

United States Institute of Peace
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INTERVIEW #29

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Executive Summary

The Interviewee was a sergeant first class working on a civil affairs team supporting a PRT near Tikrit.

1. He said the chain of command was often confusing, and relied heavily on goodwill and understanding when needs of the PRT conflicted with demands of his division. He said, “One thing that people need to be trained on is basically priority missions, not to mention the communication and the chain of command.”

2. Because of their lack of experience with self-determination and self-direction, local nationals are sometimes in need of direction, understanding and respect. Personal contact with them is very important.

3. Corruption is a serious problem. Without follow-up and oversight, funds are often diverted, pocketed or simply wasted. Kickbacks are common.

4. Longevity counts. Tours of duty of less than nine months are less successful than those of longer duration. It takes at least a year to familiarize one’s self with the area, people and customs. Short-term assignments often result in wasted money when an enthusiastic person launches a project and then leaves the country, and a less-interested person succeeds him in position and lets the project languish. After a certain period of time, usually a year or less, uncompleted structures deteriorate and accessories like wiring inevitably disappear. The project then is either abandoned or finished at a higher cost.

5. Engage the local community. It is important to get the Iraqi component of a project to participate. For example, rather than buy property from a town, the town should be asked to donate property for a school or other facility. That way, local residents feel ownership and responsibility.

6. Form teams. Get Sunnis, Shiites, various tribes and townspeople working together on common goals. This promotes solidity and helps overcome competitiveness and old hostilities.

7. Make contacts. Go outside the wire and meet with local governors, provincial leaders, university and community people.

8. Communication is a major problem: within PRTs, with Washington, between civilian and military entities. “Because everybody was doing pretty much their own thing.”
9. Training is needed. IRR – Inactive Ready Reservists – were particularly at a disadvantage, having come directly from the civilian world with very little training for the job at hand.
10. Equipment is needed for training noted in 9.
11. When you help the Iraqis achieve something - construction of a well, a school, a road, etc., - make sure that the credit goes to them, not to the US or to the PRT.
12. Check up on your contractors. Make sure they are doing the job they are supposed to be doing. Newkirk is very critical of the contractor in charge of hiring translators. Credits RTI with good work, but criticizes some of their hires from other countries.
13. Make no promises. More harm is done by assuring locals that you will get something done for them and not doing it, than by promising nothing in the first place. There is a high price to pay for dashed hopes – resentment, hatred, destruction of good faith.
14. Work with the Iraqis; do not come in saying you will do it your way. Respect their ways and wishes.
15. Reduce the number of meetings everyone is required to attend. Meetings leave too little time for actual achievement.
16. Every individual working in or with PRTs should receive an After Action Review following service. These people have valuable information to share, and the interviews are also therapeutic for those emerging from a very stressful duty period.

Interview

Q: Why don't you tell me what you did in the Iraq PRT?

A: I was the CAT-A team sergeant working with the PRT.

Q: What is your rank?

A: Sergeant first class.

Q: You said you worked with the PRT. What did you do? How did you interface with them?

A: The first time I arrived in Salah Ad Din province, there was no PRT. They didn't arrive until later, a year after I arrived. I was in the country for approximately thirty months. My main effort is supporting the task force.

Q: In what way?

A: In any means that they need. If logistics officers in certain areas, need tribal information, on sheiks and whatnot; I would get them that information. With me being there a year prior to these other units coming in, I know a lot of people. The PRT and the division brigade, pretty much anyone who knew me, would utilize me and go through the chain of command, because I cannot just do anything for a divisional brigade. They have to actually go through the task force that I am assigned to.

Q: So that was a little complicated, wasn't it? You're not taking orders from the usual chain of command?

A: My actual orders come from the task force, but yet division can turn around and give an order to the brigade, then the brigade would give an order to the task force saying we need this information. Then I would go out and get it.

Q: Which order took priority?

A: The task force would be priority if there was a mission going on. If there was not a mission going on, then of course division would take priority.

Q: Was that ever confusing to the folks?

A: It was very confusing to a lot of people, even to my own people of the company and battalion. One thing that people need to be trained on is basically priority missions, not to mention the communication and the chain of command, because a lot of times they would just turn around and email me. Again, like I said, if they wanted to take shortcuts, and I had the time, I had no problem doing it. It's basically up to my task force and myself. It depends on what they want me to do. There were times I would spend the night in the theater, and I would go out in the public and spend the night with them, and there were other times I would be gone three or four days.

Q: Were you in military uniform at this time?

A: Yes. I am always in military uniform.

Q: The PRT members are not?

A: The military portion were, the State Department portion were not. RTI and the contractors, those people were all in civilian uniform.

Q: That makes sense. So you were a man of all trades.

A: Since I was there for so long, a lot of people came to me for information that they didn't have. It's really hard, even the first year that I was there; I had no idea that division was doing a monthly census, whereas I was doing my own census. The way the government and other agencies do their censuses is they will find a local national or a group of them, and they will have them go out, and then the local nationals just report. I found out that a lot of times these local nationals will turn around and just keep telling you the same information, and then they get paid for it. I have friends out there and I'll do it myself on occasions, just to make sure they are giving me the proper information. I'll go down to the market and I'll check the prices, and I'll have my own translator of course and I'll do it myself. That way, after doing it the first couple of times, I know I can trust them. One of the biggest things over there with the military is finding a good translator, finding people that you can trust. There are a lot of good people over there, but people of the United States, the military and contractors, pretty much anybody involved, have to realize since they've been in that regime, they haven't been able to do anything on their own; it's just like training a person in a new job. They need a lot of explanations, they need to be pretty much, not really micromanaged, but overseen to make sure they are playing properly.

Q: Corruption was a problem?

A: Oh yes, corruption is always a problem. The PRTs deal a lot with the governance issues. Once they established the rules for the governance and the province, when contractors started doing work, there was a lot of corruption. Someone inside, people in charge of the contracts would take cutbacks. Whereas what I would do, since I was already there for so long, I had my contractors established, plus I worked real close with RRC, the regional reconstruction center. Those people helped me find other locations and other contractors.

These people, if they were going to work with the government, had to come to COB Speicher (Contingency Operating Base Speicher; Al Sahra Airfield under Saddam Hussein) was where I was at, and be trained on the government side to learn the things we had to have, the proper way of doing an assessment, and a bid and everything. That way, if I had any problem with those people I would take it to that commander and he would deal with them.

Q: So staying there for a while, longevity, was a plus?

A: Longevity was a major plus. In my opinion, tours that are nine months or even a year for civil affairs, and I really can't say a whole lot for PsyOps, but I would think it would help, but for civil affairs is really a waste of time.

Q: Is nine to twelve months not enough?

A: It's nowhere near enough. You really have to think about it. Especially if you are a CAT-A team. There is a lot to learn, in that whole area. You could take COB Speicher and

rouse that on a map, go forty minutes north, and then an hour and a half east, west, and south, that's my borderline. That's a huge area to rebuild, plus meet people. Not to mention IEDs, ambushes, and whatnot. So it's a really long time. I have presentations that I've done about how long it took me to do the information that I had done, plus get the feel for the people and the trust of the people. It took me thirty months to get done what I have done.

I have seen it too many times -- and this goes for task forces, brigades, and CAT-As. If you were working on a project for a university for example. Now say it was half-way done. Then I come in, and I'm like, 'this is really a waste of my time, she didn't know what she was doing, so I'm going to blow it off.' So I turn around with the Iraqis and let them take control of it, let them do it, and then you find out it goes off track, may cost more money, they don't have it done on time because I'm not interested in it. That's a waste of money, that's a waste of the other teams' time. Most of the time you end up cutting those projects because they are not done.

It's just like when you have task force commanders: They have mission to do as well, but the way I see it, and I'm not always right, but if you have \$4.1 million for the project in the university, and he's wanting to set an example for the battle space, he decides to cut all projects going on in the whole battle space. That's fine and dandy, but of course you are punishing collectively, not as individuals. Not to mention, once you start those projects back up, which I had to do, some of those projects ended up costing us more than \$200,000 extra to get those projects started and finished. So now we've just wasted a lot of money.

Q: Of the people you saw coming and going, what was their average time in the country?

A: It was nine months to a year. Now my second unit was there for eighteen months. They learned a whole lot more, and were able to accomplish a whole lot more. But then, since I went from one team to another, they were able to get more accomplished because I knew a lot more people.

Q: So contacts are really important.

A: Very important, because also, during the time I was there, a lot of the contractors, USACE (US Army Corps of Engineers), and military, when they helped rebuild the country, the Iraqis were able to talk them into buying the land, and then building.

But to me, it was like, 'wait a minute; you have to come half way.' In all the time I was there I never had to purchase land, because they knew what I was going to use it for, so I had their trust. Another reason was I had the emphasis that I was not going to pay for the land, and build the building. Then there were some circumstances in some areas that the people knew I'd already done a lot for the city or area and so, if I found the land, I would go to the municipality or the local city and I would talk to the owner of the land, or I would sometimes be able to go to government, and they would actually give me that land, if I was able to establish a school. Then, I would have an agreement with that village, 'if I

get the land, would you build the school?' They would do that, and then the government wouldn't pay for anything, I had to just sign the land over to them.

Q: That's what the teams are all about, building trust and working together.

A: Showing them how to communicate with their others. Everyone is going back and forth because they are Sunnis and Shiites. That's a start, but people have to keep in the back of their mind, that you have tribes. All the tribes are different. It's just like the governance, when they do the projects that I was talking about earlier. If the governance had a project and they were going in Al Jabal, which is across the river, they needed to make sure the contractor was from that area. They were not doing that. PRT knew that was a problem, but it was hard for them to tell the government of that province to stop doing it. But that was a part of the people seeing corruption because high government officials knew that when you are doing that type of construction, you need to find people from that area, not bring a total outsider in.

Q: What province where you in?

A: Salah Ah Din province.

Q: So you worked with high government officials there?

A: I only went to them a few times. I did more local city stuff. I worked more with the city officials. It worked a lot better, because we would have our sheiks' council meetings on Sunday, where we'd listen to all the complaints to the sheiks; and every Thursday we'd go to the PDDC. It was another location in the city, and we'd meet with city officials, local contractors or any other political figures we needed to talk to, as far as municipalities, sewer, water, and electricity, all of them.

Q: So the local infrastructure was kind of what you did?

A: Yes. By the time I left there I was able to put an assessment of most of the whole area of our task force battle space according to what we considered our SWEAT program, which is sewer, water, electricity, schools, medical and whatnot.

Q: How many square miles was that?

A: I'd have to look it up because it was a lot. Like when I'd go to Adwar, which is about an hour and a half away, it was cut off from us for a while due to the fact there was too much violence. But since I was there prior to that, I already had a lot of information. So we didn't spend a lot of time in Adwar anymore until the task force gave us approval. We were cut off from there from August 31, '06 until almost all of 2007.

Q: So you were on the outside, not the inside, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you work with just this one PRT?

A: Yes. Once the PRT was established; the first year that they were there, matter of fact. They were more intent on getting the government rules established, which took a lot of time.

Q: Rule of law and governance.

A: Then they finally asked us if we could get a rule of law program for the city. We asked for the rule of law program for the government first, and what we did is we gave the city thirty days to do their rule of law program, and we gave them examples. That way we were hoping, once we gave them examples, their rule of law program would follow into government rule of law.

Q: Security, police...

A: Everything, yes. That's what the government law consisted of. Now the city rules were not as in-depth as the government, because the PRT dealt with of course the law, infrastructure, and everything else. If they needed help, I would help them, but I was never asked for help for that because I was so spread out. My main mission was the task force, I'd help the COB's security for example, because we had villages outside our base, and I knew all them, so they'd ask me for help, and of course division, and then brigade, so I was pretty much stretched out thin.

Q: No long weekends?

A: No, I never had a long weekend.

Q: Can you describe the chain of command in the PRTs? That was apparently one of the really well run PRTs, from what I heard?

A: Yes. The biggest part that we saw faults with was communication.

Q: I see. Between the team members or with Washington, or with the Iraqis?

A: Everybody. Washington, PRT, division, brigade, even the civil affairs side, because everybody was doing pretty much their own thing, which was very important to each one of those entities, but we would not find out about it. Not to mention how much time do you have to what the team leader wanted to do and plus read all of your report from division, brigade, and all the CAT-As. You are talking about a lot of reports. It's really hard to keep up with all that information.

Q: So you were getting orders from both the PRT and the military?

A: Yes, but I had to prioritize. Now if I didn't have time to do what you asked me to do, I would tell you I didn't have time. What I would do is go to my planning department, and if I didn't have time for brigade or division, I would let them go through it, and make sure they understood it, not having a sergeant first class go to a colonel and tell them I don't have time to do that right now. They would explain it to them better. Now if it was the PRT, I would let them know. They would understand because they knew how stretched I was. If I had any problems, if it was infrastructure or economics, a lot of times I'd go directly to the team leader.

Q: What about the relationships between the State Department side and the military side, did that work out okay?

A: In the PRT or outside the PRT?

Q: Let's start with inside the PRT.

A: Inside the PRT I think the State Department seemed to be running pretty well. I think with the military personnel they had there, and I'm just slap-shooting this through the hip because I don't know a whole lot of what they did, it seemed like there were a lot of people who were mismanaged. That would fall under the military side, just due to the fact when I would speak to people over there, from maybe staff sergeants and below, the only time they did anything is when they would go outside the wire and they were the drivers and gunners and security. I'm like, 'there has to be more for them to do besides just sit around until they go outside the wire.'

Q: But the chain of command didn't get mixed up in the PRT with high ranking civilians tangling high ranking on the other side?

A: I've seen occasions where for example say the team leader wanted to meet someone, such as a battalion commander from another task force. He may turn around and keep blowing her off. I know it happened with one team leader, I don't know about the other. That's where the team leader had to get involved and call division, and of course division came down through brigade, and brigade ended up getting hold of that commander saying he had to make time. Basically, active duty military and also State Department, all these entities need to somehow figure out how we can work together, even if you have a lot of the active duty people go to down to JRATC or down to Fort Polk to do their training. When they go down there, they need to turn around and make sure there is some sort of PRT members/State Department/CAT-A team or civil affairs that goes down there to work with them, because they are down there for two weeks of training. A lot of active duty people say they know how to work with civil affairs, but they do not, and vice versa.

Q: What is a CAT-A?

A: It is a civil affairs team alpha, which means we go out and work with task force, we are assigned to a task force, and our orders come from the task force. The only time we'll

even associate with the company or battalion as a civil affairs is an administrative or logistics issue, basically supplies or if they some sort of personnel information.

Q: That takes us into the question about the effectiveness of the leadership and management structure. You said it could use a little adjustment?

A: Right now what's going on, from what I see, and I don't see everything, is that the military has Inactive Ready Reserve (IRR) people coming in, and you have to think about it and yes, we are all military but they are people who have been out of the military who were called up to go over. Regular reservists have drill every month. These are the reservists that don't have drill.

Q: So they aren't really up to speed.

A: IRR means when you go into the military and say you have an eight-year obligation, you spend four years active duty, and your other four years you can do IRR, which means the only way you will be called up is if you had to go to war, like now.

Q: Don't they meet monthly?

A: No. Just regular reservists meet monthly. Say your job was as a receptionist. You just got called up from IRR. For one thing, no one wants to go to Iraq or Afghanistan. That's typical, but that's life. Second thing is, you were called up, now you have to get reclassified. Say your military occupation specialty (MOS) was an administrator when you were active duty, now you have to go get reclassified as a civil affairs soldier MOS. So already you are unhappy with that. Next thing you are unhappy with is you have to go to Iraq or Afghanistan and do that job with no job experience whatsoever, no training.

Of course, you are in the country, so a lot of the CA need more experience and exposure to the elements. We get a lot of training on the battle drills, what we will see over there, explanations of what we will do, and other individuals coming in and giving us reports, but you actually don't have the experience of what the teams are actually going to do whereas that's where I think going down to Fort Polk, Louisiana. Or, I know at Fort Bragg now we are putting teams together to where we can give the CA and PsyOps people proper training. The teams are going to expand out to other camps and bases, like we'll go up to Fort Dicks, in California, to try to give them more of that training.

Q: Before they get there.

A: Yes.

Q: That's a good thing. That is a lesson that was learned.

A: But that is just now starting. The problem we're having is we need more equipment. For example, some of the equipment we use in Iraq when we are on patrol from one area to another, we use Dukes, which helps us with the IEDs; we use BFTs, which is a Blue

Force Tracker, which is like a GPS, whereas right now at Fort Bragg we don't have that equipment to show the people to how to use it. They'll probably get a class on it, but that's it. If they can't see it hands on, and how to work it hands on, it's ineffective, and we need to show them how to do radios. Harris radios are the next most popular radios in the country, but we don't have enough of them to give them a better class and hands on.

Q: What is that?

A: A Harris radio is where we communicate from our vehicles to other people.

Q: Okay. You need more in training?

A: We need them in training period. My biggest thing I would say when first training brigade is ready would be to have people come down and see what they have and don't have and talk to them. I came back October 29th and I had a lot of leave accrued, and I've taken it and enjoyed every minute of it. Now I'm starting to get back into it, and so I don't know a whole lot of what the first training brigade is doing. I know they're beefing up the training and they want to turn around and redo the training to where it's going to specialize the CA and PsyOps more when they go over.

Q: So this training is new?

A: Is new, yes.

Q: And it's at Fort Bragg?

A: Yes.

Q: And it's just one? They are going to travel around on their bases?

A: They want to get three or four teams together and do this.

Q: Is this what you are going to do now?

A: Yes. This is what I am going to do for the next year, and then I will go from there. This is all new, we still need a lot of equipment, and we need space. Like I said, if people took time out and came down for a tour by anyone down there, and spoke to the enlisted, spoke to the trainers, spoke to the teams that doing the training, they'll find out the needs that we have.

Q: Who would logically be the person that would come down and observe what is needed?

A: It might be anybody. If you want all the entities in Iraq with each other, you may want to bring somebody from the State Department that's been in Iraq or Afghanistan,

someone from the PRT elements, and of course anyone down under that can help the command get the needs that need to help this go smoother.

Q: Acquisitions?

A: I do know the first training brigade commander and command sergeant major are working on being able to train any of the State Department and PRTs that are going over to Iraq as well, not be trained by someone else. Plus it's a way of getting them to know each other.

Q: Yes. On the PRT itself, the staff and the members, there were about how many?

A: They came and went a lot, one minute there would be thirty, the next time I go over there a month later there might be eighteen.

Q: What's the relationship among those few people? Did they work well together?

A: They seemed like they worked tightly together. I wasn't around them that often. I attended as many meetings as possible, and then if I had an issue with the lieutenant colonel of infrastructure, that is who I would meet with. I'd go right to him. I wouldn't just go over and talk to the team leaders all the time. After I got to meet the people I needed to meet and those areas, then that's what I would do.

Q: Were you one of many people doing the same thing? What would you call yourself? PRT support?

A: I was basically a CAT-A team sergeant for the task force.

Q: Task force member, not the PRT.

A: I was not actually with the PRT. But when I had time, they would send emails, whoever needed help, but I also made time. At least once or sometimes twice a week I'd do runs. Which means I'd turn around and visit all my people to let them know I was still around and available. I'd turn around and go to the PRT to see who was there, talk to them. I'd go to USACE, they did a lot of construction without telling people because they didn't want the military involved. Once the military was involved they would go and check it out and it wouldn't be well for the contractor and his workers if they knew military people were involved in that program. So I can understand why USACE would do that.

Q: USACE being?

A: USACE is the engineers for the military. Then I'd go over to the PRT, and then I would go over to what we call BDOC (Base Defense Operations Command). BDOC was pretty much in charge of the battle spaces and the security area of the COB (Contingency Operating Base) and everything outside. I had to go to COB security, COB security of

course dealt with the security inside the COB and within so many meters of the COB. I then would work my way up sometimes over to the brigade and talk to certain individuals. I would do a lot of different areas.

Q: Were there some Iraqi offices or people on your list to visit, or were you working mostly with Americans?

A: On that base, that's who I worked with. Now when I would go outside the base, we all met at one place in particular every Thursday. There would be several local government officials. Sometimes at the beginning they were reluctant to meet me there, but then I pretty much gave them the choice: to either meet me there, or I'd come to your office. And of course, they don't want you coming to your office, not all of them.

Q: Because they don't want to be associated with the US military?

A: They are just still skeptical if they are seen with you. Whereas this was a place that a lot of Iraqis went to.

Q: Were the Iraqis receptive to you?

A: Yes. The biggest problem we had over there at the beginning was you had a lot of people who were taking government and city official jobs and they had no experience. We all knew that at the beginning that these people needed to be well trained. A lot of people were ex-military, so we made sure there were other training entities coming in to help train them and then we ended up training them as much as we could as well. Once we did that training, then we upgraded it to another level. We started trying to get them equipment. Computers and the internet are a big problem over there.

Then, of course, we would always try to get them working together, when some people didn't have confidence in their city officials. What we orchestrated were small projects to help the city; in other words, they did a clean-up project. The military paid for it, but I was able to get high level provincial and local officials to do a television broadcast on it. I made sure there were no military people around, and that all the credit was given to the city and the city officials. Cleaning the area, painting curbs, fixing some of the fountains, rebuilding the 'Welcome to Tikrit' signs Saddam built years ago, sign, because no matter what everyone else thought about Saddam, there was still a majority of people who looked up to him. Instead of fighting all of those people, you need to win them over to your side. For example, Saddam had all of these stars built in Tikrit with a tree planted in the middle. The problem of that was they started putting IEDs in these stars. Instead of bulldozing these stars, because there were a lot of them, over two hundred of them all together, we had all those stars fixed; they were painted, and then we put concrete in the middle, and narrowed them down to like a two-inch circumference, maybe three, and started planting small trees in them. That way, if somebody placed an IED, you should be able to see it broken up, and of course we were also helping the environment by having more trees growing.

Q: That is a great idea.

A: The people saw that as a positive. The military is not always here to destroy things. And they are helping the people build the city. Officials bond with the military as well. The city received the responsibility and all the credit for that. They had a couple of fountains Saddam built, I fixed them. But I gave the credit, saying the city did that as well. They were small projects, nothing over \$100,000. Now the all the stars were over \$100,000 but most of the other stuff was less than \$100,000. Some things, the fountains, I think three fountains were \$50,000 and they all worked, and the people started getting a better response out of their city officials.

Q: What was the PRT relationship with the brigade combat team?

A: Okay, brigade has their own CA teams as well, basically one or two persons. Sometimes that person is actually in the brigade active duty, or sometimes CA battalion or CA company that is going to that area with give them individuals for that team. Basically their main job is to communicate with all the entities; CAT-As, PRTs, everyone, and combine all that information and make sure that if there is anything pertinent that the battalion commander needs to know, he'll make sure that he knows.

Q: Were you a part of this?

A: No.

Q: It's a different military institution?

A: The task force is the same thing as the brigade. That brigade has to have someone inside their CA personnel to make sure they interact with everyone else.

Q: The combat team suggests that maybe they had something to do with security?

A: No, basically why it's called a combat team is that they will go outside the wire periodically. They'll get involved with a lot of the PRTs, especially the governance issues. In other words, you'd have one of your team members, most likely an officer that will always work with high government officials. Anything pertinent, to the brigade commander, that person will inform him. So they'll have periodic meetings with the brigade commander and other brigade officials.

Q: Actually relating to security, did you feel that there was a certain level of threat to you when you went about work, did you have security detail with you?

A: At all times.

Q: How many people went with you?

A: It varies on how many people wanted to go with me. It depended on the mission. The average time, I would have four trucks, with at least four individuals in each truck.

Q: Did the PRT have any reliance on Iraqi military?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the relationship?

A: It would vary on what they did. In other words, when they established the economics conference, they would try to make sure there were no American forces available. Now there was going to be somebody that was going to escort them, but they would try to use one or two entities: they would either use the Iraqi army to help them out, or they would go to the Iraqi police. Now if they were going further down into Tikrit or any other place that wasn't as well established for security, then they would get with the IA and the IA would send a couple of trucks as well. You have to watch how you do it because I think the first time we saw probably fifteen to twenty vehicles going through Tikrit which is way too many vehicles because that establishes a greater force of being ambushed.

Q: The twenty were together?

A: Yes. That's not good.

Q: A target.

A: Not to mention wherever you stopped at you're pretty much blocking off probably two or three blocks because you have so many vehicles and you don't want them all that close together. I guess I would say sometimes there was a little bit of overkill, which when you first get over there you do have a little bit of overkill because you're not comfortable with the area. You should never really be comfortable with the area because anything can happen at any given time. I mean, even with me, a lot of people knew who I was, a lot of people knew a lot of things that I did, but I mean I've quit counting how many times I was almost hit by an IED, RPGs, or grenades after ten times. If it just happened, I didn't want it to happen, but it happened. Snipers, grenades, RPGs, whatever.

Q: You were not hurt the time you were there?

A: I got rattled a couple of times, but I had a school across the river on Clemson (Main Supply Route Clemson, which is between Tikrit and Kirkuk). Clemson was one of the highest IED areas that we had. I had to go check out this elementary school that I was told about by some other coalition forces, that the man there was a terrorist. I heard it wasn't being built properly and it was a \$30,000 school. This is when I first got to the Tikrit area, so I've never seen a \$30,000 school built, a nice one. So I knew already that there was something wrong. It took me my eighth time to get out there because my first seven tries -- I went every day, one after another -- I was hit by an IED as soon as I hit the bridge. I just kept going because the people knew I was reluctant to give up, I was going

to go over there until I saw this school. When I saw the school, I cancelled the project because it was basically a shell, and I wasn't going to pay for a shell. This was a project that was started before I got there; it was a prior CA team.

If the people wanted a project, and say there was a water treatment facility, and they wanted repairs. I would go back, the last couple of three years we were in this area, and check when was the last time we worked on this water project, this treatment facility. If we worked on this same project last year and we spent \$100,000, and all of a sudden this next year they didn't take care of it, then I would have to turn around and talk to the ministry of water and a few other political people and say, "hey, you've got to be willing to meet me halfway on this because we did this, you didn't take care of it, now you have to do this." It's not so much that people say all the Iraqis are lazy, because they really aren't lazy. They are really inappropriately trained and they don't have the experiences we have in the US. Its just like when the people thought that we were only going to be there for a year, Saddam's gone, we're coming back home. In our whole history of the United States, we've never pulled out. We're still in Korea, we're still in Vietnam, we're still in Europe, we're still in Bosnia, Kosovo; I mean it's not going to happen. We need to understand that. I've come to the fact that we aren't going to leave. I have a job to do so I'm going to go over there and do it.

Q: Now you have made a distinction between projects that have been started a year ago or earlier than that. If they had been started three years ago and abandoned, were they too far gone, if they just deteriorated?

A: Yes. Once there is any kind of project, a school building with supplies in it, or any type of metals or wiring, if a project falters or goes closed, the people are going to pretty much rip it dry, and then you'll start all over again. That's why we never fixed the lights on the highways, because there is no way you can secure that. The terrorists are ripping out the wire of the lights for IEDs so we never fixed that. One good thing the PRT would do was once they came in, and we came in sync with them, is we started getting better communication, especially when the projects rolled around, the new projects for the whole battle space, we'd make sure we'd get with the city, and the city would get with the local officials of each of the villages, because some of the villages had their own little council, and we would make sure their projects coincided with what we had and ours would turn around and coincide with theirs. They would make sure all of this got published to the governance, because that is where they would establish all the money that they got from Baghdad.

Q: One of the parts of the PRT is to work with so-called moderates, and to provide economic support for counter-insurgency. Following that, would you have to try to distinguish the moderates from any one else? You said the school guy was considered a terrorist so is there a way to determine who was on your side and who wasn't?

A: There is no way to determine who is on your side and who isn't. Everyone working in Iraq has that issue. It's the same way as USACE may use local engineers they pay to go out and do assessments for them. I tried that once, and the individual gave me an

assessment. I told him to assess this one certain area for me, and he took an assessment somewhere else he had already done and just sent it to me. Well, I've already been to that area, I've already taken pictures, and I knew it was wrong. That was my first and last time I used one of them. So basically, if I started a project, no matter if it was a year prior to that, I always went out and kept up with my projects, inspected my projects. Some of the projects I could just drive by, other projects I'd go in. For university projects, we did a research center, a dentistry, upgraded the law building, sports facility and housing for all the professors, and until the day I left always went there even after they were done to see how they were putting things together, and to make sure they were using it as they told me they would use it for.

Q: So follow-up.

A: I did a lot of follow-up. I did follow-up with things six months, a year after they were done. I always did a follow-up.

Q: Was that something that everybody did, or that you see as something that needs to be paid more attention to?

A: It needs to be paid more attention to. Follow up is going to tell you if the people are really being honest with you. Also to give you more information on the individuals: Say the university wanted me to start another project, they wanted to more of the agricultural work. Some of that should have been done. But say if I built their research center, and they didn't use it as a research center, they used it for something totally different. Then that was my ball to turn around to say, "Hey listen, why should I do that, this is what you told me you would do and you didn't do it." Now the ball's in their court because they are feeling that I came through with what I did; now they have to give me a good excuse why they did what they did. If it was legit, I would understand it. Once they understood how you worked, they knew they'd have that problem, for the most part. The problem that I see over there is that you see a lot of people over there that would make promises that they can't keep.

Q: You mean on the PRTs?

A: Some PRTs, CAT-A teams, other civil affairs, BCTs, brigade people, some people on task force, pretty much a little bit of everybody.

Q: Making promises that they can't keep?

A: Yes.

Q: They don't have the authority?

A: Just like me, if you were a PRT leader and I've never worked with you before, you would come to me and say, "Is there any way you could introduce me to these people?" I would ask you why, and if you wouldn't tell me why I wouldn't do it because now you

are talking about my credibility. If my credibility is messed up, then I'm worthless for my mission. If I didn't think it was going to fit in with what I was doing, I still wouldn't do it, and I would tell them, and if they didn't like it, I still wouldn't do it, because I went by the task force. I had to do what was best for the task force and the people.

My main mission, when I go there, is that my team comes home alive; and of course I do my mission for the task force. It's in that order. When I introduced the people, I would make sure they would know that they are PRT, because everyone over in that country knew there was PRT civil affairs, and then there was civil affairs. Well, PRT worked mainly with the governance issues, provincial. Some people wouldn't talk to you if you were with the PRT. Like one year PRT civil affairs came to the dairy factory, promised them upgraded equipment because they still don't pasteurize their milk over there, and they were going to bring them all of this new equipment in, and after they left they never heard from them again, and eight months later I found out.

Q: They just brought the equipment and dumped it or they promised it and didn't bring it?

A: They promised the equipment and didn't bring it. They came up with all these new ideas, and I found out eight months later when I went there, and they told me this, and at that time they didn't want to deal with civil affairs. That's when I got really anal with the PRT. If you are in my area, you need to tell me what you are doing because it's my task forces' battle space.

Q: That makes sense. What was your experienced with RTI?

A: RTI is very important. RTI really needs to work on the individuals they hire. For example, when I was over there, RTI would bring in country engineers. Which is fine. But they have to realize that a lot of the government contractors are filling positions just because they have a contract with the government or the military and we have to have so many positions filled at this time. And so they hire whoever. I'm not saying all of them are doing it, but RTI was one of them, and for example they brought an engineer from Nepal and an engineer from Pakistan. Okay, you have to really think about it: What qualifications do they have? The way they do things isn't like Iraq. Yes we want to give them some new ideas; but when he came in, he didn't want to see what needed to be fixed. He wanted to give a whole new look, which would have cost several millions of dollars. We orchestrated all the wiring for electricity, but he wanted to turn around and dig up and put a whole new water system in the entire province.

Not to mention that it's not the people who wanted it. The people are used to having one design, and yes, not everyone's designs are adequate to each other, depending on your education and experience, but he wasn't willing to work with Iraqis. It was his way and that was it. You really have to watch out for the people you are bringing in.

You've got to work with things. I've seen a lot of people come over here and say, "Well, I'm in charge here, and if they Iraqis don't want to do it the way I want it done, then I'm not going to do it." Well, you can't look at it that way.

Q: How about PRDC, the provincial reconstruction development committee? Did you do anything with that?

A: No.

Q: Rule of law, we talked about that a little bit. Was there a rule of law officer in the PRT?

A: Yes, I didn't talk to him a whole lot, the only thing he asked me to do was introduce him to some people.

Q: Well, okay, that's very effective.

A: Yes, because at one time the PRT wasn't allowed on the university anymore. One thing people don't realize, and this goes not only with the PRT, its any type of task force or anyone: If you want the best way to get involved with people on a university or college, of course everyone knows when you go in there with the coalition forces vehicles, you are going to get noticed. The people look at that as taking time from the students, because the students will stop what they are doing. You pretty much disrupted classes and the students. A lot of coalition forces would go there during the day from morning to 1400. School's in session, so that's the wrong time to go. If you want to be there, try to make an appointment. I would go there around ten but I would go through the construction entrance; I wouldn't go through the main gate. Most of them would go through the main gate. So you are disrupting where the buses set off, where the buses pick up and everything else, where the students hang out. A lot of times I never even saw students. And students I saw they were just passing by. Now if I had to meet with the university staff, if they wanted me to come in before 1400, we met usually in their building, which would be no where near administration, because anyone usually visiting the university would go to the administration building. That's a bad location at that time, so if they wanted to meet with me, we met after school, which is usually about 1500.

Q: What about the agricultural person on the PRT? Did you work with him?

A: Yes, I didn't get to work with him as much.

Q: Was he a veterinarian?

A: No, they got somebody in, and he was actually an agricultural advisor. By the time he came in, because a lot of people were coming and going, and I didn't want to interact with someone who was only going to be there for three or four months. The biggest thing about the PRT was being able to keep people for a period of time.

Q: It wasn't by design that they stayed only two or three months, was it?

A: I don't know.

Q: I guess they did have the option to leave if they didn't like it.

A: Yes. To me, and I'm not saying if this is true or not, from my experience and from what I told, the State Department people have leave every three months. If that's true, I don't see how that helps, because it takes you two or three months just to learn the area and the people in my eyes, and so after that time, you go home for two weeks leave, it takes you three and a half weeks to get back and then you have to catch up with the time you were gone. So if you go home on leave every quarter, I don't see where you are so effective, it depends on your position though.

Q: Readjustment period costs.

A: A lot can happen in a month's time.

Q: That's a good point. The military doesn't have that?

A: We go on leave once every year.

Q: Okay. What about the members of the PRT, was it different for the military members than the State Department members?

A: Yes, its leave once a year.

Q: And for the PRT State guys, it was once every three months?

A: That was what I was told. That's civilians and Foreign Service Officers.

Q: Okay, cultural advisor.

A: They are really lacking in what you would want to consider your cultural advisor.

Q: I guess the translators and the Iraqis are the people who knew the language and the culture and who were with the PRT to help with anything like that?

A: There are people like that; there are very few.

Q: Too few?

A: Very too few. The contractor that hires the contractors, is as far as I am concerned, the worst company I've ever seen in my life.

Q: They didn't do a good job?

A: They did a pathetic job. After a period of time the Iraqis knew what kind of test they were given to hire local nationals for translators. These translators were for brigade, task force, PRT, for everybody, and so these locals, who were smart, would learn certain words and then they went in there with these words and they knew them, and they'd pass the test, so the contractor did a really bad job.

I was there in 2005 as well, and one of my best translators was killed. I had to come home for two months to get my new orders and go right back, and after I left, I found out when I came back, his family after six months still wasn't given their life insurance policy. When I found out they still hadn't received their life insurance policy I was really upset. I went to the contractor, and I pretty much stayed on deadline and they finally got their money because I kept on going over there and complaining. I think the government needs to keep a better hold on these contractors.

If you are just hiring people to make sure you're filling your contract but they are no good, then it's wrong. The other thing is that you have some locals over there that want to become US citizens. The other good interpreter that I had, his father was a colonel for the Iraqi army and he was with me for two years, and he was great, he was really a good kid. We put his paperwork in for US citizenship. As a matter of fact, I got an e-mail from him the other day. I've been gone since October, and they've lost it. I know my task force, had it; they gave it to brigade, and now with the new brigade coming in, now they can't find it. That's another thing they see is important, because they would like to come to the US, and they feel like they've done their deed. He was shot at just as much as I was, he was attacked with explosives just as much as I was, so he earned that category, but when you tell him all that paperwork is lost, and they've got to redo it all...he was mine, and that kind of upsets me.

Q: What is that category called, Iraqi nationals who are put in a special position in mind to get citizenship?

A: It's supposed to be a new structure for US immigration that they started and we're allowed to put so many in and so many of them get their US citizenship per year. This translator was one of the best. As a matter of fact, he was probably better than most translators that the US hires from America with a secret or top-secret clearance. A lot of people used him because he spoke English better than they did. Here they are getting \$180,000, and I'm like, "Wow, he wouldn't mind coming back here to do that, and make a lot more than he is making now." Those are little things, we may not look at them a lot, but those are the little things that get around.

Q: It's the human side, also.

A: Yes, because people look at it like, "Wow, if I go work for the military for a year, I'll be able to US citizenship." Well guess what, yes, but with so many units coming and going every year, if they don't fix what the last unit left, then it gets by-passed and then of course that gives a bad taste for that Iraqi national. That happens a lot. We really need

to respect them more than we do. Give them the benefit of the doubt and have more patience. I mean I hear a lot of times, like when I came back, I hear about how the Iraqis just need to learn for themselves. Okay well, we learned for ourselves, too, but we didn't have dictators over our two hundred-year history telling us what we could and could not do. We have laws, but that's not the same. Now we just have to be patient with them. If it takes twenty years, then it takes twenty years. It's really bad, I should say we should be there for twenty years, but we should be there as long as necessary. We started something, now we need to finish it.

Q: What are some of the achievements of the PRT that you worked more closely with?

A: They were able to establish the rule of law, able to establish a court system when I left. They introduced the rule of law and advisor of the PRT to the university of law. That was a big help for them because they had problems finding judges. So that was where they were when I left. It was supposed to have started right when I left; they were to start trying people.

Q: The Law School?

A: The Law School is already effective; the court was supposed to start trying people.

Q: Did they receive training there, or were they just located there?

A: They received some training, but then they brought in people from other areas.

Q: What did they require exactly?

A: I'm not sure how much training they required, since I had so much going on my plate, they just asked me if I knew people of the education of law, and I did.

Q: To identify them?

A: Yes, because the PRT at one time had left a bad taste with the university. Since I had a good record with them, the PRT asked me if I could do that.

As long as they were going to do what they told me they were going to do. What I did first was I spoke to leading staff members of the law university, and then the PRT was going to keep to what they told me they were going to do, then I was fine with that. Like I said, I was real anal; no one could mess up my credibility.

Q: You had a personal interest, and it was your baby. You weren't just over there doing a job, it really meant something to you?

A: Yes and when you start projects like the projects I started for the university, its really hard for me starting a 1.1 billion dollar building and be able to finish that in a year time, you just don't get it done that way. That's why I kept extending, because I wanted to see

my projects finished. I've seen it too many times where other teams would come in and they would not follow through with them, and they would end and they would falter. I wanted to make sure my stuff was done when I left.

Q: Would you say the PRT are accomplishing their mission and active?

A: For the most part. We all need tweaks.

Q: There are the four areas here. Could you indicate the level of competence and achievement that you saw improving, governance for example. How would you rate them on that?

A: Governance I think they did. On a scale of 1 through 10 I think they did an 8. Governance is more time-consuming. They didn't have the rule of law; they didn't have anything as far as any type of council established, so I think they did an 'A'. It's just time-consuming, and I don't think people understand that.

Q: What about economic development.

A: Economic development when I left, I would say, it's about an 8 too. With me being there for so long, I saw what it was like two years ago, now when I leave, this is what it is like. Now they have a lot of economics established, agriculture was growing, they had assessments in place for banks to get the banks going again, and they were bringing in outsiders for economics, bringing in people from Saddam's regime that left. Some were coming back, not as many as they were hoping, but if you have a conference and two comes back, that's better than none.

Q: Utilizing American military and civilian resources. Now this is the PRT, utilizing resources, how did they do on that department?

A: I would have to say that would be around a 5, but I'm looking at it as an overall communication with military, civilian and State Department people, and that was a really big thing that is really hard to do. Everyone has their meetings per day. I have my task force meetings, and sometime we'd have two, three or six in one day. PRT has their meetings, brigade has their meetings. It's impossible to make all those meetings and get their jobs done, and then read all the reports.

Q: Meetings and reports take too much time. Always does, doesn't it?

A: Oh yes, it always does.

Q: And then the last area, counter-insurgency, how did the PRT that you knew best do in that area?

A: PRT is a part of civil affairs, we are not responsible to get involved in counter terrorist, but we are soldiers. There are ways of doing it. If I see anything pertinent, I'll gather

information and make sure the proper people get the information, because we do our Sit Reps (situation reports) on a day-to-day basis. So if I see something pertinent or if I hear anything pertinent... The CAT-A teams and the PRTs may want to make sure this happens with them as well. We always need to make sure to always try to work with TPT or HTC, those are like intel gatherers, and PsyOps. We need to try to work more with them so when we go outside the wire, one of those people are available because civil affairs tries not to get involved with terrorist activities. If I'm not around and you just got through telling me there is going to be an explosion at this place and at this time, then I'm going to of course call it up. I'll let the proper people know. Sometimes my Sit Reps are four pages long. Sometimes they are a half-page long. It depends on what I do that day. That's where we need to work more together, with those other teams, because we are supposed to be an entity of gathering information, being experts on the ground for the task force. My first OYF, PPT and PsyOps and me, we always went out together. PsyOps had a mission, because we're short on security, so we are our own security. PsyOps had a mission, we helped them with their mission, we helped TPT with their mission, and they helped me with my mission. We had three trucks we rode all the time, and we were able to work it, so if somebody came up to me with intelligence, I would get TPT.

Q: It sounds very...

A: It worked very well. But that was the only time I've ever seen it happening. Once I went from Beiji, Iraq to Tikrit, there was only one PsyOps there, which was from brigade, and they didn't have enough people to supply it to anyone. Matter of fact my task force that was there for the last year and a half, they didn't have a PsyOps, and they had a TPT and HCT as well, they did have that.

Q: TPT and...

A: HCT.

Q: Is what?

A: Counter-terrorism. They are basically intel gatherers. They are the same as intel gatherers. They gather information for brigade division, the special forces, whoever and they just didn't always have the bodies to give us one.

Q: Okay. So it's counter-terrorism. That's very good, I like the way you summed up that.

A: That's how it should be, we should work together.

Q: Obviously you had excellent training before you went.

A: Yes, I have a lot of prior combat experience, so we had our training, and then of course, when we went over, we always upgraded our training. We did recover drills, and we always went to the range. Sometimes we'd go weekly, sometimes we'd go quarterly. Depends on the time we have. The team leader is pretty much the one who is the officer;

goes to meetings, but we'd always stood them up because there were so many, and then of course my job is to make sure the training is always adequate.

Q: That's for your immediate your task force, not civilians?

A: No, I didn't do anything with them. Since I was the CAT-A, then the task force would help me with the training if I needed help, or I would turn around and make up training that was pertinent for that area.

Q: Okay. The last question is lessons learned. I think you've done lessons learned before, everybody has, but we are doing it again.

A: The first thing that we need to do is, and this may be kind of what you are looking for, may not. But, one thing that we need to do is have after actions reviews. I was never asked about that. When I spoke to people that returned, they were never asked. It's just battalion commander had one of his staff people write one up, he read it, and that's what he turned in. Whereas, that's a lot missing.

Q: Was that something you wrote as an individual or as a whole program, an AAR?

A: Everyone should be asked.

Q: About his views on the whole operation or his views on his personal experiences?

A: You can make it however you want to. You have to realize, you don't ask these guys to do an AAR when they come back from theater. For one thing, being gone nine months, or being gone twelve months or whatever it is, common sense tell you what diverse thought is, finish their SRP and everything, and going home, so the best thing to do is to ask these people what their AAR is while they are still in country.

Q: Okay.

A: Then if they need to send an e-mail or anything, then that's fine. It is not good to say. "Okay, we're going to give these all to the command sergeant major and they are going to turn them in." Sometimes you are going to get AARs that are nothing but complaints, and some AARs are going to be some very valid information. The people who read these should be unbiased people. For an AAR for your job, you want someone who is unbiased where they have no reflections on that area. That way, everything that's been said is going to be read, at least.

Q: You want somebody unbiased and objective.

A: Correct.

Q: What we've just been doing here, could that be defined as an AAR?

A: Yes.

Q: So it's a good thing for the State Department to be doing this?

A: Yes, State Department, military, everyone should be doing it. It's just like when I come back, I get with the first training brigade and I would say, "Hey, you may think about doing this, this and this because we are having problems over here on these certain areas." They usually listen. I never have any problems with colonels of the first training brigade or any chain of command, because they always listen to me, because they always listen to anyone who has been over there to upgrade their training. If it coincides with their training, they'll definitely make the change, if not they may have to work some kinks out. It depends on who you are. There definitely should be an AAR for everyone who comes over. Especially CAT-A teams should be doing their AARs and turning them into the first training brigade or whoever. That would really help.

Q: That sounds pretty common sensical.

A: Yes, because most CAT-As go outside the wire all the time. Some may not, I don't know, but CAT-As are the ones outside of the wire most of the time.

Q: Okay. Is that your number one recommendation then?

A: Yes, that AARs need to be written up and submitted to the military chain of command, not necessarily to the military company commanders or battalion commanders, but they need to somehow make their way back to the first training brigade or someone that's unbiased.

Q: Anything else in that line of thought, lessons learned or recommendations?

A: We need to do better in terms of letting the first training brigade work with getting more of the CA and PsyOps trained. They are really trying their best right now, they may hit some bumps, I don't know the whole inside of what they are doing. I do know we don't have the proper equipment, enough updated equipment. First training brigade, if they want us to be successful in Iraq, we have to be successful at the beginning.

Q: Excellent. Well this has been very helpful. Thank you.