

Rumsfeld wanted Maddox to return to Iraq at once, but the interrogator needed a break. “Why don’t you go and interrogate Saddam himself for us?” Rumsfeld asked.

“And what would I ask him? Where are you?”

Maddox explains to *Zman* what he meant: “I just wanted to capture Saddam. Once captured, my job was done. The insurgency that had arisen after Saddam’s capture was a foreign insurgency and I didn’t believe Saddam would have any information about them.”

Eric Maddox continued active duty for the US Army until 2004. Today, he serves in government civil service with the Department of Defense. In addition, he works as a consultant who shares his experience, expertise and skills in interrogations and questioning techniques. Finally, he often speaks publicly about his part in the dramatic capture of one of modern history’s most dangerous and tyrannical madmen.

Eric Maddox’s job may have ended with Saddam’s capture, but the Americans weren’t finished with him yet. Now a new phase began in the handling of this highly prized prisoner of war. Saddam Hussein’s brain was filled with vital knowledge, secrets that would greatly further US interests were they to be revealed.

In the following article, read about the intense efforts that were invested in making



Official photographs of Saddam Hussein released within hours of his capture showed him in a US facility, first with his fugitive hairstyle (left) and then with his more familiar cropped hair and moustache to make it easier for people to believe the US had its man (right).



Saddam during a dental exam to confirm that it’s really him.

sure that the US government learned the truth about Saddam Hussein, what made him tick, and what really happened during his reign of terror, before he was ultimately handed over to the Iraqi justice system. ■



Left: An ISIS fighter takes control of a traffic intersection in the northern city of Mosul, Iraq, on Sunday, June 22, 2014. Vast swaths of northern Iraq, including the cities of Mosul and Tal Afar, have fallen as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, advances toward Baghdad, the capital.
Right: Members of ISIS patrol in Falluja, 40 miles west of Baghdad, on Saturday, June 21, 2014.

The FBI’s Crowning Achievement

How the FBI got Saddam Hussein to Spill His Secrets

In the months that he was sitting in an American prison, Saddam Hussein spent endless hours conversing with a high-ranking personal advisor to President Bush – or so he thought. In reality, this “high level advisor” was an FBI agent who headed the successful psychological campaign that ensured the captive Iraqi leader would not take his secrets with him to the grave.

After the fearsome dictator of Iraq was captured, the FBI orchestrated a clandestine operation in which they elicited his deepest secrets and got to the core of the enigma that was Saddam Hussein.

This was no simple feat. It could not be accomplished by threats or force, as the Iraqi despot was notoriously tough and

unyielding. He even made his ultimate trip to the gallows with head held high and no outward sign of fear, sans the traditional black face covering. After all, Saddam Hussein was no wimp; he was a hero – at least in his own mind.

Operation “Desert Spider,” as the interrogation program was called, would require

considerable resourcefulness, much time, and endless patience; and the tools to be used would be purely psychological. In the end, the immense efforts bore fruit.

President Bush's "Personal Emissary" to Saddam Hussein

Saddam Hussein had for years been the object of curiosity and speculation. People all over the world heard about the capricious Iraqi tyrant and wondered about him. What were his real motivations? Why did he commit such brutal atrocities?

Now, finally the FBI would attempt to probe the innermost chambers of the brutal dictator's mind.

The FBI agent who headed Operation Desert Spider was George Piro. He was the front man for a team of FBI and CIA analysts who were trying to unravel some of Saddam's great mysteries. There were the vast arsenals of weapons of mass destruction... which were never found. Where were they? The Bush administration was certain of Saddam's ties to Al Qaeda... which had never been verified.

None of these goals, of course, were revealed to Saddam Hussein. The former dictator was assured that George Piro was a powerful high-level confidante of President Bush. If he had suspected that Piro was a mere FBI field agent, he would have been livid. He would most certainly have deemed it below his dignity to confide his state secrets to the likes of such a lowly individual.

The "Powerful" George Piro

George Piro is a classic American success story. He was born in Lebanon. When he was 12 years old, the civil war broke out there. His family then fled to the United States and settled in California. At the time George didn't know a word of English, but he was a quick learner and his parents made sure he got a well-rounded American education.

Piro enlisted in the air



FBI agent George Piro, the interrogator and "best friend" of Saddam Hussein. Saddam had no inkling that he was a low-level agent. He believed that Piro was a high-ranking government official, a close confidante of President Bush.



Saddam Hussein as dictator of Iraq.

force and then became a policeman in California. He went to night school to earn the college degree that was required to apply to the FBI. When he was chosen for this critical assignment, Piro had been an agent only five years. He was chosen largely for his native Arabic and because it was thought that Saddam would identify with a young Arab man supposedly on his way up the political ladder.

Piro began his daily meetings with Saddam shortly after American commandos pulled the vanquished despot out of a spider hole on December 13, 2003.

From the beginning, George Piro played on the tyrant's ego, leading him to believe that he was a high-ranking government official who was in direct contact with President

Bush. As such, he cultivated a close personal relationship with Saddam and ultimately got to know him better than anyone else in the world.

For countless hours, they sat face to face in a windowless room, the tools of engagement strictly psychological. During their meetings, Piro purposely had Saddam sit with his back against the wall and then sat with his own back against the door, the psychological implication to Saddam being that he was literally up against the wall with no place to go. And since it was George Piro who stood between him and the door, whatever that door projected—freedom or the relative comfort of his own cell—it gave him a psychological advantage over the captive tyrant.

Since it was of paramount importance to keep the haughty former ruler under the illusion that Piro was a powerful, high-level government official, Piro rehearsed a charade with the guards where Piro would sternly shout some instructions to them and they would start dashing around, ostensibly trying to fulfill his commands. The brutal oppressor was duly awestruck by George Piro's apparent authority.

Mr. George in Control of Saddam's Life

At first, Piro called the former dictator "Mr. Saddam," and Saddam began to call the agent "Mr. George." Over time though, in private, it changed to just Saddam and George.

George Piro made it clear that he would be responsible for every aspect of the prisoner's life. Whatever Saddam needed, he would have to talk to him. In this way, he would be beholden to Piro for everything.

Mr. George controlled even the baby wipes that Saddam was fond of. Saddam was a clean freak and he used the wipes to clean his cell and wipe off fresh fruit. Saddam considered himself a gifted poet and wrote poetry every day. It was Mr. George who controlled the pen and paper. Moreover, Saddam was kept in a cell with no windows

and no clock. Hence, Mr. George had the power over day and night.

The guards removed all prisoners' watches. The only person wearing a watch was Piro; and it was extremely large so that Saddam would find himself consistently tempted to ask for the time. This, too, was a critical part of the psychological campaign.

The FBI Manipulates Saddam's Mind

It took many months for Piro to establish a close relationship with Saddam. It was a relationship based on dependency, trust and emotions, one in which Piro manipulated Saddam, alternating between acts of kindness and provocation.

The point was to take him on a roller coaster ride of emotions from happy, to sad, to angry. When someone goes through all those emotions, his ability to control himself is compromised and he is that much more vulnerable.

To that end, he would jar Saddam with pictures and video, including images of the downfall of his regime and the toppling of his statue in the center of Baghdad.

Although he would struggle to keep himself under control, Saddam was predictably enraged and pained by the images and



Saddam expressed his admiration for Ronald Reagan, under whom America had diplomatic relations with Iraq and even surreptitiously helped him in his war against Iran. Photo: Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld meets Saddam Hussein in 1983 on behalf of President Reagan.