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INTERVIEW #27

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Executive Summary

US has made big promises; produced few results for Iraqis.

We went in and promised that things would be better but the kinds of projects undertaken – large infrastructure and so on – did not resonate with Iraqi citizens. They wanted instead lights and water and other things that relate to their daily lives.

Inflexibility of funding allocation was a problem. If funds were designated for a bridge, they had to be spent on a bridge, whether that was the greatest need or not.

Fees extracted reduced the utility of funds. If $25 million was allocated for a project, that did not mean $25 million went to the project. Fees subtracted meant a smaller impact and smaller project, often disappointing Iraqis involved.

Provincial support teams lacked centralized guidance. Despite these problems, projects got started and progress was good.

The issue of movement security was paramount. Differences of opinion about how much and what kind of security was needed, plus a shortage of transportation security, posed serious and ongoing problems.

It was a mistake to expand missions. "The PRT got off track, because we started adding missions and when you get something that expensive out there, and then people want it to do more and more. Unfortunately, you have to lead that with resources. Those resources are essentially creating organizations that are similar to consulates out there with all the resources that consulates would have: some money to look after HR, some money to look after admin, and IT."

"We know this as a government that when you put x number of people in a field, they've got to have support structure. We lost the focus on what we wanted to do, which was to help the Iraqis become better at governing. Instead, the mission kept growing: 'let's help them do that, but let's help them rebuild their infrastructure, let's help them redevelop their economy, let's help them do reconciliation, let's help them do all these other things.' Overwhelming. You are now not talking about a two-year process; you are talking about a 5 to 10-year process."

Conflict, competition and territorialism emerged to muddy the waters. "It was in the embassy. IRMO, Embassy, and NCT battling, just battling and USAID just battling about, 'I don't want to give more than you are giving, I'm giving too much, I can't give you this unless you promise to repay me.'"

Weekly achievement summaries were good practice. The summary was "a document that in one place provided a great snapshot of what the heck was going on outside of Baghdad.''

A central coordinating body is still needed "Because somebody has to help logistics, help provide research and request for information to the PRTs. Somebody has to look out to them and manage them, because their focus should be on doing what it is you need to do to develop those governments. They need to be lean so you can take part of their effort and take it back to Baghdad."

You need a voice within the embassy speaking for what is happening in the provinces. It is essential to review lessons learned, because "we are making history."

Need to match people with appropriate responsibilities, based on their experience. Private contractors are better suited to some of the tasks now undertaken by the military and PRTs.

Government personnel should be thinking about how to empower Iraqis, not how to find paper and supplies.

Meeting goals of the PRT requires having proper (and enough) equipment, personnel and funding. We need to specify the goal of the PRT, then give it the necessary resources to achieve those goals

Interview

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about what you did and what you continue to do in relationship to the PRTs in Iraq?

A: I started with the PRT program in October of 2005, when I went back to Iraq after having retired from the navy. I'd spent the first six months of 2005 working in Iraq on General Casey's staff as a part of his strategic initiatives group, and at that point we had done some assessment of moving the Afghanistan model of PRTs to Iraq. We decided that model was not applicable to Iraq simply because in Afghanistan the idea was, "let's build these essentially little forts to help spread the authority of the central government."

Whereas in Iraq, you had a very strong central government that didn't need to have its authority spread. What we really needed was some mechanism to enhance the authority of the provincial government.

Q: It's the opposite.

A: Exactly, it's the opposite. That sort of died at that point, and when I got back I talked to an individual who was a retired marine officer who'd gone back, joined the Foreign Service, and did a tour as part of one of the governance teams early on in the CPA days. He had gone back and was working in IRMO, as the director of field operations, and Ambassador Khalilzad had come from Afghanistan and said we needed to do something to enhance our ability to reach out into the provinces. At that time, the embassy had regional embassy offices but because of the increasingly austere security environment, they were having trouble reaching out as well. This was 2004 and early 2005.

Q: By the security arrangement, do you mean the danger?

A: The danger yes, but there were a couple of other issues. One is that the regional embassy offices were supposed to be able to interact with a region of provinces, which was a substantial task at any rate simply because of the distances involved. Then as the road travel became dangerous, it became more and more problematic for diplomats to go out and engage with their counterparts.

We also started recognizing that the reconstruction effort was somewhat misdirected and not appreciated by the Iraqis simply because we were building large-scale reconstruction projects that were not being seen by the common person as useful to them. There was a realization that we need to reorient how we were doing reconstruction.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: Well, we were doing large-scale projects under the IRRF, the Iraqi Reconstruction Relief Fund program. The idea was we are going to come in and rebuild the infrastructure of Iraq. They had westerners who came in and said "you need x number of power plants, you need x number of roads, you need water filtration, you need sewer plants," all of which was true.

Unfortunately, when you build a large power plant or sewer, it takes a long time. The guy in the village, who doesn't have a power line going to his house anyway, is thinking we aren't doing anything for him, we've been here now for a year, and he still doesn't have electricity, there is a road outside his house that still has big pot holes in it, and he doesn't have running water.

Q: Did they have these things originally?

A: No. But we came in there and promised that things were going to be better and unfortunately for the person on the street, it hadn't changed. In fact, it had just gotten more dangerous for them, so they were very unhappy.

So we started what we called the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committees. Essentially, the US government said, "if you, provincial government, will form a provincial reconstruction development committee -- which is made up of government officials, businessmen, and community leaders – we will provide 15 million dollars of IRRF money.

We said we would reprogram from these massive projects and then the Multi-National Force-Iraq was going to take 10 million dollars of its Commanders Emergency Response Program or CERP that the commanders in the field can use to do things that will help stabilize the area. We will give the authority to designate projects to be delivered to your constituencies and your provinces charged against this fund, so you will have 25 million dollars. We will put in place a provincial program manager to help you in this effort, and help oversee the funding and the projects. The money wasn't going to be actually given to the Iraqis, it was simply a matter of having them designate and decide which projects they thought were most important to them then develop statements of work that can then be delivered to the Army Corps of Engineers for contracting.

The idea was that we were going to get a two-fold benefit out of this. One is we are going to get projects that the people actually appreciate. Two, we are going to start getting these nascent governments to start thinking about delivering these essential service to their people.

We had the provincial program manager, who was an Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) employee. IRMO was the office under the embassy that was created when the IRRF fund was established as the authority for overseeing the management of that effort.

We were going to have provincial program managers for all the provinces that had these PRDCs. Also the embassy would establish what was known as provincial support teams. Provincial support teams were an ad hoc group of the army civil affairs forces that would operate in the area, plus this provincial program manager of IRMO, as well as a Foreign Service officer that was assigned to the regional embassy office in that region.

Q: Military, political and civilian.

A: The provincial program manager was not really civilian because he was a 31-61 State Department employee. That person would have experience in program management. So you were able to find the military, the political, and then the program management piece of this. They would come together when they had a PRDC meeting, they would work with the PRDC council to help them prioritize, decide what needed to be done, develop statements of work, and then come up with a package of projects that they wanted to be done. Once it was all settled, those projects would be sent back to IRMO and then there was a group of people that was set up to approve that package of products.

This included the Army Corps of Engineers, the contracting command, the various senior commands within IRMO who represented the various ministries, and then the embassy.

The reason we had that collection was: One, is it technically feasible? Can we contract work? Also the senior consultants, who understood what the ministries were going to do, provided feedback and said "listen, if you do that project, it is in direct conflict with what the ministry has planned. So it's not a good idea."

Once we had all that, the IRMO director would sign off on all of the projects; JRD would contract and have them build. A lot of the projects were roads, soccer fields; sometimes a water project.

Part of the problem was that the money was taken out of various IRRF accounts, so if it was taken out of the water account, you had to build water projects. If it was taken out of the roads and transportation account, you had to build roads. We didn't have a lot of flexibility, and that was a problem, because they have wanted to do this, but couldn't.

The other problem was that with 15 to 25 million dollars, I want to build 25 million dollars in things, but when you take Army Corps of Engineers 16% fee out of it, they get a lot less done than they thought.

The other problem with the project was that the provincial support teams were ad hoc, there was no centralized guidance for these folks on what their mission was except go out and engage with the PRDCs.

But, quite honestly, the projects got built, and there were activities going on in the provincial councils, so it was the initial effort of getting these people to think about being governments. What do governments do most? Provide essential services to their people. At least it was a start, and I think in some cases, over time, they got to be pretty sophisticated.

The PRDC in Kirkuk, they came up with a grid that said "here are all of our areas, here are the ethnic groups, here are the political groups, here are the centers of the populations, and we are going to allocate our resources based off of this matrix." It was great.

With others, it was sort of we're going to give it all to that group over there. It depended. When Ambassador Khalilzad came in he saw this he said, "This is good, but I really want to add a better program. I want something that is not ad hoc; I want to be able to really reach out to the provinces."

The director of field operations in IRMO was asked to come up with the program. He had experience with the governance teams and recognized what we really needed here was some type of provincial governance assistance team. They came up with this idea to have eight teams, and there would be State Department personnel, military civil affairs personnel, and the local governance program from RTI which the USAID contractor.

It was part of the original governance teams, LGP1 contract, and now we are in the LGP2 contract. This group would come together and they would focus on enhancing the skills of the provincial governments. The director of field operations, being a former Marine, said should do this very centralized, we should have a National Coordination Team, we should have regional officers in these teams, who'll offer logistics to monitor what is going on, and they will report back in and it will be very well directed. He went to Khalilzad, who said, "Good idea, I want to call them provincial reconstruction teams because that name had traction already in the halls of Congress, it worked well in Afghanistan." So we called them PRTs. Everyone raised a flag then

and said, "Mr. Ambassador if you do that, you are associating them with reconstruction. We are using reconstruction merely as an entree to do this other thing we want to do. It's not about reconstruction, it is about building governance." They still got called PRTs. They decided that they would launch the first three PRTs inside of the regional embassy offices, which made the most sense. We had one in Mosul, one in Kirkuk, and one in Hillah in Babil province. They already had the State infrastructure, communication systems, and personnel, it was simply a matter of how bringing in the military component, and you will call yourself a PRT. So they established the structure of the National Coordination Team, and they put out a joint cable from State Department that said MNF-I and the embassy are going to do this effort together.

Q: MNF-I being…

A: Multi-National Force-Iraq, the senior command in Iraq and the embassy, so we are going to do this effort together. The military, MNF-I issued what is known as a fragmentary order (frago) and it directed its forces to support the effort, and provide personnel to establish the National Coordination Team with officers, and provide one team of civil affairs to each of the PRTs. By November of '05 they launched the first three PRTs.

Q: When you speak about building familiarity governance and so on, you are talking about working with Iraqis who had no experience prior to this with any sort of self-governance.

A: They did not, with provincial governments. We created those when we came in 2003; we had sort of an ad hoc election for these folks.

Q: These are people with no institutional memory of any kind of these structures.

A: Right, exactly. The idea that you are responsible Mr. Governor and Mr. Mayor, for providing essential services was not known. Under Saddam Hussein you had ministries. The ministries had a director general in Baghdad who worked with director generals in the province. The director general would say, "We are going to build this." That person was really responsible for the project depending on what ministry they were from. They disseminated all the large escrow from Baghdad. They controlled who got hired, all the various state enterprises in the area, so it really was centrally controlled.

Q: None of these individuals were involved in the later efforts?

A: We had to take in the directors-general. They became part of the local governance. In fact, we hadn't broken the structure yet between the ministries and the directors general. However, now you have governors and provincial council leaders and mayors who are trying to work out what relationship do we have with these DGs. DGs still own the money at this time, we haven't given provinces budgets yet, and they have no way of raising revenue. It was a conundrum for them.

They don't really understand parliamentary procedures. A lot of them have Ph.D.s, and masters degrees, but they've never operated in a parliamentary process, so these guys were learning the basics.

Q: That helps to put this in perspective.

A: I came in first week of November, just as the PRTs are being inaugurated. I was hired to go off to be a provincial program manager, and the director of field operations told me I was not going to do that, I was going to be a PRT leader in Salah ad-Din.

But before that, I became the director of field operations responsible for the PPMs, and did that for a while. As we were doing that, it became apparent that this was not going to be quite as easy as we thought. So the director of field operations was running the National Coordination Team responsible for the operation of the PRTs. It was a joint effort by military officers in there. His deputy was an army colonel civil military operations officer. They had five army officers that had come over from MNF-I and two or three civilians working in the office.

My effort was directed at managing the PRDC process and provincial program managers. Provincial program manager was a piece of the PRT. The PRT had at its head a foreign service officer, and then a military officer as the deputy, a political officer from State Department, a USAID officer, this provincial program manager, an Army Corps of Engineers engineer, a civil affairs group that averaged between four and twelve personnel depending, and then a lot of bi-lingual bi-cultural advisors (BBA) that the army had lent to us. These were great because they were Iraqi-Americans and they could be useful in translating and tell us what the culture was as well as local governance advisors under the LGP program.

Q: How many people did you have all together?

A: Well, the PRT itself was only about forty people total. This included the LGP advisors that were Iraqi nationals that did not operate out of the PRTs but were associated with it. This was really nice in the REOs, because the REOs had State Department IT systems, and the civilian PSD teams that moved around. We were really just re-branding the REO into a PRT. There was a lot of unhappiness at first because the Foreign Service officers, FSO1s that were managing the REOs, thought, "wait a second, I was a REO leader, basically working for the DCM, and now I am a PRT, and I am working for the director of field operations and the National Coordination Team, and he's not even a Foreign Service Officer." A lot of them said, "We are just going to do the memo until this thing goes away."

Q: Did that continue?

A: Fortunately, a lot of these individuals were on their way out, finishing up their tours. Some of them were better than others. One in Babil province basically said, "This is a PRT, and I am the PRT leader, but I am also a REO." The PRT focus was on Babil province but the regional embassy officer and had five provinces. They didn't want to give that up because it's more favorable for them career-wise to have been a regional officer under the ambassador as opposed to a PRT guy, which no one knew about anyway. Everybody thought the PRT program was going to go. There was not a lot of support from the military either.

Q: Especially between the military and the State Department?

A: Yes, and there were a lot of things. Part of the problem was Rumsfeld was the Secretary of Defense and Rice was the Secretary of State and there was a lot of animosity, but State had not delivered on a lot of promises, and Rumsfeld was cautious about getting himself into new commitments with State and then having to foot the bill for it all.

If you look at the PRT you say, "Well, it's a joint effort, but ¾ of the team is military guys. So how is this joint?" There was a little bit of unhappiness there. At this point, we decided to stand up the first three PRTs, do a thirty day operational assessment, to make sure we have the structure right, the number of people right, the logistics can work, and then we would brief the principals.

Q: Being who?

A: The secretaries, Washington, National Security Council. And then they would allow us to move forward and do the rest of them. At that time it was still going to be fifteen of them, one for every province and then one for the Kurdish region because they wanted to be looked upon as one region as opposed to three. Then Rumsfeld said, "I want another 30-day assessment, I am not happy with what I see so far, I have all these questions."

Q: After the first thirty days?

A: After the first thirty days, so we are now in a second thirty-day assessment. Now it is the end of January before we can get into full swing. Then we went back and briefed and they said, "Listen, we don't really need to do fifteen of these things, it is too expensive. In fact all we want to do are those that are in the Sunni provinces. "

Q: This is the principals back in Washington who made this decision?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you agree with this?

A: No. We thought that it would be better to do all the provinces. But they said we would do a total of ten, seven US, and get the British, the Italians, the Poles, and the Koreans to pick up one each. The British agreed, the Italians agreed, and the Koreans agreed. The Polish never agreed. But we said, "Oh, we'll pick it up with them." Essentially the US was going to do all the Sunni areas and Hillah because we already had that one. We raised the issue that this showed significant Sunni favoritism on our part. They nodded and said, "Fine, but this is what we are going to do anyway." The problem was that the cost was rising. Transportation became the fundamental problem.

Q: Safety and transportation.

A: Safety transportation. At the REOs, we already had an existing structure of Blackwater, DynCorp, Triple Canopy, the civilian PSDs. What we will do is use a civilian PSD at all the PRTs, because we were going to open PRTs on FOB.

Q: Private security?

A: Private security companies providing private security convoys. The unfortunate problem is that the way State had bid their worldwide personnel protective contract, WPPS, which is the contract used today to field these companies, is very expensive. It varied from sixteen to nineteen million dollars a team. If you looked at how many teams we were going to need for all of these teams, it was going to be ½ billion dollars, and everyone in government said forget that.

Q: Who negotiates those contracts?

A: That was a State Department contract. We thought we would leverage up that and that would be State's contribution, and State said, "We aren't paying that." The army said, "Look, you guys said you were going to pick up the transportation," and State said, "No, why don't you guys do this? You've got so many soldiers there, why don't you have the soldiers drive these guys around?"

Rumsfeld I think probably hit the ceiling at that point and said, "Here it goes again, State, now you are asking us to pick up another commitment that deprives us of our flexibility to reorient forces if necessary and it doesn't show that you guys are coming to the table with anything. You've only got four or five people on the PRTs and oh, by the way, you haven't already staffed some of the positions you already said you were going to staff. You created a rule of law position there, there were about 50% staffing on those." This was a major issue.

By this time, there had been a change in the MNC-I commander, and General Chiarelli came in, and he was much more interested in this type of activity. We got into January, and by this time I am the chief of staff of the National Coordination Team. I'm trying to get the staffing going, trying to recruit people for the new PRTs we were going to open, trying to work the issue of transportation, trying to get the memorandum of agreement that we were going to get between DOD and State that would outline such things as who would provide what services to PRTs and the specific thing was the movement and security.

At the same time, the base that the PRT in Mosul was located on was scheduled to close, so we were going to have to move from a REO to a base. This was the first time now we're operating a PRT off of a military installation. Even though the commander in charge of those areas was highly supportive of the PRT, we had a brand new PRT team leader in there. This was a Foreign Service officer who had been the deputy chief of mission in Poland came in.

The general there loved the idea of the PRT, established the value of being able to do the softer side of warfare, and talked about building things. Unfortunately, it's not quite as easy as you think. They really didn't have the authority to obligate the army dollar to do these things, and they got into the problem where they had already started building the building, and the army

acquisition people came back and said they couldn't do that, so we had to promise to reimburse and work with State to do this stuff.

All the while they are still working out the relationships. How do you and I as Foreign Service officers, military officers, work together? We are under a different set of movement rules. For instance they have the RSO requirements and they governed the civilians on the team who were all Foreign Service employee individuals under chief of mission, the ambassador rules. A convoy goes out; there is an incident, even if no one is hurt, they come back, no more operations until we do a full investigation. So it could be a week.

Well the army civil affairs officers, engineers: incident, okay, you survived, continue on. No big deal. However, you were having the problem of civilians who wanted to go out and engage because it's not much good to have people in the field developing capacity of government if they can't talk and engage. They are becoming professionally frustrated; the army folks are saying you guys don't do anything but sit on the compound all day long. We have the mechanics of how to pay for things on an army base. We thought when we originally established the PRTs that this would be easy. Now if it's on a REO, State pays for everything to support the mission. If it is on an army base, army pays for everything. It wasn't exactly 50/50 but it will work out that way because there was going to be a PRT in Basra on a REO then three others, so that will be four, and in Baghdad the State Department would pay for the PRT there because it was in the IZ. State has five, the army would take five, and it would work out. The problem is army funds have a restriction on how they can be used that they kept telling us that we can't do something.

Q: Why not?

A: Because the army maintenance and operations fund has certain requirements for supporting army units. The other problem is that unit there didn't budget for this. Now we are asking for that unit to pick up this additional cost and they say they don' have any money for that. We still haven't signed a memorandum of agreement but what we wound up having to do in Mosul to get things going, because it was, "I'm not going to provide you water, electricity, and everything else, until you sign a letter of intent to reimburse" because the PRT program didn't have a budget. It was established with a lot of good will, but no budget. I started working with the director of IRMO, and we created a budget one night. We put out a figure and it was based off the fact that we knew we were going to establish these coalition-led PRTs.

Q: You were developing a budget?

A: Yes. We knew that the coalition PRTs would not be able to travel with the coalition security forces, because they don't meet our standards. We also knew that we were probably going to have to pay for housing for US personnel at the coalition PRT, and things like that.

So we came up with about a 225 million dollar budget. About 196 million of that was security teams, and 27 million of that was to build another PRT up in Erbil, and to get the PRTs in general a little bit of operating capital. So this letter of intent we signed in Mosul said, "Once you guys get your money, you will reimburse us." And that was fine. The army guys said, "Well, we can

commit funding, we can't do things with the anti-deficiency act or the economy act," so all of these different provisions that are out there to keep people from doing things in an interagency environment were yet to be overcome. But we signed this letter of intent and said, "We'll front the money, but this other agency will pay us back, and we can do it." Mosul's done. Then we established the PRT in Baghdad. That wasn't so bad because that was easy enough to do in the IZ. Still had a few challenges about working with the Army Corps of Engineers, and how do we rent from them? What we are finding now though is that it is becoming a numbers issue. We are not able to recruit and staff quickly enough because the 31-61 hiring mechanism was neither quick nor efficient, and it might take you 90-150 days to get somebody.

Q: The 31-61?

A: The 31-61 is a section of the federal law under Title 5. It basically authorizes temporary hiring of civil servants for a contingency, and the president has to sign a statement that says we are going to authorize a 31-61 for a period of three years. Under the presidential directive that authorized the Iraq Reconstruction Relief Fund, 31-61 authority was granted and created the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, and said we'll staff it with these temporary civil servants for a period of three years. That was from May '04-May '07. The idea was that you could reach out and grab these people, and it would be an expedited process. We had problems finding people, and the 31-61s took fill of the new positions on the PRTs, the USAID positions, the rule of law individual. We were scrambling to find team leaders and also political officers. We created the political officer and then we expanded it so there would be a reporting officer, so there would be in fact a Foreign Service officer and a 31-61 that would assist with that.

The staffing requirements were growing from the civilian side, and we weren't filling them. The army is looking at this and we were 50-60% staffed and all they did was take a unit and say, "you are here." With 165,000 people in a country, it's easy. It got down to where we couldn't open a new PRT until we were able to show that we've got funding, we've got the space built, and all the key personnel assigned there. Then we take this, submit it through the ambassador, back to the State Department, and the Defense Department, and the two secretaries would have to sign off on establishing the PRT. This is how contentious it had gotten. We got that from Baghdad, and our plan was to do Baghdad, then we were going to do Salah- ad-Din and continue on. One US official then wanted to do one in Anbar. Anbar was falling apart at this time. He really wanted to get this thing in Anbar, but we had planned on Anbar last. We scrambled, we got something open in Anbar, and the problem is it was hard to recruit people for Anbar. They couldn't travel anywhere. The Marines went down there once a week, they lived in a government compound, and they would run between buildings, and then they would go back to the base. The RSO said "I am not letting the civilians sleep down there overnight."

Q: What was the base?

A: It was Camp Ramadi. Quite honestly the provincial council members were the intended targets. Some high government officials are living in Baghdad, being ferried back and forth by the Marines every now and then, so it was completely dysfunctional, but it was stood up. At the same time, we didn't have a rule of law person, so it was a constant thorn that they could stick in

our side, "you guys aren't supporting this thing." Then the Italians opened theirs, the Brits opened theirs, and that seemed to be working.

Q: Was that in Anbar?

A: No, the Italians opened theirs in Dhi Qar, and the British opened theirs in Basra province. We are moving along. But remember I told you, we had not envisioned that we were going to have to spend so much money to put US personnel on the coalition bases. But the RSOs, regional security officers, said, "Under diplomatic security, we've got to go out and take a look at this." They did their assessment and basically said, "You have to increase the security of all these buildings to meet our standards. Then you have to provide security teams, and then you have to provide a quick reaction force, and Medivac helicopters. This was in all of the coalition provinces.

Q: And in the PRTs that are run by other countries?

A: Yes, by the other countries, because we don't trust the Koreans, the British, or the Italians to secure our personnel. In my mind, it was merely a way of saying that we didn't want to take this risk, and if we make the bar so high we will not be able to do this. DS had never really wanted to do the PRTs; they were resistant all along, because it was an incredibly higher level of risk that they just don't like to accept. They are risk-averse because their mission is not to let any diplomats get hurt. It's not a balance of accomplishing the mission, which is to engage in diplomacy, as well as protecting the personnel. Theirs is to get a gold star on their fitness report if no one gets hurt. Getting the mission accomplished is no factor on their performance evaluation. It roughly was going to cost 100 million dollars for each coalition PRT. We said, "Forget that, that's just absurd." But we had the 200 million dollars that we had gone and asked for, and we said, "Okay, we can do two." That was a problem. We still don't have the MOA signed.

Q: You did agree to put up the 200 million under the requirements that they had, but you could only do two?

A: Instead of doing the three. In Basra it wasn't so bad because it was a regional embassy office. We said, "Fine, what will happen is they will work together, but our personnel will live at the REO and they'll move with the regional embassy office staff, and they won't have to move with the grids." That was easy. For the Italians we said we would build up something there; but by this time the Italians were backing out anyway. It was going to be a different effort. We thought, "We have the money, we'll build a US compound down there, and we'll put in a couple of teams," which is good. The nice thing is they can service a lot of the province with the teams down there. And then we can provide the one up in Erbil. Then we can also put in a few extra teams in Hillah and a few other places because we were finding out that we didn't just have the movement to get people out.

Movement security became an increasingly large problem. State had finally convinced the DOD to pick up the mission at PRTs located on Forward Operating Bases, or FOBs. When the PRT in

Mosul moved out of the REO and on to the FOB, they took the Blackwater team back to Baghdad, which made the military unhappy. They said, "Why did you do that?" "Well, because you guys are going to pick up the mission of supporting movement on a FOB. We started off this way, but just because we change doesn't mean you lose that requirement," so that was a point of contention. There was a major battle going on, and the unit commanders were telling their general, "Look, our guys are not PSD people; we cannot do what Blackwater does." Some of the State Department personnel were unhappy that they weren't traveling with Blackwater and they were used to that level of security. Others were very happy traveling with the military because they found that the Blackwater guys were too invasive when they went out and were counterproductive, and they developed a good relationship with the military individuals.

But there were still problems; there was a different way of operating. The military did not want to dedicate forces to be assigned to the PRT, and this is what we were asking for. I think they didn't want to pick up a complete commitment, and they just didn't have the personnel. They needed that.

Well, unfortunately there are a lot of priorities out there, and we are increasing the number of civilians on the staff. We had envisioned that we needed three movement teams to go to three different locations every day. Now we've got more people, and in some cases the army can only field two movement teams.

Q: Is there a necessary ratio necessary, of security people and vehicles per person?

A: Typically, in a convoy you could take four passengers. If you had three teams, you could take all twelve individuals. The problem is that you might have four locations to go to, or one team can't go for some reason; it's cumbersome. We were still not getting out enough. As well, the roads were becoming more and more dangerous. In Hillah, you had a team down in Najaf where we went in and put the initial structure of a PRT down there, as they were getting ready to close the base. The people from Hillah couldn't get down to Najaf and vice versa because the roads were so dangerous. We haven't gotten the MOA, movement still is not defined, State is having trouble staffing PRTs, they are not coming up with the extra movement teams, the military is getting frustrated, and we open up Salah ad-Din. Salah ad-Din was the first PRT that was going to be opened from the start on a FOB. Tikrit is in Salah ad-Din province, big military base there. A very capable Foreign Service officer was brought in as the team leader. We basically told her she was going to have to go up there and build this thing. Build a relationship and build the PRT. She did.

The colonel in charge of the brigade combat team there was hard-nosed. So that presented the challenge him not wanting State Department people, and to stay the heck out of his way. That's not the way to go.

She was persistent and was able to beg borrow and steal. She got a dilapidated old building, some trailers, and we started building our team. New folks came in, much more supportive of her effort, and we found out that they don't have communications. The army communications system on the base doesn't enough bandwidth for the PRT. They needed to be able to operate

Internet to do research, to be able to talk to people, send e-mail. So it ended up we had to go to State and set up satellite systems that we can set up for the PRTs that are on FOBS. Because if not, these guys are not going to be able to talk. That was a challenge, but we got that.

Q: The State Department provided that?

A: Exactly. By this time, the PRTs are becoming an increasing priority for the Secretary of State. She said to her staff, "I want all the PRTs staffed by Labor Day," in 2006. We were scrambling and they were throwing people at us, but at the same time, we are revising the PRT layout. We'll open Salah ad-Din and then Diyala, but we won't open Dinawiyah because we can't get the Polish to do it. What we'll do is we'll come up with a regional structure, we'll create this big mega PRT in Babil and we'll actually be able to service Najaf. It will service Dinawiyah province and the eastern provinces there. We'll have another one that will take care of Muthanna, Dhi Qar, and Maysan province. We'll open up a PRT in Erbil, which will take care of the region.

What we need is to figure out how we are going to be able to accomplish that. We've got these helicopters that we can buy under the money that was programmed. But then they kept changing the story. "Well, we can't get them right now…we were trying to decide what the command structure down here is. Is the guy that is the REO director? The Hillah PRT, isn't he the guy in charge? And all these other PRT leaders work for him?" Well that that was cumbersome.

It was obviously a good thing to be a PRT team leader because you could get a good job afterward. People who were senior foreign service officers, until this date they had been FSO1s, EOCs, now we were getting to be senior guys, FEs, MCs, mission counselors.

Q: As team leaders?

A: As team leaders. Now that you've got a REO director as an FSO1, who is going to be the guy in charge of an FEOC? It doesn't work that way. If you think the military is hierarchical, the State Department is incredibly hierarchical and they are very particular about things like being senior by two days. My point was, "Look, we can't get these guys out there, so let's just turn these people off. Well, we can't turn them off because they've already been promised these jobs; we'll stick them down there." That's a problem, because they aren't not getting out there to be doing what they needed to do.

Q: You had been there since late 2005, and this is some seven months later?

A: Yes, like eight months later. Let's say we are talking summer of '06, and by this time I am now the interim director waiting for the man who took over end of August or beginning of September. But my task was to get all the other US PRTs established.

We had both the Italians and the British, now we've got Diyala and Salah ad-Din established, but they are by hook and by crook. They are in a building that was thrown up, they are barely traveling when they can get out, but we've got people and we are still trying to staff all these other positions.

Q: At this point in time, can you recall whether you said to yourself, this is not going to work; or this will work, we just have a little bit more to go. What were you feeling then?

A: Well, I was getting frustrated, but I thought we could make it work. There were significant challenges, always, but I thought we could really get it done. I thought we had an innovative approach to getting out to these areas we aren't able to get out to. I had sent a guy down to Tillil airbase after the Italians had pulled out. I told him to figure out how we are going to be able to build a US presence and accommodate the Italians that want to remain, and also be able to reach out to these other provinces. He went down there and did that. We got everybody on our side. We have people down there, we have a structure where there is going to be a US PRT team leader for the other two provinces, and they were going to be able to get out there occasionally. It wouldn't be ideal without three movement teams, but if you have the people down there, they can invite the Iraqis to their location; they can drive there occasionally as things got better, but at least you are there.

Q: Movement security was then was the number one area of concern?

A: Movement is the key thing. But we had all the other logistics, and by this time we had gotten the money, and we got a budget guy, who came from State, and he actually laid out the structure, we were also able to bring in a navy commander. Now you are in charge of making sure all the logistics work. The PRT can buy pencils, paper, and things like that. One of the things they were complaining about was not having walk-around money. The team leader wanted the army CERP, being able to go and say, "Governor, you are doing a good job, what do you want me build for you?" We didn't have any of those dollars. We finally got them some money so they could buy their operating costs. But remember, when you got away from the State Department REO structure, you no longer have a GSO, you no longer have an IT com guy, you no longer have some money to do the admin. PRTs are bare bone structures, which was a mistake.

Q: Yes.

A: I kind of knew that when we started them, but I was told that this is all we could get. It was sort of a kumbaya structure. We are all going to hold hands and make it work. When you starting bringing in a lot of professionals, it doesn't work that way.

We really need all those structures that a normal consulate or regional embassy office would have if you are going to ask someone to do this type of work. They need an IT system that can connect to the State Department. When they created the PRT program, we gave them all objectives.

It was focused on building the capacity of the governments to provide services for the people, preparing them for provincial elections, increasing transparency and accountability, and also increasing our visibility to what was going on in the provinces. By having these political officers there, we were going to improve our ability to report what was going on in the provinces. If you

are drafting cables, you need a way to get it into the cable system. It worked well for the REO, because they all had State Department IT systems.

It worked terribly from the FOB. How are we going to do this? Well, can you put it in an e-mail, send it to the people in the political section, and have them do it? Well that is going to be cumbersome because the people in the political section have their own work, so give us a political officer in the National Coordination Team, and that person will do that. They did that occasionally, but then they wouldn't replace him when he rotated out, so that was a problem.

How do you tie all this up together? The other part was we were counting on the embassy econ and political sections to provide us with guidance on what they want us to achieve in the provinces. They would never do that, and the military was saying, "What is it you are telling your PRTs to do, because I don't tell my forces the same thing. You guys send in a cable, and I'll submit a frago, we'll march off smartly together. Put some of your guys in my command center, and we'll make sure we are tied together." It is a little different when you are doing development and diplomacy. You cannot be so locked up. Some of the PRT team leaders wanted more guidance as to what is it you want us to do.

Well, the original structure was to go there and do a functional assessment. We created this assessment that had input from AID, embassy, econ and political embassy, the Internet folks. It was the best we could do, but it measured governance, security, infrastructure, rule of law, and economic development. It was all based on a color chart, with red, yellow, green and orange. They would do this every month, so you have a functional assessment originally, and you what we has been identified as the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. We are going to create a work plan to address those opportunities and weaknesses, and then we'll measure our progress every month. Of course when you do something like that you get a hundred people saying, "Well, you didn't account for this, you didn't account for this, this is too much work." I thought was a pretty good idea, because it was an effects-based operation, it was done that way on purpose because everybody that created us was ex-military, and if we can't do something where we can measure the effects, why do something? There was a lot of resistance to that, and I think, we wanted to make sure we didn't change the assessment because it is hard to trim if you keep changing the questions.

Realistically, the PRTs had the guidance they needed; the guidance was your work plan. If there had been updated things that we wanted to accomplish on a political and economic level, then the embassy should have given that guidance to the National Coordination Team and passed it out. That wasn't happening, so there was a group called the joint executive steering committee, which was all the heads of the agencies and missions plus MNF-I and the Corps commander, and this was headed by MNF-I strategic effects and IRMO director, and it met every week. It was really the guiding body for what the PRTs were supposed to achieve. So we were always going to be held accountable to these guys every week and go before them and say what we were doing. That became a battleground a lot of times. But still, I think the PRTs were moving ahead, we were getting them started.

That was really what I wanted accomplished: Let's get the darn things open, and then we can work out all the other details. You've got to build the infrastructure, you've got to get the logistics, and you've got to get the operating issues resolved. Then you can start worrying about the policy issues. We are only seven or eight months into this thing; let's not try to solve the higher issues until we've gotten the foundations established.

Q: First things first.

A: I think we were moving forward. It was a terrible challenge to resolve the movement issue because we were not only finding the army's unwillingness to commit themselves to what they felt they couldn't, but we were also fighting the regional security and diplomatic security service, who were resistant to providing what we needed.

The military is looking at this again as DS not coming up with their end of the bargain, and DS is saying the military should just take the whole thing; we shouldn't be doing this anyway. So that was a challenge.

I turned over to the new director the beginning of September of '06, and we started taking a little bit of a different direction. I was going to move off to work in ministerial capacity development. But the last thing we were working on was we started thinking about approaching this higher order stuff. All the PRTs are open at this time with the exception of Erbil, but we knew it would open. It was just a question of getting the Koreans to get the authority to open it. We were going to build it at the Korean military compound; we had worked through a lot of the details.

We got thrown a curve ball when the deputy chief of mission said, "I want you to send up there a US counterpart of the Korean Ambassador that was going to be the team leader," so I was going to be basically co-team leader.

Q: Was that joint-team leadership a new idea?

A: It was a new idea, but quite honestly the Koreans didn't want to focus on anything other than reconstruction. Basically we got a PRT; they didn't want to do rule of law, transparency, or governance. In fact they didn't want to leave the base, so that was going to be a challenge. I knew we needed a strong team leader up there.

Personalities are critical in an operation like this, because personalities that can obtain agreement and consensus from these divergent parties that are working these issues. It's a challenge always to who you find to be a particular individual.

Now we are looking at what it is that we are getting the PRTs to do? We are asking them to do a lot more now than we originally envisioned. This is when they started to develop the focus stabilization program. Focus stabilization was a military program that said if we put a whole bunch of effort into a particular area and get it stabilized, then like an oil stain, it will spread.

We are going to get a lot of USAID money in there and create short-term work, prepare stuff real quick, and the PRTs are going to drive this issue. That is another new thing the PRTs are doing that's not focused on building, because it was always to build the skills of the government; not do it for them, but get them to do it. A slow process, but now it's critical. We may just have to step in there and do that push-and-pull. We can do that. But it is another challenge that we are not resourced to do.

Q: Getting out afterward is the challenge.

A: Yes, we aren't resourced to do that. The dynamics of the PRTs shifted from building the capacity of the government to building an economic revitalization of the area, reconciliation, improving the judges in the area. A lot of these things that hadn't been envisioned and hadn't been structured into the program. What is it we can provide PRTs that would help the macro level of the country? What we came up with is to come up with a provincial development strategy. The provincial development strategy, since it is still a centrally planned economy, is to get the provinces to think about what it is they want to achieve. Let me remind you none of us had experience in this kind of stuff.

Q: Including the provinces!

A: Yes. The Brits were doing this pretty well. They would bring all of their Iraqis out of the country, and they would have these planning sessions to do a provincial development strategy. We thought, "Well let's create a template, we'll send a team around to the PRTs. This is how we think we ought to develop the provincial development strategy. When you pass it back, we'll take it to the minister of planning and say look, this is the provincial development strategy for province x. This should help guide your resources in the province, lay out what they want to achieve." It also helps us understand that the projects we are delivering to them need their provincial development strategy.

I think it was a pretty good idea, and started helping these states think about how they want to develop over the next five years. That started taking off. We also defined our end states, our objectives, and we collecting this data through our assessments.

The PRT program was envisioned to be a four-year program. Two years in, with everybody there, and we were going to have all the PRTs established by April. Then, after two years, it would transition to just a USAID program, and the Foreign Service officers and military would back out, but you would also be able to transition based off of objectives met. As a province got to a particular point, you would be able to say the conditions exist now to transition to the USAID only program.

But everything got delayed, security was going bad, and we kept thinking that this is never going to work, so we decided to come up with another transition strategy. We took them out until 2008, and we still thought we had to figure this out more closely.

We had not closely defined what must be obtained in order to make this transition. We had kind of done it in an immaculate sense of lofty goals. I say let's do it more specifically. These are the end states, and these are our measuring criteria. How far towards the end state do we actually need to get? How much transparency and accountability do we really need to get? Does it need to be 100%, or can it be 45%? Go down the end state objectives and ask that. What will drive that standard of these criteria so that, as we start watching these criteria, we will be able to do a direct match to this end state? For example, we find that we are yellow here, okay, so that's a 5, we are a green here so that's an 8, so we will be able to say now in a matter of metrics, we believe that a province is ready to transition because its met this, and then someone can make an assessment and say they agree or not.

That was kind of established. I left, and I think the PRTs took on a much more reconstruction-oriented focus. Let's get the essential services going here. The MFI, MNC-I was driving to get these essential services. At the same time, we are still having issues with the movement, how do we really structure these PRTs to reach out to these provinces where we don't have a presence. That really hadn't been defined at this point? Then they got into the surge.

Q: Meanwhile, the situation on the ground was changing, was it not?

A: Then they developed the idea of the ePRTs. ePRTs are really what the military always wanted. There was always this underlying effort from the members of the MNC-I structure to just take over the PRT, saying, "We could run this thing better. Give us their resources and personnel, and we'll run this thing better." They probably could have, but it is the wrong approach. It really needs to be a civilian-led effort. But they created ePRTs which is essentially an enhanced civil affairs team. You got a Foreign Service officer, you've got a USAID officer, you've got an economic development person, and maybe a rule of law person, embedded with a military unit.

It's pretty effective because they can move at will, which is always the key thing. I am not speaking out of first-hand knowledge, but just from what I observed. They lobbied and got quick-reaction funds, which is the ability of the team leader to have money to give out like CERP, something we always asked for. They still haven't resolved the movement issues for the other PRTs.

Since the surge is happening there was a great deal of pressure to get this darn MOA signed. I think in February of that year they finally got the MOA signed. They are still not able to move as much as they need to. First of all, as I said before, we are still basing it off of three movements a day, but now you have three times as many people, because they added all these other folks to the PRTs.

They asked the PRTs what personnel would they like, and so they came back with these crazy things; an industrial specialist, an infrastructure development specialist. We came up with lots and lots of things, agriculture, veterinarians; everybody wanted a veterinarian. Why do you want a veterinarian? Because the people in the province are screaming for veterinarians. There are 30,000 veterinarians in Iraq. There is no shortage of veterinarians, what the Iraqis wanted was

free veterinarian service. If a US veterinarian is providing it, it's free. If he goes down to the veterinarian down at the veterinarian's clinic down in the city, he has to pay for it.

The PRTs tell the hierarchy what they need, and that is fine, I think they need to be involved in the decision. But I think you also have to have give and take. What is it that you are asking for, and why? What is it that we are trying to achieve? I think we got away from any kind of focused mission on the PRTs. What is it that we want a PRT to do, and then let's resource it to do that.

Q: So there was a little backsliding there?

A: Yes. I think what happened. The PRT got off track, because we started adding missions. There are reasons for that, because the darn things are expensive, and when you get something that expensive out there, then people want it to do more and more. Unfortunately, you have to lead that with resources. Those resources are essentially creating organizations that are similar to consulates out there with all the resources that consulates would have: some money to look after HR, some money to look after admin, and IT, and the whole nine yards.

We know this as a government that when you put people in a field, they've got to have support structure. The army calls it tooth-to-tail ratio, and it doesn't go away because you created this new structure. That happened. We lost the focus on what we wanted to do, which was to get in there, help the Iraqis become better at governing, and then back out. Let's help them rebuild their infrastructure, let's help them redevelop their economy, let's help them do reconciliation; let's help them do all these other things. Overwhelming.

You are now not talking about a two-year process; you are talking about a five to ten-year process. You really need to go back and revisit everything you thought about when you created the structure and the substance and everything else. Then it is a question of working out that relationship. Trying to work out a relationship in a war zone is terrible. It was always much better at the field level, they got along because they had to. But it was in the embassy. IRMO, Embassy, NCT, and USAID battling; "Well I don't want to give more than you are giving, I'm giving too much, I can't give you this unless you promise to repay me." If you thought it was bad in the embassy, my god, when they got up to the interagency level in DC, it was even worse.

Q: This is all among Americans; you haven't even talked about the Iraqis.

A: No, this is the American side of it; it was an absolute mess. Part of the problem we always had was the embassy's not being involved enough there. Remember I told you that we thought they would provide people from the economic and political departments to be there in the National Coordination Team, to help us develop the policy, to reach out, and to really interact.

One of the best things the PRT ever did was to provide a weekly summary of what they had done. We would compile that and send it off to Washington. It was well received, because it was a document that in one place provided a great snapshot of what the heck was going on outside of Baghdad.

No one really knew at that time, and they didn't care, they were all focused on Baghdad, that this was a great little document. I think it's gone by the wayside because they got involved in too many other things, but this was going to help the political and economic sections.

I got involved in helping with the transition between IRMO and Iraqi Transition Systems Organization. In the embassy, Foreign Service officers resented 31-61s. "You guys are doing what we should be doing, you shouldn't be there, and we can do this." We could have another discussion on that, so we were going to transition. The mandate for IRMO was going to end in May of '07. But it still needed an organization because we still needed to keep a hiring authority going and we hadn't finished all the IRRF funded projects. But then we also thought, if that happens, since IRMO had been the host for the National Coordination Team, what do we do? What we had always talked about doing was moving it to the embassy.

What we really wanted to do is move it under the Ambassador, give it more visibility, make it just an office, a bureau of the embassy, under the DCM which is what all the team leaders would like anyway. The idea was to create the Office of Provincial Affairs. Seems like a very easy solution, it would be staffed by senior Foreign Service officers, with Foreign Service officers involved in the process, that way they would be contemporary to the political, economic, and political/military counselors. It is much easier said than done.

One was battling questions of what level of military involvement there would be, who would run it, and what's the structure and it was all based off of incumbent personalities at the time. Then we made the transition, and it was approved. They brought in an individual who stayed about three weeks then left. The new person is there and she is committed to staying a couple of years, and I think individually she is not bad. The problem is she has still not been able to enlist the support of the political and economic counselors to integrate well with this. I was back there in October of last year and I was just amazed how little energy I saw involved in OPA. I've consistently heard that the PRTs are functioning almost on their own.

Q: What is OPA?

A: Office of Provincial Affairs, which was what the National Coordination Team became. ePRTs don't need it anyway, because they work for the brigade commander and they just went off and did their stuff.

Q: A central coordinating body is still needed?

A: I still think you need a centralized coordinating body to do this, because somebody has to help with logistics, help provide research and requests for information to the PRTs. Somebody has to look out to them and manage them, because their focus should be on doing what it is you need to do to develop those governments. They need to be lean so you can take part of their effort and take it back to Baghdad.

You need somebody in OPA that can go and travel around to these people. Somebody to help integrate the economic and political policy issues and act as the conduit between the provinces

and the embassy. Embassies' only hope is to run national governments. Consulates go out into the regions. We are talking about transformative diplomacy. Look at this structure and ask how to do that? How to tie one to the other?

Q: Are you saying it should be between the provincial and the embassy?

A: You need to be able to have a voice within embassy that represents what is going on out in the province, whether at the city level or the provincial level. I don't know how it is going now, but I have my serious reservations about the Office of Provincial Affairs and how it's assembled. First of all, they had not been able to get the right level of support. We were blessed on the National Coordination Team because we had so many military officers. One thing about military officers is that they are great planners, they are great loading stations, and they are great about getting things done. If there is a problem, they figure out how to overcome it. It may mean getting on an airplane, flying down and talking to somebody, and they'll do it. It is a little different with Foreign Service officers who are process-oriented. That's great if you have time; if you don't have time, you've just got to get it done. They had to reach out and hire planners for OPA because FSOs don't do planning in the same way. It is a distinctly military trait. Unfortunately we are operating in a military environment, and we need to be able to engage with military planners.

Q: They keep you on your feet.

A: Especially if you want to be able to do things in unison. You need to be able to go talk to military planners at the military planner level. Until we grow FSOs along the way that can do that, we are going to have a problem.

Q: Part of the objective of this whole project is to go over the lessons learned idea, and look forward to what might be done in the future to address some of the issues that have been revealed. What are some of your suggestions?

A: I'm very glad to do it. We need to start to bring together the lessons learned and ask, "All right, now what do we do? What is it we really need to start thinking about for the future of stability operations?"

I'll talk a little bit about that from a different perspective in minute. The first people that started doing lessons learned, and asking us questions, was the army. They sent around an army historian sort of capturing us. It was great because I said, "I don't have time to think about this at this point, but somebody needs to, because we are making history right now, and if somebody doesn't capture this, we are going to lose it." Thank god there was an army historian around and he started talking to us and then there was an army lessons learned person who came by and they were capturing this data, and then SIGIR said, "Let's do an audit," and I said, "Great."

I opened my door to them, even though I didn't agree with some of the things they said: one of them was that people are assigned to the PRTs that are not qualified for the job. For instance, they assigned a navy captain to be the deputy team leader at a PRT whose background is as a

warehouse supervisor and logistics company. First of all, that's unkind, because somebody's child will read that report. That is ridiculous. Let's look over what the position description is. The deputy team leader was responsible for managing the PRT. Everything inside the wire. A navy captain, with twenty-five years of service, logistics manager, seems ably qualified to me to do what we've asked him to do. He did a great job.

Similarly, there is an army veterinarian that is being assigned as the health issue person on a PRT. We didn't even have a position for a health person, but if I had a veterinarian, I bet he could probably make do in a pinch on health issues. It would be nice to find those highly skilled people, but you are never going to get that. They are just not out there and willing to go to these remote locations. You must make do with what you can. At least they were capturing what was happening, which was important. State doesn't have the capacity to do that, they need to create that, whether it is going out and hiring somebody to do it, or whatever, but they need to be able to do it.

The other thing is, you've got to think of lessons learned and analyze them, and create a structure.

I am glad they are doing it. I think what CRS (Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization) has created so far, is just terrible. They've got a mission essential task list that is fifteen pages long. What's essential? If it's fifteen pages, I'm guessing there is a lot of stuff that's not. Stop what you are doing now, I'm glad you were able to get the interagency coordination team done in that process, but let's revisit it based off what we know.

Hopefully we are doing that now. I am working for a private sector company now, and what we do in Iraq is essentially stability operations support. We support the Army Corps of Engineers by providing a national infrastructure of reconstruction operating centers that provides command and coordination, communications, intelligence analysis from open source information, situation awareness, outreach and engagement, where we have, half Iraqi, half expatriate teams that go off and monitor projects and engage with local village elders and whatnot to get a situational awareness of what's going on and feeds back into the process, develops this information that, and then provides some security at a much lower cost then some of our competitors. This structure which was created and then smoothed over for the last four years is an ideal structure for the US government to consider in other locations. The nice thing about contractors…

Q: Wait, you are talking about the structure of your company, not PRTs?

A: Exactly.

Q: Okay. Why don't they do that?

A: I think they are consistent, because we are supporting the Italian PRT already because they came to us and said, "Hey, what you guys are doing is kind of like what we need to do without putting a lot of our people there." It's persistent, because our folks don't mind coming there and spending two or three years there.

It removes all the mundane support stuff that the government agent doesn't want to do. They can just focus on inherently governmental activities.

Q: It also helps avoid some of that bureaucratic stuff that bogs it down.

A: Exactly. They always say it's too expensive. Not really, not when you think what it costs to maintain a government employee in the field, because no one thinks about the people back in Washington or anywhere else who needs to be to do this stuff. I want to ensure that we are looking at all of our assets, and not just our governmental assets. If we don't, we are going to miss the boat on this.

Q: In other words, some of this work could be contracted out. It doesn't have to be done by the government.

A: You need to have a proper operating infrastructure to support a PRT; a group of government diplomats and development personnel. If the government's not going to do it, and maybe they shouldn't, somebody needs to create that infrastructure. Why can't it be some private sector company that does that?

You could do this under indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contracts that are multiples ahead of time, and when the conflict or contingency comes up, you put a task order out, and then these companies that have been validated already as capable, are then rewarded.

You could also have training task orders, go off and have an interagency exercise in California with the military. Company X, sets up the PRT and then the government personnel fall into this infrastructure, they've already recognized how it is supposed to look, and everybody does their job. So that when we go someplace, it's not a question of buying things, you are already under a contract to provide everything needed, contractor procured, government owned equipment, its simple, but we have to think about it in those terms.

I don't want to send highly capable government personnel into the field and have them worry about how to get paper, printer cartridges, and all this other stuff. That's what we had to do. They were not focused on building Iraqi government; they were focused on how to get their cell phones to work. Industry would never tolerate something like that. Yet, we are accepting these inefficiencies and doing nothing about it. I think we have to step back now and understand what happened. Let's create a structure and an organization that actually works.

Q: How would this kind of thing understand the transition of the administration coming up next year?

A: This is a good question, and I think they are going to have to be educated that all contracting is not bad; it's simply a fact of life. Sure, we need to have much stronger guidance, regulation, and oversight than we have now. But let's fix that. But to think that you are ever going to replace a private contractor, with 150,000 more soldiers is absurd. I think the military recognizes this. It

is just a question of Congress being educated, and I think they will be happy when there are these structures in place. That's why I say if it is done ahead of time, if there is a contract that is done in the light of day, as opposed to ramming it through the process, and there is good regulation and good oversight mechanisms, it will be effective. It would be incredibly effective, and you will still be able to have a lean military.

We are never going to be able to afford a military big enough to do all the things we envisioned it to, especially stability operations because it is incredibly expensive.

Q: It's not really part of the job description, either.

A: No, and they are doing it for a lack of anyone else to help them.

Q: So its part of the lesson learned or looking forward, you would recommend exploring the possibility f contracting out some of the jobs?

A: Some of the jobs and some of the support effort. Somebody goes in and says, all right, you want a PRT? Here it is. Now you come in, and you have all the facilities that you need

I am terribly upset that we weren't able to provide the tools necessary for our diplomats and development personnel in the field, to do the things they needed. If you ask any of them, they'll talk to you at a level of professional frustration that they felt simply because they didn't have what they needed to have. How much more effective could we have been with these individuals who dedicated a year or two years of their lives in a hostile environment, and yet they weren't that 100% efficiency because of the things we couldn't provide to them. That's absurd.

Q: Were the PRTs successful?

A: In the year that I was there, I would say I saw some of the metrics that we were measuring, actually moving forward. I saw provincial councils learning how to be provincial councils. Were the PRTs effective? Yes.

But were they as effective as they should have been? Absolutely not. And it is because of the things that we as a government, as an interagency, did and didn't do. We didn't focus on providing them everything they needed, and we did bicker over ridiculous issues. I used to use this argument, we are spending billions of dollars, and for billions of dollars, we can have the best program in place that might hasten our ability to withdrawal. That's silly. We were saying 500 million dollars for private moving security is way too expensive, 500 million dollars. 500 million dollars, that's nothing. How much is it going to cost you to provide that number of US forces? I bet you it's a lot more than 500 million dollars. I bet it's a lot more than that, lets even double it.

Q: Have you testified in Congress about these things?

A: No.

Q: Some of the interviewees have.

A: I've gone to a lot of those. I sit in the background. I talked to a few congressmen off record.

Q: If you think there is more that needs to be done with this I'll be glad to come back another time and we can do more, because I think what you have been saying is very valuable.

A: We should probably talk some time, I don't know if you guys are just focused on PRTs but on ministerial capacity, if you guys start looking at that, too.

They really go hand-in-hand. It's all part of the idea of understanding how we are going to do nation building, stability operations in the future. Part of the reason I came back and started working in the private sector is I said, "Look, we've got to come up with some structure that could actually make this work." I thought I had an opportunity to be here to do it and still be engaged in the peripheral.

Q: How long have you been here?

A: About 8 months, since June of last year.

Q: What is your title here at your company?

A: I am the vice president of business development, and I spend about 50% of my time working with AID and State and army to do the stability, trying to educate people. I try to create a little model of what we are doing and say this model really works

Whether it's this company or another company, I don't care. It's just a question of it needs to be factored in to the overall equation. If we don't, and I had friends that were working at CRS when I first got back, and I saw what they were doing, and we don't need anybody from the private sector, we don't need 31-61's, we just need our foreign service officers.

Well, I have the highest respect for your guys' diplomatic abilities, but you simply don't have the background and training to do any of this other stuff, even AID personnel don't. AID personnel are contracted oversight people; they are not development people by any stretch of the imagination. They see what's necessary and they pass it off to some partner. Folks in CRS, they don't have the background in planning, they don't have the background in contingency operations, and they are diplomats.

Not only having security and a command center is important. You must have engagement

Q: Are most of the people in this company military people?

A: Yes. In fact, this is a UK company, it is mostly former military, Special Forces guys, people who have opportunities and background working with indigenous forces, and one of the

advantages of the UK company is that they spend an awful lot of time in Northern Ireland winning hearts and minds, doing counter-insurgency, so we need to learn some lessons. That's why they were able to create this model; our CEOs. To me, you need to be able to do this and this at the same time. If not, you are never going to get anywhere. I think the military guys in the field, said hey, that's exactly what we need to do, and that's why they were able to get in there initially. It's not just having a command center, it's not just having security, it's that engagement piece that is really critical, and so that's important. This had been good.

Q: It has been excellent, thank you.