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INTERVIEW #16

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Executive Summary

This interviewee, a military officer, served in Iraq from March, 2006 – March, 2007. During this time he had three distinct PRT-related assignments: as deputy team leader for Babil PRT, as operations officer for the National Coordinating Team and finally, for the final four months of his tour, as plans officer. As planning officer, he worked to define what the ePRTs should look like. One of the key aspects of the job was determining how to staff the PRTs, initially using reservists with civilian acquired skills until the Department of State could take over this function.

While deputy team leader in Babil, the interviewee worked on team building and better integration of his staff, to counteract the stovepiping he encountered there. Regrettably, in his view, he was not able to continue this effort, since he was asked to concentrate his efforts instead on helping to get several more PRTs established.

The interviewee provides insights into the degree and extent of the “clash of cultures” between the civilian world (primarily State Department) and the military; for example, a decision that takes the State Department ten days to make, the military can make “in about ten minutes.” He also has some pointed observations to make about RTI, one of the largest AID implementing partners, including commending their success in organizing a very successful governors’ conference marked by effective cooperation among Sunni, Shia, and Kurds.

One of the successes of the PRTs generally which the interviewee notes is their ability to make sure priorities are set by the Iraqis, rather than by the Americans.

On balance, this interviewee sees the PRTs as very much a part of the success of the surge under the leadership of General Petraeus, who believes firmly in the PRTs’ value; according to this interviewee, the PRTs bring skills that the military does not have.

Interview

Q: I would like to begin by asking when you were in Iraq working on PRT issues.

A: It was March of 2006 to March of 2007.

Q: I believe you had at least three different assignments. Let's look at the one first where you had the most amount of time.

A: Ok. I came into the National Coordination Team in March. I was actually an active duty military member of Multinational Forces Iraq, Strategic Effects Division and as part of an internal tasking I was assigned to the NCT (National Coordination Team). I was the deputy operations officer for several months and my first assignment was out to the Babil PRT because there was a gap between two deputy team leaders so I was assigned as a deputy team leader for thirty days. Then I returned to Baghdad and continued to work as the deputy team leader for another three or four months. I came back as the deputy operations officer and then in August or September I became the operations officer for the NCT and then as part of that, sometime toward the end of November and the first week in December, I became the plans officer and the operations officer. My plans piece was the embedded PRTs that are currently working at the brigade level in Iraq.

Q: So you really did have at least three distinct operational assignments and we can look at all of them. In your first incarnation where you were the operations officer, beginning March, '06 at the National Coordination Team, what kinds of issues were you primarily focusing on at that point?

A: At that time we had five PRTs that were stood up. The director at that time was primarily focused on standing up the remaining five PRTs. On a weekly basis, we received the status report, I guess is the best way to put it. It was the PRT weekly highlights and the weekly status report. We consolidated that into one document and forwarded that out. We also tried to meet the logistics and the operational needs of the PRTs and we coordinated with Multinational Forces Iraq, Multinational Corps Iraq and sometimes with the individual brigades that were partnered with the PRTs. At that time the PRTs were new, the brigades were not trained on how to deal with the PRTs or what their mission was and in some instances it was a very good relationship and in some instances it was not.

Q: OK. Let's explore that a little bit more. Obviously, one thing that comes to mind is that there would be, I don't want to say a clash of cultures but the civilian members of the PRTs would not necessarily function in the same way that the military members of the brigades would function. Was that a source of difficulty for you in those months?

A: My experience with the Babil PRT was maybe not the same as others. When the PRTs initially stood up there were three test PRTs and they were stood up on regional embassy offices: one in Babil, one in Mosul and one in Kirkuk. Because they were stood up on a regional embassy office, they were on an embassy annex compound and they did not require any support from the military. When we started standing up PRTs in Salah Ad Din and Diyala, we had a rougher time with those because now they were requiring support from the military and the military was asking for money back from us. But I am digressing a little bit.

What happened in Babil during the thirty days that I was there as the deputy team leader was I came in and I found people who were very stovepiped. USAID was doing the great things that USAID does, the State Department people were primarily trying to operate the REO, the Regional Embassy Office and then the military people were kind of operating on their own out there because the State Department people were focused on something else and USAID was not used to working with the military. The civil affairs personnel that were supposed to be working for the PRT were out finding their own problems and solving them. USAID, as I said was out spending money and establishing projects that are within their bailiwick and things seemed kind of disjointed, so I started to work on team building and I started to work on ways that people could be integrated and the next deputy team leader that came in behind me continued to do that work and he did a good job and I thought we had a pretty good PRT out there based on that.

Q: It sounds like when you returned to the National Coordinating Team you would have been in a position to send out some guidance/ some lessons learned just on your month in Babil, to help others correct this stovepiping you described. Did it work like that?

A: I tried, though we were up against a timeline. We had to get the ten PRTs stood up and make them credible and so at the time we did not have the personnel in the NCT to focus on current operations in the existing PRTs. When I came back from Babil, we were focused on getting people, getting coalitions out to the different PRTs and to get them manned and stood up because we were afraid that as had happened in previous years, that different types of State Department support like PRTs were tried and had failed and the names escape me but there were two previous attempts. In fact, our Basrah PRT leader, he was an Englishman, who wrote a book on his experiences in, I think it was Qadisayah. They were evacuated out in the later stages of direct combat action but still it was not a permissive environment. And then there was another group, they were called SETS, State Embedded Teams, anywhere from two to five people that were actually working on each one of the forward operating bases, coordinating with the brigades or the battalions that operated those forward operating bases to try and bring State Department presence into each one of the provinces.

As all this evolved, the PRT type organization was begun in the form that has now continued for at least two years, two and a half years.

I did not get to do what I wanted to do. I came back and I was placed into a very uncomfortable position where I knew what was wrong in the PRT that I was in but based on the focus of the organization I had to support the director and try to move things forward.

Q: I understand it was a very difficult undertaking that you had. Was the leader in this start-up a State Department Foreign Service Officer?

A: He is a retired Marine who came back to the State Department as a 3161, I believe.

Q: You mentioned a couple of precursors to the PRTs and of course, PRTs were operating in Afghanistan. While I know that there are big differences between the Afghanistan PRTs and the Iraq ones, how would you describe the model you were using

to stand up these, let's say, ten PRTs in total. Each one was going to be quite different depending on the circumstances, but they would have some commonalities as well.

A: Regarding the differences between the two PRTs, I would encourage you to seek out someone who was there.

Q: From my vantage point, the Iraqi PRTs look very similar so I am obviously missing something because people tell me that they have nothing to do with the Afghanistan PRTs.

A: The only reason the PRTs have the name PRT in Iraq is because some high officials with experience in Afghanistan decided, "Hey, that's a PRT. Let's call it a PRT." And we said, "No, they are a government support team. They are not a provincial support team like in Afghanistan." Afghanistan is about reconstruction and that is primarily what their mission is. It is a bunch of engineers from all the different services and a few civilians that are out there trying to rebuild these provinces.

Here in Iraq we are trying to build governments. We are trying to rebuild governments that can sustain themselves because of course, a house of cards in a stiff breeze is going to fall down. The State Department themselves started this whole PRT mess and confused the military and confused the civilians and when we had brigades that came into Iraq, they'd go, "Oh, yes. PRT, they do the same thing in Iraq, right? They build stuff. We give them money and they will go out there and make projects happen." And we are like, "No. This bunch of State Department people are helping here to rebuild the government." And they are like, "Oh, it's a PRT. We're going to do what we want." "No, back off."

Q: I see. So they really should have been called government support teams.

A: There was a Marine general who talked about the three block war. Briefly, there is one, you have a new Marine and in fact now you have a new soldier and a new airman and a new sailor. On one block they are fighting in direct action. They are either defending or they are on the offensive. On the second block they are in reconstruction trying to mend the fences and rebuild and re-establish infrastructure that was destroyed as a result of the direct action. Then the third block you have is people who are just trying to rebuild the government and reestablish the government, similar to the hierarchy of needs. You know, you have security, you have food and water and shelter and they are trying to do that in the third block. OK, we can't do much about the first block because that is clearly a military action, but in the second block, the reconstruction is really the kind of PRT that we had in Afghanistan. The third block is really kind of what we are doing with the PRTs in Iraq.

I believed in the three block effort on the PRTs' part and with the civil affairs personnel we had from the military. So the civil affairs are really your first block. They are the people who are advising the commander. In the second block you've got a few more civilians coming in and the third block, it's really the State Department's bailiwick to pick that up and run with that.

Q: In terms of your communications with the PRT, if you were primarily having to work on standing them up, what was the guidance that you provided to them ?

A: There was not a lot of guidance that was provided to the PRTs as to what they were supposed to do on the ground. I know there are people who will disagree with me on this. The PRTs were supposed to go in and do an initial assessment of the many different facets of the government in Iraq: how bad is the infrastructure; what is the agricultural status; what is the state of basic utilities, sewer, water, electrical and trash; what is the government doing; how are they communicating with the people; how transparent are they? And then based on this set of metrics that they had, they were supposed to come up with a work plan. They were supposed to coordinate that work plan with the Iraqis and then they were supposed to work together with the provincial government, the provincial council, the deputy governor and the governor to try and implement these policies. At the same time they were supposed to communicate back to us what they needed from the embassy to work at the national level so that they could enable the provinces to work through these issues also. The whole thing was to put an Iraqi face on an Iraqi project. I will tell you the Iraqis work at their own pace as many people in the world do. When I was out in the Pacific, we used to call it “island time”. Maybe you are familiar with that.

Q: Sure.

A: And then the State Department and this goes back to your original point, the State Department has a different culture. To me, as a military guy, the State Department is a very process oriented organization. They start at a, they go to b, c, d, e, f and g. No matter how long the process takes, and whether it ends in success or failure, they follow the process.

Q: I have heard that said by many people, that process is very much part of the culture.

A: And then the military walks in and in a decision that takes the State Department ten days to make, we can do in about ten minutes because 1) the military guy is empowered to make decisions, and 2) the military doesn't follow a set process. We do follow a set methodology but we adjust the methodology based on the time available that we see as a decision point to make a decision.

Time moved differently for the Iraqis, the State Department and for the military and that clashed on a regular basis.

Q: Was there any way to avoid that, given how things were organized?

A: I think we have, but I have been gone for a year. What happened in the year that I was there somewhere in October, November we got ready for a new corps to come in. We had new brigades come in.

Q: Strategic Effects?

A: They spent a lot of time on strategic communication. That is also one of the national priorities to try and make sure that you stay ahead of the information operations of the other side.

Q: By “information”, what do you mean by that in this context?

A: They were the official public affairs office for MNFI.

Q: All right. And you are trying to stay ahead of?

A: Well, let’s say we are trying to stay ahead of al Qaeda and how they are using their information to bolster their effects.

Q: OK. That’s understandable and that is definitely an important goal.

A: The brigade in a November - December time frame, the brigades that started coming in and the new corps that came in, had not only been trained better and were better informed about PRTs from the Combined Arms Center and the Brigade Command Training Program. They call it BCTP and there are teams out of Fort Leavenworth that train these guys before they arrive in theater. So brigades started coming in expecting State Department personnel, expecting USAID, expecting nongovernmental organizations to start participating in their plan. It really came to light in January, February, and March as we went into the surge and I was preparing to redeploy back to the United States. The commanders were taking into account the secondary and tertiary effects of their kinetic operations and what the non kinetic or the PRT piece was going to be in the province or in their operation.

So I watched an evolution of the training and of the information that was provided to those commanders so that they could meld the PRT better into what they were doing.

Q: Presumably, not only were the commanders taking into effect the PRT, but in fact the PRT was there so that they weren’t disappointed when they came in expecting State and the AID people, they found them?

A: They found them, and there are people who will disagree with me again, but the State Department has had trouble in the past manning the PRTs and we found that also with the embedded PRTs. As soon as the President in January came out and said, “Hey, we are going to double the number of PRTs,” so we took that as double the size of the existing PRTs and double the number of PRTs. Well, the State Department only hires a certain number of people on an annual basis.

Q: About 250 Foreign Service people.

A: Well, our number was 690 additional people just for the Iraqi piece alone. Actually, it was 300 additional, but in a year rotation we had 690 people that we needed. I guess after I left, one division asked for four more embedded PRTs and they were promised those, so there you go. There’s another 40 people right there on top of that. So the State

Department had a lag and they came back and said, “Hey.” They told DOD back here in Washington, they said, “Hey guys. We need some help” and DOD agreed to supply, actually, they put out a net call to just about anybody in uniform that had civilian acquired skills that met the requirements of their embedded PRTs to volunteer to come on active duty for another year and go over there and fill while the State Department tried to catch up with what the requirement was going to be.

Q: That sounds totally plausible because most Foreign Service Officers are not trained to work in a combat zone and their skills are generally not development skills. So naturally, the State Department would have to go and hire people, which I guess is what eventually took place.

A: On the PRTs for true State Department people out of the ten there was the director, i.e. the PRT leader who was usually an FSO 01 (Foreign Service Officer at the grade one level). Sometimes when we got down towards the end, we were taking MC and OCs also, that either came out of retirement or just wanted a chance to deploy, take a break from whatever they were doing. We also had a , and I am going to get the word wrong, it is like the PAO but it was a communications officer who was usually State Department.

Q: The public affairs officer.

A: Correct. And then there was supposed to be a DOJ, there was supposed to be an agricultural person and then we were supposed to have one to two USAID people and then we usually had three people that came out of a USAID contractor and they were provincial development specialists. There was one for law, there was one for engineering and sometimes agriculture, and government.

That was the third one, government. And those three people were usually not Americans but they were expats from another country that would come in or they were Americans that were Iraqis that wanted to come back and serve, you know, for a year to try and help rebuild their country.

Q: Were those folks under the RTI program? I know that is one of the big aid implementing partners and there are others but that is one that comes up with the greatest frequency. One of our questions actually is how effective were those folks, based on your observations?

A: RTI was hit or miss. In some instances, RTI was very good and in some instances RTI was not. In one province, if you talked to the team leader, you’d be told that RTI was probably the worst thing that ever walked the face of the earth. RTI’s hiring practices probably did not meet the security scrutiny that you would find to get inside of a FOB and as they started to scrutinize the RTI employees, some of the military FOBs, you know the Forward Operating Bases found there were some people of questionable backgrounds and that is what the problem was.

Q: What would that be? Are they criminals or are they just politically suspect?

A: They were. I can only say that anecdotally. I do not have any direct proof of that. In other instances the people we had, the people I had down in other provinces, were really good people. I would say the wall that I had to overcome concerned teamwork. There is a regional RTI office that never came into our compound and the people we had, RTI people thought that they worked for the RTI contractor themselves and not for the PRT and so there wasn't a real good way to put our arms around and hug them and make them feel a part of the team unless we tried to break down that wall with the guys that were downtown working with the province.

And then there was also this protection clause, exclusion clause that they had in their contract. They wouldn't allow us to see their proprietary materials. They had proprietary information so that they couldn't tell us what they were teaching. When they were teaching it, it was really frustrating because we were trying to tie in our work plan with the PRT and to what they were teaching supposedly at their weekly classes. If we could have done that and could have done that better, we probably could have started to achieve some of our goals faster. RTI at the time had a three year contract and that is still true. There is a year left on that contract. They were progressing along on the contract just like contractors are supposed to do but the PRTs, through ambitious State Department people and through really highly motivated military people, they were trying to push the Iraqis as fast as possible. We were trying to drive along and of course, that is not what USAID or RTI had in their plans.

Q: Do you think that was a USAID error because they let the contract and presumably structured it in a certain way?

A: No. This goes back to part of the strategic plan for the State Department, for DOD and it was not planned by years but the State Department's and the military's plan was get in, get out. The military was going to pull out after a year which began about 2007, just as General Casey tried to plan before General Petraeus came over. They were going to draw down and they were going to go to ten. USAID has been in Africa for 35 or 40 years and they have never left so, the military stands back and we joke and say, "Where is their disengagement, what is their disengagement criteria because they haven't disengaged from anything."

Q: It doesn't surprise me at all that they weren't disengaging but I guess it seems an error, if you will, that the PRT didn't know what was going on.

A: I don't know if it is an error because the plan was the PRTs were promised to be a one year organization. I will go to the mat on that one. The promise to the State Department and the promise to the military was "give me twelve months with the PRT, we will achieve our goals." If I had to give them a grade card, we would get the provincial council up to a C level operation, which wouldn't stand the test here in the United States but for Iraq it will be pretty good. And we will disengage. Some sold it as "don't give me any money, I am going to be out of there in a year, we can do it with what we've got, we are doing fine." A year rolled around and all of a sudden the PRTs were staying for a second year. At the end of that first year, in November, December, March,

April timeframe in that six month period we were supposed to rotate them out and turn everything over to USAID. The security situation was supposed to be such that USAID and the State Department could build their little compounds, like you guys do and live in peace and you could walk down the street and of course, it is not 100 per cent safe, but it is just going to be petty crime. Nobody is really targeting Americans and la, la, la. We are all going to live in a happy land.

OK. It didn't work out that way. Security did not recover the way it was supposed to and so it couldn't be turned over to USAID. So USAID's plan was, "OK. We've got to tolerate the PRTs for a year, eighteen months at the most and then they are going to start rotating out and we are going to get to take over" and then RTI and USAID can hold hands and they can do whatever they wanted after we were gone. They had a pretty good plan. It wasn't an error but it was at the strategic level it was tied in with what they thought the military and the State Department were going to do.

Q: I see. And you figure USAID and RTI at least were on the same page in their strategic plans?

A: Yes, for the most part. I mean, we had some instances where we really wanted to ratchet things up a little bit. We wanted to move forward with some councils and things and USAID did a great job with RTI to renegotiate portions of their contract to start agricultural conferences, to start governmental meetings. In fact, USAID and RTI came together and they sponsored all of the governors to come together in a huge meeting. They all came together and they used some of the tools that RTI and USAID gave them and they said, "what? We are going to write a resolution to present in front of the National Council." And they did and they said, "These are what we want as provincial government rights." And they must have put fifteen or twenty things down there, not that it got passed by the congress, but it was a point that these guys came together and they didn't care if they were Sunni or Shia or Kurdish, they just came together and they all agreed, all of them signed this document that said these are the rights that we want down at the provincial level. We want national level hands off. Let us do our thing down here and that was it. Everybody kind of pooh-poohed it away a little bit but it was a huge step forward and it really reflected that maybe what USAID and RTI were doing was successful.

Q: Is that activity a very good example of what was outside of the PRT framework?

A: It was held in a location where the PRTs were not allowed to go and if you spoke English or your skin was too light, you did not need to be there. It was really a place which RTI and USAID oversaw.

Q: Weren't the USAID representatives Americans?

A: They are but many of their people are coming out of Jordan, and there were a few that were coming out of Syria that had been vetted out, and a few out of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, countries that were probably more trusted than us.

Q: These were the actual technocrats that they were sending?

A: The contractors that RTI hired out of different countries.

Q: What about the leadership, the people who actually convoked this meeting for example, who sent out the invitation?

A: I don't know for sure but I do know that USAID had their name all over the flier that came out after the conference.

Q: I guess it would have clearly had some U.S. connection.

A: I hope so.

Q: I want to work up to the creation of the ePRTs but let's take a moment to look at your PRT experience. What kind of accomplishments would you say you observed or put in place or got going during the time that you were in Iraq, even though you weren't always intimately connected with that PRT but it is obviously one that you knew pretty well and we can use it as an example of how things were working and what lessons there might be from that experience.

A: You just shot me in the heart.

Q: Oh, no. How did I do that?

A: No, no. In the thirty days that I was down there that also coincided with the mosque bombing, the Golden Mosque.

Q: Oh, yes. In Samara.

A: Yes, and we had a boycott of the PRTs for three out of the four weeks that I was down there. I will tell you though that part of the team building efforts that I worked through, there was a great guy, a DOJ employee. He was probably the best lawyer that we had working for the PRTs, one of two maybe three, I would put him, out of the twelve that rotated through.

He did a phenomenal job down in Babil with his Iraqi counterpart and he started to see how he was more than just rule of law down in the province. He started to see that the lawyer had to have his hands in everything, from street construction to land rights to property and ownership. We didn't want him just looking at rule of law, just looking at the humanitarian rights of prisoners. We weren't trying to take him away from what DOJ's primary mission was down there, but he also had a responsibility to help these people out with the building of a new provincial courthouse. There were, I want to say, eleven different land owners on that. He and his counterparts worked night and day to renegotiate that piece of land with the Iraqis and they got the Iraqis to do it. They didn't

just do it themselves. They got the Iraqis to understand that you just can't say, "well, . We are going to take it because we can." They've got to either pay people or they've got to give them something in place of it. That was a huge highlight.

The other highlight, really (I can't say was attributable to us) there was an Iraqi general down there, who was the police chief, I think they call him the PDP, the Provincial Director of Police. This general was a phenomenal person. He was Shia but he did not treat anybody differently and he just hated corruption from the government, from his provincial government. There were I believe, seven attempts on his life and I think the seventh one was the last one where he was finally killed in a roadside bombing about three or four months ago. This guy did not come to us for support. We helped him with support from behind the scenes. He ran a police academy where he had one of his majors fired because this major took a hundred certificates for his friends to make them police officers. He got him and fired him. He couldn't get Shia police officers to work in the northern part of the province that was primarily Sunni. At the graduation ceremony he had it videotaped, he had the REO director there, I guess he was either an FSO 01 or an OC at the time. He had the brigade commander from the local military brigade there and he put a huge pot out in the middle of this soccer field, where he had the formation for graduation. He told them all, "Your assignment is in that pot." And there were envelopes in there for every one of those police officers. They came up and they opened it and they had to read aloud where they were supposed to go. Out of the 500 that graduated that day, I think there were 75 that quit on the spot and refused their assignment.

Q: Because they were not going to the province they wanted or the part of the province?

A: Yes, it was a provincial thing. His efforts there to be unbiased based on the religious sect was just enlightening down there. It really made you feel good when you saw him. He put his guys in danger every day and the people admired him. Other Iraqi officials did not like him. They tried to have him removed going through the ministry of interior, MOI and it took the intervention of the U.S. military and probably also through the State Department to put pressure on the MOI to keep him in place.

Q: How did he come by this unusual moral ethic?

A: That was before my time. I don't know but I just enjoyed the man's presence and the efforts that he put in everyday.

Q: He was a gem and unfortunately, was killed. I was going to ask who killed him. Is it well known?

A: A roadside bomb has no face and no name.

Q: Those are good examples of how PRT involvement was addressing the mission of justice. What other things did you want to mention?

A: One thing we started to work on the last week I was down there, was with a colleague working for USAID. He really taught me what USAID is supposed to do out there in these small groups. We started talking about how 80 per cent of the provinces depend on agriculture for their success. He said we need to figure out how a farmer gets his produce to market and then we ought to look at how we link the power of the PRT to what the province wants. Now, there are two sides of that: one is that 80 per cent of the income is from produce or from agriculture but that only involves about 20 per cent of the people. The governors, and I will say this from the operations officer perspective, the governors across the board, across the country were focused on getting enough votes to get reelected into office whenever the provincial elections came along and that would come from the cities. So the governors would push the PRTs and the military to push money into projects in the cities but here my colleague's point: if you really want to establish prosperity in the provinces, it is not necessarily about water, sewer, trash and electrical service. It is about income and it is about security. He said, "if I've got a truck and it drives out to Ali's house and it picks up eggs or tomatoes which are perishable products, but every time I drive out there, my truck breaks down because the road is so bad, I am not going to go out there or I am going to charge Ali too much money to pick up his produce. If I fix the road, then I can pick up Ali's food stuff cheaper and I can take it to market and sell it at a greater profit margin." He said, "We ought to fix the road. Once we fix the road, we can move the produce. Once we start moving the produce, then we start getting it into the towns where it can be sold and if it has to go all the way back to Baghdad, then the money comes back through the province and out to the farmers. Pretty soon you are going to need schools and then you are going to need sewers and then you are going to need electricity and water to these different areas as you work through a system."

He started working with the province to determine what their five agricultural needs were, or what their priorities were and I think it was sheep, beef, wheat, rice and okra, which surprised the heck out of everybody because the people out there at MNFI in Strategic Effects were like, "we need tomato paste plants, we need tomato canning." And it is like, wait a minute. At that time nobody had ever gone out there and surveyed the provinces to find out what they were producing in each one of these provinces.

It just so happened that Babil produced great mutton or sheep because they lived in the salt marshes and they believe the salty surroundings made the meat taste better and made it taste different, which is probably true. It also produced niche rice that used to be valued throughout the Mideast and if they could capitalize on that rice, then they could market it outside of Iraq also. It just went on and on and on from there. So now they had five things.

The national government controls the five inputs to farming; the seed, the fertilizer, the insecticide, the herbicide and the vaccinations for the animals. It is almost like a communist regime. They say, "OK. We've got 100,000 vaccines and we are going to divide that by 18 provinces and we tell each province what they are going to get, not worrying about if they need it or not." So that was a problem that should have been shifted back from the PRT to the embassy for the embassy to start working through the

ministries. Well, that wasn't the priority of the ministry, the embassy officers had not necessarily bought into the PRTs and the information that was being fed back from the provinces. Once again, broken communication but the work that my colleague started to do down there, I successfully got the engineer and the lawyer tied in. I said, "Look guys, see where we're trying to go with this. If we start building our efforts along these lines, it's not about everybody getting clean water etc." I said, "We've got to find out what the priorities are from the Iraqis and start building in that direction so that it builds a base for them to develop in the future." You would have thought I was pulling somebody's teeth out when we started talking about that.

Q: You mentioned the governor wanted the public works projects in the city where they would impact more people and then we have your AID colleague who wants to improve the rural economy which only affects directly 20 per cent of the people. So how would you manage to do both?

A: The number one thing I have to say is, was that the Iraqis had to have their face first. If it was an American face or if there was a coalition face that came out on the news or the newspaper, then the plan was doomed to failure. Only if you could get an Iraqi to stand up and say, "This is what I think is the best thing to do" or if you could get the provincial council to agree that this is the best way forward, would you have success in anything that you did. Only through educating people, individually on the side, having chai and turkey, whatever, and teaching them and convincing them which is the best way to go forward, and learning who is the correct influential person to push on could you have success like that. In the little time I was down there in Babil I did not have that opportunity, especially with the boycott that was going on.

Q: But as you watched it even when you went back to Baghdad and kept in touch with them, was there some evidence?

A: We changed team leaders down there and then we had a new influx of people and I've got to say that in December, November-December time frame we had an influx of people from the State Department and it was a bunch of FSO – 05s and 03s, and then we had a bunch of other people, even some FSO-01s that probably didn't need to be in Iraq and I am saying that in the nicest way. But they saw opportunity for promotion and they also saw an opportunity for "by name request" for their next job when they left Iraq after a year and so they came over there for their own opportunity and not necessarily for the improvement and the dedication and energy it takes to work on a very slow pace with the Iraqis and things really changed dramatically there the last four months that I was there.

Q: I guess you just highlighted one aspect of how things changed for the worse. Was the change in any way for the better?

A: The goodness of the change was we finally started getting some people in in the niche organizations. We never really overcame the shortage of lawyers for DOJ but we started getting in our agricultural guys. Those people can teach people how to fish; they can teach people how to handle herbicide and handle their agriculture, they can make some

real recommendations but we also learned at the same time that it depends on who you get. If you get a guy in who is a PhD from USDA and he works on pine trees and pine cones from the great Northwest, he doesn't know anything about palm trees and olive trees in Anbar Province. But if you get a guy in from Florida, and we had a guy from Florida that went to Babil, a USDA guy, and he was an extension officer from Florida who could call back and get people to send fishing reels over. He used to run Future Farmers of America; he ran 4-H and he was the kind of guy who would get down in there and he would work with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts. He would establish Future Farmers of Iraq; he would establish 4-H clubs and he had a different name for it. There was an Islamic name for it but it was still all the same thing. It was about community service and things like that. I mean the impact that that guy had was kind of kind of like Jesus. He taught people how to fish instead of giving people food.

Q: That's the long- time mantra at USAID. That has always been what they tried to do. This gentleman was recruited from USDA, you said?

A: Yes, he was. He was a USDA guy.

Q: Those folks are often marvelous. What they do is generally very concrete and very focused and usually makes a big difference.

A: The one thing I didn't like about USDA that is less positive: we had wonderful people that came over, but USDA did not guarantee them a job when they returned home because they weren't working for USDA, they had been working for the State Department in Iraq. So they didn't have a job guarantee.

Q: How could they do that?

A: Well, we found out. It is really only the military; if you are a military guy you are the only one that has the protection clause from the government. You don't get that as a civilian if you are over there.

Q: I didn't realize that.

A: At least two years ago you didn't. There were guys who came over there because they wanted to be there, they wanted to make a positive impact but yet they told us straight out, we are not sure what guarantees we'll have when we go home.

Q: I am sure that is definitely a disincentive for some people to volunteer. You mentioned early on public affairs, which ties into some of the things we have been talking about. How did the PRTs that you observed handle their public affairs?

A: I think they handled it fairly well from a State Department perspective. A lot of times they were not tied in with the military. The military had their own public affairs and the PRTs that were co-located with their brigades over time and through understanding, they developed a relationship so that they could report the same message together. But you

are some distance from your brigade combat team, if there was a direct action that was in or near an important provincial city and the governor would come to the REO asking what was going on or what was happening, there wasn't always a good flow of information on what the message was and what the secondary, tertiary effects were or what the information was supposed to be that was put out.

Q: The kind of information the governor was seeking had to do with the security situation?

A: Well, it depends. It depends on what kind of raid or what kind of action was taken there. It could have even been outside of the province that we are in because the REO looked after five provinces. You may have had people come in from other cities and areas. "Why is the military down there, why did they roll through this particular area?" We would be blamed for people getting picked up and taken away or we would actually have suspects in custody, the military would have suspects in custody and they would come and seek the REO's assistance to release them. But down in our province, a lot of times military actions were not coordinated through the REO's so that the appropriate message could be relayed or appropriate measures taken afterwards.

Q: Would you recommend more coordination?

A: I think if a brigade combat team and a PRT are located together, there is a synergy that is developed there, there is a level of trust and it is almost like what you have with MNFI and the embassy. While it is not a warm, loving relationship, at least there is a meeting, there's a "let's go have dinner and talk about things" and they really try to work things out together. I will say when I was there, the 25th Infantry Division came in and they pretty much decided that the four PRTs in the northern provinces, he was going to ensure that those PRTs got whatever they needed. Like I was telling you; it was part of that education process and the preparation of the division commander and the brigade commanders made before they came over which turned around in the way things went in the northern provinces once the 25th ID came in. The messages were the same, the money flowed toward the PRTs from the division and they coincided with PRT activities, helicopters were available to transport the governors. The 25th ID leadership ensured that the governors had communication with the national government. Sometimes the national government would ignore the Sunnis. So the general would fly the governors (of a Sunni province) down to Baghdad and ensure that they got in to see whoever they needed to see.

Q: Yes, apparently this was one of the PRT's important services in general, to facilitate these meetings between the governors and other local officials with the ministries in Baghdad.

A: It was a pain because the NCT was not manned to be a welcome wagon. We didn't have a protocol office and the embassy did not support our needs directly but , you gotta do what you gotta do.

Q: In terms of trying to make appointments for people the military flew in, and coordinating where they were going to stay and who they are going to meet. Was that the kind of responsibility you would have?

A: Sometimes it was and a lot of times, well, we couldn't pay for the governors to stay either in the Green Zone or outside the Green Zone and they could not stay in the embassy compound so sometimes it was dicey and at the last minute, we found places for them to stay. We also did not necessarily provide them with security or convoy support to go outside the Green Zone either.

Q: Of course the people they needed to see, the Ministries, were they located in the Green Zone?

A: Some of the ministries were outside in the Red Zone. I don't know how they got out there but I am fairly certain we did not provide them with long term security outside, in the Red Zone.

Q: That's an interesting point, how these VIPs went about their business there in the capital.

A: Well, I do know there was an embassy person going out to see a minister who was in the Red Zone. There was an irregular security force, an irregularly available security force but they would arrange to take them to meetings outside.

Q: Well, we know about the contractors, Blackwater and so on.

A: This was actually a military unit that did this. We had Blackwater when I was down in the province. They actually transported me to one or two different venues, did an excellent job. In my province, before I got down there, across the board Blackwater had a reputation for driving 70 in a 30 mile an hour zone right through the middle of town and they did not mix with the military very well because the military was more respectful of the people. They would stop for people in crosswalks and they wouldn't shoot the first car that drove up within a hundred feet of them and things like that. Blackwater would put a round right through the grill of somebody's car if they got too close. It wasn't anything to do with the PRT. Blackwater finally started evolving and our PRT was one of the first ones that started using a pen flare that kind of looks like a ballpoint pen.

Q: A "pen flare"?

A: It is a very small flare that looks like a writing pen or like a BIC pen. You pull the string on it and it shoots a little flare out and so instead of shooting a warning shot at the vehicle behind them that was getting too close, they would shoot these pen flares. They would shoot five or six of them at a time and bounce them off the guy's windshield and let the guy know, "hey, I am running out of pen flares and the next thing you are going to get is a piece of hot lead."

Q: Oh, I see, kind of a warning flare.

A: So these pen flares added to the escalation of force to give people warning that I can hit you from where I am and you had better get away from me and so they actually developed a new technique. They go, “hey, these pen flares are a lot cheaper than , repairing somebody’s car or paying money for an inadvertent death or something like that.”

Q: Yes. That’s a good idea.

A: So Blackwater, at least in that instance, was a good guy.

Q: Turning now to the ePRTs, I think that you had the mandate to get those organized and planned for, apparently in the last part of your tenure there. How was it determined now we should move from stand alone PRTs to ePRTs?

A: Well, there are actually both. As far as I know, there are still the ten stand alone PRTs.

Q: That’s true.

A: I came back from my environmental leave on about the first of December and I had just rolled back in and they grabbed me and took me to a meeting and they said, “Guess what? You are going to be the operations officer but we need you to plan this operation.” In my military experience, I was a planner and I worked at a corps level to write military operations plans for them and I did it from an engineering standpoint but I also worked with all the planners. Evidently, a lot of the reserve guys I worked with in the NCT couldn’t plan very well. So here I am, I am the planner. They said “the President is going to give a speech soon” and that is all they would tell me, but “we think he is going to mention PRTs, we think he is going to mention the impact of PRTs and increasing the number of PRTs.” I am like, “great.”

So the first plan that spun out was we want to ask the ten PRTs what they need in order to be successful, so we did that. And the PRTs came back with this laundry list of people that they wanted. Some PRTs wanted to go up to 70 or 80 people and some PRTs wanted to stay the same. In fact, one PRT actually wanted to get smaller. Some people thought this was a mandate from heaven. And then they turned around and they said, “Wait a minute. Let’s standardize it.” Then we had to go back and we had to standardize. So we took an average for all ten PRTs and then we shot that out to the PRTs and they said, “Nope. That’s not what we asked for, this is what we asked for,” which was their original numbers.

The State Department responded and said, “Let’s go with what the PRTs want, whatever they want. We’ll bump them up to 100 people apiece.” So we ran with that for about two weeks and then finally they started jelling with what the President was going to say and so they came back to me and said, “OK. How do we get PRTs to the provinces that

don't have PRTs? Where do we do this?" So we drew up a plan and it said we are going to do PRTs embedded into BCTs and I use the term ePRT because we used to have enhanced, in the military we used to have an enhanced brigade combat team, so I just called them ePRTs, embedded PRTs and of course, it stuck.

We went out to the BCTs. We went out to the commanders themselves on the ground and we said, "If you had an embedded PRT, what would you want?" We didn't put any limit to what they asked for. We thought it was going to be about ten and so we kept that in the back of our mind but we didn't put that out on the street yet and so they came back and they said, "we want a city manager, we want a city planner, we want a couple of agriculture guys and we want a couple more DOJ guys, we want this and this and this." So it turned out anywhere from eight to thirty-five people.

Of course, at the same time we got the PRTs to bring their number back down somewhere around reality. We got the BCT buy in for what they wanted and then we went back and we drew it up as a laundry list of people and showed it to the State Department. The State Department said: "We will never be able to fill these. We can't fill the agriculture and the DOJ positions we have now, and we will be very strapped to hire this number of State Department people at these specialties to come back." So we said, "OK.

Something we have known is that military personnel often come on board with civilian acquired skills. My undergraduate degree was in chemical and petroleum refining engineering. I wasn't doing anything with oil. My boss was a colonel, an environmental engineer that worked for the army chief of staff for installation management back then. He wasn't doing anything with environmental nor was he doing anything with installation management, which would be like a city planner. I sat down at a table one day and there was this guy that came in and he wanted to talk to me about the PRTs helping him with SWEAT, , sewer, water, electrical and trash. We started talking about it and I said, "Well, what do you do?" And he goes, "Well, back in Minnesota I work for the Department of Agriculture as an extension officer and I said, "Really?" And he said, "Yes, and by the way, I own a small forest of maple trees and I have a niche maple syrup business that I run on the side." And it just blew me away that here was this guy that knows about agriculture. He knows about how to do business, so he could do date palms, he could do olives, he could do a lot of things but here he is, asking me about SWEAT.

As it rolled out, there was another guy at Fort Bragg who was in the World Trade Center towers when they came down; he has a back injury from that experience. He is a New York stock exchange broker and he was in a PRT in the civil affairs unit and luckily he got to work with the finance officer in his province to help him through all the issues he was going through to get money and how to spend it and how to account for it.

Q: So they placed him in the right place.

A: Only by the roll of the dice did he end up in the right place at the right time.

Q: How did he even join a PRT? He was a stockbroker, but he was a reservist?

A: Correct. He was a civil affairs officer.

As we kept going through, I kept noticing that all these reservists were coming with civilian acquired skills, this is an important factor.

Q: I see.

A: State Department, Agriculture, DOJ, all these people said they couldn't fill these positions fast enough to meet the president's mandate and to coincide with the surge. The whole thing was the State Department didn't want the Department of Defense standing up and saying, "Ah, ha. We beat you again. You guys failed before and you failed again." So quietly, the State Department went across the street in Washington and they said, "Look, we can't fill these positions. Can you guys help us out for a year?" And that year is running out about now. So I think we asked for 150 or 175 reservists to come in with civilian acquired skills for particular areas of expertise. That's how we started filling the ePRTs. We got the team leaders, the FSO (Foreign Service Officer)-01, a couple of OCs (Foreign Service Officers at the rank of Overseas Counselor) and I think we had a couple of MCs (Foreign Service Officer with the rank of Minister Counselor) also. We got the USAID guys because USAID pulled it out for us and they got the people in there that we needed.

As I was leaving we started rolling out these people with civilian acquired skills that could fill the niche of the embedded PRT. Now, they were in uniform, they got to carry a weapon, which has both good and bad implications to go with it. As I was leaving, those people were rolling in.

Q: That's very good information about how the ePRTs came about. Let me ask you what a brigade combat team consists of in terms of people and specialties?

A: The old brigade combat teams -- the Army is going through a transition right now -- the new brigade combat teams or the transformed brigades have two infantry battalions, a field artillery battalion, and then they have a smattering of support personnel, engineers, military police, civil affairs and some others. It rounds them all out and they've got about 4,000 people. But you've got to realize in the province they are out there in outposts in platoons, companies and battalion-sized elements. They are not just all right there around as a brigade, like you might think of one.

Q: But they are all housed on their base?

A: No, that's what I mean. At the time that I was there, a brigade normally had one, even maybe two provinces that they had the cover down on. And they also had some of the training teams also, either the police training teams or the military training teams that they were doing almost as an additional mission. Sometimes you had platoons or companies that were out escorting convoys so they weren't in the base either.

Q: The reason I asked that is I am thinking about the commander of the brigade combat teams. He has his 4,000 people made up in the way you just described and then he has

to decide what in addition he wants to have, people with civilian skills; the city manager, the city planner, the Department of Justice representative, totaling about 8 to 30, to create the ePRT. Was that how the thinking went?

A: Well, we asked him what his opinion was and what he felt he needed in his province or at least in his area of influence. They came back and told us; the State Department will tell you that the ePRTs did not work for the brigade, that they were still a State Department entity. That is true on paper but on the ground it had to have been a very close relationship between both the PRT leader and the BCT commander to make it work. My opinion is that they probably, the ePRTs probably ended up working for the brigade combat team whether anybody admits it or not.

Q: Why wouldn't you admit it since you are heavily dependent on the brigade and you need to have a good relationship with the commander?

A: Well, you had some FSO – 01s that used to swing their weight around and say, “Well, I am the equivalent of an 06, a full colonel. And you had some MCs and some OCs that came out there and started thinking that they were SES level or general officer level and it really set some of the commanders off. They were like, “ What? I am not going to take this. They are not in the military, they are not in command and they are not going to try and tell me what to do or speak to me.” I mean, it was a bunch of egos. So there was some aspect of that that was also going on.

But the other piece there too was I believe, personally, that there was a struggle back here in Washington, where they wanted one department to take over the PRTs for both Iraq and Afghanistan. And the military had already established training outposts, at Fort Bragg and at Fort Riley to train PRTs to deploy into one of two theaters and they had a program of instruction and they had a way to get people and they built teams and they sent them over there to do a job. Well, the State Department didn't have that at the time. They've kind of got that now, for the ePRTs and how they spun them up to indoctrinate them into the State Department way of doing business. They are really in fear of losing them.

Q: What brought about this reaction by the State Department, to exert itself?

A: It all came down to money. How much money you got from, the Supplemental that we were trying to get and then it was the next budget input that was coming in and the State Department had a wedge in there for PRTs in Iraq and they were afraid that they were going to lose that wedge to the military. It all comes down to money at this level. The guys I work with at the corps level or at the garrison level with IMCOM and with Management Command, it all comes down to money. It is not about the mission either. It is who's got the dollars and how far you can spread those dollars.

Q: Do you think it is sensible that one department be in charge of the PRTs and if so, then which would be the proper department to do that? One General I spoke with had his own idea about that and it was not State or DOD?

A: I believe we are in a transition period right now in Iraq and I don't know how long that transition period is going to last. It is not reconstruction anymore because the Iraqis need to spend their own money and at the same time the military cannot have their hands off completely. But we are a point in time where there has got to be an agreement between both DOD and State to make this work because the State Department is going to have the longest presence in these countries around the world. I don't think it has to be a separate Department, I don't think it has to be DOD or State. I think, like I was telling you before, in the first two blocks, it is really a DOD lead. In the last block, which is kind of what we are in right now, it is a State Department lead with military support. And the military needs to be transitioning out and preparing for the next conflict. But I do believe that these PRTs are situated much like FEMA is, that you have these emergency response functions, oh, ESF, emergency support functions. I think there are 15 of them now and back when I used to do defense coordinating officer work, there were only 12 ESFs. What I told my colleague was: "you could have a standing PRT with the State Department that could be launched when, for example, Pakistan had that major earthquake and all hell broke loose. You could even use that when Orange County went bankrupt ten years ago. You could use it for the Native Americans here in this country." In fact, right here in Fayetteville, North Carolina where we've got the Lumbee Indians that are fighting like the Hatfields and McCoys, a PRT could come in there and teach them about good governmental practices. And then of course, you've got places like Iraq, Kosovo, and Yugoslavia; they could go in there and help those countries too. But if they are organized like FEMA and then you establish which departments, just like FEMA does, has responsibility for certain actions and on certain teams, you can do these teams and they can go out and do their thing.

Q: You clearly have an overarching view of PRTs as well as a theoretical approach, which can lead us to perhaps draw some conclusions about the future of PRTs and how well are they accomplishing their mission in Iraq, though there may be other applications for them as well. To what degree do you think the PRTs have been effective in the areas of governance, development and counterinsurgency, though I realize we haven't said much about counterinsurgency up to now.

A: We tried to stay out of counterinsurgency for the most part, except in a non kinetic way. We tried to support what the BCT commander wanted to do without bullets, without driving down the streets. We tried to get the Iraqi provincial government to do things that made the province better. That kind of thing. That was kind of a behind the scenes way to push it. The success of the PRTs depends on putting an Iraqi face on an Iraqi project and I know we are running out of time but, the Corps of Engineers - and I am a card carrying Corps of Engineer guy - probably did worse things to that country than anybody else with their projects and the way the projects were executed without having any coordination with any of the provinces or with the national government.

Q: Were they working under the aegis of the PRTs though?

A: The Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division is kind of its own thing over there and of course, they get money from other people, especially from our government. They

have projects all over that country that they are trying to coordinate that are not necessarily the projects that the province wants or that the national government wants. The way that the Corps of Engineer timeline is, it is a three to four year timeline from design to completion, sometimes it is even longer than that. And so things were planned in the early days of the war, after initial occupation, that were just being started or accomplished and people were running around, Iraqis were running around asking us, "What are you doing this for?" And it's like, "I don't know because the person who planned it rotated out two or three rotations ago."

Q: You wonder what they were thinking since, originally, they were only going to be there for a year anyway.

A: But General Petraeus came in with the surge. General Petraeus, of course, wrote the counterinsurgency manual and he came in and he really embodied that if you are going to do counterinsurgency, it's not about direct action. It is about winning the hearts and minds, it's about effective communication and it's about telling the people what you are doing and how you are making their lives better and how you are turning their country back over to them. Not only was the surge successful, but the timing of General Petraeus coming over there I believe, was very successful and played heavily into the reduction of violence that was occurring in the country over there. Were PRTs part of that? Absolutely and General Petraeus liked PRTs, he believed in the PRTs, he worked with the corps and he worked with the BCTs, not directly with the BCTs, but he worked with the BCTs to include the PRTs in what they were doing and so it really gave a boost to the PRT effort.

At one time we had metrics to disengage the PRTs from the provinces and by the time I left, nobody cared about metrics anymore. It was about how long can we make the PRTs last. We can't disengage the PRTs.

Q: Now why did they no longer disengage them?

A: Because PRTs were no longer a one year commitment to provide provincial reconstruction. People started to realize that it was a very long term and that metrics were not going to change and if you start putting metrics up that don't change, on a monthly basis, they may only change on an annual basis, then people are not going to continue to provide you with resources to maintain a program like that. You and I both know that the attention of the American public is six months. Well, it is no different in government either.

Q: I see.

A: I mean after 9/11 and it is sad to say, but after 9/11 by the time you got into the spring of 2002, people were starting to forget that the Trade Center towers had come down. It was a distant memory because it only affected the people in New York and Washington, for the most part. It was a very small population after a while and the country had already done what they needed to do. Well, it's the same thing in government and it is

the same thing over in Iraq in that the human attention span is very small and if you don't show progress - and that was my other hang up with the military: you come in there for a twelve month rotation into Iraq, or recently a fifteen month rotation into Iraq, and a commander comes in with a punch list. I am going to do this in my job. And that is what they try to do and come Hell or high water, they don't care if the PRT supports their punch list or not, they are going to do it anyway.

Q: Do you think public opinion in Iraq is convinced or becoming convinced that our efforts are leading to turning the country back over to them? That has been our message and, of course, it is what the American public wants to hear but do you think it is sinking in there?

A: In Iraq? I believe it is and the reason I believe that is because General Casey had the military consolidating on two bases and the bases were growing and there was less presence out in the provinces and that was part of the original draw down plan. When counterinsurgency became the new buzz word and General Petraeus came over, the first thing he did, he pushed everybody back out into the streets and there was risk with that and he was willing to accept that risk and it wasn't a short term risk because by partnering with the Iraqi military and the Iraqi police, it gave a backbone to the Iraqi military, Iraqi police, Iraqi security forces. It gave us a presence out there but not a face and it also reduced the number of human rights violations. It encouraged better security practices for the people and not for the individual and things like that. I think those things helped. I think that the PRTs then come in there and they start helping the government to foster those feelings and to start seeing what the people need when the security is better and that when you get those two organizations working together, it really shows that we are not there for the long haul, that we want to get out of it at the right time.

Q: OK. I think that may be a good place to conclude, since you've defined the PRTs and their particular niche.

A: They bring skills that the military does not have.

Q: Right and they seem to be providing a different message than the military and an important one.

A: I think the military though is coming on line with the message of the PRT. With the counterinsurgency push, the military and the PRTs are trying to say the same thing. You had a point in 1945 in Germany or in Tokyo, with an occupation force. "We are not here, we don't want to be here and as soon as you guys get back up on your feet, we are going to hit the road."

Q: And we would also like to see a democracy in place.

A: Are you sure about that?

END