

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

**INTERVIEW #17**

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**Executive Summary**

This interviewee was heavily involved in the policy debate that led up to the President's New Way Forward, announced on January 10, 2007, and subsequently as a principle implementer of the policy for the State Department until approximately the end of January, 2008. The interviewee's tenure corresponds with the launching of the e-PRTs. The goal of the ePRTs, is defined primarily as a counter-insurgency one (to bring down violence by combining "development, defense and diplomacy"), as distinguished from the goal of the classic PRTs, which is to build the capacity of the local provincial government to develop effective, transparent and accountable processes to meet the needs of the people. In the view of this interviewee, the PRTs, by combining civilian-military capacities, are the right tool for working in Iraq's non-permissive environment.

The interviewee credits the PRTs as one factor accounting for the "remarkable" fall off in violence which has occurred over the last year. The experience of the PRT in Muthanna illustrates how this turnaround occurred, with the PRT convoking the most-respected, natural leaders and creating a critical mass of moderates who were able to "stick their heads above the parapets" together and essentially face down those committing criminal acts underneath the Jeesh al-Mahdi banner. She acknowledges, however, that the danger remains very real for those seen working with the Americans.

This interviewee is able to discuss from an insider's perspective how the State Department, working with the Department of Defense, overcame the unaccustomed logistical and managerial challenges of fielding personnel for the Iraq PRTs in short order. She also describes in detail the funding mechanisms open to PRT leaders.

Most provocatively, this interviewee describes the tension between military doctrine and the State Department approach to the economic pillar of the PRT mission. The military believed that jobs creation would increase security and "kick-start" the economy, even if the jobs created were unskilled jobs such as stacking rubble or cleaning canals. The State Department took the view that there was no scientific evidence to support the Military's strongly held contention that those promoting violence were unemployed, and that by uncritically funding some of the "quick impact" projects, we were in fact "feeding the crocodiles" and contributing to a "Failed Project Cycle." Thus, State argued instead that providing micro-grants would do more to promote law and order by allowing citizens to buy a stake in the future. This in turn would reduce violence and insecurity. This basic

issue of “quick impact” projects versus long-term sustainability is one which has not been resolved; to illustrate the point, the interviewee quotes the Center for Army Lessons Learned Manual, in which a frustrated military officer says that the “State Department wants to build Iraqi capacity. We need to get shit done.”

At the end of the day, the interviewee expresses optimism that the PRTs are accomplishing their mission and pride that our government has been a catalyst for local governments to take hold.

## Interview

A: I think let’s go ahead and just call me deputy coordinator for Iraq, because I think its going to be clear who I am anyway, and if it’s something that can’t be attributed to me as deputy coordinator for Iraq, I just won’t be able to say it. I don’t think I can get around this because it would be so obvious.

*Q: You were responsible for the creation of the embedded PRTs, the framework under which they came to operate in January of 2007, is that correct? Or maybe let’s start and ask you what is the time frame of your involvement in the Iraq PRTs ?*

A: I joined OCI, the Office of the Coordinator of Iraq, May 31 of 2006. I did not immediately work PRT issues; I worked coalition issues to begin with. I started phasing into the PRT issues in September of 2006 with the growing involvement through the course of the fall until really, a very heavy involvement during the policy discussion that led up to the New Way Forward, the President’s change in policy that he announced January 10, 2007. The Secretary then went to the Hill January 11, 2007 and asked for the money for it. I then became really the principle implementer of the New Way Forward for quite some months and I have really just now let those duties go, maybe a week ago would probably be fair.

*Q: Let’s look at the history of what was going on at that time, and what kinds of principles and parameters you had to put in place in order for the PRTs to accomplish their mission. I guess I should first ask you to define the mission, in your own words.*

A: There was an evolution, I think, in what the PRT mission was. I think at the very earliest phase it was kind of an idea of a presence, and it was sort of in four or five cities. Then, from the time of Ambassador Khalilzad we went to the concept of PRTs -- and I think it was influenced by his own experience in Afghanistan, which of course it would have been -- a PRT in every province; so we started an expansion that way. Also, it brought the development focus to the foreground with the idea of capacity building. The core mission statement from that period was about building the capacity of the provincial government. We went through and named some things, like economic development and rule of law and those kinds of things. When the New Way Forward came about, and as you will recall the history around that was a really seriously deteriorating security situation and talk of, you know, the question was whether there was a civil war brewing

and will it lead to regional spillover, so a dire situation indeed. There was a decision to increase the military presence, but also to increase the civilian presence, and then the mission started to be defined with the concept of the PRTs being a counter-insurgency tool, and so you get yet another dimension that comes in. When I have gone up as recently as say, September-October of 2007 to talk to our procreators about the mission -- because you can't tell what you've achieved if you can't say what you've set out to achieve-- I really talked about two distinct missions. For the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the original ones that were paired with a provincial government, their primary focus is indeed building capacity of the Iraqi Provincial government to meet the needs of its citizens, using Iraq's own money, primarily. It is a capacity building effort but it's also a political engagement one, it's really the PRTs as convokers, but our main metric for whether or not we are succeeding in that has been provincial budget execution, which was essentially zero when the PRTs were standing up and has soared. I mean, it is a great metric to show they have developed the ability to have transparent, accountable -- those are always relative words -- but fairly transparent and accountable processes to determine what people want done with their money, and then to actually let the contracts and we're just at the phase now, because it was just moving through, of actually trying to build with that money. So that's the ten original PRTs. For the embedded PRTs, the counter-insurgency focus is first and foremost. I think the most effective way to speak of that mission is bringing diplomatic and development expertise right into the brigade, so the 3 "Ds" are together. Assessing the situation, figuring out what's driving conflict, and developing a joined up, whole government plan to try to bring down violence and stabilize the area.

*Q: The 3 Ds?*

A: Development, Defense and Diplomacy. You've got them all together, and they arrived in these areas, these are sub-provincial areas, they do not necessarily match up with any Iraqi political geography, so you don't necessarily have an Iraqi host government counterpart. You do have a military counterpart; you do have a geographic area. Your partners in Iraq are as likely to be a merchant's association or maybe a Qada, which is kind of a municipal level, but it is not an engagement with the provincial government because they don't have a provincial government partner. The area of responsibility was devised by the U.S. military to meet their war fighting aims. The idea that you could simply take what you had done with the ten original PRTs and flip the template over and it would then apply to what you are doing in these rural, or sub-districts in Baghdad, there wasn't a whole lot of carry over. There's a whole lot of similarity between what the PRTs paired with provincial governments do and they share a lot of best practices among themselves. But with the embedded PRTs, they have had to...they're newer, so we have less of a track record to determine what they have done. The main metric I use, is I take the chart that just shows the violence decline. From about September, you watch it just fall off as I believe we developed a much more effective strategy. Now there are many factors that caused that fall off in violence; I think the PRTs were only one of them.

*Q: Could you elaborate a little more on this counter insurgency pillar? I read that the embedded PRTs have both a political counter-insurgency aim and an economic counter-*

*insurgency aim, and that has some intuitive meaning to me, but I'm wondering about the specifics. Would they be defined by the PRT members themselves? Or would this be laid out to them by a variety of authorities from Washington? How does it get defined?*

A: We gave them some very broad guidance, very strategic guidance that we sort of took down to a program level where we went back very clearly to the Secretary's testimony from January 11 (2007), where she defines the mission as channeling targeted assistance to bolster Iraq's reformers, moderates and reformers, and their struggles against violent extremism. We broke that down into a good old visual, which is a chart, which says what you are trying to do is bolster moderates, and those can be anybody who rejects violence, is prepared to pursue his or her political agenda through nonviolent means. So, it could be an elected official; it could be a women's group. My standard group for illustrating this point was the Concerned Sunni/Shia Moms intent on "taking back that playground for our toddlers," and that yes, that is exactly who you should stand with, you should take back that space, make that public space, clean it up, get the playground going. This is the classic example of a very grassroots one. Your partner may also be someone who's an elected official, or your provincial council. But you are not required to deal with provincial council members who you know, very clearly, are part of the problem. They are pursuing their goals through violence; they are pursuing an agenda that is not in keeping with our aim. This was a relief for some of the PRTs who had been told they were supposed to build provincial capacity; in some cases they knew what they were doing was really strengthening some extremely unsavory characters. We told them the other vector was to drive down extremism. In January, when this surge started, the Jeeh Al-Mahdi, the Shia militias were just on an upper trajectory taking up more and more of the economy, more and more of the physical space, geographic space, more and more political space. Al-Qaeda had a lot of space, and we told them (the PRTs), in your area your success looks like more space for women and children to go to parks; children to go to school without being kidnapped; shopkeepers to open their shops and do business, and it will be an increasingly difficult environment for gangs, militias, Al-Qaeda to operate. This space needs to become toxic for them, and if you can figure out where they are getting their money and strangle it, you do. If it happens to be your construction project, you really don't build the building. There is no point in building a building if you know that the major beneficiary is the militia which is providing you the construction workers and taking a 40% cut. Don't build the building. We gave them that kind of guidance back here at PRT training. We started with the first group that went out with the surge in March. But we've done it; every class that's gone out now has had training at the Foreign Service Institute. When they got out there, the embedded PRTs in particular, -- these started to arrive March 31 - April 1-- the core teams arrived and then we added specialists month by month all the way through to December 31 -January 4 or 5 really, of this year. They were given fairly free latitude. Henry Clark, who was the director of the Office of Provincial Affairs as we were going through this phase, was firmly of the view that these were seasoned senior Foreign Service Officers; they knew what to do, and you should send them out there to figure it out. It was not pre-scripted from the center. They went out and tried to figure out what would be most effective in creating an environment that would give space for decent law abiding moderates and would make this environment less attractive, more toxic, less free reign for the violent extremists. Frankly, if you look

at where we are today, compared to where we were a year ago, it's remarkable. When we were laying out this set of principles, I have to say, I knew I was one of the chief advocates for it, but I could not quite figure out how you could turn around trend lines that were headed so in the wrong direction, and to see us having done so is one of the most rewarding things in my whole career.

*Q: Lurking in the back of my mind is a question, because I think, I know what Foreign Service Officers look like; I've been one, and I think that if I were assigned to go to a Forward Operating Base and try to figure out what group was really a group of good guys who deserved our support I might have trouble doing that. How did our personnel, and you may want to talk about non-StateDepartment as well, how did they manage to make this discernment in the first place, which I think would be the hardest thing.*

A: I agree with you. When I visited last year in March, what struck me was even in PRTs that were doing miraculous things, we had to move in these Humvee convoys, we could only go to the governance building, we could only meet people prepared to gather there. It wasn't like you could -- for example, when I was Consul General in Northern Ireland, I could just meet everybody. I couldn't quite figure out how you were going to operationalize this, and I find that is one of the great tributes that I really pay to my colleagues on this, and the answer is very different, it's different all over Iraq. In Tikrit, where it was a Sunni dominated province, actually they had a good provincial council, they had a very good deputy governor, they formed strong relationships there, overcame that legacy of mistrust that you would have expected after a U.S. invasion. This is Saddam Hussein's home town, and they developed a pragmatic pattern of cooperation with us through - some of it was sheer force of personality. Another PRT leader that pulled this off was operating down in Muthanna, a poor area, which never really had a lot of violence, very Shia, not very well educated, and he somehow managed to find the one guy in the town who seemed to have had a PHD in accounting. He was a spectacled little man hiding behind sand bags because the place was so militia dominated, and our PRT leader, by golly, made this guy his basic platform, and starting pulling people together, a series of bilateral meetings and then convoking. The cable that describes this is quite wonderful, because you find this person, you find another person, you get the two of them together; you find another one, the three of them are able to convoke, and then finally the Muthanna PRT, the Muthanna Provincial Council meets. All these people have been found, pulled out from under their sandbags, decided there are friendly faces over there, this is who they are. The PRT went to the back row to watch it happen, and they (the Provincial Council) cheered at themselves, and they worked out a budget themselves. I think our convoking power is one of our most important things; Foreign Service Officers were able to go out and find the people. Sometimes it was your spectacled accountant and in another place people understood it was really going to be the deputy mayor who everybody in the community respected; this was just clear. This is who people came to to solve their problems; this is who women with toddler problems went to. He came from the dominant tribe. He only held a kind of insignificant post; he was not the head, he was deputy mayor, but our PRT decided that's who we were going to work with because he had real community support. We were going to use him for the nucleus for starting to pull in other like-minded people, and we were going to lift the

heads above the parapets all at once. When they did, the numbers were too big for the Jeesh Al-Mahdi to go after, since you would have gone after the whole tribe. It basically put, as my PRT leader - who's a real hero in my book - put it, the drug-crazed 18-year olds, committing criminal acts underneath the Jeesh Al-Mahdi banner, it just put them on the run. It was those kinds of tactics, looking to where Iraqis go, seeing who has the natural authority here. They were able to find this out even from inside the difficult circumstances they were working in. I thought that might have been our insurmountable barrier, our inability to move as freely as we would have liked. The good PRT leaders managed to work through that. The tales of heroism and "ad-hoc-ery" and creativity, frankly, Lawrence of Arabia has nothing on them.

*Q: You've really introduced the question of public diplomacy, since some of these stories are really incredible, and they would be very informative reading for the American public. Is there a now well-routinized public affairs program in each of these PRTs to get out the good stories? Are the PRT leaders encouraged to write them, and do they send them in to you so you can disseminate them to the media, or what happens?*

A: We do have some, we are absolutely aware of the trade-off between doing and reporting. We don't want to make the burdens on the PRT leaders for reporting and getting out the story. We don't want it to get in the way of doing, so we've tried to strike that balance. I will say the story that I just told you about the deputy mayor, the details may not be precise but that's what happened, David Ignatius just wrote about this PRT leader in the Outlook section of the Washington Post a week ago, and said something about the capability or the effectiveness of the PRT leaders being infectious and went on to describe it. Some of it is out, it has caught on. The PRT leaders have met with the President several times by video teleconference. He's done press conferences with them, the Secretary has met with them, and we sign them up all the time with their local newspaper. I used to do media interviews, talking about these kinds of achievements. We made some success. The David Ignatius piece, though, was really a break-through piece, because here's the thing: these stories don't bleed, and they don't lead. These are stories about small people showing amazing acts of heroism and courage in the face of long odds, and about really kind of boring topics, like getting the mechanics of government working, figuring out how to open a bank account so the money from the Center can get transferred and you can actually disperse it, and training people in Excel spreadsheets so they will be getting them in the accounting system. All of this, it just does not make a sexy story, though it's profoundly important in terms of what happens. So that's one of the things, I don't want to say we've come up against, (but) I understand news, and I also understand that blowing up a mosque gathers a lot more news attention than getting an accountant in Muthanna to set up a transparent mechanical process that citizens believe in. They wrote a great cable back on it; I've talked about it, the Secretary's talked about it, so it's out there, but you are up against the idea that this is a story of brick by brick building, a process that works.

*Q: I recall the time the President met with one of the leaders of the awakening groups, and then two days later he was assassinated. That got wide coverage...*

A: Because it bleeds...

*Q: Because it bleeds. I understand what you are saying. There was recently some Congressional testimony, in which the PRT leader was describing who he was working with, and he said 'this guy has survived 8 assassination attempts.' I'm thinking it isn't easy; you have to be very courageous, because the 9<sup>th</sup> attempt may well be successful. Perhaps there have been some of those downsides, as well, that "X" project was going along very well, but unfortunately our local interlocutor was just assassinated?*

A: That was the other thing, besides the isolation of the way we had to operate, which was Humvee convoys and the governance building only, it was also the knowledge that the people who were openly seen working with us were putting a target on themselves. It was heartbreaking for PRT leaders; it was heartbreaking for us back here. The governor's wife in Tucrete was killed after meeting with her PRT leader; you don't get over that. We lost our local staff in Anbar for the Community Stabilization Program. The senior person was assassinated, everyone else got threatening letters, and we lost them all. We have seen that turn dramatically around in the last year, partly because of the strategy we just described, with the deputy mayor, and then you bring a lot of the people, and you all raise your heads up at once; you are also using tribal protection, all of that. This was a response in some way to trying to do it individual by individual, because if you did it one by one, then the pain of seeing those people being assassinated was just too much. But, when individuals help find each other through our convoking authority, and then hold their heads together, violence dropped. That said, we know we still have a very serious challenge in the assassination of the technocrats, capable ministry officials. This may be less of a PRT story than a central Baghdad story, but we're scoping the magnitude of this. It's not gone; it has changed its manifestation. I mean, we adapt, they adapt, we adapt, they adapt, but it is diminished as a...it was a really, really serious issue a year ago, that is, 'how do you in good conscience, work with Iraqis when you know you are putting their lives at risk?' There has been some mitigating strategy like strength in numbers.

*Q: It's important to hear that, because that's what you think about when you read these stories. Let me ask you about some of the nuts and bolts; I understand you were very instrumental in crafting the MOA that made it possible for State and DOD, and probably other agencies, to work cooperatively on the embedded PRTs.*

A: No, the MOA for February 22, 2007 was signed by the two Deputy Secretaries, John Negroponte for State and Gordon England for Defense, and covers all PRTs. It lays out an essential principle for how support is provided; the overarching principle is that the Department of Defense provides the support, the State Department reimburses for it. This is crucial because DOD has got the supply lines, and there is the impossibility of us opening alternate supply lines to get in food and supplies. So, there's some fine tuning on that. DOD provides life support, all of our food, the housing, bottled water, that kind of thing; which we reimburse. DOD provides security at most PRTs through military movement teams. We do not reimburse for that. That's huge and it has been a major reason why they've been able to expand, because it's such a big ticket item if you have to pay contracted security. It dwarfs the other costs; over half the total cost of PRTs is

contracted security at just a few, four or five. So it's a big, big cost. It says that PRTs are a priority State/DOD mission, but at DOD request, State Department included a very specific line item that says the Department of State is responsible for recruiting, hiring, and managing PRT personnel. We took on that as our responsibility, not as a joint one. We agreed way back when we were creating the New Way Forward in late December and early January, December 2006, January 2007. However, we knew from our timeline we would not be able to hire this number of people and get them all cleared quickly enough to meet the phase II timeline. We stood up the first core teams, ten core teams with four people each, the management team. We stood those up as the first order of business, got those people trained and on the ground by March 31. Phase II was originally supposed to be 109 but became 99, and DOD provided those. Forty of those were civilians, and the rest were uniformed military. They were provided for -- well the period of time became controversial -- it ended up being 10 to 12 months, and while those people were deploying through the pipeline, we were actually getting all the position descriptions advertised, collecting the resumes, getting security and medical, and the ethics clearances done. So we then moved all of our people out in Phase III which went through the Fall of '07, and now we're in the phase starting sort of January of this year, replacing all of those DOD people from Phase II by State provided personnel. That's how the whole sequencing went. The MOA did lay that out roughly and laid out that sort of division of responsibility.

*Q: So in those initial phases, the recruitment of the PRT personnel was done by DOD.*

A: Phase II was, that's right. There were 99 persons provided by DOD. The total of Phase II was 133, so a third of them actually we did provide, we and AID together provided a third of Phase II. The bulk of Phase II came from DOD. Yes, DOD did that. We worked with them, we had an interagency, PRT Staffing Subgroup, and we met with some terrific people from the DOD side; we worked through the position descriptions, we helped adjudicate whether or not this fit we found was close enough to match the job description. But they had people who were already cleared, and of course DOD is actually created to move people quickly into a war zone, so it's really their core competency. They've got vocabulary and systems on how to do this, that you can just marvel at when you're a State Department Officer. (laughter)

*Q: The whole matter of position descriptions in the earlier PRTs, wasn't that one of the lacunae; they really weren't well defined?*

A: Bear in mind by the time I came in, we were writing pretty good, clear position descriptions. We were trying to refine it, make position descriptions clearer, make the mission statement clearer. We had explicit training to tell people what success would look like. I think by the time we were doing it in 2007, it was looking good. Now that we're over the first onslaught, because remember we had to sort of get 300 people out there over the course of a year, and this is for a Department that normally hires, this isn't taking all of our hiring, but just the Foreign Service component, about 250 a year. So it's a dramatic uptick in what we are doing. It's just a huge logistics endeavor, and a management endeavor to do it. Now that we've kind of got the machine built that gets



these people out, we are able to look at refinements and position descriptions, things like if you were trying to get this program done, do you need a new skill set to be brought in there? That is what I think will come next, further refinement, but it got better over time.

*Q: I read in Bob Perito's U.S. Institute of Peace study that the embedded PRT folks had not yet found their voice, that's my paraphrase, and that they were working more as political advisors to the battalion commander, brigade combat team commander. To what degree does that sound correct?*

A: I think that it is very true, the PRT leaders will in their voices say that the PRTs paired with the provincial governments feel more like a consulate general, that you, as the PRT leader, had regular access to the governor, to the Provincial Council, and that you're in charge and setting the agenda, and that you receive life support and movement support from the military. But then they will in their voice often say, at an ePRT, you are more like an embedded element, part of the C-9. So they will often say this in their own voice.

*Q: I don't know what the C-9 is.*

A: The C-9 tends to be like the civil affairs component of it. But they'll say they're more like an embedded military element. Now to the question of, does this mean they haven't found their voice, or they aren't living up to their potential? It's a different mission, and I think being political advisor to a brigade commander, if your brigade commander is listening to you and the development advisor, the senior development person that AID provided, the synergy of having that combination can be huge, because you are all pulling together, you're leveraging an awful lot of resources. But you do not have, there is no governor for you to have as your counterpart, you are almost by definition, because you aren't paired with an Iraqi political entity. It does feel different, but some of the embedded PRT leaders would tell you they would have it no other way. That they feel like their impact is huge because they're leveraging so many resources when they are listened to and their advice is taken. It has a huge impact on that outcome, but a very different kind of feel.

*Q: I don't think it is a bad thing. In Afghanistan, that was very common. In fact, the State officer was usually a political officer and they were politically advising the battalion commander, or whoever was in charge there, and it seemed to be much value added.*

A: Yes. As we prepared for joint hearings with DOD, or joint briefings with staff, with State and DOD, one of the first points that we kind of agreed, was that the only thing in some ways these PRTs, - Afghanistan, Iraq embedded and Iraq original - had in common was three letters: P, R, and T, and that otherwise, it's just such a vast difference. I think Bob Perito's class at Princeton sort of did a good job of saying what a PRT is, a civ- mil entity that operates in a non-permissive environment. That may be the common denominator that actually really captures it, and it is the non-permissiveness of the environment that actually makes PRTs necessary, and the right tool, such that when the environment becomes more permissive, I think the need for PRTs actually goes away. You need a whole lot of PRTs in a non-permissive environment because you can't travel

very well, and if you are going to have an engagement and impact with your host nation, it's very cumbersome to get there and you can only travel short distances. As the security situation improves, one can see that a consulate that is able to serve four surrounding provinces, because travel becomes much easier, is perfectly suitable and you don't need a big military support team, because you can just drive over road, you can buy food locally, and you can operate like you do. I think that was a very good insight that they did in crystallizing it, that it is the non-permissiveness of the environment that makes the PRT the right tool, and it's probably the one thing that really kind of unites PRTs: the civ-mil team in a non-permissive environment.

*Q: The Embassy in Baghdad now has the Office of Provincial Affairs, which I gather is to provide guidance and direction for the PRTs. Could you describe somewhat how that actually is supposed to function, and how in fact it does function.*

A: Others can do a better job than I can, but the Office of Provincial Affairs is the successor organization to the National Coordinating Team. That change came about just about the same time the New Way Forward was coming out and we were going through the expansion. It was paired with, at the same time with, and this is sort of lost in the history, and I hadn't realized its ramifications until it was pointed out, so I kind of want to flag it here. IRMO, the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, its mandate ended in May of 2007, and it came out with a successor organization, called ITAO, the Iraq Transition Assistance Office, was the successor organization, but most of the reconstruction funds were spent by then, so ITAO was a downsized version. Originally, the NCT reported to the IRMO director, the PRTs were under IRMO, which of course highlights its reconstruction mission. After that transition, the Office of Provincial Affairs sits on the country team, co-equal with the political counselor, the economics counselor, etc. They do not report to IRMO anymore, so you can see there is a shift in emphasis here. You are not just under a reconstruction mission, but you're also lost because IRMO had been there a long time. It was a very robust organization, it just had a lot of really good administrative support, really good personnel system, really good logistics, it was good. When you moved them out of there, you had to actually start to try to find ways to create that support elsewhere, so that's something that happened in this transition that was not necessarily visible here. It's kind of a shift there. So now you have the Office of Provincial Affairs, which sits on the country team. It has, I think, perhaps almost by necessity or certainly the reality is that for the last six months since it was really stood up and became OPA, its primary focus has been on getting the surge on the ground, because trying to get the position descriptions refined and looking at the resumes, picking the people, deciding who was going to go where, received properly in Baghdad, out to their post, this was a huge logistics challenge. Made more difficult, I will just go ahead and be honest, by the close, intense, relentless scrutiny of the military, which spends an awful lot of its organizational energy on a present for duty exercise, which is sort of alien to us. We are a whole lot more about 'what outcome did you achieve in this country?' and they are a whole lot more about 'how many boots did you have on the ground today?'. In order to respond to the relentless requests for highly detailed information, we were really forced to divert an awful lot of energy to converting our PRT support group into an operation that can produce present for duty charts that looked like what the military expected. OPA

spent a lot of its energy doing that. I do believe we are through the worst of that. Everyone is present for duty, and now we are able to actually try and make sure that it isn't just about numbers, it's also about people being aligned with the programs, aligned with the mission, understanding those clearly, that we're getting our story out, that was the story of the Fall, not a story that was really happy to live through.

*Q: Is the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office still there?*

A: Well now it's re-hatted as ITAO, the Iraq Transition Assistance Office. Under the law, IRMO actually sun-setted. You couldn't extend IRMO, and actually as we looked at it, IRMO's mission was to largely oversee the expenditure of the IRRF Fund, the I-R-R-F Fund, the 20 billion dollars worth of reconstruction money. We're down to the last few percentage points of that being expended. That was IRMO's chief job.

*Q: I know there are four funding mechanisms for reconstruction. The CERP funds, which are the military commander's funds, the Development Fund for Iraq, the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, which sounds like what you just mentioned, and then the State Department's Quick Response Fund.*

A: ESF, you are skipping ESF, that's the fundamental funding source.

*Q: Okay, well let me ask you to explain the importance of the funding mechanisms..*

A: I have a great chart; it shows PRTs in the middle, and it says ESF is our primary source of funding. That's the State Department's component, and our biggest, most specific funding program inside, the line item inside ESF is called PRDC, Provincial Reconstruction Development, I can't remember what the C is for. Could be council. In its original inception, it was conceived as a capacity building program. This is worth, by the way, about 300 million plus and another 600 million so, to give you an idea, it really is the big funding source. We started with no provincial capacity to execute funds. So we used this as a tool: 'we have this money, you come together, you come up with the process for deciding how you are going to spend it, what your priorities are, and we'll fund it.' So that is how it started as our very first engagement there. The Army Corps of Engineers largely built the projects. They were large projects; I think that we tried to move towards smaller ones, but that's what PRDC, that was one of the main things it did. Quick Reaction Fund, QRF, actually comes out of PRDC, that line item, and that goes through an AID implementing partner, which takes a huge accounting burden off the PRTs. 25 million is administered directly by the PRTs for smaller programs. We've done it that way to try to maximize the impact and minimize how much time you spend with the accounting responsibilities that come with grant making. Other programs that have a big impact on PRTs are obviously CERP, Commanders Emergency Response Program. That is running something like 800 million this year. That's in the hands of the brigade commanders; it has a lot of latitude to be spent quickly and one of the things that we hoped with having joined up teams and with better communication between State and our AID colleagues and our military colleagues, is we can kind of think through quick impact

and “consent buying” aims of CERP to minimize the long term harm they do, could do. So trying to institutionalize that “do no harm” principle and to...

*Q: There's the dependency principle?*

A: Dependency, but also if your construction project is actually going, if the major beneficiary of your construction project is the militia that is providing you the construction workers, and your goal is to minimize their running space in your community, perhaps the net impact of this project, of building this is to strengthen the very forces that you need to minimize in order to get to where you are trying to go. One of our senior officials called this feeding the crocodiles. The first thing that you need to do is stop feeding the crocodiles. I think CERP has done a lot of good things, but we know we've had tension between consent buying and quick impact, and the more sustainable goals we were trying to reach. Those are the two biggest sources, PRDC and CERP. Next, there is the community stabilization program, which is essentially a program worth 300-400 million. It was a jobs program, largely. It was the strong belief of our military that the reason people attacked us was because they were unemployed. This is not a principle that we ever actually believed was supported by any evidence at State; nevertheless, it was so strongly held, we did develop a program to be able to go in the immediate post-kinetic environment, Baghdad, Anbar, and be able to hire a lot of people. We then though were able to do some vocational training, things of that nature, so that's another big program.

*Q: And that continues...*

A: that program continues.

*Q: We get the impression from the media that there is very high unemployment, people don't have meaningful things to do and so they participate in negative activities, and whoever pays them is where they have their allegiance. That's not a very nuanced view, so how should we be thinking about the environment for economic development and employment opportunities in Iraq?*

A: Well, we brought together a best practice conference in November that the British led, their department of DIFID. We believed very strongly that with this kind of short term employment, you really aren't buying a stake in the future; when someone is paid 90 dollars a month to stack rubble or clean canals, this is not a future. Micro-grants really do buy a very different thing. You open a small shop, you want to see your shop prosper, you become a force for law and order because heaven knows nobody will come to your shop unless the streets are peaceful. You won't be able to prosper unless there is a good legal framework. In this way, somebody is paid who gets off the fence and decides that he's a force of stability here. So we think about micro-grants, business formation. The biggest thing though is security. When the environment is more secure, people are actually able to open their shops, go to the shops, buy things, move around; the biggest factor has been security. I know this was a chicken and egg discussion with DOD last year at this time. I'm so thrilled that violence has fallen off and there has been an

economic upturn, so that we can get off this kind of sterile debate because there was a hope that somehow you could kick-start the economy in the middle of very serious violence and insecurity, and that this would bring security. I think, very much the civilian view was that you can pour an awful lot of money into this in the middle of raging violence, but you can't kick start the economy, when something is this insecure. We've gotten through that, we've gotten through that part, we are in a different phase now, but certainly things that give people a stake in the future rather than a 3 month short term job, we believe were far more effective, and we also could find little evidence that those who were actually attacking us were in fact unemployed.

*Q: They were fully employed as militia members?*

A: Sometimes militia members, sometimes they had a day job, and the day job was enough that they could afford to put gas in their trucks so that they could get around to plant IEDs. I have to say I do think a fair number of people said 'I only did it for the money,' because what would you say if an American soldier caught you laying an IED? (laughter) 'I did it because I hate you, because you invaded my country, and you are defiling my soil,' no, you wouldn't say that, now would you? You would say, 'I only did it because I am a poor boy trying to feed my family,' that's what you would say. I think a fair number of people did say that, I think a more sophisticated analysis shows that is probably not the right explanation for what motivated a lot of people.

*Q: And I presume that police recruitment and everything to do with police training has nothing to do with PRTs, I mean that's not normally their mission?*

A: It's not. No. MNSTCI, M-N-S-T-C-I, which is a military command, did do the hiring for the police, and you are right, it hired an awful lot of people. Concerns did arise, certainly in Baghdad, that police themselves might have actually been some of the main perpetrators of death squad activities in certain areas and so the idea that by hiring people you get a more stable situation, there are more ingredients to it than just hiring people and paying them. They don't necessarily become a force for stability; it does require a more concerted and holistic approach to avoid a really negative second order outcome.

*Q: Just to return to put a final point on the funding question, it would seem that there are many sources of funding, so that if you had a project, you had many avenues to pursue, and some of this money may even be Iraqi money? Is that true?*

A: Increasingly what we would like to do is see, particularly when you are talking about construction or reconstruction, we would like to see small and diminishing amounts of US money leveraging large and increasing amounts of Iraqi money, because the success that I described earlier in getting the budget flowing to the provincial governments, something like four billion has flowed out to the provincial governments, all of these sources that I am putting together don't equal that. I mean the Iraqi money is considerably bigger than our money, and it's also where you are trying to go, which is you really want, as a very clear goal, Iraq to be spending its own money through transparent and accountable and responsive processes to meet the needs of its own

citizens. That's just good in all kinds of ways, it has a huge counter insurgency positive impact because one of the main things you want people to do is to say: 'this indigenous government structure that is sitting up there: that is the future. I'm getting off the fence now, I'm casting my lot there because I'm going to get in now while I can.' You need that thought process to happen and while we're in there doing a substitution role, that's not happening. Your biggest accounts again are PRDC, CERP, Community Stabilization Program. There are some others that are smaller, the Community Action Program, which the PRTs have less to do with. The other one that is big that's worth mentioning is the local governance program. It is a centrally-run AID contract run by an implementing partner, but they had been really important in developing the skill set you need to run a provincial government. As they will point out, that's a long term project, it's been running for about three years now, and when you see the dramatic success and budget execution, you see the payoff. A long-term steady program to actually get people trained up and able to actually run a government and administer it. That's the other one I think I would highlight for you.

*Q: Is that the RTI?*

A: It is indeed. It's the RTI contract.

*Q: They haven't gotten a lot of press, at least that I've noticed.*

A: Again, it's a very quiet process story, to make incremental improvement leading to no big explosions.

*Q: There's a story there. Another questions that arises concerns the adequacy of mission guidance. In your view, do the PRTs now have adequate mission guidance? You don't want them to be overly guided, but how would you respond to that?*

A: I think it's better. I think the training has been really important. I think the PRT leaders conferences where OPA brings the PRT leaders together to, - when somebody's really cracked the nut, cracked the code, and they're able to do a presentation to share it - I think that kind of lateral transmission of best practice is a very good way to augment and make practical the strategic guidance you're giving them. I do think the guidance is better, but I think as you can hear from my discussion here, there are some unresolved doctrine issues about what you should be doing. Should you just be hiring everybody and building a bunch of stuff? The Center for Army Lessons Learned manual, on lessons learned for PRTs, has a great quote that really kind of captures it. There is a very frustrated military officer saying, 'the State Department wants to build Iraqi capacity. We need to get shit done.' And there is the difference. I don't know that it's always long term versus short term, but that's one of the tensions. There's our view that people invest in the future not necessarily by solving short term unemployment; there's the military's conviction that unemployment leads people to shoot at us, there's our questioning that, 'do the people that shoot at us, are they really unemployed?' So there is a series of unresolved doctrine issues that continue to make guidance difficult. They continue then, when you give guidance here, when you get in the field and you run up against military

doctrine, the fact that our doctrine and their doctrine are not well defined and at odds in many key areas means that I think that the guidance gap persists and plays out in a thousand skirmishes. It really does need to be something we address as a first order of priority, do a little science-based look at this, try to figure out what the best practice and the historical lessons tell us, and then try to come up with the best set of guidance that we can, because it's unresolved; you can feel it in the tension of my describing the various funding streams and the money that goes behind them. It's hard to give consistent top level guidance when you've got this many unresolved questions of what's the best way to go about doing this, and what is it we're trying to do.

*Q: That sounds like a very serious divide, in fact, and not one that's going to be rapidly bridged. But you feel optimistic, I can sense, nonetheless.*

A: I think the events on the ground in Iraq make you optimistic if you look at where we are today, where we were one year ago. It is a turn around that none of us who were, I don't think any of us could really have just bet it would go this well. Violence is down dramatically. These terrible outflows of people being displaced from their homes, it's over, it's not happening anymore, some people are returning home. I sat with Italy's 'Katie Couric' at lunch in Rome some months back and she was lovely, but she was very clear she'd gone to Baghdad to write a critical story about the surge, and she had to say that she couldn't say enough good things about it...the shops were open, the children were playing, the mothers and their toddlers were back in the street, and watching the city come back to life and people's lives start to return to something worth living, it's so inspiring for people. Watching provincial government take hold, watching ordinary Iraqis believe they can stand up and question their leaders and ask what happened about something. Watching contracts be let in Anbar in a very public ceremony where the winner of the contract is called out, walks up, and is handed it so that people can all see how. These things, they are very inspirational because it's really what we set out to do. That's the part I'm very optimistic about, and I do think we've learned some things from each other, and that some of these doctrine issues are probably being hammered out on the ground, and then a lot of lessons are being learned that may allow us over the next few years to come back, particularly with DOD's robust lessons learned process - two-thirds of the average military career, I gather, is spent in training and exercising. It's hard to believe that that huge amount of time and money and people's thought processes won't get turned to trying to sort some of this out. We still have very little capacity at State to do lessons learned and to put this forward, but I'm hoping we can have some voice in trying to sort these things out over the next couple of years.

*Q: That is the purpose of this project, which is fully backed by State, actually. You mentioned the Army's Lessons Learned Center's Playbook. Apparently it is kind of a controversial document, and there are some things in it that the State Department does not agree with.*

A: I think it has surfaced the doctrine issues that need to be worked through, so we can determine best practice; you know there is some science involved in this, there is some interviewing, there is some perception, that needs to get sorted through after we're...it's

probably for later, after passions have subsided over some of these topics that I think the Center for Army Lessons Learned does at least draw into sharp contrast, such as the differences in what you believe success is, such as 'We have to get shit done.' I have to say, one of our PRT leaders, one of our very, very gifted PRT leaders has a great cycle called the Failed Project Cycle, pointing out how 'getting shit done' actually makes things worse a lot of times. If it's not incorporated into the Iraqi budget cycle, then we build it for them, then they don't maintain it, they don't staff it, they expect us to, we expect them to, we're mad at them because they didn't do it, they're mad at us because we didn't do it, the building falls into disrepair, and the request comes all the way back up except there is all kinds of ill will. That's a bad cycle. We would argue that getting stuff done is actually not the top priority. I think we've got enough rich material here that we'll have a chance to sort this out over the coming years. I am optimistic because I think my organization stretched and reached and pulled and delivered a kind of logistics feat which is not our core strength; no one ever turns to the State Department to handle a difficult management or logistics challenge and we did it. The quality of the people that we got is also one of the unsung stories. We are getting this back from PRT leaders that you send us great people. I am proud of that, and I think we are getting better at it all the time, and now that the tremendous pressure of the Present for Duty exercise, which was one that I developed no affection for, will allow us to actually focus on refining it and making it more about getting outcomes. Also, I think we're probably moving into, as it becomes more secure, there is more space for us to operate and do what we do. It's easier for Iraqi partners to step forward. When they do, and we're a part of the catalyst for them stepping forward and saying this space is ours, let the light shine here, be gone with you gangs and thugs, there is nothing quite like having been a catalyst for that, and that's happening more and more. Those are the things that make me most optimistic.

*Q: Let me just ask if you would like to add anything. You've really given a tremendous and very rich view of what's going on and how you played a role in developing the PRTs into what they are today. I wish more people would get to hear the story because there really is a lot of good news there. For the record, is there any concluding statement you'd like to make?*

A: I think your question about why I'm optimistic was a great way to conclude it, and I thank you for a very well structured, pleasant interview.

*Q: Thank you, my pleasure.*