

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

INTERVIEW #37

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Initial interview date: June 26, 2008
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Executive Summary

This interviewee served as the team leader for the Muthanna PRT in 2006 and 2007. He then moved to the Wasit PRT for 10 months. The Muthanna PRT was small, consisting of eight Americans and five Iraqi local employees. The PRT was located at Tallil air base, which was under Australian command. As a result, the Muthanna PRT was dependent upon the Australians for life support and movement. The interviewee characterized it as a “battle “ with the Regional Security Officer (RSO) to get permission for his team to move with the Australians, but once that was obtained, he indicates that coordination with the Australians worked very well and movement was satisfactory.

The principal focus of the Muthanna PRT was on governance, with a major effort to have the voices of leaders from all sectors of the community – teachers from the agricultural college, business leaders, farmers from the agricultural unions, etc. - heard by the Provincial Council. One particular accomplishment was to help some of the agricultural NGOs gain a voice in planning the agricultural portion of the Provincial Council’s development strategy. The PRT also made strides in helping the members of the Council realize their own interest in heeding the advice of these experienced Iraqis from outside the council. In discussing the work of the PRT, the interviewee indicates that he saw greater utility in trying to build capacity among Iraqi leaders than in funding large infrastructure projects. For this reason, he hails as especially useful the arrival of the quick response funds, which gave the PRT the flexibility to work directly with NGOs, local governments, mayors or district councils, un-tethered from the Provincial Council. This allowed the PRT to gain legitimacy in power centers outside the provincial government, and the security situation was such that movement to these outside centers was possible.

The interviewee’s experience in Wasit was also in a non-U.S. led coalition environment, in this case a mixture of Salvadorans, Georgians, Lithuanians, Poles and Romanians. This PRT, during the 10 months of the interviewee’s tour, grew from zero to about 50 personnel, including a civil affairs team assigned to the PRT. In both his PRT experiences, the interviewee stresses that PRT members with prior military experience, such as himself, found that that was a very important factor in dealing successfully with military counterparts.

One of the most active sections in the Wasit PRT was the rule of law section, under the

leadership of an individual who was both a career Marine and a career U.S. attorney. This individual made measurable progress in forging the link between the judiciary and the police, in strengthening judicial oversight and police accountability, and in inculcating a respect for due process (e.g. the need to seek out a warrant in advance of arrests) and a lack of tolerance for intimidation or corruption in the judicial ranks.

In sum, this interviewee believes that the PRTs have played a critical role in the provinces. They have demonstrated to those Iraqis outside of Baghdad that the U.S. is interested in them. In his view, the civilian presence that PRTs represent enabled a much richer interaction with Iraqis. Having seen the situation first as a deployed Marine and then as a PRT team leader, he observes: in dealing with provincial officials, “the ideas (exchanged) are more creative and the willingness to work together is greater than it is when the military represents the U.S.”

Interview

Q: When were you at the Wasit PRT and when did you return?

A: I actually started in 2006 in the Muthanna PRT. Then in 2007 a new PRT was stood up in Wasit Province. I asked to go and be that team leader and moved up to Al Qut and started the team there.

Q: So you actually had ten months in Muthanna.

A: Yes, about ten months were in Muthanna.

Q: And how long did you have in Wasit?

A: I left Wasit in spring of 2008, so about the same amount of time.

Q: Let's talk about both PRT experiences.

What was the structure of the Muthanna PRT?

A: That team was very small. It was referred to as a PST because it operated remotely at Tallil airbase; it was remote to Muthanna province itself. We had to travel from Tallil which is in Dhi Qar Province into Samwa the capital of Muthanna. So the team was very small to begin with. I think we started with three and grew over the course of ten months to eight total. That doesn't include our locally employed staff, which is an extremely valuable component of any team over there. We had five Iraqis working for us inside the province. So, if you include them we were about 13.

Q: Your position in Muthanna was?

A: I was originally hired to be the deputy team leader. The team leader, who arrived about the same time that I did within a few weeks fell ill, sadly, and returned to the

United States. I was made the team leader shortly after that.

Q: You had responsibility for from three to eight different individuals, and then you had in addition the five Iraqis who were the bicultural, bilingual advisors?

A: No, these are the local employed staff; these are Iraqis who live in Iraq. They were hired in country as contractors.

Q: What were your primary goals there?

A: When I arrived there was really nothing. There was an empty building, so the first goal was to get the operation set up. To get our computers. To establish our working relationship with the military units that were already working in Muthanna – in this case it was the Australian forces. Of course, then to bring in the incoming personnel, to integrate them into the process. But really, the first order of business was to just get the infrastructure of the PRT itself up and running and to get a toe hold in the province in terms of an introduction to provincial officials, to the Iraqis themselves. You get some background that had been generally stored up by the Australian civil affairs forces and try to understand what was happening in Muthanna. Back then the PRT program was still in its early stages and it took some explaining to provincial officials who we were and what we meant to do. These days, no such explanation is required. It is a pretty famous program throughout the provinces. But back then we had to sort of introduce ourselves in the province and that took some time. Especially in Iraqi culture, it takes a fair bit of time in a series of meetings before you can really get down to business.

Q: Were they simply skeptical of your motives or just not...?

A: They're not 100% dubious, so much as, maybe a little bit skeptical. But they'd not seen civilians; they had certainly not seen State Department personnel. I mean, this was a new concept to them; they had dealt with the military for some number of years, but for the most part that had been civil affairs units. Not to denigrate the military civil affairs capability, but you know that primarily consisted of building a series of small projects in the areas of tactical interest to those particular units. The thrust of the PRT was quite different. It aimed right at the heart of governance in the province, and right at the provincial council and the governor. They had not been the center of attention, really, up to that point and I think that at first they were a little surprised, but quickly grew to like the idea of having the PRT there to engage them directly and consistently.

Q: You had to establish your relationship with the Australians who were in charge of the air base?

A: Very important. Very critical.

Q: Did your team have some military members as well and how was that relationship?

A: We did not have any military members. I take that back. We did not have any

military members who were directly assigned to the PRT. MND South did assign a liaison officer from their headquarters, to assist the PRT in working with both its headquarters as well as with the military units who were on the ground in Tallil. That, by the way, was instrumental. I mean it was key to have that contact and somebody to just assist us, from very mundane things like air requests to billeting and figuring out where to get sheets or the most basic things to live and work on the base, to more significant things like coordinating with the Australians, understanding their planning process, understanding their mission and their goals, understanding their funding available for reconstruction and development and how they intended to use it. All those were key roles for that liaison officer. We did not have any uniformed soldiers in our team, but we pretty quickly forged a good link with the Australian command. I think they really appreciated what we could bring to the table in terms of experience and in terms of our goals and were actually, frankly, anxious to hand off some of the reconstruction and development roles to us and the key leadership engagement roles also to us. And so they were happy to help us get around the province, first of all, introduce us around, and get us started.

Q: In terms of your movements around the province, were you dependent upon the military?

A: At first we were wholly dependent upon the Australians, and back then there was no Memorandum of Agreement dictating to them that they move us anywhere, so it was all done just by handshake, really. Frankly, it was a bit of a battle from day one; because they were not US forces, it required some special approval from the RSO, which took some doing. But, my view was we were in Tallil, and the people we needed to talk to were in Muthanna and it didn't make sense to me that we would have been put there and then not afforded the means to actually do the mission we were assigned to do. The only way to do that was to move with the Australians and so we fought very hard for the right to do that. Eventually, through some special exception to general policy we were able to move around with the Australians, which was fantastic. They were very accommodating, I mean, it's not perfect; they didn't just move us where we wanted to go whenever we wanted to go. We had to plan with them according to their interests and their goals and their missions and go with them when they went, rather than according to our schedule, but certainly it was better than being immobile.

Q: Who were the people that were on your team and what kind of projects did you attempt to pursue?

A: Well, the team filled out with the sort of building blocks of an IPAO or political officer, a project manager, a public diplomacy officer. We borrowed from the Dhi Qar team their agriculture advisor, the USAID advisor, and public finance expert who was a contractor with RTI, and, therefore, with USAID. Those were the beginnings of the team. We really set out, at first, to find out what the Iraqis themselves were doing in the province, what was their provincial development strategy, what was their funding situation, what was their ability to plan and execute the budget they were receiving from the national government and then to ask in turn, "how could we participate in the

execution of their provincial development strategy?" The plan that they had at that point, and this is summer of 2006, so it's important to remember that was just over a year since the governing body at that provincial level had been established, it was...wanting. It was lacking.

Q: It's amazing they even had a provincial development strategy.

A: Yes, it actually was remarkable. It formed the basis for our communication; it was the topic for us to get together as a framework for our discussions. Muthanna is a heavily agricultural province, in fact, really, that's the only industry there, at all. It's the poorest province in the country. Its population is only around 750,000, despite the fact that it is a sizeable province, I think third largest in terms of area. As a result, agriculture was a natural place to focus in terms of the development strategy; it was, in fact, the most robust section of the first version that we saw, and that's where we dedicated our limited man-hours to begin with. Basically we thought that we would use agriculture as a planning model which could then be expanded to other sectors. The principles that we followed were that we wanted to hear from more than just the provincial council members themselves, we wanted to involve in these planning sessions: leaders from the community, leaders from the agriculture college which was in the province, leaders from the business community and the farmers themselves from the agriculture unions, and others. We wanted their voices and we wanted to encourage the provincial council to hear from such people when formulating their agriculture plan and hopefully in formulating their development strategy as a whole. So that's where we started.

Q: Could you give me an idea of your day-to-day schedule, whether you traveled everyday to meet with people or visit projects or whether you had great difficulty making arrangements so it was only a couple times a week. What would be the normal rhythm?

A: To travel into town from Tallil was, if you took the road, about an hour and fifteen minute drive. Unfortunately, or fortunately I suppose, the Australians didn't take the road. We traveled alternate routes in light armored vehicles and the Australians preferred to go overland to avoid IEDs. The trip took about three hours in each direction; it was a long haul. Occasionally, we would go on consecutive days but more often than not I would say we averaged probably over the course of my time two to three movements a week.

Q: Were the Iraqi security forces at all involved in helping you?

A: They were involved; Muthanna was the first province to go "PIC", as we say, Provincial Iraqi Control, and that happened almost at the exact time of our arrival. So, they necessarily, almost, were involved in the security considerations in our movements. According to the PIC agreement, the Iraqi security forces would be apprized of coalition military movements. Now that didn't happen so rigorously and, obviously, that raises a lot of security concerns, but the Australians had a strong enough relationship with the police forces in the province and we all had a strong enough relationship with local officials that we would coordinate in advance of the movements so that check points, for

example, would just wave the vehicles through when they happened to come upon a checkpoint. To that extent they coordinated. We never had Iraqi units moving with us or in my experience no Iraqi units were ever assigned protective role in terms of our movement or our personal security.

Q: You mentioned the nature of the threat there were the IED's which were pretty ubiquitous, but behind those, what actors were most prevalent in Muthanna?

A: Muthanna actually was relatively quiet. Even back in 2006 and 2007 when the rest of the country was struggling desperately, Muthanna was even then relatively quiet. As throughout the South, the most disruptive elements were the Jaish al-Mahdi, Mahdi Army. The highest government officials were members of SCIRI, now ISCI, backed and very strong leaders. They not only had personal leadership characteristics, but also had ties to the strongest tribal elements in Muthanna, and Muthanna, like its neighbor Anbar, is a heavily tribal society still. I think probably maybe second only to Anbar in terms of the influence of the tribal structure in the province. And the officials' ties to the strongest tribe in the area helped them keep their thumbs, really, on the militia elements in Samawa and the other towns in Muthanna.

Q: Were the officials from there, was that the basis for their strong ties?

A: Yes, they were from Muthanna, with strong ties with the tribe. When the Mahdi saw fit to rise up, riot, oppose the governor himself, it seemed the police could not on their own get the upper hand, but time and time again elements from the officials' tribe would weigh in on the side of the police and pretty convincingly win the day. The Mahdi army never really took a very strong hold in Samawa, largely because of the leadership abilities of these officials who were closely aligned.

Q: So, the militia, who did pose some threat, nevertheless, was kept under control by these leaders?

A: Yes.

Q: Not to second guess the judgment of the military, but I gather they felt it was prudent and necessary to take varied indirect routes, that took three hours, which clearly puts a bit of an obstacle on how much you can get done in a day.

A: Oh yes. Right, right. Yes, that's true. Of course, you know in any conflict environment, the balance of risk/gain is complicated and difficult and challenging. Especially when you're traveling to do meetings, the classic risk vs. gain in any conflict environment is "do I send these troops to take this hill or to defeat this enemy in this place," and those are calculations that a military commander is accustomed to making. A much more difficult calculation is "do I send these troops to go to this meeting to talk about reconstruction?" That's a calculus that is more difficult for them, and one that they are not necessarily trained to make. I don't know if anybody can actually make that

calculation.

Q: Did you have periodic meetings where you would sit down with the military commander and say: “ here are the meetings we’d like to have this week” and then negotiate how possible they would be?

A: That’s exactly how that would happen. Yes, we had a close relationship with the Australian staff, especially the operations officer and the other officers involved in the planning process. We attended their battle update briefs several times a week and made sure we knew what operations they were going out on and how we could tag along if it made sense or when we needed to put something in the mix, we did and they fit that into their operational rhythm.

Q: What would a civilian call the battle update brief? I’m trying to imagine this.

A: Yes, well, the military has this dizzying array of briefings every day. The battle update brief is usually a daily briefing, every morning of what’s happened the day before, what’s the forecast for the day coming. In the case of the Australians, we didn’t go every day; there was almost like a planning meeting where everyone came together, looked at the schedule, and said “going out this week, here’s what I’d like to get on the schedule.” And then we spent some number of days coordinating it, and then later in the week there’d be sort of a confirmation brief for those engagements that were closer and maybe a week out. They would say, “Just to make sure, we’re doing this and this for the following, seven, eight days or so.” We would attend both of those every week as well as a smattering of other ones, such as intelligence updates; we would occasionally go to the daily briefs, especially if there was something significant happening.

Q: The “we” would be you personally or your representatives?

A: Usually me, but I had a great team, great guys, who I felt comfortable sending in my stead when I couldn’t go, but usually it was me. But, there was a rotation certainly.

Q: What kinds of projects was your project manager involved in; I think you mentioned an Agriculture person you borrowed from time to time and a USAID representative?

A: Right, the funding that we had available to us then was ESF funding which is otherwise known as PRDC money, which in a way dictated our focus on the provincial council, because the stipulation in spending that money is that it will be projects funded and planned with the Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee for the provincial council’s approval. Focusing on the provincial development strategy and the provincial council’s priorities and figuring out what we could do as a part of that plan was how we determined how we could spend that ESF money. Those were our first projects.

Generally speaking they were larger, as you might expect, larger infrastructure projects; that was what the ESF money was designed to do. In planning with the provincial council, it inevitably meant that you would do in large part larger infrastructure projects.

Q: Such as?

A: In Muthanna, as I say, we focused first on agriculture, and so you saw a lot of pump rehabilitation, canal clearing, water purification units for some of the smaller villages, some roads for some of the smaller villages, really just a host of all the usual essential services, such as water purification, agriculture, roads. I'm trying to think of my original project list; it was almost two years ago, I can't remember everything that was on it.

Q: Were these infrastructure projects you mentioned things that did exist but needed reconstruction? Or the roads, for example, were they new roads that you had to put in?

A: Yes, for the most part, yes. I was not, to be perfectly honest, a big fan of doing the big infrastructure projects at all. But the roads where we did them were attempts at low dollar, high impact. I saw a lot of roads go bad in terms of project management. Also, there's just a shortage of bituminous asphalt and so it was difficult to do roads and costly. Usually, if we did a road it was because there was a small stretch that was isolating a particular village especially when the weather got bad and turned the dirt road to mud and with a small investment we could pretty dramatically change the access in and out of the village. We did that in a couple of cases. But, you know, doing long, four lane highways and such wasn't feasible for us.

Q: Sometimes the critique is made that the military would prefer to put an emphasis on these kinds of projects, which have a high impact and an immediate visibility whereas, the State Department and USAID might take a different approach to determining development projects and would make a different choice. Did you see any of that?

A: Yes, absolutely. That's why I described my reluctance to do those larger infrastructure projects. I just was of the belief that we were never going to build our way out of Iraq or build our way out of the insurgency or build our way towards better government. It wasn't about the Army Corps of Engineers constructing facilities that would provide better services to the people. I just don't think that is the sort of primary driver of development. With ESF funds, we would plan all of these projects and we would essentially hand them over to the Army Corps of Engineers for project management or contracting project management and execution. The delay between the time we agreed to do that and the time that the projects were actually contracted and gotten underway was so long as to almost certainly mitigate the impact that we hoped to achieve. The PRT is mostly about access, it was mostly about getting into the provincial government and understanding the dynamic and saying, "hey, we've brought something to the table" and maybe if we do these first few infrastructure things we can start thinking about process and start doing some things that are near and dear, generally speaking, to the PRT's heart in terms of capacity building and building mechanisms for the Iraqis to spend their own money on such things and project manage their own projects instead of having the Army Corps of Engineers do it.

That's why I do believe the arrival of the QRF money, the *Quick Response Funds*, was an

important development because it gave the PRT the flexibility to spend that money in more creative ways, on actual capacity building, which most agree, I think now especially, is at the core of what the PRTs need to be doing. It also un-tethered us from the provincial councils, because unlike the ESF money, we didn't have to spend it necessarily working with the provincial government. We could spend it working with civil society or NGOs or local governments or mayors or district councils. That helped us move around the province a little bit and gain some legitimacy in power centers outside of the provincial government.

Q: Those Quick Response Funds became available to you at what point?

A: It wasn't until right around the time that I changed teams, so May, June, July, summer of 2007, roughly, I think.

Q: Ok. So we might address some of the kinds of things you did with those funds in your next incarnation. Meanwhile, I know you mentioned RTI, the contractor, earlier and I thought that they worked primarily in the governance realm.

A: Right.

Q: So you clearly were doing some work in governance...

A: Right.

Q: And capacity building, how did that work out in Muthanna?

A: It worked out quite well in that we had a very good RTI governance advisor, who was a Tunisian very skilled in public finance, who understood mechanisms of budget planning, budget execution, internal auditing, and, probably critically, spoke Arabic. He could convene the leadership of the province, and impart pretty quickly his knowledge and understanding and help them implement these very mechanisms. I think we became in a fashion focused on public finance by mid-2007 or so, but this particular advisor had us focused on it in 2006 and zeroed right in on trying to develop public finance systems within the Muthanna provincial government. They were largely receptive; most of the concepts were new to them and challenging, but they were anxious to learn them. I mean the fact is, there was almost no experience amongst the council members; there were some who were trained in finance but things that we take for granted, such as financial oversight found in any institution here in the United States, just does not exist. The instinct is not there and has to develop and it takes time to develop. Still, I have to say that there were those whose interests were threatened by that. There were those who were wildly corrupt, and whose power involved patronage, and using public funds for paying their cronies, lackeys, supporters, whomever. Then, there were those whose interests were in curbing the power of such people and they were a willing and ready audience for public finance lessons, trying to get an understanding of how to put those oversight mechanisms in place.

Q: It sounds like you were working pretty closely with the RTI expert, which I think is not always the case.

A: It's not always the case. Yes, he was a superstar.

Q: Did you have a USAID individual supervising this work as well?

A: Yes. The USAID advisor was dual-hatted as AID advisor to the Muthanna team. I'd say, that in this particular case that was not a terrifically productive relationship. The RTI employee was the driver in terms of USAID's participation in the effort in Muthanna.

Q: You also mentioned a PD officer; was there very much work for the PD person to do?

A: Yes. It was a little bit slow going at first, in terms of forging ties with the media. Also, it was very challenging because the media, as in most provinces, was all state-controlled in Muthanna, and understood its role as a state-owned enterprise, a state-owned mouthpiece for the powers that be, so it's a challenge. Also, it takes time for public diplomacy officers to think about their role a little bit more expansively and include what the military calls public affairs, or even information operations, and to understand the lines between public diplomacy and information operations. You even start to bleed into psychological operations and those are distinctions that the military is pretty familiar with, but public diplomacy officers, not necessarily so. There is overlap between all of those areas and the public diplomacy officer works necessarily pretty closely with the information operations officer for the Australians, the public affairs officer for the Australians, though not so much for the psychological operations, but occasionally there would be information that would be of interest to both. It takes some time to understand that terrain, really, and figure out what the proper role is. The public diplomacy officer was a little bit of a late arrival; I didn't have a lot of overlap with that particular person in Muthanna. However, my understanding is that after I left, he picked it up and continued to do great things. I think when I left we were still in that learning phase.

Q: You mentioned that NGOs apparently were able to work in your province?

A: Yes, there were a number of smaller Iraqi NGOs. I'd say, for the bulk of my time, we were focused primarily on the provincial government because the funding we had dictated that. In addition, it was a natural place for us to start, and given the small amount of time we had, we had to pick and choose our battles pretty carefully. We did develop some early relationships with NGOs which, especially on the agricultural side, we were able to get into the planning process at the provincial level and at least get them a voice in what the provincial development strategy for agriculture should look like, how to train farmers in new techniques, how to improve seed distribution, how to revitalize the decrepit co-ops, etc. We got some pretty capable, agricultural related NGOs involved in that process. Again, later on, after I left, the QRF, I think, allowed that team to forge some more direct relationships with the NGOs and do some projects with them directly instead of vis-à-vis the provincial government.

Q: Opening up the provincial government to these new voices, was that something that you achieved by persuasion, since, as you mentioned, you didn't have money to offer?

A: Yes, it was persuasion; it was little bit of both. The fact is those thirty-some or forty, depending on how many showed up to work in the provincial council, on any given day, you know their backgrounds were varied, but for the most part, many of them were teachers, interestingly enough. I found that often in the provinces, but not many of them had strong backgrounds in agriculture. They began to realize pretty quickly, especially when the money started to come in, that they could throw the money around the province and hope that it stuck to something in a productive way. Still, I think we had a pretty powerful argument to tell them, "Look, this is your chance to convince the people that you are capable of governing, and sooner or later - turned out to be later- there will be elections, and this is what people will hold you accountable for. So if you, by yourself can't figure out how to establish, for example, a training program for young farmers or a training farm, these are great ideas, and there are people in this province who can help you, and you would be foolish to ignore that." They realized that they could listen and take good ideas and nothing horrible was going to happen to them; they weren't going to lose all their power; they didn't need to be so secretive and so close hold with every bit of information . They realized it wasn't a sign of weakness to ask a question about something that they were not familiar with ; I think we made some progress on that front.

Q: It sounds as if you had to change some minds or mindsets.

A: Yes, that's certainly true, that's certainly true.

Q: Since they weren't technocrats to begin with, but rather educators, they brought to the situation their traditional mindsets; apparently, though, they were at least receptive to new ideas. Your work in this area sounds like an accomplishment.

A: Yes, possibly, maybe in a decade or two we'll know if we did any good, but it's too early to tell.

Q: These things do take time;, you wouldn't expect revolutionary change in the space of a year?

A: No, certainly not.

Q: We've set the stage now for your move to Wasit province. I gather you were kind of promoted and you were comfortable in Iraq, so you elected to stay another year?

A: Yes. Yes, I don't know what I was thinking, but I did agree to do that. And the story is actually very similar.

Q: You were a team leader there?

A: Yes. We started with three people: a project manager, our political officer, and I. We set up the team and got rolling and ten months later, when I left, the team, if you include all of our locally employed staff and the civil affairs unit teams that were assigned to the PRT, we numbered about fifty. So we grew up to be a much larger entity than Muthanna had been and grew up much more quickly and that changed the nature of my role as team leader quite a bit.

It was very different in Wasit than it was in Muthanna. There were many more personnel issues, the integration of new people; the management from day to day took up a much larger percentage of my time than it did in Muthanna. I really had to focus carefully on what I needed to do in terms of engagement. That usually meant fewer engagements with high government officials; I had to pick my battles very carefully in terms of what I wanted to weigh in on. That made the experience quite a bit different.

Q: In terms of what you hoped to accomplish in the nearly a year that you were there, how effective were you? How well did the two PRTs you worked with accomplish their mission?

A: The story in Wasit was very similar to Muthanna. Wasit had not seen a PRT before. There was no predecessor PRT and really they had not seen many Americans, because it was, again, for me, a coalition environment. The largest unit in Wasit when I arrived was and still is a Georgian unit and then there are Salvadorans; the Salvadorans provide a civil affairs team. There are also Romanians, Poles, Lithuanians - it's just an extraordinary mix of nationalities. In Al Qut, the Americans are a distinct minority.

In that way both were very similar, but the provincial government had really not dealt with Americans for quite some time and certainly had never dealt with a PRT, again, focused right on their interests. Our reception was good. They were very anxious to understand what we could do and how we could work together and how we could forward the relationship.

Q: How successful were you in creating a relationship with new provincial officials, who were a different individuals from the chaps in Muthanna?

A: They were very different leaders, much less experienced than in Muthanna, in my opinion. They had no experience in government. Some had been in education before being elected. They were not particularly interested in issues of government and it's a tough thing for a PRT when the main targets of our engagement can't really sustain a conversation for longer than five minutes about the budget, or about really any governance issue.

But we find others who were very strong. And in some ways that led us to a strong relationship with the provincial government. We could talk to them and feel like our ideas were registering which was not the case with everyone.

Some high officials were anxious to take from us. They wanted this or that project, or a pet project done, but we're not in that game. And I think personalities dictate a lot in terms of the course a PRT runs over its lifetime and in this case it led us to a much stronger relationship with provincial leaders than I had, for example, in Muthanna, where we were engaging more heavily with regional leaders.

Our success, I think, was due to the fact that I had a great team and some very high quality individuals and energetic individuals, with a lot of experience in Iraq. I probably should also say, and this is important, with a lot of experience in the military. In one way or another many of us had a military background and could integrate with the brigade staff in a significant and meaningful way. That was very helpful over the course of my entire time in the province.

We integrated really quite deeply with the provincial government. Our movement rate, by contrast to Muthanna, I'd say we moved two to three times per day in Wasit. We were always on the move. Our movement calendar looked like the president's weekly calendar. It was jam-packed and we were busy.

When you have fifty people there are a lot of moving parts. The rule of law section was very active. The public diplomacy section was very active. The agriculture section, again, Wasit was a heavily agriculture-based economy and that was a critical part of our operation. The business development section, we had a pretty robust operation going and there were always moving parts. Even with the dedication of several movement teams and the promise to move us two to three times per day, there was still heavy competition for all of those moves. We could have, frankly, probably occupied twice that movement capability pretty easily, I think, if it had been available.

Q: Was the rule of law a program that you would credit with having had some positive effect?

A: I think rule of law is at once the most difficult and maybe the most neglected aspect of PRT work. It is the essence of what we're trying to do. It's a full time job, working with the police and working with investigative judges and the judiciary and the prisons and looking at the whole picture is more than a full time job.

In Wasit, I had a career Marine and a career United States attorney in one person and he was quite a superstar. He understood Iraq. He had been to Iraq before and understood Iraq enough to know that assessment up front was his most important mission and spent a month or two really just gathering the lay of the land before he identified some critical points that he felt he could affect and zeroed in on those. He's still there now and by all accounts doing good things.

Q: What did he identify as the critical elements?

A: The link between the judiciary and the police, I think, in most provinces. That is to say respect for judicial oversight in the investigative process, the willingness of the police

in all cases to seek out a warrant in advance of arrests, unless there's exigent circumstances. Basically strengthening the weakest branch of government, the judiciary, and developing an appreciation amongst the police and security forces for the judiciary, as well as certainly having no tolerance for any intimidation or corruption in the judicial ranks. He pretty well zeroed in right on that with planned training on both sides.

Our public diplomacy effort, which was a combined effort between him and the public diplomacy officer, was another element. He was teaching the police how to present themselves to the community, how to at once explain to the people what they were doing in order to win their favor but also to grow the habit of accountability and to be in the habit of answering to the people, explaining to them what they were doing and why they were doing it and really focusing on the security forces' relationship to the people that they're meant to police as well as to the judiciary that they're meant to be beholden to, those are the linkages that he is working on.

And you'll notice that there's no critical infrastructure construction involved in either of those. Court house security is a part of that. That is in a sense related. It is protecting the police from violent influence. I think at this point in the game, any time we're building something for the sake of that thing alone, if it's a water purification plant and the justification is to provide clean water for 500 people in this village, that's not enough, not at this stage. There needs to be more to the picture than that.

Q: One final question for you, is the PRT the right mechanism to achieve all our larger State Department/combined U.S. government goals?

A: In Iraq, yes. I think that the PRTs have played a critical role in the provinces. I believe that the PRTs, first of all, have played a critical role in demonstrating to the power centers outside of Baghdad the interests and the intent of the United States government. That alone, I think justifies the presence of the PRT mission.

But imparting the expertise of people like that rule of law advisor in Wasit, who are focused in on those critical government linkages, is something that only experts like that can do. I honestly think that it's not something the U.S. military is suited for or trained for or capable of. They are capable of extraordinary things and do an extraordinary amount of good work in the reconstruction and development field, but when you bring a career United States attorney in to address the issues of an ailing criminal justice system, you're going to get a vastly different result than if you ask a company commander in the United States Army to do the same. I think that is something that the PRT has brought to the table and I do think that it has been a productive, worthwhile effort.

I think that the judgment is still being written and it will be for some number of years, but I think that the conclusion will be that it was a worthwhile effort, that got our mission and our intent out into the provinces, which will in time become increasingly centers for spending Iraqi money and centers of power outside of Baghdad. We would have been remiss to just ignore them, certainly.

Q: Do you think that the folks who dealt with you, because you were a civilian, appreciated that? This is the thought I have heard expressed by many people, that they really react differently to you as a State Department person than they do to the military.

A: Most definitely. I actually had deployed as a Marine to Iraq in 2004, as a civil affairs officer. Despite my best effort in that role, the reception that I got from Iraqis when I appeared before them in a suit and tie was vastly different than when I appeared before them in uniform. It's very difficult, I think, for the military leadership to realize that the fact is that the presence of a uniform is off-putting for many people, certainly for many Iraqis, and it puts limits on the range of conversation you can have and the depth of the conversations.

And I think that we get further when we present ourselves as civilians. I think that the conversations are richer. I think that the ideas are more creative and the willingness to work together is greater than it is when the military is representing the United States in front of these provincial officials. I say that, having worn both over there.

Q: Those are great observations and I think your perspective is very valuable and enlightening. I appreciate your willingness to share your views.

A: Thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate that.