

USIP- ADST

Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #12

Executive Summary

The interviewee was located with the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar in Kandahar Province. His period of service was from August 2004 until February 2005. His position was as an agricultural advisor to the PRT with a specialization in veterinary medicine.

The local communities experienced frequent power outages and water supply shortages; the agricultural area had suffered from severe drought for seven years, although there were heavy rains in late 2004. Lack of adequate security was a constraint on PRT staff visiting the provincial villages with two districts particularly unstable — Arghastan and Marul. Travel from the PRT base compound, even in the city, required being accompanied by a convoy security team of Humvees and guards; PRT resources were limited for providing escorts, however. Travel by road was a problem necessitating driving in dry riverbeds, although with the rain even this became a problem.

The Mission of the PRTs is the reconstruction of the country, which in Kandahar was going well and was well received by the population. The PRT was made up of a military group and 5-10 civilians under a U.S. commander. Other members of the PRT included a civil engineer working on check dams, water distribution systems and digging wells, a USAID and a State Department representative.

UK DFID (U.K. Department for International Development) had a representative in the area and the Japanese and USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) were reconstructing the Kandahar-Kabul road —almost completed. USAID was also constructing a road from Kandahar to the border, the Spin Buldak border. There were UN personnel in the area, [but not identified]. There were “a lot” of local Afghan contractors, who bid on projects proposed by the PRT. Their work included school buildings: a high school, four middle schools and primary schools.

The PRT was also involved in police training providing vehicles and equipment, a DDR program (disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation), controlling arms and providing ID cards. A U.S. public prosecutor was working on the legal system. The PRT was also providing emergency food assistance distributed through district leaders; the distribution was well organized. It was also working to establish an agricultural bank. For the national elections, “the PRT distributed the ballots the day before the election. All the polling stations and polling officers came to the PRT and they picked up the ballot papers. We talked to the locals; they were very happy to be part of the election and to be part of the voting and all the people I talked to and asked did they vote, they said yes.”

Interviewee's projects included:

- an assessment of the animal health situation;
- a poultry program — chicks and layers— for the village women. This involved training a counterpart, 10 Afghan extension agents who trained 100 others and the preparation in Pashtu of an instruction book. The day old chicks were given to 100 women/families. This work was carried out under the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture located in the province. This project served the communities by providing income and nutritional benefits; it had a “fair amount of impact” just demonstrating it could be done. Coverage of the province was limited as it was important to monitor the program and provide medications and vaccinations. The Ministry of Agriculture lacked funds to support the program.
- work with another U.S. specialist, developing a U.S. land grant type university at the Kandahar University and collecting agric/vet books from the U.S. for the college students.
- a proposal for veterinary field units and infrastructure.

The PRT interacted with the population well. Democratic processes such as the national election and local councils were working; the presence of the central and provincial governments was evident. “Actually the PRT kind of stayed behind the scene with the utmost intentions and efforts to project the central and the local government.” The PRT was very successful and well led.

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Afghanistan Experience Project

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Interviewed by: W. Haven North
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Q: When were you in Afghanistan and where were you located?

A: I was in Afghanistan from August 2004 to February 2005 and located in Kandahar, Kandahar Province.

Q: How would you describe the situation in that area last August?

A: In what respect?

Q: Well, in terms of the security or the economic situation or the political situation.

A: Okay, in general I was at the PRT with the army and as far as the town was concerned I could see much activity—a thriving, developing town. There was a lot of construction of buildings going on in the town and so it was like an ordinary town, yes.

Q: I see. Was there much disruption of services?

A: There was. For us at the post, where I was, we had a continuous supply for power and water, but in the city, I was told by the locals working there that they had sporadic power supply. When we visited different people, the power would go on and off and the same way with the water supply. It was not very uniform yet. Actually it was not working in a lot of the places. The same way with the drainage and the sewage; they were not working.

Q: I see, then, in the agricultural area in which you were working, how would you describe that?

A: My specialty: I'm a veterinarian by profession.

Q: Okay, in that area then.

A: I was basically focusing in that area, and initially I was assessing the situation, what was going on, what were the animal health conditions, the general health in the area and what was the need of the locals. Doing the assessment I traveled to the villages, traveled to towns and went to talk to the people, like a village councils. I talked to the district

leaders because that province was divided into several districts and also talked with the agricultural director from the Ministry of Agriculture. Then also I talked with the University of Kandahar staff in the animal husbandry department.

Q: Sure.

A: My assessment was several fold, since I had a limited time and I wanted to do some effective projects. One was the nutrition needs of the local people. Second was the work of the contractors, and third were the women. When I talked to the villagers, I asked the villagers how many cattle they had, how many goats and sheep they had. Then, I asked them how many chickens they had and 100% of the time they would say, “Well, that’s the woman’s job.” They kept up with that.

Q: I see.

A: I wanted to help supplement the family income so I started working on a poultry production project. There was no poultry being raised in Afghanistan, in Kandahar especially, so I wanted to teach them new methods to raise poultry hands-on, and also prove to them, practicably, that it can be done and its possible. That’s what I started working on.

Q: Let’s come back to that in a minute. You were part of a team I guess. Is that right?

A: Yes. I was part of a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team), but basically I was by myself as an agricultural advisor. Since I had no funds, the funds had to be provided by the U.S. military. I had to seek funds from different sources and come up with the projects, yes.

Q: What did you see as the overall mission for the PRT, not just yourself?

A: Reconstruction of the country I think is going very well. It’s very helpful and all the locals I talked to are very appreciative and, I think, we are winning the hearts and minds of the people, yes.

Q: This is the role of the PRT in Kandahar.

A: This is all of the PRT mission, yes.

Q: I see. What was the organization of the PRT and its staffing overall?

A: There was a commander. Some of us were civilian, not many in number and then the commander and deputy commanders and officers and then soldiers.

Q: How many were civilians out of a total, how many all together would you think roughly?

A: I cannot get into that one, sir.

Q: Most of them military?

A: Most of them military, very few, less than 10 civilians.

Q: Less than 10 civilians?

A: Yes. Maybe less than five.

Q: What was your understanding of what some of the other staff were doing?

A: I was with the military and I was very much part of the entire team.

Q: Sure. What were some of the others on the team doing?

A: The other civilians: we had one person who was an engineer with the army. He was working on checking dams and the water distribution system and some other projects. Also there was a civilian, the State Department representative, and there was a civilian USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) representative, yes.

Q: I see.

A: Also, we had a British representative.

Q: They were doing similar things?

A: Pretty much. USAID again they had their own projects, so they were working and monitoring their projects.

Q: What kind of projects?

A: The USAID representative: I really couldn't tell exactly, but he was dealing with a lot of the UN and other agencies. I did not see any specific projects he was working on.

Q: I see. You were focused on the agriculture.

A: I was focused on agriculture when I traveled with the military, visited the villages. The military was doing the civil affairs work.

Q: What kind of things were they doing?

A: Digging wells and checking on dams; I was still assessing the animal health and their veterinary needs and all that.

Q: What were the civil affairs people doing?

A: Civil affairs people were getting into building the dams because that area definitely needed water. Also they were digging a lot of wells because there was a drought in that area and there was a severe water shortage. They were doing a lot of well digging, contracting for wells, so I visited those sites where the wells were being dug.

Q: Was there any evidence of any Afghan agency, government agencies or what they call the local warlords or those people involved in these programs?

A: There were a lot of contractors they were dealing with.

Q: Afghan contractors?

A: All the contractors were local. This work was done through the contractors and so yes. Actually they had a very good system. They had bidding on the projects. All those contractors would come to the PRT and bring their bids. They would be made aware of the project and then they would be given time and they would bring their best bids. They would go through the bids and then select the best person.

Q: Were the Afghans represented in the PRT, having their views known about what was needed?

A: I'm not sure how they communicated, but those contractors were coming through to the PRT yes.

Q: I see. These were all local contractors.

A: They were all local contractors.

Q: I see.

A: I think some are NGOs and some of them just contractors, but actually they were for-profit contractors. They were doing some school buildings. They were building a high school I visited, and they were building three or four middle schools and primary schools, yes.

Q: What about the security situation there, was it a problem or how was that being dealt with?

A: Each time we would leave our military compound we would be in a convoy and have security protection. We had a lot of information about different activities going on in the area; I did not encounter in Kandahar any of these dangerous situations. A grenade was thrown at a convoy one time. They were visiting Spin Buldak, which is an area bordering Pakistan, but I was not with them that day.

Q: You were not with that convoy?

A: I was not with that convoy.

Q: I see. So, that's the only incident you heard of?

A: That's the only incident that happened to our PRT. I would say the security situation was pretty stable, but the guards were up all the time. The soldiers never compromised or took it lightly.

Q: You had Afghan soldiers, as well as U.S. military?

A: Our PRT had Afghan security personnel. They provided the security at the front gate and they were with our soldiers in the towers and, if we went outside the city, they would escort us, in front and the back.

Q: Then when you went out to the field, did you go with an escort?

A: Yes, always, even anytime I left the compound, I would be with the escort even in the city or anywhere. I was not allowed to go by myself.

Q: What did the escort involve? What did you have?

A: We had some Humvees; let's say three Humvees, and then long guns, three long guns and 12 to 15 soldiers, yes.

Q: Just when you were going alone?

A: It doesn't matter. I mean we would try to combine the missions, if two or three people were doing something or if the military was going for civil affairs work and I'm going for my veterinary assessment. Even if I had to go alone several times it happened. When I went to the university, I would have the same escort, yes.

Q: I see. It must have made I difficult to get around.

A: It was. It was not easy because we (PRT) were very limited on the escort resources. The security was definitely a hindrance in achieving our goals as fast as we would like to.

Q: You got your funding from where?

A: I got my funding from the U.S. army.

Q: From the U.S. army? You applied to them for funds?

A: Yes. I discussed my projects with the commander. He was very excited about them. There is a branch of the army called RDZ, Regional Development Zone and they were able to provide me all the funds we needed, yes.

Q: You were able to secure what you needed?

A: Yes, I procured what I needed and gave it to the locals and gave them hands-on training and all that yes; I was working with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Animal Husbandry Division.

Q: I see, they had a local ministry office?

A: They had a local director there in the province. The ministry has a director in each province, yes. So, actually they were the direct representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture; they were selecting the people. They were working to make their government strong and let the people feel that this is their government doing something for them.

Q: Right, so did you have counterparts working with you?

A: Yes, I had my counterparts; the director of agriculture, yes. They were the ones selecting people who participated in the project; and they were providing all the food and other human help.

Q: In the selection of people, was there any political aspect to that or were they just selected in general?

A: I'm not sure about that. We always suspected there was some corruption or some nepotism, but to me they were all Afghans.

Q: Sure. I see. Another dimension, in the area of governance, did you get any sense of anything being done to introduce democratic methods or improve local government capabilities or the role of the central government?

A: I think there was, if I understand your question correctly; it was pretty much under the central government and the governor was going to different places. All the district leaders were pretty much in charge of the province and then the district leaders were reporting to the governor. I think there were two of the districts out of six or seven districts where there was what looked like some Taliban activities and maybe not under the control of the central government.

Q: I see. You were not involved in those areas?

A: I visited that area one time; two districts in Kandahar province. One was called Arghastan and the other was called Maruf. So, evidently we could not go to Maruf because that was very volatile and considered dangerous from what the security information was telling us. Arghastan leaders were evidently from our side and trying to cooperate with the governor and the central government, but deep inside we had information that he might also be providing some support to Taliban or some terrorists or

something like that. These were just the reports.

Q: Were there local councils organized?

A: Local councils are very organized in the villages, because the military provided some humanitarian assistance to several villages. Actually in these volatile areas we were focusing on reaching the people and letting them know that we wanted to help them. So in Arghastan, I was with the military. They took several trucks out there with rice and flour and cooking oil and sugar and tea. We delivered in that area through the district leader.

Q: You were working through the district leader?

A: Working through the district leader.

Q: They were the ones that decided who got the food?

A: They were the ones who decided who deserved the food, because they had the information on the most deserving people.

Q: Did you ever see a local council in operation?

A: Operation in which you mean distribution? Yes. The people came and we unloaded the material and they would call and people would come and the district leader would do the distribution yes. It was very organized. I mean I could see people respected the council and the district leader very much.

Q: They were all there.

A: The council was there, very much in his control; they would listen to him and they followed his orders and instructions.

Q: Did you have a sense that they were promoting some sort of good government?

A: I think so. Mostly the district leader was, yes.

Q: Was there evidence of any of the major political events in Afghanistan?

A: I was there when they had elections, the presidential election.

Q: How did that go?

A: Oh, that went very well in Kandahar. All the ballots were distributed from the PRT the day before the election. All the polling stations and polling officers came to the PRT and they picked up the ballot papers and all that.

Q: So, that was working pretty well.

A: It went very well, yes. We talked to the locals; they were very happy to be part of the election and to be part of the voting and all the people I talked to and asked did they vote, they said yes. That's what they were telling me, yes, they voted.

Q: They felt the election was reasonably fair?

A: I think so because I did not hear anybody saying otherwise.

Q: Let's talk a bit more about the actual work you were doing in your reconstruction work. What were all the projects you had and how did they work?

A: There were several projects. One project was to teach the Afghan woman to raise poultry. So, what I did I saw the Minister of Agriculture and talked with the director. He picked 10 trainers and I provided them the training, classroom training and gave them the instructions of what to do, what not to do and all this. Also I wrote a little instruction book and translated it into the local language called Pashtu at the university. We had a translator so I was also working with the university professors. The local interpreters and the university professor helped me to translate it into the local language and the University of Kandahar people typed it into the local language. Then with all the pictures I provided them I showed them what to do and they posted the pictures. I had the book published and gave it to each trainer. The Director of Agriculture picked 10 people and I trained them and each person would give training to 10 other people, so that was the initial part.

After that they had selected 100 women or 100 families; each family was given 30 seven day old chicks and two 100 kilograms of feed which should be sufficient for six to seven weeks, that's what the project was. My assessment was that if I had had to work on cattle, it would have taken three years to raise the cattle. Goats and sheep take six months. Poultry takes six to seven weeks. It's (poultry) the quickest way to supply nutrition and income to the family.

Q: Good.

A: I took a trip to Pakistan. I visited the poultry farms; I visited the local conditions and some of the feed mills and assessed what would work in this area. I kind of duplicated with my knowledge from here and all theirs and mixed it altogether. I duplicated the instructions, their circumstances, because things might work very well here, but over there, there was no steady supply of electricity, so we could not use anything electric in the chicken houses. They were using wood stoves and all that, so that came in real handy and it worked very well.

Q: Good.

A: Those 100 families were given 30 chickens each and then 200 kilograms of feed.

After that I would monitored the program, plus I had a control flock at a local poultry farm and one of the local leaders let me use his facility as a control flock so I could give them the medication, vaccinations. I visited those facilities, those people and the trainers to give them the medicine and the vaccines and all that. It was very successful. It had a low mortality. If people were given 30 chickens, most were able to raise 25 to 28 chickens. In six to seven weeks, they were ready to be sold at the market.

Q: You think it had a fair amount of economic impact?

A: It had a fair amount and also more than economic impact, just to teach them that this is possible and can be done. Because if they had a local poultry association.... the people whose poultry house I was using were the ones that told me that it's not going to work. Their leader, who is a very well known businessman, basically in construction, who had a side business in poultry and he told me it's not going to work. Even before I started, he said, "You're going to bring the chickens and they're all going to die." That did not happen, so I talked to him. He said, "Well, you had the knowledge and expertise, that's why it worked." It made him a believer, too, because I was using his poultry house.

Q: This was an Afghan?

A: Yes, they were also being trained. His son worked with me day and night taking care of those chicks and raising them and I was providing them the instructions.

Q: What happened with the women who got these chicks and how did they sustain their operations?

A: The sustainability was that they could start the second and third phase, which would be done by my follower. She was another veterinarian. She would get the next batch, which we would subsidize; they paid half and we paid half up front and the third batch they should be doing it on their own.

Q: I see.

A: That was the project.

Q: This is both for the feed and chicks.

A: Yes. I demonstrated to them that even if they bought everything they would still make a personal profit.

Q: Did you get out to the field to see the women working on their poultry?

A: I went to the field and saw — I didn't see the women — the facilities. The women don't come and talk to you, you know. I visited their houses, where they were keeping the poultry and they were doing very well.

Q: Did you have any other projects you were working on?

A: Okay, there was another project. Another 100 families were given layers. So, each family was given 10 layers, like chickens ready to lay eggs, these were broilers. The purpose for that was the 10 layers that were given to each family would produce seven to eight eggs a day. The family can eat seven or eight eggs or they can sell and buy the bread for the whole family. For those seven or eight eggs can bring bread for the whole family. That also involved the women. They were distributed to the governor's office. The governor and his staff picked the families and they helped with the distribution. This was also funded by the RDZ, the military yes.

Q: I see. How widespread do you think your program was in terms of its coverage in the area?

A: We were limited, because I wanted to provide the care and vaccination and medicine, to the surrounding area of Kandahar city. There were people from Kandahar city and there were people from surrounding areas. They were from all over.

Q: It wasn't provincial-wide?

A: It wasn't too far. It was not whole province, no, because I was very limited on my movement.

Q: Sure. That constrained your getting it out beyond the local area.

A: Yes, because the military did not have that many resources to provide me the escort and protection, if I wanted to go to villages everyday.

Q: Right, but did the Ministry of Agriculture start on its own extending the program beyond Kandahar?

A: The Ministry of Agriculture was looking for funds. They wanted to continue, but they told me they did not have any funds. They said if you provide them funds, each time I'll went they would have a representative from agriculture ministry with me. They were with me each time I visited the poultry house [the control flock]. Actually one of their veterinarians was assigned to the poultry house where I had a control flock. He was coming in the morning, stayed there all day and learned all this and then went back home in the evening.

Q: Were there any NGOs working in this same area with you?

A: There's an organization called VARA, V-A-R-A [?]; they were also working in the area. They offered their help, if I needed it, but I was able to do without that. They had had poultry projects, not the day old chicks project, but they were distributing the layer hens; they called them the Kuchis, that's a nomad, so they were working with them.

Q: That was also in the Kandahar area though.

A: That was also in the Kandahar area, yes. It's an NGO; I don't know what it stands for.

Q: It's a local one or?

A: It's international because Steve Maynard was the head of that and I think he's from here from Washington, D.C. There were local NGOs part of that. There was a woman with whom I was dealing with then; I was working with them and they were providing me with some assistance.

Q: Were there any women's organizations helping with the project?

A: I was working with one of the other women organizations, but they had a dairy project. This was collecting milk from the villages and then they were bringing it in town to Kandahar. They were distributing or selling in the local market.

Q: Was this a local NGO?

A: Local NGO, yes. Also, we had a lady I can't think of her name from NPR[?]. She was there in that province and working on the project; she left and the whole project kind of shut down and they wanted to revitalize that project.

Q: So, you think your projects are carrying on?

A: I would hope so, yes.

Q: They were pretty well integrated in the Ministry of Agriculture?

A: Pretty well integrated with the Ministry of Agriculture because all my work was done through Ministry of Agriculture and through the governor's office.

Q: Well, yet another aspect, I don't know if you have any familiarity with this, but was there any police training going on that you were aware of?

A: The PRT was involved with the police training. The PRT was involved in issuing ID cards and the PRT was involved in the DDR process. You know that's the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, so they were involved and were very active in controlling the arms and the guns, and issuing the ID cards. They were involved in the police training. The PRT also was involved supplying vehicles to the police and supplied several hundred motorcycles to the police and provided several pickup trucks to the police, yes.

Q: Did you have any understanding of the local legal system, the courts and the prisons?

A: I have some because one of the majors in our PRT was a public prosecutor from Baltimore; he was working on the legal system and developing that and providing them assistance. Personally, I have not seen anything; not been to a court; no. He was working with the legal system and with the prosecutor and providing them the papers and forms and establishing their infrastructure.

Q: Were there any other areas of PRT activity that you are aware of that was going on while you were doing your work?

A: Okay, by the military or by me?

Q: By the military and the other civilians.

A: Other civilians, different person, this was a British DFID (U.K. Department for International Development). He was part of working with a lot of the locals gathering information and visiting with the local leader, but I don't think he had any project going on. Also, the PRT was calling on all the religious leaders; they call them Imams. They were having a monthly meeting at the PRT. In that area people are very religious and they will listen to the Imam like a priest; the Imams were in different area mosques. They came in and had a dinner or a tea at least in the afternoon once a month. Then PRT definitely asked them what are their needs are and how we can help them. They were being helped in several ways. Whatever needs they brought in, like one of them said they are publishing some newsletters and need help on that. So they were being helped.

Q: So, the PRT was interacting with the local people?

A: The PRT was interacting locally with the locals "very heavy." This was the best way, in my opinion, going through the religious leader and making them believers. The people basically listened to them.

Q: So, the PRT was being well accepted in the area?

A: The PRT was very well accepted in the area. Yes, because each time I went with the convoy when we went around the city or in the bazaar in the street, people would come out and raise their thumbs up.

Q: How long had the PRT been in business, the same time that you were there?

A: I heard here that that PRT had been there about a year when I got there.

Q: You think it was accomplishing its mission in providing security?

A: I would think so, yes. Providing security and making the local government strong.

Q: Recognizing the role of the central government?

A: Recognizing the role of the central government and also encouraging the local governor's office and all that to take charge of the province.

Q: Do you think this PRT approach is a good one?

A: I think so. I think it is an excellent approach and it is the winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Q: Any lessons you learned from this whether it was successful or not successful?

A: I think it was very successful and I felt very good about my project. I felt it was able to make a contribution and overall the PRT is making a great contribution.

Q: But, was there anything you thought might be done better or differently?

A: Not really, I mean I think basically it depends a whole lot on the commander. We had a very good commander.

Q: This was an American?

A: He was a good leader.

Q: This was an American?

A: Yes. This was an American PRT, yes.

Q: What was his rank?

A: Lieutenant colonel.

Q: Lieutenant colonel.

A: Yes.

Q: Did you report to him?

A: Yes. Basically I was an advisor to him and advisor to the local government, yes.

Q: I see; is there anything you thought might be done better or differently?

A: I really can't think of anything. They really, I mean from what I heard that PRT was the ahead of all the PRTs in Afghanistan in accomplishing missions and doing the projects.

Q: Why do you think it was doing so well?

A: I think it was the leadership. Yes.

Q: I see. Is there some point that it is going to be phased out and turned over to the locals?

A: I'm not sure about that. I was assigned for six months, so I completed my term. There is somebody behind me. She's a lady, but she is also a veterinarian, too.

Q: Somebody taking your place?

A: Taking my place, yes. They (the PRT) liked it and they wanted the USDA foreign agricultural department in Washington to be aware of all the projects, so they definitely made sure that they wanted to continue what's going on. They sent the same type of person like I was in the veterinarian profession.

Q: so, somebody has replaced you?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: What kind of projects are they carrying out, the same ones or something new?

A: I'm not sure. I've gotten a few e-mails, but I have not gotten any detailed e-mails yet.

Q: I suppose the main problem, was extending the work throughout the province and getting it out. I suppose that was a limitation, right?

A: That was a limitation, but the civil affairs and military were trying to go to places wherever they could and they pretty much went every place in the province except one or two places when I went out, yes.

Q: But your project was not yet extended that far out?

A: No, I visited those places; I made a proposal for the veterinary field units and the infrastructure; that proposal is on the paper; I designed all the veterinary field units and houses, how the infrastructure will be handled. It has not been implemented yet.

Q: So, that's a problem of having access to these places.

A: Yes, but I visited most of the places. A lot of the villages do not have a road. No village has a road. The only way to the village was driving in the riverbed.

Q: Well, that's important.

A: That was our access to those villages, yes. That was because of the drought; most of the villages' rivers were dry, so that provided a road to the villages, yes.

Q: The conditions for agriculture were not very good at that time.

A: No, at that time because of the drought, some of the areas were really hurting. That's where our military provided the humanitarian assistance. But some of the areas they were kind of coping, but, by the time I was ready to leave, they had plenty of rain. So, everybody was very happy; especially at the end of November, December [2004] it started raining and that was after seven years of drought.

Q: My goodness.

A: Then it rained really heavy and the whole area looked like it would come back.

Q: Then it will be hard to get out to the villages because the riverbeds were flooded.

A: That is true, yes because one of our convoy—I was not with them — were kind of stuck somewhere. They had to be rescued, yes.

Q: The whole question of spreading the benefits is going to be a difficult problem I guess.

A: It is and will be because of the ability to move. Everybody even the commanders of the military, the civil affairs, the MPs, all of them felt they could do a whole lot more, but they were very limited because of the security situation.

Q: So, the outlying areas were still quite unstable I guess?

A: They were, yes.

Q: These were Taliban or?

A: That's what we called them and anti-coalition forces, the Taliban and that's their activity. The intelligence reports were showing some hostile activity yes.

Q: That's still a big job ahead I guess.

A: Yes.

Q: Well, is there anything we haven't touched on your work?

A: I was working with the local university of Kandahar.

Q: Yes, how was that?

A: Another project I worked on because they had just moved to a new building; their entire infrastructure had been destroyed in the war. What I did; I contacted several people here and there and they collected books from all over the country [U.S.]. They

sent me several dozen boxes of books, agriculture and veterinary books, so I just distributed them to the university there and they were very happy to receive that.

Q: They had a number of students?

A: They had a number of students. They were in the process of building; the central government was doing the building. They didn't have any books or anything, so I collected those books and gave them to the university. Another civil engineer was working to establish some water testing lab and other testing lab facilities in the university.

Q: Well, is there any other dimension that we ought to touch on that we haven't talked about?

A: The PRT, when I got over there, was trying to establish the agriculture bank. They bought fertilizers and seed and gave them to farmers through the local agriculture bank; those seeds and the fertilizer were loaned to the farmers and they were to pay back when they had their crops. That was another successful project and the leader of the director of the bank was very actively involved. Actually that was again to project the local government, what the government was doing through the agriculture bank, which was under the central government. That was another project.

I talked to the director of the bank, and they were willing to fund anybody who wanted to have a poultry farm on the same basis; they were willing to give loans on a very low interest. Then RDZ was developing a department to do the land survey. They provided the department with a lot of land surveying equipment mainly because what they had was obsolete equipment. They replaced their equipment.

The PRT had a competition of speeches at one of the local schools there; it was a high school. There were girls and boys both involved and that was the first time ever in Kandahar, I was told; there was a woman on one side and a man on the other side and that was the first time that ever happened in Kandahar, after a long, long time yes.

Q: I see.

A: The PRT was doing that.

There was another program I was working on with the university. There was a professor from the Penn State College. We were trying to establish a land-grant university, not exactly the same, but somewhat like we have in the U.S.

Q: Right.

A: We were encouraging the university and the Ministry of Agriculture to work together. The farmers would bring their problems to the university and the university would find the solutions and help them and guide them, like extension work. That project is still

going on and they were planning lectures with the local farmers and with the university students and the agriculture department.

Q: This was a PRT project, too?

A: This was a USDA Foreign Agriculture Service project; they were working through the PRT. So as a part of the PRT, I was facilitating the university and the agriculture department bringing them together; the teachers and the other support was being provided by the foreign agriculture service.

Q: This was the staffing of the university.

A: Yes, this was a land grant university type concept introduced by the foreign agriculture service.

I think that if anybody wanted to do anything, the PRT was the only source they could go through.

Q: They had authority and they also had the money, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: I see, so you couldn't operate in that region without going through the PRT I guess?

A: Definitely, at least the support because those people could not go to the university unless the PRT provided the force protection.

Q: Were there other foreign donors active in that area?

A: Yes, Japanese were very active. They were building some roads and some schools also, yes. I'm not sure exactly because they were talking a lot, what I heard, they agreed to everything, but very few things materialized.

Q: I see. Anybody else?

A: There were, but I think Japanese were the major other one.

Q: They were in parallel with the PRT?

A: They had their own set up and I'm not sure exactly how, but we were meeting with them, dealing with them in different meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and all that. So, yes, they were coming to the PRT for meetings.

Q: The Kandahar road project I guess was being rebuilt was it at that time?

A: That is the Kandahar-Kabul road; it is being built by the Japanese, yes.

Q: That was being done through the PRT or?

A: That was an independent project.

Q: That was I guess with USAID?

A: I think USAID and the Japanese were doing that.

Q: That would affect your work being able to get out, I guess?

A: Yes. That road was almost complete, what I heard and it's a beautiful road. There was another project I think USAID was working on, building a road from Kandahar to the border the Spin Buldak border.

Q: All of which I guess would help the extension of your program?

A: Exactly, yes because in Afghanistan there is very little, most of the stuff is coming either from Iran or Pakistan. That would be the channel bringing material that comes from Pakistan.

Q: I see. Well, are there any other dimensions that we haven't touched on?

A: That pretty much covers that I think, yes.

Q: Do you think that the central government was becoming more evident in the area?

A: I would think so, definitely yes.

Q: Who did the commander in the area report to?

A: There was a Southern command. That was at Kandahar airfield, a PRT headquarters. There was a Southern command headquarters. The commander of the PRT would report to the commander over there. He was a full colonel.

Q: Then there was an Afghan governor for the province?

A: There was an Afghan governor for the province, yes.

Q: Is that local government functioning well?

A: Very well, yes.

Q: In parallel with the PRT I guess?

A: In parallel with the PRT and actually PRT kind of stayed behind the scene with the

utmost intentions and efforts to project the central and the local government.

Q: I see; good. Well, this has been very interesting, very useful. I've learned a lot. Anything else you want to add?

A: That's pretty much it I think, yes.

Q: Okay, well, that's fine; we'll call it a day then. You can send me the release.

A: I will fax you the release, but I would like to have a transcript. [release sent]

Q: Okay. Very good. We'll certainly get back to you with it.

A: Sure, yes.

Q: Thank you so much. It's been a worthwhile interview.

A: Thank you, Mr. North.

[END INTERVIEW]