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Executive Summary

This interviewee served as the Director of the National Coordination Team in Iraq, where he was in charge of supervising and providing guidance to the PRTs, from the summer of 2006 through the summer of 2007. During his tenure, the ePRTs also came into existence.

Though initially skeptical, this interviewee became "passionate about PRTs," which he believes, "save lives." In summing up, he stated: " With the instruments available to the PRTs," [their] "expertise" and "experience", "we were able to win over parts of the population that we might otherwise have tried to hunt down, at great risk to the soldiers… who would have had to do it."

The interviewee agrees that "mentor" is an appropriate term to describe the function of the PRT leaders vis-à-vis the Iraqi provincial leaders with whom they worked. These leaders were usually either inexperienced "rookies," or tribal or military leaders who may have understood aspects of leadership, but who did not usually understand how to make a government function.

Each PRT included civil affairs soldiers, whose mission in Iraq was, by classic military doctrine, atypical. Usually, the civil affairs mission is to "manage populations so that the population can be isolated from kinetic operations." In Iraq, however, the civil affairs soldiers were involved as "the eyes and ears" of the PRT leader, since they were less restricted in their movements outside the PRT than were the civilians. That said, other civil affairs soldiers served as technical experts (e.g. city managers) and in other roles similar to civilians.

The interviewee describes the tension that sometimes existed between short term and long term goals. Short term goals included projects that had very high visibility, which would demonstrate to the population that their government could deliver; these efforts could be as basic as trash pick-ups, security for a government official, or jobs creation. The longer term goals were actually teaching governance, such as how to administer a province, how to plan and execute a budget.

One of the most significant capabilities of the PRT was its ability to identify, with reasonable reliability, the moderates that the Coalition should be working with, and to

provide institutional memory regarding those individuals deemed trustworthy. Despite turnover of PRT personnel, they managed to maintain this institutional memory in a manner which was lacking on the military side.

The interviewee describes the genesis of the ePRTs as the desire to provide a civilian component to the military surge, and provides a helpful analysis of the complex nature of the violence in Iraq. He credits the subsequent success of the ePRTs to several factors: they were genuinely embedded with the brigade, with the ePRT leader working for the brigade commander and responding to the needs which the brigade commander specified (e.g. if he needed three city managers and two lawyers, that's what was provided). Unlike the original PRTs, whose guidance, albeit very flexible, was provided by the National Coordination Team (now the Office of Provincial Affairs), the ePRTs received guidance and direction from the brigade commander. In addition, the quality of the ePRT personnel was outstanding, described by the interviewee as "hard chargers" who could really get things done.

The interviewee describes how both the PRTs and the ePRTs solved problems related to the transfer of funds and how they were instrumental in putting Iraqi officials in direct communication with their national government leaders, in order to get action on their issues. At the same time, PRT personnel were still unable to engage adequately with the Iraqis they needed to see for several reasons: the security situation in many of the provinces did not permit it; transportation resources were stretched thin; some local governments did not want to work with the PRTs, and in some locales identifying the right leaders proved problematic.

This interviewee recommends that, given the experience of setting up and staffing the PRTs and ePRTs, we create for the future a separate entity whose mission is post conflict transformation, SSTR – Security, Stability, Transition and Relief. One model might be a USTR-like entity, with Cabinet status; other possibilities include an entity embedded either in the State Department or the Defense Department. In any event, the end result would be "PRTs which are on-call, ready to be deployed" in a post –conflict situation.

Interview

Q: I am speaking today with the Director of the National Coordination Team in Iraq from the summer of 2006 through the summer of 2007, where he was in charge of supervising the PRTs. I would like to begin by asking you to define in your own words the purpose of the PRTs at the time you were in charge of them.

A: The PRTs were focused primarily on the provincial level, though that wasn't always the case; some of the PRTs focused on other levels. The provincial government was really the target of the PRT's efforts. Their purpose was to build capacity to foster the ability of governments to deliver to their populations what it is governments ought to be providing their populations. That was really in five areas, one of which was in the governance area. So PRTs worked with provincial governments to teach them basic procedures, how to establish priorities, how to meet those priorities. Really, some mechanical things too, how

to meet various procedures. So it was governance, it was economic development, working with provincial authorities to foster economic development in the provinces. It was infrastructure, helping to repair infrastructure there. The PRTs actually worked with provincial governments again to identify needed projects and then to manage those projects. The Rule of Law was the fourth area, to establish the Rule of Law and then to get it to function properly. First, to make sure there is a body of law, and some kind of entity to enforce it. Then if there is a law-breaker, to bring that law-breaker to justice. The last area where the PRTs focused was public diplomacy, as a matter of fact. That was probably the least well defined area. The way I took it was to ensure that the public relations arm of local governance was working. Inform the people, let them know, quite frankly, let them know about the good things that the government was doing so that the benefits of that knowledge would accrue to the governments and obviously to the coalition.

Q: There is a lot to delve into there. Taking the governance prong for a moment, the local governments that the PRTs work with. Were the Iraqi officials very new to governing, is that why they needed this kind of assistance? The word mentor is one that is used; I would be curious to know whether you think that's a good term. In any event, could you describe the general class of governing officials, and how we fit with them?

A: Yes, I would say the word mentor is an excellent term. PRT leaders in most every case established very close relationships, working relationships with their respective government officials, and mentored them in virtually all the areas that we described, but governance is clearly a very important one. You were right, when we got there, into the provinces, as we stood up PRTs, we found that there was a real paucity of experience for reasons that are historically well known and well documented, and that is the de-Ba'athification. Lots of the government officials that had worked for the Saddam regime were gone. For one reason or another, in one manner or another, they were either purged, de-Ba'athized, or they left. They just picked up and took off to Syria, Jordan in the case of the Sunnis. Some Shias, too, who left because they were concerned about how the coalition might treat them, and they went off to Iran, and some other places. We were dealing with rookies in most cases. In helping them, mentoring them to do the things that governments ought to do. There were some exceptions. Some of the folks that we found were leaders, military leaders in some cases, tribal leaders in other cases. Those folks understood leadership, but they didn't necessarily understand the functions of a government.

Q: What did the PRT staffing consist of?

A: Again I'll take it functional area by functional area. Going back to the governance prong, as you put it. That was mostly done by the PRT leader, and it was a political officer, a Foreign Service officer who helped in that area. And then USAID had a program which we called the Local Governance Program. It was USAID supervised. We relied pretty heavily on third country nationals to come in. They had a program of instruction and took provincial councils through the various lessons in the lesson plan.

That was kind of an extension of the PRT, the folks that were working for the Local Governance Program. They were very often out actually living with the population.

On the economics side, again, we had the USAID official who generally headed up the economic development team. And then each PRT is a little bit different in terms of what that economic development team looked like. If it was primarily in an agricultural area, we'd bring in a Department of Agriculture guy, if it was an area where there was a specific industry of some sort or another, we'd try to grab, generally a civil affairs officer who had a background in that particular industry. If it was oil, some of the civil affairs officers had a background in the oil industry, so we'd roll them into this economic development team, but always headed by a USAID official.

The public diplomacy prong, we had a Foreign Service officer from the Public Diplomacy cone, who came in, who had that kind of specialty. He or she was generally a one person office. We just didn't have a whole lot of experts there.

The infrastructure dimension was handled by a commissioned officer, an army officer from the US Corps of Engineers who had reach-back, worked in the PRT, but had reach-back to the Corps of Engineers; the Gulf Region division was the overall command. There were three sectors in the company: Gulf Region North, Gulf Region Central, Gulf Region South, and so the engineer officer and the PRT worked very closely with them, on the infrastructure part of it.

I'm forgetting one area, Rule of Law! This was not uniform across PRTs, but we had the Department of Justice and INL officials. And again, lots of times we would find a civil affairs officer from the Army who was a lawyer or had some background there. That was kind of the rule of law team that worked out of the PRT. Every one of those five sections I described was plugged in, if you will, to somebody back in Baghdad, so there was good reach back capabilities. The PRT teams were backed up by experts and officials in Baghdad, and in turn, in Washington, in some cases.

Q: Now all of these folks that you just described, trying to just get a number, is it about 8-10? The total of the PRT personnel would also include the military folks whose job you could describe better than I, but I am thinking it is security. So, the original PRTs have the specialists you describe, and in addition to them there would be how many military personnel providing security?

A: I'd say if you're going to identify specialists, and by that I mean specialists from civilian agencies, we'd run anywhere from 10 or so in the smaller PRTs, to 20 to 25 in the PRT like the Baghdad PRT, which is our biggest. And the rest of them were military complements. Most often the uniformed military in the PRT were civil affairs officers or non-commissioned officers. It was a civil affairs detachment of some sort. They could be 20, 25, or 30. They weren't really there to provide security. The security provided to PRTs, the soldiers who were involved in that we really didn't count in our PRT numbers. The size of the PRTs would, again in Baghdad there were about 80 sometimes upwards of

that, everybody included, to include the civil affairs people. The small PRTs would be 20-25.

Q: Okay. When the military folks are doing civil affairs, what does that look like?

A: That is a good question, and the civil affairs mission, by doctrine, is to basically manage populations so that the population can be isolated from kinetic operations. That classic mission for a civil affairs unit didn't really translate well to the environment in Iraq. So what the civil affairs folks did there was they worked with populations, where the PRT core members were more involved in building capacity in the five areas that I talked about. The civil affairs folks went out to villages and towns trying to find what the populations needed, trying to provide that, did a lot of relief work, did a lot of reporting back to PRT leaders about what it is they found out. If I was going to describe what the civil affairs primarily concentrated on, in the PRTs, it's being the eyes and the ears of the PRT leader. The restrictions on them as far as traveling outside of the PRT were a lot less stringent than for the civilian PRT members themselves. I hasten to add that the line between, I kind of describe it as being fairly clean, it wasn't. There were civil affairs folks who were city managers, who were reservists, who put on uniforms who came and helped with the governance program, for example. It was a very flexible and oft times capable asset for the PRT leader.

Q: I think I understand what you are saying,, and I wouldn't expect things to be anything but very flexible. I'm thinking that we may find, though, as time evolves, that the lines become more clearly defined. That's a hypothesis, and you'll be able to tell me, as we move from these classic original 10 PRTs to the ePRTs. In terms of the political component and the economic component of the US counter-insurgency, which I understand was a part of the mission for the PRTs, could you speak to how that actually played out?

A: Yes. Actually, in a number of ways. I break the effects that we were after into two groups, the short term effects and then the longer term effects. To military commanders, to the military guys, they were often more focused on short term, high visibility, quick impact projects. Be they economic projects, be they assistance to government officials or another leader. The way that worked is the political officer or the PRT leader would identify: where are the moderates, who are the people we can trust, who are the people that have a hope of garnering the support of the population in ways that we would like to see that support garnered. I say we, the whole coalition. We worked with those leaders, and then they delivered what those leaders asked for and needed. Sometimes it was money, the government folks and the PRT folks had money available. I don't mean bribes, I mean money for projects. Sometimes it was security for a government official. Another government official was concerned about the buildings, and the PRT leader would work with the unit commander to get the right security there. Sometimes it's employment, so the USAID official and the PRT leader would look for opportunities to generate employment. Some things were as simple as trash pick ups. They organize police calls, hire local folks. All of this was short term, very high visibility; show the population that their government could deliver. That was the ideal. It was also what the

coalition in support of their government, as a team, could deliver. I shudder when I use this term, but it's a good term, win "the hearts and minds" of the population. That was what it was about. Getting them to essentially turn away from the insurgents, and to identify who they were, in lots of cases. That's how it happened.

Let me just talk to the long term, we'll get back to your question. In longer term, it was about teaching governance and economic entities to do the things that they were supposed to be doing: governors to provide administration, to administer the province, budget officials in the provincial council to know how to execute a budget. And again, this took a little longer, as you might imagine. So you know the military guys were kind of 'eh, you know, what's this doing for me now?' But that's unfair. Most of the military guys got it, because if you don't have a government in place which, at least ostensibly is delivering without the support of the coalition day in and day out, that government will never win the loyalties of the people, and we'll be there forever propping up a government that is eventually going to lose legitimacy in the eyes of the people, and we can go to Afghanistan and talk about that if you want. So there were the short term effects and the longer term effects tied to the counter-insurgency effort.

Q: Working with the rookies, as you described them in governance, I'm going to assume they are fairly young.

A: Some were.

Q: You can clarify that? Did you feel on balance, that it was preferable to be working with these younger, though untrained, than working with the folks who left who might have been technically more competent but may have had other disadvantages?

A: Of course, that varies case by case. I would say if I were going to try to generalize, just taking the question and giving it a slight tilt. The worst thing that a PRT could do was to try and back a guy who appeared competent but who either was or appeared to be a sectarian, associated with sectarianism. A Shia in one of the Sunni provinces who may have been competent, may have been eager, may have been pure, his motives may have been pure, but if he is viewed by the population as being sectarian, if he was viewed as leaning on the police, the national police, who are known to be sectarian, infiltrated by Jeesh Al-Mahdi. Not only would they have no effect, they would have a negative effect, because of the signal that was sent, which was 'hey, we've got the coalition supporting people who hate us, who are trying to kill us, and that's not a government official who is going to be able to do much. So that is kind of an answer to your question.

Q: That makes sense and definitely speaks to it. I'm sure it's not easy to make these distinctions. By the time you were in charge, had we developed some pretty reliable expertise that would allow us to determine who is worth cooperating with?

A: That was one of the tremendous capabilities of the PRT that the military really didn't have, because the PRT was there constantly. Now it's true that PRT officials rotated after a year, but there was always someone there who could serve as the institutional member

who can say, 'we don't want to deal with that guy; he is a bad actor.' Whereas the military guys, the units would pick up lock, stock, and barrel and move out, and you'd have a new unit moving in. Now yes, the military's got a very regimented set of handover procedures, but you can't cover everything, and all of a sudden this new actor would pop up on the screen and say, 'you know what, I'll tell you about a bunch of Al-Qaeda guys if you will help us to get this started or whatever.' The guy could have been completely corrupt, and if the military wasn't checking with the PRT, there would be a problem. I would say the PRT is very good at identifying who it is that we need to work with. We still had some glitches. I mean, we worked with some folks we shouldn't have worked with, either because we didn't know, or for the sake of convenience and it was expedient, you know how that works. But the PRTs were good reference points when it came to identifying the moderates who were worth working with.

Q: On the economic front, I heard the other day from someone that it was not always the case that we needed to generate employment; that is, many of the people who are not sympathetic to us are actually very fully employed and so generating more employment for those folks really was not helping us. Rather, it was hurting us because they could use their ill-gotten gains against us.

A: I don't know where he was going or she was going with that, but I thought you were going to say that they were fully employed because Al-Qaeda or Jeesh Al-Mahdi were paying them to build and place IEDs, and that was the case, and that's why public employment programs were so important. These weren't ideologues. They were just people trying to earn some money; if they get 100 bucks for putting an IED in the ground, they were going to do it, they didn't have an alternative.

Q: That was actually the controversial point. I had understood things along those lines, but what I was hearing was 'no, it wasn't that they needed the money brought by placing the IEDs.' They had money coming in from their day jobs; rather, they didn't like the American occupation.

A: Certainly the case. And again, you can't generalize about the motives of the insurgents. Some of them did hate the coalition. They viewed the coalition as being a force of occupation. A lot of the hatred for the coalition, I truly believe was nationalist extremism. This is an invading army and we are going to get them out. Not so much Islamic fundamentalism, although there was some of that too, but it was nationalism. It was people who hated the coalition. I would say if you are going to look at sources, - this is a little off the point but let me get into it, - if you are going to look at sources of violence, during my time there, overwhelmingly, the primary source of violence was sectarianism. Shia on Sunni. The second was mostly Sunni rejectionists, who I believe were mostly nationalists, not Islamists. And then you have Islamic extremism, Al-Qaeda. And then you had Shia extremism, Jeesh Al-Mahdi. All those things contributed to the violence that we saw there. It was kind of important to parse out what you were dealing with. If you were dealing with, let's say, Sunni rejectionists. It is true that some of those folks were pretty well to do, and you can create all the jobs you want for them, and they are still going to hate you. So yes, if you look at who is causing the violence, in some

cases, yes. The militias, for example, are made up of people who are making their money off of belonging to a militia. Many of the insurgents were paid by terrorist groups to fight against the coalition. And so if you could generate employment, and give them an option that was more attractive to them than what the insurgents or terrorists have offered to them, they'd come over. I cannot think of a single case where we said 'no, we're not going to generate employment in that area because these people are already employed, they don't need the money, and they going to take the money and use it against us.' I will say we made some choices about locations where we implemented job programs and job creation efforts based on who it is, you know, conditionality. If you do this, we will do this. To be honest with you, the best programs are not based upon, but certainly take account of this notion of conditionality. In that sense, I agree with him. We didn't go into Sadr City, for example, and say 'I will stop this; we're going to do micro-loans all over Sadr City.' But we did, we did go into Sadr City to get some Shia who were parts of militias interested in some other things. But then Al-Sadr was not very friendly at certain times, to the coalition, and so we weren't going to reward him for his animosity by going into neighborhoods that were supported by his supporters, and helping them out.

Q: I can see the logic behind that.

A: Pretty straight forward.

Q: Let's see if we can launch the ePRTs now against this back-drop. We have talked about the components and the objectives of the original PRTs. On your watch, I gather the ePRTs were launched at the end of 2007, approximately. What was the thinking then behind the creation of this slightly different structure and what were the major differences?

A: Right. I'll be very frank. Initially, the notion was that the military was going to surge, so the civilian bureaucratic community or governmental community was going to surge, too. Because it couldn't just be the military for lots of reasons that you understand as well as I do, in terms of the politics that go on back here. And I think some officials were serious about doing something that might make the military surge go hand in hand with the military surge, make it more effective. Initially, I had the overwhelming sense that it was just a matter of putting civilians out there to show it wasn't just the military that was going to do it.

Q: Initially you had the sense…

A: Right, this is what I'm coming to. I was not a huge fan of ePRTs when the concept was first discussed. But then as the concept developed, I got more and more supportive and interested, and now I am widely enthusiastic about what ePRTs are doing. It's because we were able to work with Washington to get certain agreements in place, and those agreements basically caused the ePRT concept to morph into something that the military really was supportive of. Let me get into that; it was first of all, they were truly embedded. They were right in the brigade. Secondly, this is a huge struggle, but the command and control arrangements were that, and this follows almost naturally for being

embedded, but the ePRT leader worked for the unit commander. To be honest, with a military background, I was thinking, we are going to throw these PRTs into BCTs and they aren't going to work for the brigade commanders and just cause all sorts of problems. Well, we worked with the right people and got that changed. Third, maybe most important from the standpoint of the BCT commander, is that the ePRTs were tailored to the needs of the district, or what the military would call the area of operations, where the brigade combat teams into which the PRTs were embedded were operating. So, both in terms of size, if the brigade commander said 'I need 25 guys in my ePRT', we got him 25 guys. When he said 'I only want 5 guys in my ePRT', you know, we gave him 5. And if he said 'I need 3 city managers and 2 lawyers', we came back and did the best we could to match the skill set that the brigade commander was asking for. For those three reasons, I became very enthusiastic. I guess there is a fourth reason. The fourth reason is that the people who showed up were hard chargers, they were operators. For the most part, they were people who had been in the field, and liked it. And ePRT leaders, if you get a chance to talk to any of them…

Q: We do.

A: Okay good. I would be surprised if they don't give you great, positive feedback on their experience. In fact I had several who told me it was the best assignment that they have had in the Foreign Service.

Q: Now, the folks that you're recruiting were civilians, and initially, I gather in this first period, they were reservists and National Guard folks.

A: And DOD civilians in some cases.

Q: Okay, I guess I can picture DOD civilians, reservists and National Guard. These are not your average Foreign Service officer.

A: No.

Q: Was the concept initially that we need to be able to mobilize these experts; they don't exist readily in the Foreign Service, so we will look to National Guard and reserves. But with the proviso that over time this will change?

A: Yes. In essence, you are exactly right. Just taking a step back. In January, we fielded the core teams, which was the Foreign Service officer, who was the PRT leader, USAID Foreign Service officer, and a civil affairs officer. From the start the civil affairs officers were meant to be military guys and gals. Then you have what we call a bi-lingual, bi-cultural advisor, BBA, which were generally Iraqis, sometimes from the region, not necessarily Iraqi. But they definitely spoke the language and were able to interact with the people a little bit better. So everybody got a core team like that, and then we built a tailored team beyond that. Now, you are right, the tailored teams were based on specialties that the brigade commanders had identified very early on in the process. The Foreign Service is not structured to provide officers of types, specialties on short notice.

We never really envisioned that they would all be Foreign Service officers. You know, we were hoping that if we wanted agricultural experts, they would come from AG, if we wanted, you know…

Q: City Managers?

A: Right. That there would be a way to reach out and touch those. You can get me into where we need to head here, to be frank; I don't know what we expected when we asked for a city manager, because the Foreign Service doesn't have them. I'm hard pressed to find any department, US government department that has them. I think what we were hoping for is that between DOD and State, that there would be some kind of roster of active, I don't want to say active, reserve or retired individuals who State or DOD could reach out and touch. Might be a reservists who was a city manager, might be a retired Foreign Service officer who had gone into some kind of local government work of some sort or another, or had some experience working with the local governments, you know, an operator, and we had some of those: Vietnam vets, Foreign Service officers who came in, a CORDS guy who came in, you are probably too young to remember CORDS.

Q: I read a lot about CORDS; that was not part of my era, but…

A: I remember CORDS.

Q: These to me, though, are still the exceptions. It's exactly what you need, but your current Foreign Service officer will not be that person and the USAID folks who do have a lot of specialties, they're aren't so many of them either.

A: Right. Let me just finish that train of thought now. So you are right, everything you said is right, and therefore we have relied pretty heavily on the military to pull out their, to tap into their databanks and find us reservists, and initially and to this day, the vast majority of the people who man the ePRTs are reservists and DOD civilians. Slowly but surely the Department of State is figuring out ways, developing mechanisms, for contracting other needs, to get civilian officials into the ePRTs to replace the reservists. But as I said, that's happening slowly. I'll give you just 30 seconds on what we need, and that is a civilian reserve corps. People who say, 'you know what, I would like to do things like this, I'll put my name on your list, I've got 10 years of experience in standing up police forces in small towns, and if you need somebody to help with the police force in Waziristan, I'm ready.' That kind of thing, God-forbid.

Q: I was going to say, that's a tough assignment.

A: That's where we need to head; of course President Bush announced that's where we're headed. You can be a judge of how far along that road we are, and down that road we are.

Q: I think you alluded to a process that might be worth delving into a little bit more, as well, and that was while you were there, agreements were negotiated between State and DOD to make it possible for the PRTs to have DOD life support and sort out the security

issues. Could you describe that process, what might be learned from it? I imagine there were some difficulties to overcome?

A: It was incredible to me that we had people out on the frontlines, risking their lives everyday, who relied on the support that we were responsible for getting to them, and we were arguing over the turn of a phrase in paragraph 4B sub 1, in the memorandum of understanding. It was excruciating, and as you alluded to the big areas were support and security. It boils down to who is really going to pay for it, because the military said, 'hey, we'll provide, but we want to be reimbursed for it, and we want to be reimbursed for it in this particular way.' And then the security piece was difficult because we habitually relied on the military to secure our officials who were going out to work with the people to do their jobs, and these are the PRTs that are located in the so-called FOBs, Forwarding Operating Bases. The military need those people to run their missions. It was a scarce resource, and there was no agreement, so we're at the mercy of the military. If they didn't want to go, if they had something else to do, they could say, 'your mission takes a back seat to what it is we have to do.'

We needed these memorandums, they were painful, but the memorandums did establish understandings or agreements about the provision of security, how many convoys would be secure per week, what they would look like, what they had to do, specifically what they would not do, they wouldn't escort officials to any side buildings because they weren't PSDs (Personal Security Details), they weren't trained to be PSDs, but they would secure convoys and get them to where they needed to go and they'd secure the perimeter. Then, on the support side, if they were on an FOB, the FOB supported them, they gave them pencils and pens, and food and all that kind of stuff, and the reimbursement of that was the agreement back here in Washington.

Where do we look at in the future? If we think this is a good concept, and this is something we want to replicate in some civilian operations, peace building, post conflict, conflict transformation, then we need to have these agreements in place before we go over there. In order for that to happen there needs to be a proponent for PRTs, somebody who is their advocate. I would argue that if we tried to make State their advocate, it wouldn't get the right kind of 'umph.' If we tried to make Defense their advocate, defense would ignore them, because they have too many other things going on, such as buying F-22s. It probably has to be a separate entity whose mission is post conflict transformation; SSTR (Security, Stability, Transition and Relief), peace building, and PRTs are an important part of their portfolio.

I don't have it all figured out, but there are different ways to do it. There is one model, which is to stand up a USTR-like entity, a trade representative entity, that's got the force of a cabinet position, that can say to the Department of State, you need to train - and does so in the name of the President, or somebody, - and says you need to train these 20 people to be PRT leaders and keep their name in a book so when we need to dial them up we can do so. It really says this is what we need to have on stand-by, ready to deploy, at the drop of a hat. That's one model. Then there those who advocate that it ought to be embedded. I've got my doubts about that. It ought to be State that has the lead for SSTR, and State

had the lead for that, so they worry about the PRT. I have this image of the Secretary of State trying to tell the Secretary of Defense what it is that he needs to do…I just don't think that's going to work. And then you have another model, which is within various regions: it's almost like a subordinate headquarters to a regional commander, it might be the SIG or it might be a command that works for the SIG, but there is a subordinate headquarters whose focus is SSTR and has operational units working for him or her, has this, what he calls CORDS-like entity, which is maybe PRTs that are on-call, that are ready to be deployed. It is almost a regionalization of the concept. It's kind of slick.

Q: It appears to be a dependency of DOD, in that model.

A: It could be. It depends on the region. If it's these groups that are focused on SSTR, it might work for the Ambassador. Especially in regions where we are pre-conflict. Let's say we want to do some of these things before conflict broke out, it might be the Ambassador in that case who gave these folks their guidance and direction. In a post-conflict situation I think you are right, it's going to be the regional combative commander, what we used to call CINC.

Q: That is now taking us a little far beyond our scope, but it is very interesting, and it certainly does relate, as it all goes back to clarifying the relationships within our bureaucracy. Going back to the ePRTs and the PRTs. Were there any philosophical differences between what they were trying to accomplish? It doesn't sound like there were…

A: There is a fundamental philosophical difference inherent it the standing PRTs.

Q: Philosophical differences?

A: The standing PRTs were more focused on capacity development, and assisted counter-insurgency efforts along with that, whereas the ePRTs were focused on a counter insurgency effort, and developed capacity as a part of that. So it was a little bit of a priority thing there. The other thing that's important is that standing PRTs were focused at the provincial level, and the embedded PRTs were focused on levels below the provincial level.

Q: I've heard it explained that as a result of a lack of a government structure for the ePRTs to work with, some of them became more political advisors to their brigade combat team than their counterparts in the original PRTs did.

A: I think that is fair.

Q: Maybe that is a good thing?

A: I think that probably did happen, in some cases; it was probably personality dependent. If the brigade commander is working with an ePRT leader that he liked, he or she probably became something like a Political Advisor. I would hope not exclusively,

but at least a contributor. I will tell you some of the standing PRT leaders were really relied upon by the brigade commanders to provide all sorts of advice, political, economic, what have you. Again, personality dependent.

Q: I heard that principle was very important in the Afghanistan situation, and it rings true.

A: Remember in Afghanistan, the PRT leaders were the exception. In any event, in my opinion the military guys or gals are less suited than some of the experienced Foreign Service officers that were out there to provide some of the nuanced political advice.

Q: With that distinction in mind, I was going to ask about mission guidance, which is what I believe you would have been providing, while you were in Baghdad, and responsible to pay attention to all the PRTs. How did you provide guidance to them and at the end of your time was there a kind of standard guidance?

A: You have undoubtedly come across people who will tell you that the mission of the PRT is no where very clearly defined, and that is a fact. We had a mission statement, but I think we kind of reverse-engineered the mission statement to what it is the PRTs were doing. Guidance and direction did come from Baghdad for the standing PRTs, came from the National Coordination Team, and now I presume comes from the Office of Provincial Affairs. What we tried to do was keep the guidance broad, to establish the left and right limit, and let the PRT leaders work within those limits, based on what their provinces looked like to them, assessments that they were making, the people they were working with, and I think we were fairly successful in doing that. For the ePRTs, guidance and direction came from the brigade commander. I stayed very close to the military chain of command on that. My background allowed me to do that. Most of these guys were my friends. I kind of kept a finger on the pulse, what they were telling the brigade commanders to say to their ePRT leaders, we could de-conflict in cases where we were going to have problems. Because of the nature of the military chain of command, I am convinced that the direction, the ePRTs were getting was pretty tight, pretty consistent.

Q: Too tight?

A: No, not too tight. I think it was probably right. Again, the Corps commander over there is a very experienced guy, and he knows if the mayors express their intent, then one of the commanders runs with it. I think they did the same thing in terms of how they deal with their ePRT leaders. That's the direction that we gave from Baghdad. The guidance and direction from Baghdad, from the National Coordination Team, I think we stayed fairly consistent. We were appropriately consistent. I'll whine to you a little bit. The NCT really wasn't structured to do the kind of things that I thought it needed to do. I tried to restructure it, the primary example was we really didn't have a planning capability, or a capability to keep track of what was going on, at least to keep me satisfied, in the PRTs, because there was no, what in the military they would call, an operations section. You had the folks that were looking at different programs, and then on the other side you had the desk officers who were focused on getting PRTs what they needed. They needed

communications equipment, computers, that kind of thing. But you really didn't have the guys who could write the directives, and say you are going to do this, you know, six months from now you need to be there, to really try to focus on assessments. We really didn't have a section that was responsible for that. We kind of had to make do. We probably could have done better in the area of guidance and direction if we had been structured a little bit differently in the National Coordination Team.

Q: Now is that why the National Coordination Team eventually became the Provincial Affairs Office?

A: No, well, I don't know that they were trying to correct anything. In fact, I would be offended if I heard…no. (laughter) I think the Office of Provincial Affairs, again this may be beyond the scope of your research here…IRMO. You know IRMO, the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office. It was an entity that was stood up to oversee reconstruction activity, specifically Iraq Reconstruction Relief Fund, 24 billion dollars of money. That's what IRMO did. Part of IRMO was the National Coordination Team. IRMO's term ran out in May of 2007. Horribly inconvenient when you remember where we were in the military surge, but you know, the machine was running and we weren't going to change it. When IRMO stood down, so did the National Coordination Team. The need for some entity that could coordinate the efforts of the PRTs was recognized, in fact they wanted to up-gun it, so they created OPA and plucked in an Ambassador to go ahead and be the director of OPA.

Q: Well, that's a little bit, you might say, haphazard rather than careful creation of a new entity to carry out the good work.

A: I agree, it was not crafted ideally.

Q: Okay. In terms of funding, I have the sense that there are many tools available to fund projects and a fair amount of money is available to folks, but what problems did you observe from the funding side of things? Was it too difficult to navigate?

A: We can talk about funding…first was the IRRF (Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund), which was around since 2003. I believe that we saw it started in 2003, but it was early on, right after that the initial combat operations. The PRTs did not control IRRF, but they helped to identify needs and requirements. They were asked to and often did manage projects that were underway. That was not discretionary money to them, but it was certainly money that was available and could be associated with PRTs. And PRTs, so far as there was no IRFF spending to go on, PRTs could participate in determinations about what projects IRFF was going to fund. The next fund is the CERP fund, which is military money. That money was available to PRT leaders only in so far as the military commanders were willing to work with PRT leaders to fund things that the PRTs felt were important.

Q: Well an ePRT would certainly have…

A: I'm coming to ePRTs, yes. That's true. Since you got me into ePRTs, they worked with their brigade commanders on CERP, plus the ePRTs had what we call QRF, quick reaction funding. That was totally at the discretion of the ePRT leader. But just like the PRT leader, a lot of cooperation occurred with his military commander, or her military commander. The military commander wanted to participate in decisions where QRF was going to be spent. So it was a cooperative deal. Then there was ESF, that's kind of broadly put, but ESF, QRF for example came out of ESF. But the money we considered to be ESF, and that was funneled through several agencies, State had ESF that came to them in the form of PRDC funds, Provincial Reconstruction Development Council. That was about 300 million dollars of projects across Iraq, broken out between the provinces, lets say 10 million in a particular province or whatever. Really what that was capacity building money. That was money PRT leaders made available to provincial councils and said 'hey, here's the money, you figure out how you want to spend it. Go through the processes that governance goes through.' Identify where the requirements are, establish priorities, develop a budget, draw a cut line, find the projects, manage the projects, you know, capacity building. The process is more important in the eyes of the PRT leader anyway, more important than what the money is actually buying. Of course the Iraqis view it differently, but that's okay. Okay, so that was ESF, then ESF came though USAID, those were the two big spenders of ESF. USAID had various programs: I don't know how much detail you want me to go into.

Q: Not too much.

A: Okay, I'll just give you the names. Local governance program, LGP, they had Community Assistance Program, CAP, something, it was called CSP, Community Stabilization Program These were, you know USAID, you know what their focus is, and those programs were designed to support that focus.

Q: We read often that problems in Iraq stem from the central government not releasing Iraqi money to its localities. How would this impact an ePRT, which is sitting in a locality? If the Iraqis need some service would they likely come to the ePRT and say 'well we can't get any money from our central Iraqi government, can we use yours?'

A: Yes, that would happen. Yes, US money displaced Iraqi money far too often for some people's taste. If you were focused on the near term, like lots of military guys were, they said 'hey, we don't care, let's get the money spent and get the effects that we need now, so we can get the insurgents off the streets.' If you were interested in capacity building and getting Iraqi systems to work, then you were a little concerned about that displacement. To be totally fair, it wasn't only the central government who was screwing us up, because lots of times the provincial government would be saying, 'I have no money, give me money, give me money', but they have a budget. They weren't doing the right thing. And the Minister of Finance, who was not 100% a good guy, but was right in this area, saying 'Give us a budget, and we'll send the money to you.'

Now, the other last piece, I could keep going on with a lot of detail on this, but I won't. The last piece is the Iraqi system is horribly complex. Some of the money that goes to

provinces goes through ministries, to their directors general, and the province, goes through that route. Some of the money goes straight to the provincial government, some of the money is totally extra-governmental. The government kind of decides that, but it's really not Iraqi money. It's Iraqi money but it's coming from the US authorities, the DFI funding. As complex as Iraqi money is to move, that kept it sometimes from getting there, it wasn't anybody's malign intent, it was just the system was too cumbersome to make it work. You always had at the end of the year this huge hue and cry about here are the Iraqis, they've got all this money, they're not spending it, and the US is buying all the things the Iraqis aren't buying. And to some extent, that was true, but the reasons for it weren't what a lot of people liked to say were 'these greedy Iraqis, they want to sit on their oil wealth,' well, that's unfair.

Q: Regarding lessons learned for our PRTs, obviously we have two large bureaucracies which on their own are difficult to navigate, so there's not going to be a simple lesson learned to pluck out of that.

A: Well, there is. I think that the lesson learned is, in addition, well, part of the development of capacity at the provincial level is to assist provincial governments to work with the center. For example, what we saw in the North was the Sunni provinces are always suspicious about the central government. In the North we had Sunni officials that were saying, 'you know, these people are trying to get more benefits for Baghdad: they don't care about us.' We would put skeptics on a helicopter, working with the military - the military is great about this - put them on a helicopter and flew them down to Baghdad, to discuss the situation with national officials. That was a PRT function, working with the military because we don't have helicopters. That became a big thing for PRTs. That's the lesson learned, quite honestly, it's an Afghanistan lessons learned, too. But the Provincial governments are not going to be able to function, unless they are able to cooperate with the national government. Whereas we didn't see that when we started out, and had specifically an area focus for the provincial government; I would say it's a very important focus now.

Q: Right. Maybe some cultural learning that needed to take place so that these Iraqi provincial government leaders could, on their own, run off to Baghdad…

A: You said a mouthful. There are cultural intricacies, Americans to Iraqis, because we have Americans, especially a military guy - again, the Foreign Service people are used to working with foreign cultures- but the military guys would say 'hey, this is a screwed up way to do it, they ought to do it this way, why can't they do this, we clearly…' well, the Iraqis would say 'oh yes, okay, very good' and then they would just blow them off. We tried to force things on the Iraqis just because we don't understand the way that they do business. Not just under Saddam, but historically. There is cultural awareness that has to occur there. Then, as you said, cultural awareness within Iraq. The North, Kurdistan, is about as foreign to Baghdad as Tehran, and in some cases, Tehran is probably closer.

Q: It probably is.

A: There are cultural gaps that have to be bridged there.

Q: I don't want to take all of your morning here, but I just want to cover a couple final points. We early on alluded to public information and I have to come back to that, as a topic of concern. How would you characterize the adequacy of the public information program that you saw regarding the PRT work?

A: There was a tension there. We wanted to cultivate, to mentor in local governments, wanted to mentor governmental officials in public diplomacy, in how to get the good word out. How do you use information to garner support for the government? So we wanted to do that. What we didn't want to do is to have the public diplomacy officer touting the accomplishments of the PRT, and some of the pubic diplomacy officers didn't get that. What they ended up doing was producing articles on what the PRTs are doing, and first of all Iraqis don't care mostly, and ones that do say 'how come you guys are doing it and our government's not doing that?' Then there was the security issue. If either Iraqi publicity or coalition publicity raised profiles too high, that could be very dangerous, because a provincial governor who is being wildly successful in his province, is a great target for extremists. We had to be a little careful there, too. My feeling on public diplomacy was where they were able to work with local governments to develop the instrumentalities of information, public information, that was a good thing. Going too much beyond that was difficult.

Q: So the ability to go much beyond that really didn't exist at that point?

A: That's another good point, we only have one public diplomacy officer, and there are some good ones, but for some of the PRT leaders it's kind of an afterthought.

Q: So, they have to define who their audience is. Yet, could our PRT personnel engage adequately with Iraqis, the ones they needed to see?

A: No. There were all sorts of reasons why that didn't happen enough. First of all, the security situation in lots of the provinces made it just difficult to get out. There was the problem of transportation. Some of these folks worked in provinces that were gigantic. Anbar is this big, huge province and it's just hard to get around. There were cases where local government just didn't want to work with the PRTs. They didn't want to be associated with the coalition. There were problems identifying exactly who it is we need to be dealing with, ePRTs experienced that initially. Some were working with informal leaders and some with formal leaders, so it was identification of the people we ought to be working with that was difficult. For those reasons, if we could lick those things, we would be 80% of the way there.

Q: Well some of those are problems you would expect because they are endemic to the situation of a war zone.

A: Right, it's a post conflict, or conflict situation.

Q: To conclude, on balance then, would you say that the PRTs, both the PRTs and the ePRTs, are sufficiently able to do what they are trying to do?

A: Well you are not asking someone who's unbiased. Here is what I would say: I could not prove to you that the PRTs are worth the money that we are investing in them, because the most important results we got from PRTs were not particularly measurable. The measures of success were intangibles. I have been around, a lot, both the military side and the civilian side. I got out to the PRTs regularly, I talked to local officials, I talked to military guys about the PRTs, and got very positive feedback in virtually in every case. My gut instincts tell me these are good things. I think another lesson learned is, we do have to figure out what it is we want to measure, and then make awful sure that it is tied to the really important things that we want from the PRTs. Because we made decisions earlier about the things we wanted to measure, but, you know, often times, one measures the things you can measure, and not the things that are really important.

Q: Or what someone tells you to measure.

A: Yes, from Washington, that too. Here's a war story for you. Someone wanted to brief the President on what the ePRTs were accomplishing, so they sent out this list of things they'd like to get…how many school children are in the playgrounds on an average afternoon. The people that were asking were so out of touch with that was going on the ground.

Q: How did you reply to the President's briefing?

A: Certainly, I wasn't going to give the brief, just give information to somebody else. I said the measures you're asking for, in many cases aren't realistic, and in some cases aren't important. Let us tell you what we can provide, and that seemed to be satisfactory.

Q: Any final thoughts, anything you would like to add for the record?

A: No, you really gave me a chance to give you my final thoughts with your last question, it was a good series of questions, well done, nicely crafted. As you read through your notes or you transcribe, if there is anything you want to ask me about, I'm at your disposal. And if you can't decipher my Long Island accent, just let me know.

Q: Very mild Long Island accent, hardly a Long Island accent.

A: I've been away from Long Island for a while.

Q: Well we thank you, it really has been…

A: My pleasure!

Q: We covered a tremendous amount of ground.

A: I am passionate about PRTs. PRT's, I truly believe do save lives. We were able to do, with the instruments that were available to the PRTs, with the expertise, the experience that was resident, we were able to win over parts of the population that we might otherwise have tried to hunt down, at great risk to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, civilians, Coast Guard, men and women who would have had to do it. That's one of the important reasons I am passionate about PRTs. I was, in a previous life, leading the soldiers who are out there, who put it all on the line.