

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

INTERVIEW #15

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Initial Interview Date: April 14, 2008
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Executive Summary

The interviewee, a reservist recalled to active duty, was a former agricultural team leader in the Hillel Provincial Reconstruction team, who served in Babel province from April 2006 to April 2007. The informant was rather pessimistic about his experience there, from the “poor” management to reluctance of some members of his PRT even to do their jobs. The security situation was dangerous. The fortified compound where he lived and worked suffered 15 to 16 mortar attacks while he was there, although the inhabitants fortunately suffered only relatively minor injuries.

The informant was enthusiastic about his own work in agriculture. Although he had no agricultural background, he quickly became involved in improving the situation in the province. Irrigation canals had become clogged with weeds, some as much as 10-feet tall, and weed clearance and dredging became a priority. There were no PRT funds available, but the team leader was able to obtain \$ 108,000 in military CERP funds to clear 90 kilometers of canals in the province. He also found the sheep population in the province to be under threat from neglect and disease. He worked to get nine sheep dip tanks built in Babel province. He also worked with bee keeping, a niche industry that particularly benefited women. He was lucky to get advice and guidance from the Research Triangle International’s (RTI) agricultural advisor on a large range of agricultural and animal husbandry issues.

The informant saw some improvement in the province in terms of provincial governance in the year that he was there, but he found that the pace of progress was very slow. He was appalled by the lack of adequate training before he arrived in Iraq. He also felt that the military could do a much better in terms of matching skills to jobs in their selection process for civil military teams. He also was not optimistic about Department of State representatives, who he sensed were reluctant to serve in Iraq and consequently had personnel problems on the ground once they started serving their tours in a war zone.

Interview

Q: Can you describe for us the location, history, physical structure, size, and staffing of the PRT in which you served?

A: I was with the Hillah PRT, that was in Babel province in the city of Hillah. I got there in April of 2006 and was there until about April 2007. As far as the civil affairs—the army component—we had about 40 soldiers. As far as the whole, entire compass of the PRT, I do not know the exact size of that one. You include all the other agencies.

Q: How about the physical structure in which you were located?

A: We were at a small little compound, called the REO or Regional Embassy Office. It was a small little base, on which basically the only people living on there were from the Department of State and the other agencies like USAID and our civil affairs company. We also had half of an army battalion that was situated there as well.

Q: Would you describe it as a fortified compound?

A: Absolutely. It was a fortified compound. Our static security was Blackwater Security as well as army. We augmented some of that. It was as safe a main place as you can get in that region of the world.

Q: Can you describe the role and mission of PRTs in Iraq and maybe more specifically the mission of your PRT? First the PRTs as you understood it.

A: My understanding essentially was at the provincial level specifically for Babel province where I was to be the interface between the Iraqis and the coalition. For my part, since I was an agriculture team leader, my role as I saw it was to reach out to agricultural officials in the province to further assist them with things that we can do. For example, farming and agricultural co-ops, unions, seeing what the needs of the people were, helping with water resources to get water to the crops, things like that as well as meeting with the lead contact for agriculture in the province.

We had it broken up into different functional groups, and we will talk about that a little later. That is the same thing with any PRT in Iraq. Their goal is to further governance

and other functional areas at that provincial level and to get out and interact with those key contacts in the province.

Q: Describe your PRT's relationship with the provincial affairs office or the national coordinating team.

A: In our PRT, I do not know how often they met with the national coordination team, but I know that was usually the PRT team leader, who was a civilian from the Department of State. He would go up to the Green Zone and meet with NCT (National Coordination Team) or they would come down about once a month. I do not know if that would happen every month. My level was more interfacing with the local Iraqis in the province. I did not take part in some of those more senior meetings. I was more the guy at the grass roots level trying to get things done.

Q: The same would be true for the U.S. embassy and the U.S. military commands? You did not have an active role yourself in liaison with them.

A: I would say yes, that is for the agencies based in the Green Zone; however, my counterparts—some of my peers—we did start to reach out to some of them because we were not really getting a lot of help at our level down at our province. We started to reach up to the Green Zone because we knew a couple of people there. That is essentially how we got things going, getting contacts.

Q: You had your contacts within the embassy and with the military command in Baghdad?

A: We had contacts with the military command up there and as well with the military command on our compound at Hillah. We would meet with them just so we could synchronize things, and he knew what we were doing and we knew what they were doing. If you do not make an effort to meet with the military command on your base that

controls the battle space where you operate, you are not going to have a synchronized effort. You can be overlapping and duplicating things where it makes no sense to do that.

Q: Can you now describe the chain of command, both civilian and military, and the internal organization of your PRT?

A: For the military chain of command, for my level as a captain and officer there, my chain of command was to my commander who was a major who commanded our civil affairs company. His boss was the deputy PRT team leader who was basically the second in command of the entire PRT who was always a military officer. He reported directly to the leader of the PRT who is a Department of State civilian. That was my chain of command. I reported to my civil affairs commander, and it went up the chain like that.

It is the same way for reporting. When we would go out and meet with the local officials, we would have to send up our report, and it would go up the chain. At the same time I would also send it over into the military loop so the military could see what we were doing and to get that synergy, so that they knew what we were doing and who I was meeting with.

Q: Although you told me off tape, would now give me your title and role in the PRT?

A: We broke it down. We had our civil affairs company with about five to six officers, and we broke it down. The four of us were functional group leaders. My role was to cover agriculture, so I was the lead contact for agriculture in our province. Being that it was a new PRT that really had just got started a month before we arrived in April of 2006, there was really no active army living on that base until we got there. We were the first army unit to actually live and interface with the Department of State on a daily basis. The unit before us was supposed to; however, they did not. They would drive down there and meet with them every week or so.

Q: How do you rate the effectiveness of the PRT leadership and management structure?

A: I would say very poor, and I could see it on a daily basis. That is one of the key things that crippled us or hindered us from making more progress and getting things done. The leadership overall was poor, starting with the PRT team leader from the most senior person there all the way down to the lower level person that is a USAID person or even a military person as well. The leadership was less than desirable and it was very, very frustrating to get things done.

Q: What improvements would you recommend?

A: For starters with the senior PRT team leader. I do not know how that selection takes place on the Department of State side. It needs to be a more vetted process where they interview more people, make sure the person has got more experience interacting with or being able to manage groups on the civilian side as well as the military side. I still think there is the apprehension for some of the civilians working with the military on a daily basis, and it showed.

Our first team leader was a nice guy, but I do not think I ever heard him say more than a few hundred words the entire several months that he was there. I do not think he reached out to the military civil affairs guy, who was definitely an important part of the PRT. He was gone more than he was probably there, obviously some of them were in meetings, but he was on leave and going back to the States. The leadership starting at the very top was very poor.

After he left we got someone who was a really nice guy. He actually went and took things a step further and sat down to meet with all the different groups on the compound. He sat down with the civil affairs officers. He sat down with the other army battalion that was there. He also sat down with all his groups among the Department of State, USAID, IRMO (Iraqi Reconstruction Management Office) and groups like that. He took things a step further, but another issue that a lot of us had a problem with was he was gone maybe 50 per cent of the time, and he was there 50 per cent of the time. It creates a challenge

for him to get things done when he is gone half the time. I know he was back and forth to the United States. He would go to some other places in the Middle East for meetings, so that was frustrating.

Q: Did you encounter agencies stove piping there?

A: We did initially, but we started to have meetings where we would meet with our functional groups on a regular basis to try to eliminate that. USAID is a great agency doing great work over there. I just think for our specific PRT in Hillah, it was a challenge because of this one contact who did not want to work with others. We could not do much because of that. This individual had a separate chain of command and we had ours. I was a military officer, and this person was a USAID employee. I can not do anything to affect that.

Q: How did you rate, though, the PRT not in terms of the staffing and personnel but just in terms of its organization. Do you think that was organized to work effectively in theory?

A: Yes, I do. In theory if you look at it, the layout, and how things were laid out, it could work and it definitely should be working. I go back to the leadership issue with the quality of people that are in those positions. If you look at it, a lot of those people are not necessarily hand-picked for those positions. They are thrown into those positions.

Another example of that is you take the deputy PRT team leader who is the number two in command which is typically across the board in the country, it is a military officer. It is an O-5 so typically a lieutenant colonel. They are not going to be the people who are going to volunteer to go work down at the Department of State *per se*. They are going to be people that are put into those positions because they are probably not getting the job done in other areas.

Then you put someone down there who is a lieutenant colonel to take a big job of interacting and meshing together civilian agencies and the military, and it was poor. The O-5s that we had when I was there were pitiful. I tell you, he said on more than one occasion in front of me and the soldiers and the civil affairs company that this job is ridiculous. It is basically check the block, get it done, and get home. When you got a senior officer saying things like that to people at the PRT, it shows where his level of commitment is to get the job done.

But back to your original question as far as the infrastructure set up there to be successful, I think it is, but the key thing is you have got to get better quality people into those positions. That is a challenge.

Q: You see it as a challenge both on the military side and the civilian side.

A: Yes, and on the civilian side, I know they have the challenges of being good leaders, and are proactive to get things done in some areas. Let us face it: not a lot of people want to go into some of these areas and leave the compound and interact with the Iraqis in fear of hitting a roadside bomb or facing the threat level in different areas.

It goes by the same token with the military side. You have got most of the units that are working at the PRTs or serving on the units. They are not active duty army units. If you take a look at it, the experience levels are a lot different when you look at active duty army versus reserve army.

Q: You have started to describe the relationship and the interaction of members of the PRT. I am curious whether you have positive views in some areas and negative in others. I have heard mainly negatives. Do you have positives to report in terms of at least some of your relationships with PRT staff?

A: Everyone is not on the negative side. There are a lot of things that leave a very bad taste in my mouth over there. There were some positives. Working with IRMO, the Iraqi

Reconstruction Management Office, who based their contact at our PRT. He was a great guy to work with, and he had been there for a few years. He was probably one of the more senior people there. Working with him was a positive thing because we were sharing information. There was no stove piping. We cross-leveled information. That was a good thing.

Q: We will get to RTI in a later question and also some of the other NGOs, Non-Governmental Organizations. Since you were in an ePRT, what was the relationship with the brigade combat team?

A: I would interact with the brigade combat team almost on a daily basis, at the minimum probably through an E-mail. The brigade combat team was based up at Bobcat Zoo which is probably a 40-minute drive. I do not think the meetings and the synchronization happened enough. We did have a big meeting up there with all the leaders of the PRT and the leaders of the brigade combat team, but it was probably six or seven months after we had been there. That is not ideal. That meeting has to take place early on and not after the brigade combat team has been in country for five to six months already.

Q: Where was your BCT (Brigade Combat Team) based?

A: I was called the Forward Operating Base Kalsu. We did have a large meeting up there. It seems like we were trying to get things on the same level. The meeting took place way too late. I do know the brigade commander and the PRT team leader still did talk and E-mail on a regular basis. I do not know how often because I was not privy to that. The other meetings had to happen more, and if you could not get there because of security concerns, then they should have set up some video teleconference or something to get thing done. Only positives can come out of meetings like that, and it certainly did not happen enough.

Q: Did it happen only once during your tour?

A: Once during my tour and that was with the brigade combat team, the fourth brigade team out of Alaska. We did have part of the brigade combat team living at the PRT, so that was a lieutenant colonel commanding that unit. We actually started to make good progress in that we would have regular meetings weekly, so he knew exactly what the PRT's focus was and what we were doing. On that level, it did happen. The meeting I was talking about was between all the key leaders of the brigade combat team and all the key leaders of the PRT. I was going to say, on the same note, there still was the challenge of being able to have civilians and military working together and being able to get things done. As you stated before, there is a different chain of command. You cannot hold some of the Department of State people accountable for not doing their job. At the same time, they cannot do it for the military side, so that is a big challenge.

Q: I would like to discuss security now. What was the level and nature of the threat for your ePRT?

A: The biggest threat that we faced probably every three to four weeks is this rocket and mortar indirect fire coming into the compound. That was the biggest threat that happened every three or four weeks. As far as security on the base, the security on the base was Blackwater, who had a contract with the Department of State. When things like that happen, they never left the base. It was, I guess, a different philosophy on do you stay on the base and continue to get rocketed and mortared, or do you go out and try to be proactive and find out where it is coming from and meet with people?

That is where, we as the military unit on the PRT, we started, based on some of our backgrounds to go out with different artillery systems when they are shooting mortars at us. We can basically project as far as the distance of the ammunition they were using and look at a map and then talk with different locals and narrow things down to where they were shooting those from. And then we could take the security a little bit further and try to be proactive instead of sitting there and letting them shoot at us every couple of weeks.

The static security on the base as far as Iraqis coming in and off on a regular basis to work there or meetings was fine. I do not think there were any issues there at all.

Q: Did you suffer any casualties from these rockets coming in?

A: We did. We had some military people in the living area where they lived. Their trailer was hit. I do not know if there were broken bones, but there were definitely shrapnel injuries, and they had to go to the hospital and got stitched up and cleaned up. A local Iraqi contractor was injured. His hand had lost a finger or two. There were probably one or two indirect fire attacks out of probably 10 or 11 at least out of the year, probably more than that, 15 or 16.

Q: What was your military-specific role there to the extent that you can describe it.

A: When we got there, we met with our Department of State counterparts. One of my peers had an idea. We wanted basically to figure out where we could affect spheres of influence the greatest in the province. We thought of how things were set up initially. It was definitely stove piping coming into play. What we recommended and the PRT leader approved is that we came out with functional groups.

The captains in these civil affairs units were plugged into different functional groups. I was plugged into agriculture. We had another guy in economics, another contact in the central services like water, electricity, things like that. Our other captain was plugged into governance at the provincial level with government leaders. At the same time our four army officers captains were in those functional groups. The agencies and NGOs at the PRT, they had their representatives at the functional groups, and that is how we started to meet and to go over and really share information and get things done.

Q: I am looking for a little bit bigger picture. I do not mean to give you a leading question, but was the military's role there more stabilization? Was there any actual combat? Or were its actions mainly defensive in nature?

A: No, no. I understood our role as getting out there and interacting with provincial level leaders and even going down to local sub-districts as well in villages to meet with local leaders and get their concerns and relay them to the Department of State. Then the Department of State could use the NGOs and other tools that they had at their disposal to better analyze the province's needs.

An example for me, I would go out and meet the local agriculture official, find out who he was, and find out where he was short, where he did not have money in his budget for the Iraqi province, and then relay that to the PRT. By no means was it a static, sit-back operation. I looked at it that to be effective in my job, I needed to get out of the gate on a regular basis to meet with local Iraqis and to discuss farming and water resources to get solutions. By the same token for the economic team, they would go out in the city of Hillah and other districts, sub-districts, and meet with businessmen and bankers, find out about the Iraqi system, do up the reports, send them up the chain. We were actually proactive in getting out there and getting things done.

Q: Did your PRT rely any on Iraqi security forces in terms of your getting out into the field?

A: We did not. We had a Iraqi police checkpoint which was directly outside our PRT. We did not rely on Iraq security. All our security on the base was Blackwater. When we left for a mission, in the area of civil affairs, we were our own security element. We would have a minimum of four Humvees go out, and we were our only security. We would plan our own missions. We would send them up to the security head for approval. I cannot think of what his title was at the PRT. Overall he was responsible for everyone's safety at the PRT. We would send him up where our convoy was, and we would also send them up through the army side so they knew what we were doing.

Q: Describe the PRT's relationship with international and non-governmental organizations, NGOs.

A: They had a lot of those types of groups at their disposal. I do not know if a lot of the interagency information was being shared. We did not know about any of the programs that were available, so you could take advantage to help people in the province. Or we would find out about it from someone else, one of our peers at another PRT who showed up and briefed. There were a lot of those NGOs and IGOs that were available to help. A lot of information at least was shared, so all the groups knew about it.

For example, the civil affairs unit. We did not know about all the programs and other ideas that were available, what we could do, what we could hope to use at our disposal for the problem. I do not know if we are still going to talk about RTI later.

Q: Yes, that is a separate question. You had Iraqi counterparts?

A: Yes, mostly provincial officials. They were my main contacts, and then by meeting with them I would find out where their priorities were, what else to do. At the same time you have to keep in mind that we were the first army civil affairs unit to live at a PRT 24/7. There were not records shared on prior agricultural programs, so I started with almost a blank slate. I did have some reports from the previous civil affairs unit, and I started to read over those and cranked out names, phone numbers.

It was up to me whether I wanted to do my job or not. I probably could have sat back at the PRT and not done a lot, but I figured if I am over in Iraq, I am stuck there. I might as well do a good job. I met with leaders in agriculture, found out what their priorities were, what their budget was, what they could afford. Then I started meeting with different farming unions and co-ops and then going out there and finding out what was available at the PRT that I could use to help them.

Q: Did you also meet with tribal councils and local business and community and citizen groups?

A: Yes. Absolutely. I met with people at the district level. Ideally I would like to bring them into the PRT to meet with them first before we went out there and took my soldiers into harm's way. I would try and bring them in, but I met with them at their farms too. We would be able to see what the problem was. I met with sheiks, mayors of sub-districts, small town farmers, with principals of schools, the head of agriculture programs, with all them.

I would also do my best to keep the higher-ups in agriculture in the loop of what I was doing. The Americans would go out and meet with these different people, and these people are not going to see a physical change. They are not going to see something getting done. The red tape it takes to get things done took a long time.

Q: Did your PRT have a public affairs officer in the program?

A: We did. I did not really understand what he did initially. When the new public affairs officer came down, he definitely was a nice breath of fresh air. He took it to another level to be proactive and get the word out there to local Iraqis, to different people so they would know what the PRT was trying to do.

Q: Who was the audience of your public affairs program, and was the program ultimately effective?

A: My opinion for the first several months there is I do not think it was effective. Once we got our new public affairs person, his audience was anyone at the PRT for starters. He met with all the civil affairs because he knew that we were out there interacting and meeting with people, and he wanted to be aware of it. He sat down with the people, interacting with the other NGOs, IGOs, and ultimately interacting with Iraqi officials. When he found out that they were doing something or they were focused on something that we were working with the Iraqis, so he would get that information. He would send it out.

Q: In terms of counterinsurgency, the PRTs are intended to bolster moderates and to provide an economic component of U.S. counter insurgency efforts. What comprised this effort? Your specific area was agriculture. Can you broaden that a little bit? As far as your PRT and looking at it as a whole, were they bolstering moderates to the extent that they could?

A: I can tell you the PRT gave me zero money when I was there. The only money I got was through the army via CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program) brigade combat commander. It was a big discussion that the PRT initially this was not going to provide or have access to CERP funds. That was clearly the quickest, most efficient way for us to get money.

The PRT team leader and the IRMO leader did not have that philosophy, and he did not want us to do it. Then he finally got to the point where there was no access to any funds by anyone, but we were not aware of it. Then they started throwing out of the boat the funds that were available to the PRT.

The bottom line is that it would have taken so long to get money to be able to use for farming unions. I went up to the military side, and our brigade commander was able to allocate funds to us so I could start getting CERP funds, dollars that I could use to be able to actually physically get projects started, to get them completed and show them that Americans are here and we actually can get stuff done. Otherwise it was just meeting with people without ever doing a thing.

Q: Would you describe the economic components that you were involved with as infrastructure, improvement and development?

A: It was infrastructure improvement. It was also development. For example, we met with different village level leaders, and I also met with provincial leaders who worked with water resources. The budget from the Iraqi government was not enough to clean all the canals. Canals had reeds and weeds in them that were 10 feet tall, so you could not

get water flowing through that because there was too much weeds and growth in there. I got I think \$108,000 approved so we could go in there and clear it, hire Iraqi contractors. In the canals, the water would flow better, get to the crops, get to the villagers and improve the whole system. Once you get water to crops, there were farmers to grow the crops. They could take them to the market, improve the economic sector of the villages.

Q: I know this was not necessarily your area, but can you describe the PRT activities related to promoting democracy and the ability of provincial or sub-provincial governments to function effectively and provide public services?

A: The goal was that they would try to have a meeting once a month, a PRT meeting with the Iraqi provincial government. There were one or two little things to come out of such a meeting. Some of the leaders would show up and they would protest. Then you would get into a meeting and as in a lot of the Iraqi meetings, there would be twenty minutes arguing back and forth, and then they would finally start the meeting. You did not accomplish as much as you hoped.

I would attend some of the government meetings for my own education. You never really see what was they were trying to get done. Were they effective? It is finally subjective.

Q: Can you now describe your interactions with RTI International?

A: As I said, RTI was based in a separate compound, probably just a couple miles away from us, and they had their own security and things like that. But we started with our functional groups. They were members of functional groups. They would come up for a weekly meeting when they could. RTI had its own agricultural expert.

RTI--I would meet with them on a regular basis, the same thing throughout the economic functional group. They had economic contacts. The only thing is the RTI expert was clearly working more of at higher level. He was looking out for the country of Iraq, and

then he would narrow it a little bit down to the province-wide level. He was so much more involved in systems that took months and months to fix, whereas I was looking at what could I do with the year that I was in Iraq to make things better for agriculture.

His experience was certainly helpful, and he steered me in the right direction. When I held meetings with different agricultural officials in Iraq and the province, I would certainly invite him, and he attended several of them. He could steer me in the right direction. If he had not been there, it might have been a lot more challenging with no American agriculture experts to help me out. He was actually from South America and that background definitely helped. RTI International brought some of the expertise that the PRT was lacking eventually.

RTI certainly helped with agricultural expertise, but they were more concerned about higher level issues. For example he was concerned with salt in the soil--how to fix that. That takes a long time to do, and I was more interested at a micro level.

Q: Can you describe PRT activities related to economic reconstruction and development, namely, what U.S. agencies and PRT members were responsible? We could say other than agriculture which was your specific area.

A: USAID had a big role with several programs that helped the economy in different sectors. We had our agriculture contract team leader who was my roommate at the time. He would meet with the functional groups and with the economic development team. There were different business leaders that would meet Iraqi officials, so we would try to have representation of reputation at those meetings that were held down in a business building in downtown Hillah or something like that. USAID had by far the most options as far as providing funds to do different things.

Q: Civil affairs soldiers participated in a lot of these reconstruction efforts?

A: Yes, at least in our PRT they did. We had our four functional groups broken down. We had usually the captain who was the officer--that was me. Then we had our enlisted sergeant who was in those meetings, too. We knew exactly where we were going and what we were trying to do. At the conclusion of those functional group meetings, we would know where we had to go out and you needed to be with or what the focus was to try to get things done. That would stimulate our mission. We had two or three missions that would go out, meet with the people, bring our information back, discuss it with some of the PRT people--our plan of attack--to physically get something done on the ground.

Q: How about the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee, the PRDC? Can you describe their work and evaluate its performance?

A: The PRDC meeting was held once a month. Some of those projects were more long-term projects, and there were billions and billions of dollars involved in those. The PRDC meetings that were held were often times not too productive.

The key component in those meetings was Iraqi nominated projects, and the PRT were supposed to put the projects on the list. A lot of those projects were long-term projects. Ultimately it was the Arab Iraqi government that was going to decide what went on those PRC lists.

Q: Can you describe the work of the rule of law officer at your PRT?

A: Initially that was going to be one of our more functional groups. Rule of law was going to be in one as well. The challenge with that involved my first roommate, who was a lawyer from Chicago. He was going to be at least a civil affairs connection to the rule of law. It would have been a perfect transition for him, but he was killed the first week we were there. He was not going to be able to do that, obviously. The PRT rule of law contact worked well and shared information with us, but he had been basically told that he did not really need our support; he was doing fine. He did not need our help. He said

if he did, he would let us know. We could get out and interact a lot easier with officials, our counterparts to those at the PRT.

Our rule of law activity did not really involve the civil affairs side. It was strictly our rule of law contact groups meeting with Iraqi officials. Toward the end of our deployment, he did come to us and ask us if we could get out to meet a couple of judges that he was having a hard time getting a hold of. We were able to go out and do that and get him some information. Our rule of law team was a functional group *per se*, but it did not have any civil affairs interactions.

Q: How did your PRT relate to the training programs run by the Multinational Security, Transition Command Iraq?

A: Like MNSTCI ?

Q: Yes, MNSTCI.

A: That operated at a much higher level. I do not know what programs they were working on or what. What they did clearly it did not filter down to my level. I was not aware of a lot of the programs they were doing, what was available that I could use. I know they had larger programs to train the Iraqi army and Iraqi police.

Q: They did not get down to your PRT?

A: Not to my functional area, not that I know of.

Q: Did your PRT have an Iraqi cultural advisor?

A: As far as a BBA (Bilingual Bicultural Advisor)? We did. We had a few of them.

Q: Were they essential to your mission?

A: We had a rule of law BBA, we had an agricultural BBA, and we had an economic BBA, and we had one other as well, governance BBA. I will comment on the agricultural BBA. He was a great guy, a really nice guy, and wanted to help. His job back in the United States though was as a homebuilder and a door installer, building new homes.

I had a question initially what his expertise was in agriculture, being over there as an agricultural BBA. He was helpful as far as answering common questions about Iraqi crops and agriculture, and the same thing about economic issues. They were helpful in answering general questions, but I had expected something a little bit more advanced as far as his expertise in that field.

Q: What did your PRT achieve during your tenure? Could you describe a list of projects completed or other concrete developments or accomplishments?

A: I will comment first on agriculture. We cleaned over 65 or 70 kilometers of canals for the farmers through CERP funds from the brigade combat team. The first big thing that we finally accomplished was the canal cleaning. Our public works group got some smaller projects done, such as paving the road in Babel province. They cleaned it up and then they paved it, which alleviated some of the security concerns about roadside bombs and things like that.

We also had funds provided, and we flew a couple businessmen to a key business meeting. I can not recall the location. It was somewhere, not in Iraq. We were able to get some key business leaders to that meeting, where they took in different ideas of how to run business plans and things like that, where to get different things.

Also, we worked with the veterinarian group. There was a director general for the vet clinic in Hillah. We were linking them in with some groups up in Baghdad which was beyond what I ever thought I would do in Iraq, like artificial insemination for bulls. The crops were so depleted in Iraq and, therefore, they did not have enough food in the whole

food chain, so we did that. The sheep were so contaminated and infested with disease. It is a good way to create income for farmers. We built sheep tanks, I think nine of them, throughout the province.

Q: Sheep dips?

A: Yes, so I was able to get that started to get at least eight or nine sheep dip tanks built and completed before I left. That was something they were very happy and grateful for. Another thing we started work on was honey production. I was not able to complete the project when I was there, but the next unit started working with them on honey production for women: candles and honey were a way to provide income.

Q: How about some of the other PRT accomplishments? We are going back to the general, but I am looking at improving governance, promoting economic development, effective utilization of American military and civilian resources and also our counter insurgency programs. If you have an overall assessment of your PRT in these areas it would be helpful to us.

A: Initially for counter insurgency they were failing. They were definitely failing. The key component of counter insurgency is getting out there with local leaders and interacting and meeting with them. A reason why they probably were not getting on meeting with them, we every now and then might have had a security issue. The bottom line is, the civilian counterparts at our PRT did not get out enough to meet with their local counterparts in the province. They are not doing the initial first task on how to defeat a counter insurgency. We were failing at that.

Q: How about governance, improving Iraqi governance?

A: The governance portion was improving, but it is such a slow and methodical process. It takes so long. If you get a good Iraqi leader who is doing the right thing, he will not give the Shiites more than the Sunnis. Then we had a police chief who was great. He did

not discriminate against different militias and different groups. He did not give preferential treatment to Sunni, Shiite, different cities or things like that. Then he became a target. He died. I think he was assassinated a couple of months after we left. That is what I heard. The governance side is working. It is just not working fast enough.

Q: Would you say the same for economic development: it is happening but not happening fast enough?

A: Yes, not happening fast enough, but some of the reasons why it is not happening fast enough is because not everyone knows what is available to spur economic development. Not everyone is aware of the programs available. USAID has so many programs available.

I can tell you in the civil affairs company when I was there, we did not know a lot about them. It is the same thing now but we are not getting these people, these civilians from the Department of State, out there to meet with the Iraqis. They are never going to know what they can do to make an impact. Of course, the goal is to improve governance and leadership in the province.

Q: Did you feel that given the resources you had, both military and civilian, you were using the American resources effectively?

A: With the limited resources that we were aware of, we were doing what we could to make ends meet. If you asked me when I got to Iraq, what we would accomplish in a year, I would have certainly said I thought we would do a lot more. That goes back ultimately to the leadership. The leadership was so poor, pathetic in our PRT. People were very complacent, and complacency was accepted a lot. If you have senior leaders accepting complacency, it is going to filter on down to a lot of persons. No one is going to do enough.

Q: As you look back on your total experience in Iraq, was your training adequate to prepare you to serve on a PRT?

A: Absolutely not. When we were going through our training at Fort Bragg before we left for Iraq, we had minimal if any PRT training at all. We had maybe a half an hour discussion on the PRT, but the PRT concept was so new in Iraq. The PRT concept in Afghanistan was a successful model and was working well there. That is why we decided to bring it to Iraq. It was so new. Now it is a couple of years old.

It could be going much more successfully now. Part of the problem was no one knew how to train us, and no one knew how it was going to work because different PRTs throughout Iraq were doing things a little bit differently. When we got there, we essentially created the model for all PRTs that we thought was going to be successful. The training prior to deploying was very, very poor.

Q: So you had almost no programmatic training for your specific position.

A: Absolutely not. If you were to take a step back and look at my background in sales from a health care standpoint, I was recalled into the military, which was fine. Then my job in Iraq was working on agriculture. My agricultural experience was maybe planting a couple of seeds in my parents' garden when I was a kid. That is about it.

Q: What modification would you recommend in terms of training? Not just modification but obviously you saw that there was a need for a whole new training package altogether.

A: For starters, once they have the civil affairs units at Fort Bragg, and once they identify where they are going to be going in country, you right away start cutting and pasting. You start plugging in the officers and NCOs and soldiers that have experience in these types of things. For agriculture, you take someone who has got any kind of experience with farming or seeds or anything. Finally in Iraq we had an officer whose

job back in the United States was with seed, selling seed to farmers at a local level. We finally got him down there the last couple of months.

Things like that take people that have Master's degrees, have their MBAs or have had their own businesses. You put them into the economic functional groups. If you had different people who were city planners or city councilmen who were working with developing services in cities, you put them into essential services groups. By putting the right people in there before you get to Iraq, and start linking them up through e-mail with the units in Iraq, that is going to set things up on a much better foundation. They could get in to the PRT and start running it instead of having to do all the research initially after arrival.

Q: This is my last question: What lessons did you draw from your experience in Iraq?

A: Overall, depending on whatever job you do initially, be proactive and find out the information and get things done and do not take no for an answer. There are too many people there who were taking no for an answer or who would sit back on the base and never do anything, messing around in their office, goofing off on the Internet, not doing their jobs. The many people in PRTs need to take pride in their jobs and get things done. It was very, very frustrating for me throughout the entire year.

The last few months I was pulled out of the PRT, and a search took place to go to a combat unit up in Baghdad. I was very apprehensive initially to go up to the city but very glad I was doing so because I was leaving the PRT and moving on to a different job. It was also interesting seeing how the Department of State and the military interacted, some of the challenges that they faced, and I am sure are still facing today.

Q: Any other comments that you would like to leave us with?

A: No. I've voiced a lot of my concerns. Hopefully the selection process gets better for the leaders that they have over there because if not, the PRT objectives will not be met

with what they are trying to do in all the provinces. They can be met if you get some of the right people in those positions. I remember reading in the news months ago that many of the Department of State people do not want to volunteer for those positions, so they are probably going to pull people into there. If you do not get the right people, it is going to be poor work at the end of the gap again and again. Bad work in--put bad people in--get bad work out.