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INTERVIEW #54

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Executive Summary

The interviewee was a high level U.S. official with a PRT covering three provinces from 2007 through 2008. Originally a Provincial Support Team, it was becoming a Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Members included representatives from USDA and USAID; a Rule of Law expert, construction engineers, finance officers, a public diplomacy officer and an Iraq Provincial Action Officer.

The mission of the PRT was to assist the provincial and local governments in governing and delivering essential services, as well as counseling local Iraqi officials in everything from banking to agriculture.

PRTs were given some \$25,000 in quick-response money, while BCT had much more. The interviewee noted that the PRT needs more ready cash to be responsive and effective.

E-PRTs had more flexibility than PRTs in tactical movement because they were already with a BCT, unlike the PRTs. This caused friction. RSO standards for security far exceeded those of DOD, and resulted in more restriction on movement and frustrated the team leader. Under State rules transportation had to be facilitated all the way through and must be pre-coordinated. DOD would go out with a single patrol of four vehicles, while Department of State runs with a triple set. According to the interviewee, "it was possible to get one engagement a day without expending everything you had at the REO. The RSO wouldn't allow us to call ahead because it would be a violation of the operation's security if personnel went outside the wire." Later, PRTs moved into forward operating bases that were in the provinces and engagement increased, which was more effective.

The interviewee's progress toward achieving the mission was not visible immediately. The interviewee noted that the cycle for the DOD is a 12-month cycle with an emphasis on results, while the Department of State cycle is a little bit longer. The interviewee felt that the Department of State recognized the need to "grow it" and that results were not immediately visible. While the interviewee felt that being in country for only a few months made them unable to see the fruits of their labor, they did note "promising interaction" and "good beginning structure." Moreover, international bankers are interested in coming in; a huge airport was built and running.

The interviewee's previous experience and connections in Iraq were very helpful in surmounting bureaucratic obstacles. Relations between State and Military people were okay at the tactical level but more difficult at the embassy level. According to the interviewee, there was a frustration with remarks such as, "you promised me manning by a certain date. I didn't get manning." Military officers ended up doing independent recruiting for positions, which caused some friction with OPA. Stovepiping did occur. The interviewee noticed that DOD was not copied on a lot of State Department cables and that they were on different systems with different reporting structures which lead to answering questions from the two different agencies, and feeling understaffed.

The interviewee felt that relations within the PRT itself could be better, because there were representatives of different agencies, each with their own agenda. However, one of the best lessons learned was the practice of embedding an individual from the DOD within the PRT. According to the interviewee, "it's a small price, but I think that overall it provides quality leadership with a working knowledge of the DOD organization."

The interviewee also recommend putting the DOS team together before deployment instead of assembling it in on different cycles. "Multiple year tours, at least for the team leader, might also be beneficial. So maybe the team transitions every 12 months, but the team leader stays on for two. Iraqis get frustrated with talking to a different face."

E-PRTs are in a better position in terms of communicating with the BCT, because they work so closely together. Success of PRTs in that relationship is more heavily dependent on personalities.

The security situation was quite good, with threats occurring around religious holidays. The interviewee stated that, "We could go just about anywhere we wanted to go. Just needed coordination and time to get the right assets down. There was a difference in attitude toward utilizing Iraqi security. The RSO would say, 'Never.' Whereas the team leader would hop in that humvee in a heartbeat, the RSO was less permissive."

The PRT worked with several Iraqi NGOs. Some were hesitant; felt threatened by authority-related police types who might come in and raid the NGO office.

The team leader's counterpart was the provincial governor. The team leader had good relations with all three, each of whom had different aspirations (local, national, international).

Tribal councils were important. While the PRT's aim was to empower them and get them involved, they are eager to find a seat at the table.

The business community is awakening. Big projects: the ready-to-wear factory; tourism; a new airport. There is some frustration in trying to do business abroad, especially with the U.S., because the visa requirements are difficult, time-consuming and humiliating to the Iraqis. They would prefer to go where they feel more welcome: to Egypt or South Korea. The Iraqis were extremely interested in setting up Internet businesses. According

to the interviewee, money is not the issue, instead, they are constrained by unspecified government restraints and probability of censorship.

Not much conventional PR work was done by the PRT.

Effectiveness of PRTs has yet to be determined and it will take years. The interviewee feels good groundwork is being laid.

Due to the mindset created by CERP funding, budgeting is still fairly inadequate, and planning is lacking. The interviewee remarked, "Iraqis will tell you what they want, but not how they plan to get there. Iraqis still deal in hard currency and do not do electronic banking, which is a problem."

Counter-insurgency effort work through economic development work, with legitimate government seen as providing visible economic stimulus to people, but they also have short memories. You could build a school, paint it today and tomorrow they'd ask, 'What are you doing for me?' So in terms of counter-insurgency, the results are in the future. Insurgents are still a formidable force, and deliver instant results. They have been there longer, and are good at negative PR. Most Iraqis can't see the long term benefit of an airport or sewer system provided by the legitimate government but a water delivery or other instant relief resonates with them, draws them to insurgents because they perceive results.

Continuity in the PRTs is important here. Iraqis don't respond to strangers moving in and out every couple of months. It is important to build relationships, over time. And staying around for a while is necessary for that. PRT location in the province is helpful, sending the message, 'We aren't transients. We're here for a while.'

Interview

Q: Please tell me about the location and the physical structure of the PRT you were with.

A: I was with primarily one PRT, which covered three provinces. My work focused primarily on one province, but for the longest time, until the others came in, I had covered all three provinces.

Q: And how much area physically is this?

A: I would say at least the size of New Hampshire, if not, bigger, when it comes to square miles.

Q: Was this a fairly well established PRT? Had it been there a while?

A: It had. It actually was known as a PST (Provincial Support Team) for the longest period of time. It was in the process of becoming a full PRT as I was preparing to leave. So the PRT nearby would be the closest thing to a full-up PRT. And then you move to

the PSTs, in which you had support teams for our provinces. I know that they still carried them as PSTs for the longest period of time.

Q: How large was your PRT in terms of personnel?

A: Standard was 15 personnel to include a team leader, but in most cases when I was there it was manned no bigger than six of 15 for any given team. Others were at about four of 15 and we were about 6 of 15. So really you had a lot of the teams working together for all three provinces.

Q: And then what kinds of specialists did you have?

A: I had a UDSA representative, a Rule of Law representative, NGO, and we had one USAID that worked out of the REO that kind of covered everything in that area. So we had one USAID representative that kind of came back and forth. Construction engineers, public finance officers, public diplomacy officers and the IPAOs were also among the team. We had an IPAo for each of the provinces. It worked out pretty well.

Q: What were the dates that you served?

A: I was there from 2007 through 2008.

Q: Was there a specific mission that this PRT had?

A: The teams were inter-agency teams established to assist the provincial and local governments in effectively governing and delivering essential services. We worked with the provincial, municipal and local institutions to develop that strategy and we also counseled local Iraqi officials in everything from banking to agriculture. We had business owners from outside the country coming in and trying to also help that along.

Q: You weren't there very long, actually were you?

A: On that PRT, no. I was in Iraq for 15 months with various operations.

Q: Did you notice a lot of differences among the PRT and the E-PRTs?

A: The E-PRTs probably had more flexibility in tactical movement; getting out in the engagement piece. I think the E-PRTs had an easier method of doing that because they're already with BCT. They could get out. The PRTs, although within a brigade footprint, weren't paired like the E-PRTs. So, they were really the one with the RSO, the Blackwater escort, whatever it takes to get them to a venue. I would think when it comes to engagement, E-PRTs had the upper hand. The PRTs were more limited in a tactical environment.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about the PRT's relationship with the Provincial Affairs Office or the NCT?

A: Sure. We did have a desk officer with the PAO (Provincial Affairs Office) that worked each of our provinces. They were very pro-active from that point of view. There was some frustration when it came to vending. Yes, we had linkage but a lot of the issues that went back and forth, QRF, things like that.

Basically the PRTs were given under \$25,000 in QRF availability. Now that compared to a BCT who had hundreds of thousands of dollars; probably a quarter of a million dollars at any given time. This is definitely one of the things we went back to the office to try to work out. Manning was an issue. They were challenged. One desk officer, in the three, four, five months that I was there, probably changed three times. So they were bringing people. We had a desk officer that was there for a while but it changed three or four times. The desk office was definitely fluid when it came to knowledge and keeping the issues current. It was difficult.

Q: Was security an issue in terms of personnel?

A: In a tactical environment it is always an issue. You did have a little bit of friction, nothing we couldn't overcome, but you had the RSO whose standards, in some cases far exceeded that of DOD. So that caused a lot of frustration with the team leader.

Q: Do you mean they were less willing to go out or more?

A: I think they were more restrictive because of their protocols. When it comes to opening windows, talking to doors, talking to local Iraqis at checkpoints, bottom line is that they had to be facilitated all the way through. Otherwise they couldn't stop to actually roll the window down, have a dialogue with an Iraqi, get through a checkpoint. It had to be already pre-coordinated. You have to go straight through. When it comes to engagement we couldn't drive to a nearby city because there was a series of checkpoints that would require a ratio of basically US army to cover those checkpoints to allow the Department of State or the Blackwater escort through.

Bottom line is that DOD would go out with a single patrol of four vehicles. The Department of State runs with a triple set, which would mean your advance party, your principal package and you also have a quick reaction force. So when you do something like that with the RSO, you could probably get one engagement a day without expending everything you had at the REO. Unlike the US Army, where one patrol could take multiple venues. RSO was limited to probably one venue, prior coordinated. And we couldn't really tell the principal or at least the recipient on the other side when we were coming. So once again frustration with the team leader. I'm going, 'Hey, how can I make sure he's there if I can't call him ahead?' RSO wouldn't allow us to call ahead because that would be a violation of the operation's security if you went outside the wire. Nothing that wasn't overcome, we did get out probably not as frequently as the team leader would have liked. So he was very excited about moving forward into the provinces and I think that was what we were getting into after the first of the year. We moved into the provinces co-located with DOD facilities. DOD escort helped facilitate the engagement.

So as I'm sitting here right now we were still at the REO. Still relying on the RSO escort and DOD transportation whenever available to get us to an engagement.

So after the first of the year you'll find out in later interviews that they moved into FOBs that were in the provinces and engagement probably increased, tripled. It was great. So you've living with the people you're working with.

Q: That brings us to the effectiveness of the PRT leadership and management structure. Were you satisfied with that?

A: I think when it came to our mission -- economic guidance -- we were augmented obviously by USAID, which was very big value added. You had the LGPs that helped a lot with the counseling and getting out there with locals to go out there and teach some of this. Did we see the fruits of our labor? No. We all understand the cycle for the DOD is a 12-month cycle and we kind of like to see results. I understand the Department of State cycle is a little bit longer. They understand you have to grow it and you won't see immediate results. Being there for a few months I didn't see the fruits of the labor but I saw a lot of interaction when it came to economic stimulus in terms of banking. A lot of bankers came in. I saw lot of external interest in the provinces from Italy and the U.S. They want to come in and start businesses or export goods from the province. So, yes, I was satisfied that we were well on our way to economic growth. We also had a huge airport that was about to come on line. So, I was really happy with the way it was coming. I wish I could have seen it to the end. There was a lot of good beginning structure.

Q: Was there good synergy between State Department people and military people?

A: I think there was a lot of personality in there. Overall, yes. If I needed aircraft, and that's one of the lessons learned that I had. Because I was with DOD, I could facilitate movement. My knowledge of the division headquarters from Baghdad was a lot easier than the team leader or deputy team leader that was sent there, who, had no personal relationship with the division, and was just using the bureaucratic forms, whatever it takes to get an aircraft, that kind of thing. So movement was definitely enhanced by the fact that I could call up and say, 'Hey buddy, it's me, I need that aircraft and this is important.' I could expedite that.

But overall the relationship was good at the tactical level, meaning the PRT talking to the worker bees getting aircraft things like that. I would think that at the embassy level we ran into issues with manning. There was a frustration with you promised me manning by a certain date and I didn't get manning. Once again the learning curve of how Department of State finds people, assigns people to positions and gets them there. That caused a lot of frustration. I need these people now. I'm willing to put my own people in the positions.

So what the DOD did was put out recruiting posters and said, 'I need somebody with a business background, get me an MBA.'

You don't have to be Department of State to have an MBA in something. They went through and actually called for applications. People would apply and say, 'If you need a bicultural, bilingual guy or gal here you go, I'm ready to do that.' That was fine for a while but that did cause some friction with the OPA. They said, 'Listen, we've got our manning structure. I've got 100 percent names against positions, but they're not in place; there's going to be time lag.' That time lag causes some serious friction with the assignments.

As we grew out of the REO into the provinces, there was also friction in terms of security concerns, that protocol of Department of State and DOD. DOD would come back and say, 'Listen, four trucks and a couple of machine guns can get you anywhere in the province.' RSO would tell you no. You need advance party, principal package, QRF, big delta, FOB security standards. I have to have X, Y, Z for the FOB, REO whatever; you want to call it. Big, big delta. In price I know we had a MOA with the Department of State that was signed by Mr. Negroponte, that was thrown around quite a bit as we get off the REO. I think that was relooked the first of the year, but I can't be certain of that. But it finally got figured out, what the communications requirements and security requirements were, and basically filled that engagement. It worked itself out. There was some friction out front learning the time changes with manning, with basically expectation management of the DOD in a 12-month cycle Department of State with a multi-year cycle that would cause a little bit of friction up front, but we worked through it.

Q: Do you note the term "stovepiping"?

A: Stovepiping is basically, 'I've got information that's going in one direction. You're not sending it out to everyone.'

Q: Does that happen?

A: Basically, yes. I think the team leader would probably talk a lot more to the OPA director. There's information going through Department of State cables that the DOD doesn't necessarily have access to. That's a Department of State system. I get a lot of our RFIs on, 'I want to see a copy of this' whenever that cable is put together. I can do that for you, but it's a matter of bringing it over to a different system because we're on different systems. Yes, absolutely there're situational reports that go forward and back Department of State cable system versus the DOD system.

Q: Part of this is inherent differences with the systems.

A: That was one of the reasons.

Q: Were people feeling more comfortable with their own agency people?

A: Sure. Absolutely. You're speaking the same language. You've been assigned to them before. Just the reporting structure, either. The MOA was in existence, but there no

requirement for a team leader to send up routine paperwork back up to BCT. Just because DOD is landowner doesn't mean that I owe you a weekly report on what I'm doing. So that came into a little bit of a friction. I'm answering all these questions from two different agencies. The infantry division has a lot of questions. Department of State has a lot of questions. All of which are great questions, but when you're only manned with six people, what is more important? So, sure there's stovepiping. 'I'll answer your questions because I know you, getting you the answers are not the best answer but they're going directly to you.'

Q: What did the MOA say?

A: The MOA was primarily what DOD would provide, what Department of State would provide in terms of automation, security, things like that. So that went back and forth primarily with the RSO. But obviously it worked itself out because they did move off the REO.

Q: Describe the relationship among PRT team members.

A: It could be better. Once again, you've got two agencies, each with their own structure, their own security levels, their own protocols, and it's a matter of getting them back together. I think one of the best lessons learned is having someone from the DOD staff embedded with the PRT. It's a small price, but I think overall benefit is greater because you're playing with quality leadership that has a working knowledge of the DOD organization.

The only recommendation that we've talked about when we were over there was somehow putting that DOS team together before they deploy instead of piecemealing it in different cycles. They come in together, they leave together and also gives one face to the Iraqis. Multiple year tours, at least for the team leader, might also be beneficial. So maybe the team transitions every 12 months, but the team leader stays on for two.

This would help because the Iraqis do get frustrated with talking to a different face. If you take three leave periods a year, the Department of State could vary anywhere from two weeks to a month depending on transportation issues coming in and out of the country. They get frustrated with hearing, 'I'd like to have a meeting. I'd like to do that for you, but you have to wait 30 days until X gets back, because he's the only person that works with banking for me.'

Q: Civil-military relations. You're familiar with the E-PRT, so what was the PRT relationship with a BCT?

A: Well, right now PRTs, since they are not embedded, occupied the same battle space but there was no direct relationship. Now the E-PRT yes, they're embedded with BCT. The BCT had a little more say, but the PRT itself is variable. Personality had a lot to do with that and with how well that interaction occurred. There was a civil affairs team that

was assigned to the area but it was primarily focused as part of the task organization for another PRT.

Or there were occasions where displaced civilians, we asked that they get involved. Absolutely, they would jump upon that change to help out wherever they could. But their primary bread and butter was the PRT. That's who they worked for. We, as a PRT, were still young in the fact that we did not have an assigned CA team and we also ran into the issue that we were still a PST and not authorized a full-up CA company. I believe the PRTs were at the end. As that transition and that movement from that Provincial Support Team to Provincial Reconstruction Team and then the manning of the CA company that came with the PRT, it got better. You could have two or three PSTs working for one PRT.

Q: What was the security level?

A: It was actually pretty good. The overall threat wasn't bad. Bottom-line is that we had threats. They occurred during major religious occasions, things like that. But the RSO would be quick to tell you there was never an event. In our province the issue with the team being pulled out of their headquarters to be basically killed was a legacy issue that kept coming up over and over again, when it came to moving into that province. We've had issues in the region before. I don't want to say there was hesitancy, but there was a little more of a focused eye on situational enemy reporting when it came to us trying to get in there. But overall it was good. We could go just about anywhere we wanted to go. Just coordination and time to get the right assets down. There was high competition for RSO assets, as all three provinces needed access to movement. So if you have one area moving on one day, no one else could move.

Q: So the PRTs relationship with the military in terms of security varied?

A: Well, yes it varied. The E-PRTs probably had more of a permissive, get out whenever you needed to go. The PRT because it is REO is a little less permissive only because you worked primarily with the RSO. They were your primary vehicle if you want to get out into the provinces. That's without moving the four FOBs. Military officials sometimes said 'There should not be any reason that a PRT, if they want to get out and do something, and if the enemy situation does not prohibit it, why they should not get out. I will help facilitate.' So we always went to the RSO first. If I've got a conflict, got something else going with an ePRT, not a problem. We'll go back over to the Army. If I need a helicopter, I need a MINT team that would meet me down there, provide helicopter landing zone support, give me transportation. It wouldn't be an issue.

We had the SF teams also available, so the MINT teams working for the Iraqi army were also in the province. They were limited, but they were in the provinces to allow us access and movement.

Q: Was there any reliance on Iraqi security?

A: We have used Iraqi security before and it depends on who you talk to. RSO would say, 'Never would I put my Department of State person in an Iraqi vehicle and drive them downtown. Never in a million years.' Would the team leader differ? He would hop in that humvee in a heartbeat. So, you've got 'Hey, I think it's good enough for me.' The RSO is a little less permissive. U.S. Army once again, it's an Army truck, 'Sure, not a problem.'

We used Iraqi FOBs for many meetings for engagements with governors, mayors, things like that. That was Iraqi security 360 degrees, with small U.S. presence in the center. So we didn't hold the wall. They held the outside and we'd conduct business on the inside. So there's not a reliance on Iraqi security, but there's not a hesitation either on the part of the team leader. I think there's more of a hesitation on the part of the RSO. The team leader would say, 'Okay, I'm by, with, and through these guys. Wherever they want to go, I'm there.' So if there's a hesitancy to go to a venue, it wasn't on our part.

Q: The personnel in the PRT were able to operate in the field?

A: They were.

Q: What percentage of optimal field operation were they able to do, given the security situation?

A: Well, the limitation really came down to the vehicle by which to get to the venue. If the RSO was moving, I could only move four people. So optimally you've got 15 people sitting at the RSO or at the REO who want to go to an engagement. The RSO can move no more than four, period. You'd have to pick. The team leader will always want to go, so there's one and you're down to three. How do you work with that? And then you take a BBA if your team leader is not bi-lingual, takes two and now you're down to two people that you're really going to take with you. That's going to be the one who writes the cable, the IPAQ who is responsible for that province; now you're down to one. What extra one person? I'll just tell you that the team leader had the tendency to always take me, because I was the DOD guy, to go with because I could interact with the MINT team, the SFODAs, whatever else was down there.

But that got better as we moved into the FOBs. When you're there, you're living there 24/7 and people could come and go, and it was better.

Q: External relations. What was the PRT's relationship with international and NGOs?

A: We had a total of about 94 NGOs at any given time.

Q: Were they international?

A: No, not international. International: probably one or two. There was friction of NGOs at the Iraqi provincial levels. The NGOs didn't work for them. There was definitely a hesitancy for NGOs in the area. It really posed a threat.

Any NGO that wasn't vetted through Baghdad, working in our area for any reason, it just posed a threat to the governmental agency, just because of the amount of control that they had over an NGO. Did we use international NGOs? Were there local NGOs that were coming in for office calls with the team leader? Absolutely. On any given day there were a million of them. We were feeding money through people, through CERP programs, through IRF funds. Anything we could get funding into. We were helping buy furniture for NGO facilities in each of the provinces. But there were issues for NGOs in one particular area. For instance, a bunch of furniture was purchased. They went in and basically said they would shut you down, we're taking your furniture. And they took, it. It was a women's organization that had that happen to them. There's some frustration there because you're not there to watch at any given time. So you're coming in and out of the province infrequently; once every week or so.

Q: The Iraqi government took the NGO's furniture?

A: There's long story behind it, but yes. It was Iraqi police types. It wasn't just a bunch of bandits that came in and stole it. It was uniformed people that would come in and do that. There was definitely an intimidation when it came to NGOs operating in governmental positions within certain provinces. Was it overt? In some cases, yes. Was it definitely understood? Every time. But there is an NGO organization that worked out of Baghdad that was supposed to have vetted anything before it came down there. AID never vetted these guys through Baghdad so now we have the right to basically take care of them in the province.

Q: Who were the PRT's Iraqi counterparts? What kind of interaction did you have?

A: Primarily because we dealt with the strategic level, the team leader's counterpart would be high level provincial officials. These officials would primarily be who we talked to on any given day. We had a pretty good relationship with all three, if you will, for all three provinces. All three definitely were driven individuals that had international and national aspirations.

Q: What about the tribal councils? Did you have anything to do with them?

A: Yes. We had many meetings with tribal councils. It's a matter of getting them empowered. The Provincial Powers Act was under revision toward the end of 2007. It would try to disseminate some of that information or some of that power. Tribal leaders would come on a frequent basis to the REO and talk to the team leader about their role in the government: how they are going to play a part in the provincial government. While the provincial leadership would acknowledge the tribal role, it was still undefined by the time I left. It was something that they acknowledged needed to happen. They knew who the tribes were who were power players in the area. And bar none, everyone had a tribal relationship, even high level officials. We had many sheiks come in on any given day and say, 'Hey, how do we fit into this?'

Maybe we're just doing agriculture, maybe that's something tribes can do. They were still negotiating when I left about their role in economics and commerce. We acknowledged their presence, but their role wasn't defined. So they were still looking for that seat at the table when I left.

Q: What about the business community?

A: Sure, we had an economics officer. We had two big projects that were going on. We had the ready-to-wear factory. This is a big clothier. We brought in international people to come and look at the operation and see if they could sell some suits. It was a great initiative from outside the country to come in. There was also an emphasis on doing meetings, basically bring in different organizations.

There was a frustration, though, with visas. It's easier to do business in Egypt than it is in the United States only because of the access and the time it takes to get a visa to come in. That's well understood, not only on the economic side.

On the education level people want to use U.S. schools. They want to visit. They want to see the process.

In most cases, it is three to six months to get the visa they need. Now could it have been improved? It was also an issue that was raised. In South Korea, you have more business from our region than the in U.S. did because they had easier access to South Korea, Hyundai, cars, things like that. They would be quick to tell you that too. 'Hey, I can go to South Korea. They welcome me with open arms. I'm trying to give them some business. I find the United States hard to get into. So I'd rather take my meetings to Egypt, Cairo and bring in them in there.' But there is a hesitancy to go there too. So yes, there is definitely an international playing.

Also you had the economic version. You had the airport. Initially it was just a little strip of land out in the middle of nowhere. High level Iraqi officials were dedicated to making that airport work. They want to build hotels, and start tourism classes at the University. They wanted to go worldwide and get this information. Now the hesitancy: There was a lot of control from the top. In the internet, everybody wanted WIFI, because economically, internet is huge. You do a lot of commerce that way. In the Iraqi version, there's no control. So the control of the internet with VTC, with open dialogue, is an issue. There was a hesitancy to set up systems to provide that. So like in University we'd like to do VTC with schools in the U.S. about training, economic development, anything we can, but the cost of getting the systems was out of our league.

Q: It was cost, not censorship?

A: It was more censorship. Iraqis would always tell you that if they wanted it, money was never an issue. Like the airport, 100 million dollars, never blinked once, not an issue. If they wanted WIFI, they could have had it.

Q: Who is concerned about screening? The government?

A: No, not our government. We were the ones trying to help them get it. It was on their part. I couldn't tell you exactly who. I would say someone in their system. We sat in a meeting one day with the president of the University. They are all bi-lingual, spoke very good English, and when the question of Internet VTC came up, just from the body language alone, you could see that yes, they wanted it, but there was going to be significant pushback from upper levels. So I couldn't tell you the details of it, but it really came down to control on what was being said in these VTCs and what was being sent out through the Internet and what information was coming in. There was a huge interest in international commerce, a huge interest in training internationally. They were frustrated with visas, access and this was something we were overcoming at the time.

Q: Did you have a public affairs person?

A: Yes

Q: What was the audience?

A: They were primarily involved in education, but were triple-hatted. So with the University, they got into the WIFI issue. This worked a lot with USAID and helped facilitate a tower for that, but most did a lot on the education side when it came to the line of operation.

Q: Was their audience Iraqi?

A: Well, the president of the University was one of the primary contacts.

Q: What about the Iraqi public?

A: I didn't see anything as a global scope or a provincial scope. A lot of our work has to do with schooling for displaced civilians, getting them into classrooms, back to education and then University, that's what I'm going to focus on.

Q: Was there any kind of conventional PR work say, sending press releases back home to indicate this is what the PRT is doing, achieving?

A: I didn't see any of that.

Q: Would there have been a call for that, would that have been useful?

A: I think the president might have done a lot of the PR work himself. In January, in the Rose Garden, he brought in the E-PRT leaders. He had a lot of the PRT leaders in the background. He is doing quarterly VTCs with PRT leaders, and he came out at a news conference saying PRTs are doing great things. He is accessing national media with PRT

achievement. But it wasn't done at the PRT level. That was done way above the PRT level.

Q: Do you consider the PRTs to be effective?

A: It's too early to tell. I think we're on a cycle that says in a few years, we'll see if it was beneficial. I think we're laying good groundwork. In a lot of cases we were half-stepping where the Iraqis were ready to sprint. I think they're ready to run with it.

We're still into CERP-mind, which is more like a quick fix, quick reaction money, but it doesn't really get into how the budgets work. A lot of times the Iraqi budgets are, 'You tell me what you want in it and I'll put down whatever you want.' So it's not really them cracking the Rubik's Cube on this, I just want to satisfy your whim to get it on the shelf. But we had an issue with a lot of good training on how to budget, a lot of good training on how to write a provincial developmental plan. Real good stuff -- but then never tied a budget to the plan. So while they give you a plan, say, 'I want to cut infant mortality rates by half a percent,' they wouldn't tell you how to do it. 'I want Internet access, I want to put WIFI,' but they never tell you how to do it; they never allocated money.

Two issues with that: Iraqis still deal with hard currency. They don't have electronic fund transfer. So when it's time for your annual allocations of money, the dinar would show up in a Ryder truck. And it's ready to go, and they'd already have it pre-spent. So they'd divvy it all out. Depending on your relationship with officials, sometimes you get extra allocations throughout the year to pay for this and that, like the airport. This is a big perk, so we're going to pay for that. When it comes to budgetary constraints, they're still spending like a 12-year old. 'I get it, I spend it.' There is no budget. At least there wasn't.

Then there was a developmental plan, but it was helped along so much that it wasn't their plan, it was the USAID, the RTI, that was down there. They were going to help them write it, and they were writing whatever they wanted to write just to get it on paper. If you actually peeled it back to a plan on how they are going to execute it, tied it into a budget, you'd probably run into a gap.

Q: One of the goals of a PRT is to bolster the moderates and reduce counterinsurgency. What was this effort in your PRT? Was it effective?

A: I don't think we had a dedicated counter-insurgency effort. It was more of economic development to the point where legitimate government is providing economic stimulus to people. The Iraqi people were definitely hands-on. They could see results, that you're doing a good job. If you're just giving me a plan, that's not taking me out of this clay hut down here. They could care less. They also have short-duration memory. You could build a school, paint it today and tomorrow they'd ask, 'What are you doing for me?' So when it came to counter-insurgency, there is definitely a long-term piece to that. These counter-insurgents are working right now to stimulate what we believe to be a democratic structure.

The insurgents have been there a lot longer. They can show results. They are really good about media. They're really good when it comes to newspaper, print. They're really good about propagating negativity. The PRT is limited. How do you get in there and talk about a school that has just been painted? Or 100 million dollars that has been dumped into an airport? The average Iraqi can't afford an airline ticket. So what? I don't see hospitality training, airports, or hotels. It's not tangible. I can't put my hands on it. When it comes to getting the word across, pictures speak a million words. That's as good as gold. So insurgency is winning out only because they can see the negativity quicker and faster than a five- or 10-year plan that says, 'Hey, I'm gong to bring 100 million dollars into the economy over the next 10 years, once we get this airport built.'

The average Iraqi just doesn't buy into that. Then the PRTs coming in and going out. Living in the province also helps. This shows you have the dedication to that province. That was a great step forward. We're not just coming and going, we're not transients.

Q: So, you're saying that being able to satisfy some of these immediate needs is a counter-insurgency move?

A: Sure. If I need water and the insurgents come up and provide a truck full of water to people who need it, their value goes up, versus us, trying to build a pump station over a longer period of time. The quick fix is definitely something. It pays bigger dividends in the short term.

Q: Our long-term effort, is it working or not?

A: Once again, we'll see. But we did get the airport approved, they did land the first aircraft. So I think they're definitely working through some of the bureaucratic red tape of getting that all done.

Q: So that the Iraqis are starting to see more results.

A: Sure, you had the president of the country land on that first aircraft. Sunni, Shia, everybody came together for that one. So they are seeing some benefit. They see dirt being moved. At the ready-to-wear factory, you see people being employed. You see stuff coming out, money coming in. You see electricity on more often than not. You see the hours start to grow, so there are some tangibles in there, but they're slow because mostly it's only the urban people who see the benefit of the power, the jobs. The rural people are still working with USAID, still working with agencies like USDA to get out and work agriculture. We had fish farms coming up. You had a lot of the agricultural pieces once again, works in cycles. So you have to wait to see results. We have done a lot of revamping on the grain silos. There are benefits, and some of it is tangible. I think we're starting to win it over, it's just a little bit slower than DOD would like. It is definitely about the right pace DOS would like.

Q: What about governance? You had some RTI people?

A: Sure we had RTI. They conducted series of classes through local government programs, to benefit both men and women.

Q: Was this RTI person part of the PRT?

A: They work under USAID. I think it's a contract that RTI was under USAID which worked as a part of the PRT. So it wasn't a PRT person, but about two tiers down.

RTI was helpful. They're out with the people and they're training and they're constantly training. They're not limited by security because they already live outside the wire. They're working down in the towns, sometimes co-located with the provincial leadership. A lot of these instructors are actually there in the building, so it really does help, on all levels, governmental, security levels, giving information back and forth. On education, things like that, effectiveness of the programs, sometimes those RTI guys provide a lot of good feedback just across the board.

Q: What were your activities related to economic reconstruction and development?

A: Primarily it was the airport. The airport was huge. The ready-to-wear, so we had some of the textile-type things. Agriculture, too, but you did see a lot of that going on down elsewhere. You have your basic governance things: the provincial reconstruction plans, and how to spend their money and that kind of thing.

Q: What U.S. agency PRT members were responsible for these activities?

A: We had the IPAOs (the Iraqi Provincial Action Officers) who leaned heavily into the funding and the money when it came to the airport. If it came to education, the hospitality piece to that became the responsibility of our PDO. That's how we divided it.

Q: What about CAT (civil affairs soldiers)?

A: None were assigned to our provinces but the REO had access to them.

Q: The agriculture people were working in the bread basket – was this mostly grains?

A: Yes, they had a lot of farming. In some areas they were building tractors. They were trying a 'Buy Iraqi' campaign. Tractors built in one place were being used elsewhere, so the 'Buy Iraqi' was working. You also had vocational schools, so when it came to schooling on how to raise a cow, how to plant a field, each of the provinces had a strong agricultural background. The vocational training was on how to fix a tractor, how to get a fish hatchery up and running. So vocational training was also important. Textile and vocational training was strong.

Q: The agricultural specialists from the PRT were helpful?

A: Yes. USAID, USDA, both of those. Once again, this was highly personality driven. We had one really good person who just loved the job, and it showed in the Iraqis. They'd go out, then engage local farmers. They weren't hesitant about leaving the wire. Not that anybody was but that they knew just what needed to be done and went out there and did it. It really paid dividends.

Q: Can you evaluate the performance of PRDC?

A: Overall it is still immature, still getting there. I think once again it's an issue concerning developmental plans. I think RTI played a piece of that. USAID played a part of that, giving us what we were asking for; not necessarily giving us a plan. So I think right now, they have the right structure, they have the right people participating, they just need to put some meat on the bone when it comes to putting a budget against a plan. So, we'll find out how that works later.

Q: How do you describe the Rule of Law officer's work?

A: Beneficial. There was a good relationship between the BCT and the Rule of Law when it came to training judges, and providing laptops to those kinds of people. Basically, the laptops had all Iraqi law from back in the early 1900s pre-loaded in Arabic, ready to be used and it was issued to them. We also taught them how to use the computer. That was done on a provincial level and just about everywhere. So we purchased the laptops, in coordination with the Rule of Law, trained them how to use the laptops, what they're looking at in terms of legislation. We helped facilitate that. We also brought judges in for meetings about rule of law type of things: how to conduct normal business, etc. They'd know how to do court trial, things like that. But really it just kind of helped them facilitate automation, things like that. So very good.

Q: What about police and prisons?

A: There were special teams who do the police training, so we don't really participate in that too much. They are called NPTTs (National Police Transition Teams). Military primarily runs the police transition teams, but when it came to prisons there were a couple prisons that we wanted to basically upgrade or build, so we were also helping facilitate that. That also, hand-in-hand with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of State. A lot of the times we were trying to get Iraqis to use Iraqi money to put that on their long-term plan.. That kind of expenditure wasn't something that we could provide since we didn't have enough money. We helped them with just making sure they had money allocated and the expertise on how to build it.

Q: In relation to the Rule of Law, did your PRT relate to the MNCI?

A: MNCI was probably at the OPA level.

Q: In Baghdad you mean?

A: Yes. So it's probably two levels above us.

Q: What did your PRT achieve during your tenure?

A: I'll tell what they started. That was primarily the same things that we've already discussed. We've talked about tourism, the airport, fostering international business ties, University, trying to get them involved. I think those were the biggest things. So in terms of education, business development, tourism and the airport. That is definitely a way ahead.

Q: On the whole, would you say that the PRTs are accomplishing their mission? On a scale of one to 10 In the four areas: improving governance, economic development, utilizing American civilian and military resources and counterinsurgency.

A: Improving governance. Sure as a team absolutely, training. Governance is a tool for proving that tool. How well they use that tool is yet to be seen. Once again, 'I've got a plan, let's tie it to a budget.' They haven't got the two quite together yet. So, I think what we've got is some great tools in the kit bag and we haven't really built anything that's really worth looking at yet. But there are some things on a great glide path in terms of economic, international build, airports, things like that. So, yes, I would probably rank that very high in governance.

Economic development is tied hand-in-hand with the airport. They've landed the first plane, so all thumbs up for that.

American military and civilian resources, I think we're good about weaning off the military reliance on CERP, the \$100,000 push for a water treatment plant. I think we're now midway. So that rank, on a scale of one to 10, is probably about a five.

Q: You mean moving it from a military responsibility area to Iraqi?.

A: Yes. Buy Iraqi, use Iraqi funds. They have millions of dollars. Let them use it. We're still victims of that. There's still a lot of discussion about CERP money. Success for us isn't CERP. That's U.S. money. Success for us is using IRF, the Iraqi Reconstruction Funds. Use their money. Right now they'll take it if you want to give it to them. That happens a lot. If you give me this much, I'll use matching funds for this much. They used their funds for the airport, for example in terms of economic development, they've got a considerable amount of money and we need to help with how they allocate it and how they budget it. So they're still about 50 percent only because they haven't tied the budget to the plan.

Q: Counter-insurgency.

A: Once again, counter-insurgency is a long-term question. On how effective it is, if you do it in terms of attacks, deaths, explosions, we're doing well. That's the DOD definition on how we're doing. In terms of Department of State, the measure is engagement: how

well we can go out and meet and have a credible relationship with local governance. I think right now we're probably about a 7 out of 10 on that. I think moving into the provinces is definitely a big perk on destroying the counter-insurgency because we're there. We're with you. So, we're going in the right direction.

At one point military support was limited in scope. Now, what we've got is a full-up FOB which is co-located with an Iraqi army unit right at the airport which is getting a lot of money with it. You have DOD escort, you have Department of State teams that now have bi-cultural, bi-lingual advisors. They are almost at the 15-person manning level. You probably have the flexibility now to go to multiple venues on any single day and engage at a moment's notice with governors, mayors, provincial leadership, tribal leadership in a location they feel comfortable going.

The REO was also a little bit less permissive when it came to getting in. You have to have vetting, you have to have a metal detector. Sometimes this is offensive to a lot of tribal leaders who want to come in and are basically shaken down. They would take offense to that and they would not want to come meet because of the security protocols coming in. So you'll lose a person like that, and it plays into counter-insurgency if a tribal leader doesn't want to come talk to you. You're going to lose out. Once again, 'Hey, I can see my results. Look. I just brought you a bottle of water, I just fixed your sewer.' ... 'Okay, you're right, I can't even talk to the Americans about it because I have to get a security clearance, they can't see me for a week because the guy that I usually talk to is on leave, or he's gone,' whatever the case. It's a long-term issue, but we're going in the right direction with getting into the provinces, manning to the right levels. Is 15 the right number? It is to be determined. We don't know.

The bi-cultural, bi-lingual advisors, are definitely a step in the right direction. When it comes to speaking the language, that is definitely helpful. We can get power out of that. The fact that they're using their language and he's taking the effort to actually learn their language paid huge dividends. So if we're going to be long term, it's also a commitment to ourselves to say, 'Okay, I understand your culture, I understand your language, and not only do I understand your systems, I have my systems.' Those little things go a long way.

Q: Did you learn some Arabic?

A: I did. We actually had an Arabic instructor who came in once a week to the REO. Four months' worth is not a lot. He would come in and the team leader would have a special session, but groups of four people. We all started to learn some Arabic.

Q: It was the effort that mattered.

A: Right, the effort. Other than just the normal gestures of welcome and goodbyes, it did. You could see it in their faces. It's like. 'Wow. He understands what we're saying.' You know the sidebars that you can kind of catch on what they're concerned with. It's something that you'll miss if you're just working with a single translator who is focused

on the mouth of the person you're talking to and all the other peripheral information you're losing.

Q: That brings us to a training question. Were you satisfied with the preparation you received before being sent over?

A: I didn't really have preparation because I had been in Iraq already. I was basically recruited to go in, so I didn't go through any kind of special PRT training. I don't have a huge background. I have a mathematics background, so I understood that, but when it comes to business, not necessarily. Where I did pay dividend was the security access, getting the team leader to the venue. That's where I helped the RSO. I think that's the only benefit I really played on that kind of scale.

Training for the team, training the team as a team before it goes over. Making sure that it is manned at a consistent rate, meaning your BBAs are ready to go, you've worked with the team leader, you understand the personalities. There was friction. I think there's friction everywhere you go. With personality it's just a matter of working through that. Every organization has got it. But in a case where the security is an issue, you really don't have the time or the luxury of worrying about personality conflict.

In terms of training, I would think train as a team. Also, when it comes to hiring someone based on the job title, they have that experience. The team leader received many resumes filling a provisional program manager position. One had no budgetary background but was still being submitted as a possibility. Or a tourism expert, but tourism because I've traveled the world. So there's a little bit of expertise there. I understand there's no directed assignments when it comes to Department of State so it was a little bit of the whim of team leaders.

There is also a matter of a vetting process. Maybe more directive. 'Hey, this person is the best person for that area because of X, Y, Z.' Maybe there should be more of a directed assignment process out there.

Q: Could you sum up your lessons learned?

A: Lessons learned for me would be embedded military. I think that would be something that is definitely important, because of the linkage between the landowner (DOD) and the Department of State. I would think that adequate manning up front is important. Because one, the leave cycles and the continuity of talking to the Iraqis is important. So they always have that face to talk to. Sooner or later you need a break; and when that person leaves, you just can't have a gap. I think the local governance program training through RTIs is sustained. RTI is USAID outside-the-wire type of training with local governance programs is definitely sustained. So I would say that is also a good thing.

In terms of agriculture, continued partnership with USAID, USDA and their expertise, I almost think should be expanded. We've got one person per team. I think there is

opportunity, at least where we were at, for more. I think we could have used more on our team than that.

In terms of economic development I think we need to be a little less restrictive when it comes to access. Not only access to the United States but access for Iraqis coming in and visiting. Even for a US citizen to come to Iraq right now, to start a business relationship, it would be a monumental process. So really, take action making it a more permissive environment in order to foster the bilateral relationship, perhaps by lowering the standards for visas or establishing an expedited system where if a team leader who is SCS level individual, signs off on a document saying that this tribal sheik is important enough to go to the United States for a couple of weeks, that doesn't get the same look as anybody else from Iraq trying to come in. So there's got to be some movement on that. And maybe there has been; it's been a few months since I was there.

The visa system and access to both international and domestic opportunity is limited. So I know there's been committees, and meetings, and conferences scheduled but once again, location. Would they love to come to the United States and do it? You know they would. They'd love to go to Houston and see some of the good stuff up there. But they just find that difficult to do so.

Q: Thank you very much.