

Saturday April 21, 2018

By Jeff Anderson

## A Diplomat's Perspective on War in Iraq

In October 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the [Iraq War Resolution](#) citing several key factors to justify the use of military force against Iraq. The Resolutions stated intent was to remove "a regime that developed and used weapons of mass destruction, that harbored and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses and defied the just demands of the United Nations and the world."

Looking back the Iraq War was precipitated by the [September 11 terrorist attacks](#), launched for the purpose of liberating the people of Iraq from the [government of Saddam Hussein](#) and evolved into a protracted armed conflict to establish stability in the region.

We are fortunate to have residing and leading in Kerrville a former US diplomat who served in the Iraqi war theater and desires to share his perspectives on this controversial and costly conflict. Thursday April 26th, Walt Koenig will be presenting a Dynamic Learning Class offering his unique perspectives on the War in Iraq.

Walt Koenig is President of the Kerrville Area Chamber of Commerce. He served the United States Department of State as a Senior Economic Advisor in Iraq from 2008 through 2011 where he led US State Department Economic Development teams in Baghdad and Basra.



*Walt Koenig embedded with US Army Combat Units in Iraq*

Walt says, "The Iraq War has been and continues to be controversial. During my four years serving in Iraq, I was both embedded with Combat Army Units and assigned to Senior State Department Positions. I think it is important that the story of this conflict be told from both perspectives."

Earlier this year Walt presented a fascinating DLI Class on the War in Afghanistan where he served from 2011 to 2015 as a leader in US Government initiatives to establish a strong private business sector in Afghanistan. Walt's DLI presentation revealed new paradigms of reality regarding Afghanistan and his upcoming Iraq Class promises new paradigms about the Iraq War.

Walt and his wife MG moved to Kerrville in January 2017. They've quickly become active in our community and bring with them a reservoir of interesting life experiences to share with neighbors in the Hill Country. MG is a skilled multi-lingual business professional who originates from Italy. Walt has decades of international business experience in the technology, manufacturing and construction sectors. He specializes in finance and banking and currently serves as Chairman of the Afghan Commercial Bank. Walt earned a Masters degree from the University of Illinois, is fluent in Italian and Russian and holds a top secret security clearance.

Walt's business activities in Iraq were undoubtedly a unique way to do business. He was often embedded with US Army Combat Units as he focused on economic development. In Iraq he mentored enterprises to produce developmental and operational plans to access the capital they needed to succeed. Worked with the banking industry to develop lending facilities. Pioneered a leveraged grant program to infuse capital and to drive access to the formal banking system.

In Iraq Walt drove the transition of military base properties to private sector use while receiving the State Department's second highest merit recognition "The Superior Honor Award". He worked closely with ten international oil companies to insure smooth mobilization into Southern Iraq. Additionally, he led the formation of locally directed democratically elected business associations and agri-cultural cooperatives.

Since Walt completed his service with the State Department he has desired to share experiences he garnered in Iraq. He believes that his unique involvement in both the Afghan and Iraqi theaters gives him a special perspective of wars that have been under reported and largely misunderstood. "For the sake of those many Americans that made great sacrifices in service to our country, I feel important that people know what happened. The opportunity to teach these classes has given me the venue to accomplish what I have sought to accomplish since I left Government service."

When asked what he hopes DLI Class participants will take away from his DLI presentation he responded, "I will consider the class on Iraq successful if those attending gain a better understanding of the historical context of the country, the reasons conflict started, the critical events that took and are taking place and the lessons that we as a nation necessarily should take. Many families have had members serve in Iraq and I especially hope any of these family members in attendance will gain insight."

We invite you to join Walt Koenig's DLI Class Thursday April 26th 6-7:30pm at the Dietert Center to enjoy "A Diplomat's Perspective on War in Iraq."

DLI Board Members Ginnie and Tom Moser will be Class Hosts. Cost to attend the Class is \$20 per person. To register, call [792-4044](tel:792-4044), Mondays through Fridays, or register anytime online at [www.clubed.net](http://www.clubed.net).

### **Register for Future DLI Classes:**

- April 24th - More Than a Race of Spectators: How Folklore Matters in Everyday Life (11:30am-1:30pm) Luncheon
- April 26th - The Iraq War—Lessons Learned From a Diplomat's Perspective (6-7:30pm)

### **Dynamic Learning Institute**

DLI is a Kerrville community partnership between the Dietert Center's Club Ed, Schreiner University, SERV Kerrville and the Dynamic Learning Institute Board of Directors. Dynamic Learning aims to provide the Kerrville area with fun, interactive and stimulating learning experiences.

The DLI Board is excited that over 1000 registrations have been recorded this semester. People are discovering the joy of learning from dynamic instructors with a lifetime of subject experiences to share. There are no tests, no grades and no papers — just the opportunity to explore interesting topics and develop new interests.



**About Anderson-** DLI Chairman Jeff Anderson is servant pastor of SERV Kerrville, a nonprofit collaborating with community partners to empower lifelong learning.