

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

**INTERVIEW #69**

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**Executive Summary**

Interviewee has an extensive background in political science and public administration, which led to contracts working in Egypt, Bosnia, Afghanistan and twice in Iraq. Present employer is RTI, which placed the interviewee in the Ninawa PRT to serve as the coordinator for a group of six other RTI employees, plus 10 local Iraqis who work outside the PRT.

The interviewee found the PRT to be like an elephant being described by blind men, but tried to describe it in a structural way:

“We have a team leader who’s with the State Department. And under him there are five main sections: there’s governance, rule of law, economics, reconstruction and public diplomacy. And also connected to the PRT is a USAID representative and several other organizations.

In addition to RTI there is MSI, which operates a national level training organization. We’re at local level. And then there is the CSP, the Community Stabilization Project, which is also in our compound and we all do our best to work together, which is of course the big challenge, because when you get all these pieces, we’re all doing our own thing and it’s actually quite a challenge for our 75 people, which includes two outposts, to actually share information and make the most of our cooperation.”

According to the interviewee, PRTs have certain generic responsibilities as well as specific characteristics. Each new PRT director puts his own stamp of direction on things. “Ours is very oriented to capacity building, which of course is a common theme. I think at this point I should say that RTI has renewed a commitment to be what we call PRT-driven.” The seven people in the PRT, plus the twenty people out in the field, are formed and driven by PRT objectives, rather than operating independently.

In terms of leadership and management, the interviewee found this to be “a problem area” that required a much more systematic approach to front end training, in service training, setting up systems, and improving standard operating procedures. The reality of day-to-day life is that the PRT members often ran into problems with making movements to go out and engage Iraqis. Interviewee noted, “We have limited movement resources and that’s only one among a number of examples that could be given, which suggests to

me that maybe there could be a super level improvement effort when it comes to management systems that would significantly improve the productivity of PRTs. Constraints on our effectiveness: Movements are definitely one. Access to translators is another. A third one is access to the people we want to work with, to the Iraqis.”

One way in which the interviewee’s PRT was branching out was in the collaboration with local NGOs and making an attempt to differentiate those that are viable from those that “pretend.”

“We have a partnership that we’re developing in our region with ACTI/VOCA. ACTI/VOCA is the civil society operation for northern Iraq. So we’re trying to work with them. They have something called the community action group. There are eight of those in Ninawa. We’re right now trying to develop a closer relationship, so that we can, for example, follow up on the request of the USAID representative, who wants us to do more with the underrepresented, for example: orphans, widows, minorities, environmentalists or whoever and try to get those people involved in the decision making processes of the government.”

Interviewee had strong opinions on training: “...on the front end, the more we can systematize and put into training programs, which either take place in the U.S. before...” the better. Interviewee did acknowledge that putting the PRT together in the U.S. can be problematic and wonder whether “... some training could be done on site, either at Baghdad at a training center or in the PRTs vis-a-vis a continuous training operation.”

Interviewee noted, “I think we do have this culture conflict between the military and the State Department and the contractors as to how the work should be done, and more work needs to be done to bridge that gap. There is the military, “Do it now at all costs!” and the State Department, “Well, maybe we’ll do it slowly and we’ll do it right, the way we think it should be done and it’s going to take longer.” Meanwhile the military is looking at them and saying, “What the hell is going on, if anything?” We can see that in our PRT and we actually have, I would say, pushback on it.”

Interviewee finally noted: “There’s an emphasis on making good plans and we really don’t have a good plan in our PRT and I’m not criticizing anybody for that. There’s also a related emphasis on needs assessment to support the plan. We don’t have that, either, in my opinion, So that business about planning and assessments is something, again, that comes at the beginning, along with training and so on.

There’s another thing: we have a tendency to multiply. There are nine principles and 15 imperatives and when you get too many of those, it gets hard to manage. So some simplification is probably in order.

Turnover is a really serious problem because everybody knows that it takes a while to learn what’s going on and then by the time you’ve learned, you leave and then somebody else comes and starts learning all over again. We don’t have a solution to that and the manual doesn’t address it as a serious problem.”

“PRTs, however, are necessary; there are no alternatives. It’s important to do lessons learned.”

### **Interview**

*Q: And what was your job trajectory that led you to join a PRT? I’m sure you’ve been all around and done lots of things, but maybe there’s something*

A: I have been all around and done lots of things, but looking at the last twelve years, when I really got back into international work, I worked for USAID in Egypt, Bosnia, Afghanistan, twice in Iraq. That’s a quick sketch. There’s more, but that’s probably enough.

*Q: And so tell us about how you basically got connected to your most recent job assignment and fill in the details of where you are.*

A: RTI has been after me for five years to go to Iraq. I finally gave in. After my first tour, which was actually with the Kurdistan regional government, so there was no U.S. entity involved. Now, of course, I’m with RTI and happy to be doing this.

*Q: And so where are you located right now and just tell us what kind of basic work you’re doing and how you came to be where you are today.*

A: I’m assigned to the PRT in Ninawa. Mosul is the capital city. I’m the coordinator for a group of six other RTI people in the PRT, plus about ten local Iraqis who are outside the PRT and this gets to the question of organizational structure. We are linked to a hub, one of five hubs in Iraq. Our hub is in Arbil.

*Q: Describe for us what does this hub mean, what does it do, how does it function?*

A: We’re sitting in the national headquarters here. There are about fifty people here, roughly, who service the five hubs. Each hub is responsible for distributing training activities, very heavily training oriented and its the hub that organizes the local staff and organizes the RTI expat advisors, in this case, in the five northern provinces.

*Q: And describe the PRT itself.*

A: The PRT is like an elephant being described by blind men, so it’s a little bit difficult to do, but I can try and I’ll do it in a structural way.

We have a team leader who’s with the State Department. And under him there are five main sections: there’s governance, rule of law, economics, reconstruction and public diplomacy. And also connected to the PRT is a USAID representative and several other organizations.

In addition to RTI there is MSI, which operates a national level training organization. We're at local level. And then there is the CSP, the Community Stabilization Project, which is also in our compound and we all do our best to work together, which is of course the big challenge, because when you get all these pieces, we're all doing our own thing and it's actually quite a challenge for our 75 people, which includes two outposts, to actually share information and make the most of our cooperation.

*Q: This CSP, is that a private corporation?*

A: No, at least not to my knowledge. To my knowledge, it's just like RTI and MSI, it's a government contractor. I could be wrong about that.

*Q: So, basically, at your PRT there's three non-governmental agencies, or pseudo-governmental agencies?*

A: Let's say government contractors.

*Q: And how many folks work for those, as part of the 75 total, rough guess?*

A: RTI has seven. MSI has one, he's kind of like a roving preacher. He even goes beyond Ninawa, but he is an outreach person. They have a regional headquarters in Arbil, just like RTI has a regional headquarters in Arbil.

But if you really begin to add things up, like the Community Stabilization Program has hundreds of employees out in the field who, to all appearances, work for the Iraqi government, to appearances. That makes it easier for them.

Whereas our twenty locals, RTI's twenty locals, don't have that luxury and consequently actually the level of risk for them is significantly higher, which we take into account in what we ask them to do.

*Q: Do you know any history of the relationship of the CSP and how they were able to get their employees to be covered in this way?*

A: I don't know, but I think it's standard practice.

*Q: Is that something that you would advocate for other groups, other organizations?*

A: To the greatest possible extent, yes.

*Q: Describe the role and mission of your PRT. You've talked about the five sections. Is there a hand connected to those five fingers?*

A: Well, of course, PRTs have certain generic responsibilities and then again they have specific characteristics and each new PRT director puts his own stamp of direction on things. And ours has just come in and put a stamp on us and it's very oriented to

capacity building which of course is a common theme. So we're very oriented to capacity building and I think at this point I should say that RTI has renewed a commitment to be what we call PRT-driven. In other words, our seven people in the PRT, plus our twenty people out in the field, our goal is to have them be driven by PRT objectives, rather than operating independently.

*Q: And have you seen a lot of independence between the different functions of the PRT?*

A: I've seen a lot of independence and a lot of interdependence. To a large extent, it is not intentional. What I mean is that it turns out to be rather difficult to communicate and coordinate among 75 people and that creates perhaps unwanted independence, if I'm getting your question properly. And we are doing our best day by day to close the gap and improve our coordination and hence our productivity.

*Q: How would you describe your PRT's relationship with the Office of Provincial Affairs, if you know about that?*

A: I know about it, because I've met our person there because before I went up to Ninawa we made some presentations to the OPA and that's my contact. But since going to the PRT I have not had any direct contact with the OPA and from that point of view they don't exist, if I may say so and that's not a criticism, just a description.

*Q: What about the PRT's relationship with the military command?*

A: I'm going partly on hearsay. What I have heard is that the previous PRT director had a bad relation with the military in our unit. And I see that every day the new PRT director is working to fix that problem and to establish good relations. I think on the whole we have good relations but we also have sensitivities.

*Q: Let me take you through kind of some function roles. How do you rate the effectiveness of the PRT leadership and management structure? What improvements, if any, would you recommend?*

A: Those are very much in the front of my mind right now, as you know and I would say that this is a problem area and that we need to take a much more systematic approach to front end training, in service training, setting up systems, improving standard operating procedures and all that kind of thing, because the reality of our day to day life is that we often run into problems with things like making movements to go out and see somebody.

We have limited movement resources and that's only one among a number of examples that could be given, which suggest to me that maybe there could be a super level improvement effort when it comes to management systems that would significantly improve the productivity of PRTs.

*Q: I know you wrote about this, so I know you have some concerns and issues with it. Why don't we go into some detail on this issue of movements and describe what you mean when you say movement.*

A: Sure. Let's say that we are going to look at the constraints on our effectiveness: Movements are one. Access to translators is another. A third one is access to the people we want to work with, to the Iraqis. So let's say there are those three.

With regard to movements, in order to go out in Ninawa, which is a largely non-permissive environment, which may make it a little different from some of the others, every time we go out, we go with four MRAPs.

*Q: And describe what that is.*

A: Occasionally humvees, but preferably MRAPs, which is the super large, almost but not quite invulnerable, transportation vehicles. So we have two of those movement teams available to us. There are probably hundreds of MRAPs on the base, but we have two of those movement teams available to us and that is a constraint and we often find that, for example, that RTI advisors are often bumped off of trips by higher priority moves, which significantly interferes with getting the job done.

*Q: And when you say higher priorities, how do you think these priorities are*

A: Priorities are all set by the PRT team leader, who is very active and that's very good and it uses up a lot of movement. And he often takes the section leaders with him, depending on the agenda.

*Q: Do you have the sense that some people see movements as a perk?*

A: No, absolutely not. Movements are a necessity and that's the way everybody looks at them.

*Q: How about this access to translators issue?*

A: We seem to have grown on the advisor side and to have diminished on the translator side, which creates an imbalance. There's something called a BBA and you know what that is and we don't have enough BBAs. They're highly qualified individuals who are indispensable to the operation and when you don't have enough of them it causes problems.

*Q: You're describing an imbalance. Was there a balance at one time?*

A: This is what I am told. I'm a new guy, so I don't know, but this is what I'm told, that the balance was much better. In other words, before we began to increase the number of advisors and began to lose the number of translator BBAs.

*Q: And then your final subject that you brought up was access to Iraqi officials?*

A: High government officials because even when we solve the movement problem and we solve the translator problem we still at least some times find that when we get there the guys we're supposed to meet with are not there, or that it's very difficult to schedule with them. And so when these three things combine, the net result is a big constraint, with a capital C.

*Q: So, on this last issue, about availability, is there any recommendation that you'd have? Is it all on the Iraqi side, for the most part?*

A: On that third point of access?

*Q: Access to Iraqis.*

A: As distinct from what?

*Q: Well, is there any PRT that has easy access?*

A: Are we not available when they are?

*Q: Yeah, is there any PRT issue that's experiencing access problems?*

A: I think that's a question we would have to ask the other side. Seriously. I just don't have insight into that.

*Q: Good point! Tell us a little bit on how you view civil-military relations. And I should say, too, you've got time with this current PRT, but you were with a previous PRT, correct?*

A: No, I wasn't. When I was working in the KRG I was working directly for the ministry of municipalities and although I did work with the RRT, that's what it's called there, I was not part of it.

*Q: The only thing I want to say is if there is anything from your previous experience that you would think would be applicable to this issue, please don't hesitate to bring it up, as well as your current affiliation.*

A: I'll be happy to.

*Q: So, how do you describe the civil-military relationships within the PRT?*

A: I guess there are several different dimensions to it. One of course is that we have, in round numbers, let's say twenty of us are military and they run the ops, they run the intelligence and generally we depend heavily upon them for our movements and for lots

of other things. I think the working relationships are basically good, but no doubt there are tensions.

I'll move to a second dimension, which is the civil-military action units, which also exist at the base and they're outside the PRT. They're not in the PRT, not part of the PRT. We are actually trying right now to improve our working relationship with them. There was kind of a disconnect, not a bad relationship but a non-relationship, so we're trying now to improve that and see how we might work better together.

*Q: So this action unit is a full military structure?*

A: Yes.

*Q: Now are they doing work that's replicated by a PRT and vice versa?*

A: Not a duplication problem, as far as I can tell and given my limited knowledge it seems that they are working rather intensively and actively around the city of Mosul, more or less working on the street, so to speak and that is quite different from what we're doing, but still, I think if we talk to each other and see what each other are doing there are going to be connections.

*Q: Let's move on to security issues. How do you perceive security issues out in the PRT so far?*

A: Well, the PRT is on a huge base, FOB Marez. So we are literally surrounded by about ten thousand guys, or however many there are, I haven't counted them and we feel totally safe and secure. And also when we go out on movements I think it's safe to say we feel safe and secure, although I can report one exception where one of our RTI guys was in a humvee that got blown up.

*Q: And he was...?*

A: He was okay. So that's an exception and I would say that today we feel safe going out when we want to go out.

*Q: And talking with your colleagues, has that security situation changed since a year or two ago?*

A: I can't see that it has changed, but I want to mention that RTI has some twenty local colleagues. They do not come to the base, ever. When we meet them, we either meet them in Mosul city hall or we meet them in Arbil and that is another constraint on our ability to integrate our work, but it's necessary, because it would be extremely unsafe for them to be seen approaching the base.

*Q: Do you rely at all or work with Iraqi security forces?*

A: Not to my knowledge. Of course, if you were to ask the military guys, they might have quite a different answer. I haven't seen it.

*Q: Has your PRT had much [contact] with international and NGO organizations?*

A: I would say limited. That's something that interests me personally and I think it's an area where we need to do more and I expect we probably will do more, although I think the initiative for that remains to be developed.

Perhaps the exception is working with the United Nations. We are working with the United Nations on elections.

*Q: So tell us about that work, as you can best describe it.*

A: Well, my understanding is that we have several elections experts in the PRT and that they work with the United Nations, with NDI and whoever else is doing elections work, mainly on an informational basis, a limited basis. But, for example, if the UN wants to come up, we will host them, make sure that everything is going okay for them. That's probably the nature of our working relationship with them.

At the moment I can't name another one and I consider that to be a problem area because I cannot.

*Q: What about local NGOs, Iraqi NGOs? Anything happening?*

A: We have lists of local NGOs which we maintain as best we can, trying to differentiate the ones that are viable from the ones that are pretend. And right now I can identify three or four people in the PRT who are working with NGOs and are working with citizen participation.

If we broaden that slightly, we have a partnership that we're developing in our region with ACTI/VOCA. ACTI/VOCA is the civil society operation for northern Iraq. So we're trying to work with them. They have something called the community action group. There are eight of those in Ninawa. We're right now trying to develop a closer relationship, so that we can, for example, follow up on the request of the USAID representative, who wants us to do more with the underrepresented, examples would be orphans, widows, minorities, environmentalists or whoever and try to get those people involved in the decision making processes of the government. So that is something that we're doing, but we're not doing it with international NGOs, unless you consider ACTI/VOCA to be one and it's like RTI, it's a contractor.

*Q: You talked about three or four folks in the PRT working with some groups. Do you have specific projects or*

A: I don't know that much about what they are doing, but certainly one area, as you would expect, is women. We work with women's groups actively and the leadership there comes from our public diplomacy officer and a person in rule of law.

*Q: Continuing on with interaction with Iraqis, what's your sense on PRT involvement with provincial governments, local governments, business community?*

A: The business community probably is being dealt with by the econ section. I happen to be in the governance section, but I am aware that the econ section does a lot of work with the business community. I can't say a whole lot about specifically what it is.

In the governance section we work directly with the highest local officials and with the members of the provincial councils and those local councils which are permissive for us.

*Q: And when you say permissive, what do you mean by that?*

A: I mean that from a security point of view it's possible to work there.

*Q: So, are there a lot of places you can't work?*

A: More than half.

*Q: Why don't you talk some more about your specific section and what it does and what you do specifically?*

A: My role is to be the coordinator for all of the RTI people at the PRT, which includes three of us in governance and four of us in reconstruction. In other words, there are none of us in rule of law and none of us in econ, even though we work closely with those people. So my job is really to make sure that the RTI people there are fully functional and that they're working together, that they're working with our local staff partners and with our hub resources.

*Q: And tell us some of the issues that you're working on specifically, or your section as a whole.*

A: In the governance area, we're working on getting the governor to be more proactive as a public administration leader and working with the provincial council on bylaws for the council and charters for its committees. Those are some of our major activities. In addition, we are doing a lot of budgeting and finance training for that committee of the council and for its staff.

*Q: So, on that training, in specific, are you bringing in outsiders to do that training, or are you doing the training yourselves?*

A: The way RTI sets up its training, the hub and the locals do most of the training. However, in this particular case of public finance, we do have a public finance advisor,

an expat, who is personally doing the training for the provincial council budget committee and staff.

*Q: PRTs are intended to bolster moderates and provide the economic component of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort. Do you agree with that statement?*

A: A very narrow statement!

*Q: Well, I'm going to say to you, do you agree with that statement, first of all?*

A: Well, I agree with it, but it doesn't go far enough. In other words, there's a lot more that we do and I mentioned the term capacity building, which is way above and beyond anything that that statement would suggest.

*Q: Taking this statement as truth, for the moment, do you feel that that has been effectively done at the PRTs?*

A: In other words, that our civil activities have been effective counterinsurgency measures? Would that be a reasonable way of putting it? That is a really tough question, partly because of my ignorance, but I will take a flying leap at it and say that in Ninawa the insurgency situation is so serious and so broad that what we are able to do is limited, the difference that we can make directly countering insurgency is limited.

What we can do is in those areas that have become permissive as a result of someone else's counterinsurgency work, we can then go in and begin to put the pieces back together, set up good governance and so on.

*Q: Let me take you out a little bit on some things that I would say you're not necessarily immediately involved in, but perhaps you have stories or know the people or can talk to these issues?*

*First, the public affairs program within the PRT. You have already said we have a public affairs officer there. How would you describe the work of that section?*

A: Well, being a new person, that's one of the areas that I haven't gotten very far into, but I am quite aware that the public affairs officer (PAO) is actively working in women's issues and that for example there is a major conference coming up, a women's conference coming up, which will dovetail with a north region women's conference and a national women's conference that are also coming up in the next few months. So I see what the PAO is doing as pretty well articulated.

*Q: So you think there was some systematic effort on setting up this local conference, in anticipation of it feeding the next group of conferences, perhaps?*

A: I think so, but it's my inference.

*Q: Mine as well. How about reconstruction activities? What do you know about them?*

A: We're very active with them, have a significant effort with reconstruction, led by a colonel in the Army Corps of Engineers and there we cover a wide range of things. We cover electric power, solid waste management facilities and lots of other things which are going to escape my mind at the moment but they are there. That's a very active group and quite well tied in, I think, with other activities by the military.

*Q: Is there a civilian side to that reconstruction section?*

A: Yeah, it is civilian. What I mean is that they interface with the military, who are also on the base and doing other things, so that I think there's a good connection there, that's what I'm saying, but within the PRT it's a civilian effort.

*Q: Okay, so it's not the Corps of Engineers, but the PRT folks are working with the Corps?*

A: And the colonel who runs it just happens to be that. We also have a specialist who works entirely on the airport, Mosul Airport, which is somewhat related, getting it up and running and I think it just opened on Friday. So that's a big step forward.

*Q: Absolutely. Do you know about the Provincial Redevelopment Committee?*

A: I think that's obsolete. I read about it. To the best of my knowledge, they don't use them anymore. That's only my impression.

But what we do use is something called the MRC. It's a committee of the provincial council. And so I suspect that the MRC committee has replaced the whatever it is, PRDC or whatever. So the function is still there in then provincial council and our reconstruction people work very closely with that committee on projects.

*Q: So, how's the committee work? Are there Iraqis on the committee?*

A: It's the provincial council. It's a committee of the provincial council. So it has only Iraqis on it.

*Q: Agricultural activities within the PRT?*

A: Yes, the econ section has an ag specialist and I mentioned, I think, that we have two outposts, one in Talifar and one in Key West.

*Q: Key West?*

A: Talifar is a major agricultural area and so right now, actually we are, I think the best way to put it, we are exploring a way to get an ag specialist out there to help them with their ambitious ag development plans in the Talifar area.

*Q: Your ag specialist, is he a USDA person?*

A: I believe so, the one who's there now and we just lost another ag specialist who was in the USAID office. So we actually I think are going to have to replenish our ag specialists and that's a very important priority, as far as I can tell.

*Q: What kind of agricultural projects are they working on, do you know?*

A: No.

*Q: How about the cultural side of things? Do you guys have a PRT cultural advisor?*

A: Not to my knowledge. If we did have one, if that functions was being performed, it would be by our public diplomacy officer.

*Q: That makes a lot of sense, yeah. Tell us about some achievements, as you see them, that have happened and include ones that you know of that potentially predate your activities here.*

A: I would say one of the things about achievements is that they come slowly, sometimes and an example is the bylaws and charters that I mentioned. One of our guys has been working with the provincial council for quite some time now and is, we think, about ready to wrap it up, so that they will adopt the bylaws and the charters and they will be of their own doing. That, I think, is a major achievement and it illustrates the strategic problems we have in working with the Iraqis, that there is a tendency in some circles to say, "We're gonna go out and do this and get it done, even if the Iraqis have nothing to do with it." Whereas, our guy who's working on the bylaws and charters takes the view that if the Iraqis don't do it, there's no point in it.

And so it's going, perhaps, slower than some people might like but probably in the end it'll work better. And that is the philosophy of our new PRT team leader, that if we have to work slow, that's fine, but let's get some sustainability and ownership, Iraqi ownership.

*Q: So that buy-in element is important?*

A: Absolutely, it's important. It's being reemphasized, I would say.

*Q: So let me do a little critique. How do you think overall it's worked, with, say, this bylaws project? It is in a way a layering over, a kind of American assumption of governance, correct? And has that had an impact on the process?*

A: Well, that's a question that I should be able to answer, but I'm not sure that I can. And what I mean by that is I don't know enough about the distinction between Iraqi ways and American ways to evaluate that, as you're requesting.

At the gut level, I have to admit that it makes some sense to me that bylaws and charters provide the guts of the system and that without them people really don't know what they're doing. And that I think gets to a really major problem, because in so many cases the American approach, I'll call it that, tends to be very goal oriented, results oriented, know what you're doing, whereas the Iraqi approach, however intelligent, is not that way. It's quite different and moves more slowly, it's less results oriented, it's more I'll call it maintenance oriented. And so there is that inherent tension which we constantly struggle with and for the foreseeable future we will continue to struggle with that tension.

*Q: Let's take you down the assessment road for a little bit. These are kind of big ticket questions in a way and so feel free to really philosophize if you will.*

*Are PRTs accomplishing their mission?*

A: I would like to back up and say are PRTs necessary? They are necessary and there is really no alternative to them.

Are they accomplishing their mission? I would say they're nibbling at it and that's based on my very limited experience. Somebody who's been around longer and seen more PRTs could give a much more realistic answer. But I would say we're nibbling at it and that that's probably the state of the art for PRTs, that it's just a multiyear learning process and that what you're doing now is going to contribute to learning better how to make PRTs work.

*Q: Now you've written and culled together I think some important arguments and ideas. I think it would be great for you to talk about some of those issues that you've brought up and written about, but maybe we haven't gotten them on the recording yet.*

A: I appreciate the opportunity, but I feel slightly at a loss. We've got these studies that have been done and they pose some challenges and some of the challenges are the kinds of systems challenges that I mentioned, standard operating procedures and so on. And then in addition to systems, there is the operating level, operations level, which has a whole bunch of other challenges and somehow the systems and the operations have to be better coordinated with each other and that's gonna be a long term learning process, which probably, I'm reminded that one of my colleagues, who was a State Department 3161, he said, "You know, we had a week of training on PRTs," by the way, I never had any training on PRTs, "But it was useless," that's what he said: "Our week of training on PRTs was useless."

Nevertheless, on the front end the more we can systematize and put it into training programs, which either take place in the U.S. before and together, somehow and that's a real problem, putting the PRT together in the U.S. It would be an expensive proposition. So it seems to me that some of that training has to be done on site, either at Baghdad at a training center or in the PRTs and there has to be a continuous training operation. I hate to put that much emphasis on training, but it seems to me that that's where we're at.

*Q: Do you recall specifically what your colleague thought about the training?*

A: I recall that he didn't say.

*Q: What are some other issues you've brought up in your writings?*

A: I think we do have this culture conflict between the military and the State Department and the contractors as to how the work should be done and more work needs to be done to bridge that gap. There is the military, "Do it now at all costs!" and the State Department, "Well, maybe we'll do it slowly and we'll do it right, the way we think it should be done and it's going to take longer." Meanwhile the military is looking at them and saying, "What the hell is going on, if anything?" We can see that in our PRT and we actually have, I would say, pushback on it.

*Q: Pushback from which side?*

A: Both sides. So they're both pushing each other and depending a lot of the personalities, that can be very productive. If they push each other enough and get somewhere with it, then we'll move forward.

What's to be done about that I'm not sure, because, personally, I can see that there are some things that need to move fast and some that need to move slow. And maybe that is the difference. If we could see more clearly which are which, then we might appreciate each other more and therefore work together more effectively. That's possible.

So those are a few, I'm not in a position to synthesize everything.

*Q: No, but without trying to synthesize, if you, again, want to talk about some salient topics.*

A: Let me just pick something. What I did was to look at the Army manual.

*Q: This is called The PRT Playbook. It's put out by the Center for Army Lessons Learned and this is dated September '07.*

A: And as far as I know it hasn't been modified. So I went through it and I made 17 comments on the book.

*Q: Maybe take three or four and expand upon them as you think they're important.*

A: There's an emphasis on making good plans and we really don't have a good plan in our PRT and I'm not criticizing anybody for that. There's also a related emphasis on needs assessment to support the plan. We don't have that, either, in my opinion, although we may all have our background impressions of it. But it hasn't been

formalized. So that business about planning and assessments is something, again, that comes at the beginning, along with training and so on.

There's another thing, that we have a tendency to multiply: there are nine principles and 15 imperatives and when you get too many of those, it gets hard to manage. So some simplification is probably in order.

There is a very short reference to the problem of turnover and that is a really serious problem, because everybody knows that it takes a while to learn what's going on and then by the time you've learned you leave and then somebody else comes and starts learning all over again. We don't have a solution to that and the manual doesn't address it as a serious problem.

*Q: Would one solution, potentially, be for people to serve longer than their current tours?*

A: That would be a solution and in some cases that's being done.

*Q: And are there any negatives to that "solution"?*

A: Sure, there are negatives. People can get jaded. They can get tired. And I'm not in a position to say where the balance lies here.

*Q: And it's probably dependent on each personality, where the balance is, right?*

A: Yeah. And then, again, back to the manual, they do this beautiful management structure, starting with D.C. at the top and by the time they get down to the PRT, where is it? I don't know.

And then repeating something I said earlier, they list some functional areas, administration, operations, support and others and we just don't have that. For example, we don't have the administrative personnel to run the PRT. So in a way the PRT is a self-implementing operation without a management structure. I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I think there's some truth in that.

*Q: Again, to that point, what's your ideas on how to make it different, or better?*

A: We have a State Department team leader. We have a deputy leader who is military and who probably performs the management function. It just seems to me, from observation that maybe he doesn't see himself and it's not a criticism of him, performing that function because maybe nobody has said, "Hey, look at this structure and look at the way it's operating. We don't have any management here."

And of course we do have management, but it's kind of seat of the pants management and maybe more could be done or would have to be done to pull that together. Possibly

one additional person who's a real management honcho would be able to pull the pieces together better.

*Q: And in your org chart, where would that person sit?*

A: It would be a deputy director, would have to have clout. It wouldn't have to be the director, because the director is a face man. He's interfacing and he's out there making the connections and selling, doing all those things that nobody else can do. And I think it's typical in a lot of organizations that you have it that way. You've got a director and a management deputy and maybe that should be tried more formally, in a more formal way.

*Q: And so, keeping on this train of thought, do you see that your PRT has that relationship already, but maybe not fully refined?*

A: I don't see it and maybe that could be my fault. That's not a criticism of anybody, but from a structural point of view, I don't see it. Bits and pieces, but nothing to pull it together.

*Q: What other thoughts do you want to share with us?*

A: Going back to the idea of maybe too much formality and the need to simplify, the nine principles, 15 imperatives. Similarly, there's an MOU in that document and I'd be willing to bet that no PRT has ever read it, or if they're read it they only read it once and forgot about it.

*Q: And this was a memorandum of understanding?*

A: Yes.

*Q: And who would the memorandum of understanding be with?*

A: I think it applies to everybody.

*Q: Oh, really?*

A: I think so. You can check it out.

*Q: So it's an individual person kind of signing a pact with the rest of the PRT?*

A: Not like that. I would have to open the book up and see who it is that's supposed to sign this MOU. It could be an MOU without signature.

*Q: So, penultimate thoughts?*

A: Well, I guess the penultimate thought is called integration. We've got so many high value resources in these PRTs and we need to do a better job of integrating them, making them work together. And probably along with this management idea would go a systems and procedures component, the two of them would work together and the systems and procedures improvements would help us cooperate more effectively together.

*Q: Okay, final question: what lessons have you drawn so far with your experience in the PRT?*

A: It's necessary, no alternative. Important to do lessons learned. And appears that maybe it's been a while since that's been done and of course the document that I gave you is a military document and now you're doing the civilian component, as far as I can tell and those have to be brought together.

*Q: Anything else?*

A: I'm tired.

*Q: I am, too. And thank you very much for sharing some good thoughts and we do appreciate all the stuff you wrote and hopefully will be used. So thank you again.*

A: I'd just like to emphasize that what I wrote comes from listening to a lot of other people. So in a way it's not mine. It belongs to others.

*Q: You're training to be a great oral historian. Thanks again.*

A: Thank you.