

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

INTERVIEW #3

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Executive Summary

The interviewee served in Iraq as Director of Field Operations for the Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office (IRMO). He led the effort in the summer of 2005 to the summer of 2006 to develop the Provincial Reconstruction Team program (PRT) in Iraq as the Director of the National Coordination Team (NCT), which he organized in October 2005. By November/December he had organized the first three PRT teams. He also set up PRT training programs in California and Germany.

The overarching mission statement for the PRTs was to provide a provincial government capable of managing its own affairs, a government that is transparent and has the support of its citizenry—building capacity at three points: the Office of the Governor, the Provincial Council, and the offices of the Directors General (the provincial representatives of the national ministries) and some work with sub-provincial offices. The need was for training in civil government administration: funding, budgeting, planning and development. Each PRT had a base-line assessment of the province and a work plan, which spelled out the purpose, the objective, the desired end-state, and a table of organization. The purpose was not to build infrastructure but capacities. This led to some differences between the civilians and military—the latter preferring short-term construction and impact and the former longer term training and capacity building.

On organization, each PRT was to be led by a civilian (a State Department Officer) with a military deputy being focused on government capacity building with no security role. (The latter came with the Embedded PRTs (ePRT), which were part of the surge.) The Team Leader was responsible for integrating and synchronizing the work of all the agencies and staff. Significant conflicts were referred to the NCT or the Office of Provincial Affairs in the Embassy. The staffing included: a Rule of Law Coordinator, a Provincial Action Officer—two political officers (capacity building and reporting), engineer officer, a public diplomacy officer, economist, agriculturist, and experts in governance, finance and municipal planning with several Iraqi counterparts. The total staffing varied but could be as high as upper eighties including the Iraqis and movement security. The Department of Defense (DOD) provided civilian Bilingual Bicultural Advisers (BBAs)—up to six. There was no standard staffing pattern. The Rule of Law program was a big concern: there was no cohesive law program.

Logistical support and its funding for the PRTs varied and evolved, depending on the facility location whether a State Department or military base of operations. Program resources came from State Department Quick Reaction Funds (QRF), USAID Economic Support Funds (ESF), or the Commanders Economic Reconstruction Program (CERP).

Lessons: It is important to have DOD on-board with the program and not creating roadblocks. The State Department should not lose focus; the amount of its effort to support the Iraq program was not adequate. It is important to have a single coordinating entity in conflict and post-conflict development efforts. There should be an interagency agreed baseline, structure, purpose, mission with dedicated resources—staffing and funds.

Interview

Q: I understand that you had two different roles with respect to the PRT, is that right?

A: In the summer of 2005 I led the effort to develop the program in Iraq and then I led the program as the Director of the National Coordination Team (NCT). I led the PRT part of it for essentially the first year, until the summer of 2006. This is my third tour in Iraq. I arrived the first of June 2005 as the Director of Field Operations for Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO). In that capacity I put together an effort, starting in July, to develop a Provincial Government Assistance team. Then we sold the concept. After I briefed the Ambassador and the General in September. They approved the concept, and then I stood up the National Coordination Team the first of October.

Q: This was in the Embassy?

A: Yes, I stood up the first three teams by the end of November and the first week of December. I led that effort until June of 2006, when my year was up. I came back to the States. Since then I have been working with training efforts on PRTs, both at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), where I participated in all the training sessions, up through January, providing PRT operations training to the people going out to the PRTs. I also set up a program with the army at the National Training Center in California for a PRT training program for their brigade combat teams, as well as their training center in Germany.

Q: You were not actually operating in a PRT, then. Is that right?

A: Yes. Previously, under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), I was on a provincial team as a deputy governance team leader and then the acting team leader.

Q: Where was that?

A: Diwaniyah. That job provided a good foundation for how we developed the teams for Iraq. We really looked at the Afghanistan effort, we looked at the CPA governance

teams and we looked at the Vietnam era CORDS program in developing a program that would be unique to Iraq.

Q: Would you describe for us the design that you created for the Iraq program; what the original concept was and what you were trying to accomplish?

A: Basically, many of us recognized early on that standing down the governance teams under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) initially was a bad idea, pulling out of the provinces before the provincial governments had had the time to mature. However, with the standing down of the CPA and turning over sovereignty to Iraq, the money was not there to provide security to those provincial teams, so they closed them down went through a period of chaos from early summer of 2004.

Then I returned to Iraq to the Local Governance Program (LPG) as Director of Operations later in 2004, where I had teams throughout the country. It gave me a good opportunity to see the damage that was being done by our not having a consistent presence in the provinces, severely restricted our ability to develop governance capacity.

I returned in 2005 as a State Department employee again. On my first tour in Iraq I was a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) seconded to Department of Defense. I came out of Guayaquil, Ecuador. In my second tour in Iraq, I was Director of Operations for the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Local Governance Program. And the third time in Iraq, I went back as a State employee, as a 3161 appointee.

So it really started with a conversation the end of June, early July in the Embassy, where everyone had come on board with a realization that this program was not working. There was big pressure on the military to have civilians out in the provinces, because what had really happened, under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) days when we actually had USAID officers, State officers, a variety of specialists, out in the provinces. So when that went away, the military was left holding the ball, in my opinion, and having to do everything in the province on their own without the assistance that they really needed. So there was a big push by the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) to get something back out into the provinces. The Embassy was coming to that conclusion as well.

In the meantime, during the spring of 2006, the political section had put together what they call a PRDC Initiative, Provincial Reconstruction Development Community Initiative, as an effort to give some voice back to the provincial governments and to enhance the engagement. But by June, it was pretty apparent that that initiative was not going to be as successful as we wanted, mainly because there were no new people. By this stage of the game, State was having a hard time filling the positions in Iraq that existed and we just did not have people in the provinces.

So between the Embassy and MNFI, we collectively recognized that we had to have something again in the provinces to develop the capacity of the provincial governments. That was really the key. When we turned over sovereignty, the government at the provincial level had not had an opportunity to be educated and develop their skills.

Under the CPA, at least in the province I was in and neighboring provinces, there was a great effort to provide training to council members, governors and their staffs. However, once we turned over the country, there were new elections held and, in many cases, a half to two thirds of the trained government officials had now been replaced, so we were almost back to square one.

Reality was that the provincial governments under Saddam Hussein had very little authority, very little autonomy. They had made almost no effort to determine what the needs were of their provinces and to allocate resources to them, much less the ability to manage such as they did not have enough accountants to manage funds. So our effort, the PRT effort— it really has not changed overall in concept— was to build capacity primarily at the provincial level. Then it was intended to move down to the sub-provincial level, say to districts, at some point, though we had some serious manpower issues in doing that. The surge or the Embedded PRTs (ePRTs) really provided that capability.

Three of us worked on the PRT program: myself, a civil affairs lieutenant colonel and an engineer lieutenant colonel; they ended up being the plans officer and the operations officer for me on the National Coordination Team. Again, we just looked across the spectrum and looked at what we needed. We recognized there were some key areas where every province was lacking, such as they needed a significant amount of training, civil government administration, funding and budgeting and planning and development. We recognized the need to have USAID representatives, State Department political officers and others in the field, reconstruction people, rule of law coordinators in every province, able to work directly with the provincial government.

Q: What about security?

A: Security was an issue unlike prior to April of 2004 when we did just about everything. Security went seriously downhill after sovereignty changed. However, we recognized that regardless of the security situation we had to reengage, because there was never going to be the opportunity to defeat an insurgency if one does not have a government that is capable of handling its own affairs. So we recognized the need to do that.

The first few PRTs were stood up, with State Department funded CSP security teams; we stood them up out of existing Regional Embassy Offices. Two of them have essentially gone away and transitioned completely to PRTs and the other two are in various stages of doing so. So that was easy in the beginning.

The challenge was moving beyond those Regional Embassy Offices (REOs) to facilities such as in Salah Ad Din Province, Diyala Province, Anbar Province, to name a few, that had significant security issues, without State Department Community Stabilization Programs (CSPs). So the agreement between MNF-I and the Embassy was that State would start pulling CSP resources back into Baghdad to help with the requirement in the Baghdad area and MNFI would step up to the plate and take over responsibility for the

majority of the security requirements outside of Baghdad. That was in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that did not get signed for 15 months, but it was drafted in November of 2005, and finally was approved in February of 2007.

So that is the way the security situation was to be addressed. Only in a few circumstances would PRTs rely on civilian security assets provided by State, with the vast majority relying on Multinational Forces Iraq to provide movement security teams and then on-site security at government centers or wherever they were working.

Q: Was there a mission statement that was basic for all of the PRTs?

A: Yes, absolutely. The overarching mission statement has not changed. That was published in a cable that went out the first of October, 2005. It laid out the mission, the purpose, the task, the objective, the desired end-state, the generic table of organization for the provincial level PRTs. So that was clearly laid out. Following that, there was an MOU that was developed with Standard Operating Procedures, developed by the National Coordination Team at the beginning of the program.

Q: When was that put in effect? Were there separate mission statements for each PRT?

A: Each PRT had that opportunity. The overarching concept that we had was that we were not going to micromanage the PRTs. We had smart Foreign Service Officers and other civilian specialists and military deputies that were fairly senior. We felt that we laid out the objectives, the desired end-state and some specific tasks. They would then move on and develop a work plan for each province. They were required to develop a base-line assessment of the province and the National Coordinating Team (NCT) developed an assessment process to support that. They assessed the province and they developed a work plan that utilized the Local Governance Program work plan as its core, but which evolved into a Provincial Work Plan to take on all the various areas that the provincial PRT was going to address, based on their assessment and the desired end-states and the mission.

So all those things existed. How they were implemented varied by personalities. But all that was out there; all that was published.

Q: What were the key features of the overall mission statement; summarize them briefly?

A: Providing a provincial government capable of managing its own affairs that is transparent, has the support of its citizenry. Really the key focus is building the capacity of the government.

We look at three elements of the provincial government: the Office of the Governor, the Provincial Council and the offices of the Directors General, which are the provincial representatives from the national ministries. So those are the three key points.

Now we did some work with the sub-provincial level early on, but that was primarily through the Local Governance Program, in a training effort. It was not until we had more staff out in the field that the lower levels were to be engaged.

Q: Did it describe any particular program areas and resource possibilities?

A: Yes, the Local Governance Program (LGP-II) work plan laid out in detail the capacity development efforts across the board, and in specific areas. The resources were difficult in the beginning, until PRTs were reallocated funding, because we were dealing with whatever resources that various participants had already allocated, such as USAID or the Rule of Law coordinator, a Department of Justice person, through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) effort; then there was an effort to synchronize with Commanders Economic Recovery Program (CERP) money.

What we had to do was demonstrate that the teams were going to be effective. So by the summer of 2006 we had separate funding lines via Economic Support Funds (ESF) and now we have the Quick Reaction Funds (QRFs).

Q: Describe the concept of the organizational structure and the staffing that you had in mind.

A: The organizational structure was laid out in its entirety in the cable as a notional structure, but it was intended to be modular and based on the specific needs of a specific province. We had set it up so the team leader was a civilian. We saw Iraq having a well-developed infrastructure, and not needing a lot of help; it was certainly there. So it was radically different from Afghanistan. The key thing we looked at is having civilian leadership, not having a security role whatsoever, being focused almost solely on governance capacity building.

In the beginning of the program it was all PRTs. There were no ePRTs. ePRTs were part of the surge effort, which came on board in 2007.

Q: In the original PRTs, who was the principal officer?

A: A State Department officer.

Q: But was there a military commander?

A: No, there was not, not in Iraq. The PRTs are all civilian led, with a military deputy. We recognized that we needed someone with a strong security background and a strong leadership background, particularly since we were merging so many civilian and military resources on the same team. So it was intentional. The agreement during the very beginning with MNFI was if we could not field a civilian team leader, then we would field a military team leader, but the desire was to have civilian leadership, as we felt that demonstrated the right concept to the Iraqis and, number two, that was more in line with NSPD 44.

In the PRT, the baseline structure was, again, a civilian leader, a State officer and a military deputy, 0-5 or 0-6. We designed it as a 0-5, lieutenant colonel, but we have had several situations where we have had a colonel or a navy captain as the deputy. And then after that, we had a Rule of Law coordinator provided by the Justice Department. The Rule of Law Assistant is an INL personal services contractor. A Provincial Program Manager, who is a fall-out from the IRMO Provincial Program Management. The Iraq Provincial Action Officer was a political officer, which evolved into two people, one for engagement and training and capacity building and the other a reporting officer. And a Public Diplomacy Officer, an Economist, and an Agriculturist, as available.

And then on the military side, an Engineering Officer provided by the Army Corps of Engineers, and a Civil Affairs (CA) company, based on what the needs were of each province, because there is an operational and a tactical civil affairs mission, with the operational civil affairs mission transitioning to the PRT. Therefore, those CA people with that mission would shift over to the PRT, but it depended on how many CA people were available in the province, what the units were.

Q: How many people were standard?

A: There was no specific standard. It could be as high as the upper eighties. It depends on whether you include movement security. If you are looking at civilians across the board such as Agriculture, State, you could have as many as 12, plus another up to 28 or so Iraqi counterparts that were assistants in each of the specific areas. And then with the local governance team, you had three members, expatriates, who could be Americans or British. They were the subject matter experts in governance, finance and municipal planning. At least three of those in all the provincial teams and for each one of those about five local Iraqi staff that worked full time at the governance center: U.S. government civilians/contractors, say, up to 15, maybe. Locally employed staff, maybe twenty to thirty. We also had Bilingual Bicultural Advisors (BBA), on top of that; they are DOD civilians. Most of the provincial level teams have up to six of those. And then the Civil Affairs staff, the Engineer, the Liaison officer from whatever military organization was in the area, could increase the military members to over twenty. So you end up with a pretty large team at the provincial level.

And they were not all created equally. There were higher provincial priorities. It just varied. In fact, some of the teams in Muthanna or Maysan are still provincial support teams and have never really evolved into PRTs, though they are in the process, as are Karbala, Najaf and Diwaniyah. We have five that are still in the process of transitioning.

Q: How is the PRT operation, which is a large operation, supported with logistics and housing and food?

A: That is an interesting evolution because the initial agreement between MNFI and State was that we would use existing resources. If we put a team on a Forward Operations Base (FOB), then the military picked up responsibility. If we put a team in a State

Department facility, such as in the Green Zone or in a Regional Embassy Office compound, then State picked up the tab. Each would come to the table with whatever their equipment was. A Civil Affairs company would come with their civil affairs equipment. A State officer would show up with a notebook computer and a satellite phone. The MOU was written that way.

However, that is when the wrangling started. MNF-I was ready to sign the MOU that we had in December. However the lawyers at Main State became involved and put a stop to that. So as a result, over the next year there were negotiations between DOD and the State Department at higher levels, instead of the MOU that we had with MNF-I and the U.S. mission. As the State Department lawyers raised the ante a lot of things changed. While the military still ended up with the responsibility to provide a lot of logistical resources, there was a mechanism now in place for DOD to seek reimbursement for their expenses. But the MOU did task the military with providing movement security to the team.

Q: I had the impression that there was a lieutenant colonel or military officer who was actually calling the shots about what should be done and what should not be done in a PRT. That is not right?

A: That would depend. If the lieutenant colonel was the deputy team leader and he was acting, he would be in charge. We had a gap in the PRT Baghdad where the deputy team leader was in charge for a while. Yes, absolutely, he is number two. But the general rule is that there is a civilian in charge and it is the State Department officer who is ultimately calling the shots. It is civilian leadership. That does not mean that he or she may not delegate certain responsibilities to the military deputy or, if there is a gap, that that deputy would be in charge.

Q: But each of these staff people also had direct lines to their home organizations. Is that right?

A: Yes, the best way to explain that is from the military's concept of Administration Command (ADCOM) versus Operations Command (OPCOM). You might be OPCOMed to another organization, but your administrative control stayed with your parent organization, to handle administrative things such as leave, R&R, pay, all the things that teams should not have to worry about. Now that link, that informal administrative link, however, on PRTs also extends to some programmatic issues. For example, if we are dealing with the Community Action Program (CAP), a USAID program, USAID has the Contract Officers and the Cognizant Technical Officers (CTOs) responsible for it and have the contract, so there has to be a relationship with the USAID Mission to ensure that that program is being utilized at the provincial level properly, legally.

But the idea is the PRT team leader has direction over the staff on the team and provides guidance and direction to the team and synchronizes that effort. He or she is ultimately responsible for integrating and synchronizing the effort of all the agencies and entities that are on the team.

Q: And then, how are conflicts between these people resolved? Was it mostly within the PRT, but then was there an appeal to higher authority?

A: Yes, and this still applies, if there is something that people simply cannot agree on in the PRT, then it would certainly go up from the PRT to the National Coordination Team or the Office of Provincial Affairs.

Q: Was that common?

A: Not really. In my personal experience, I did not see that a whole lot. There are a number of issues like the Community Action Program (CAP). For example, we had almost no ability to influence CAP programs in the beginning. So USAID actually rewrote the contract so that the implementing partner would be required to synchronize with the PRTs. Now, there are a lot of things that are personality-dependent. That is just the way Iraq is. So PRT Babil, PRT Diyawil, PRT Ninawa, Kirkuk, they all are slightly different. To me, that is a good thing. The flexibility is there to the team leaders. Instead of Baghdad dictating, to coin a phrase, how to suck eggs, to do everything, give them the tools and then the flexibility. So, yes, you are going to have implementing partners and staff who are very energetic and interested in doing their thing, which may not be completely in line with what the PRT team leader has determined is the focus of the main effort, so there may need to be some discussion and, if they cannot work it out, it has to go to higher headquarters to be worked out.

Q: On resources, was there a problem of getting resources, having a budget that could be used?

A: In the beginning the effort was to get teams fielded and to start doing something. Then we went back and tried to build up the other things. Yes, there was no real O&M budget given to a PRT in the beginning, because the original agreement was if you are on a FOB that military commander is going to provide your support. You need typing paper, you need more computers, you need phone-lines, that is the military commander's responsibility that has the FOB. If you are on a REO, it is that regional coordinator's responsibility.

There has been some bickering within DOD, as to how much they wanted to buy into this program as it moved forward, some of those agreements were great at the high level and then there was nothing in the middle, so the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) commander and the PRT team leader, in many cases, in the beginning, had to sort things out while the process went back to, "All right, this is not completely working. Let us develop an O&M budget for the PRTs, so if they need X they can go back and get it. Let us redirect programmatic efforts and Economic Support Funds specifically to the PRTs themselves, so that they have the say on how work is done in that province."

Q: Apart from logistics, what about program resources for reconstruction projects or other development programs?

A: In the very beginning, predating the PRTs was the Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee (PRDC) initiative. Under that, MNF-I directed corps and subordinates to allocate a certain amount of funds to the provincial government via the provincial reconstruction and development committees. When the PRTs started, they were then to be redirected through the PRT. The PRT would act as the coordinating entity for all U.S. government efforts in the province. Not to take away from a military commander's need to do things on the military side of the house, but if it was governance or economic related, it was to be coordinated with the PRT and the PRT would take the lead. So for the three lines of operation: security, governance and economics, the PRT team leader would have the lead for governance and economics, with the military in support and just the opposite for security lines of operation.

In the beginning you had CERP money and you had remaining ESF money allocated. Everyone recognized that we needed to do something to get more funding specifically directed to the PRTs and that took a while. The summer 2006 was when we got the supplement. It was June before that money was actually allocated, new money allocated specifically to the PRTs. And then in 2007, ESF and a subset of that, the Quick Response Fund (QRF), gave the PRT team leader a very, very flexible resource he could do things with.

Again, the key thing to keep in mind here: the purpose of the PRTs is not to build infrastructure. The money resources are tools to help build governance capacity. You serve no purpose in going in and building a water system, if the Iraqis have not been involved. So the idea is to build the capacity of the Director General for Water's office to plan for the Provincial Council to identify needs across the province, to prioritize those needs, and then to work with the Governor's office and the Director General's offices to budget for them and then implement them.

So the idea is that we teach the Iraqis how to do it and then we provide assistance, particularly in the short-term. The reality is that in Iraq to get ministerial funding might take 12, 18 months to get that money into the pipeline.

Speaking of long term planning, one of our key efforts from minute one was to develop, again, the capacity of the Provincial Government to conduct planning. It has taken a couple of years for this to occur, but now 17 of the 18 provinces, by my last count, have actually produced a Provincial Development Strategy. That is the end of a two-year process. What that allows us to do is synchronize our efforts completely with what the Iraqis have produced that says what their priorities are.

Q: Since you have mentioned that capacity building was a primary objective, could you be more specific on what the PRTs did to create greater capacity?

A: It is quite a smorgasbord: a lot of training for provincial councils. You start with basic things like what are the responsibilities of a council member, what are the legal requirements, look at CPA orders and draft provincial government laws. We had to develop funding resources, training in how to do budgets and planning, fiscal

responsibility, transparency, the role of civil society organizations. How to assess needs, how to prioritize needs, how to synchronize needs with short to mid to long term strategic planning. A great deal of training in the Local Governance Program; there were small grants. If you are going to teach people how to do something, like traffic management and there is money at the end once they finish this, then they would have some money to implement a project. But the PRTs work primarily on developing provincial abilities through training.

A great deal of training is in the classroom and I would say the majority is, but a lot of it is not; it is rolling up the sleeves and sitting down side by side. For example, the Rule of Law coordinator, the Justice Department officer in the PRT and the Rule of Law Assistant sitting down and working with the judges, working with the police, and looking at detention facilities, looking at prisoner handling or detainee handling, and looking at transparency and access to the courts. And it is really rolling up their sleeves and a lot of times and working with them and helping them recognize what their needs are and how to develop a plan for moving forward, as opposed to doing it for them; this latter was the major part of what we did under the CPA which did not serve us very well when we left prematurely, because the Iraqis were not ready. They were simply not prepared to take on the work as their own; they did not know how to do the job.

De-Baathification of the first three levels is what it was; the first three levels of government leadership were gone. A bunch of others bailed out. Elected officials that were trained were replaced in elections. So you really had a huge deficit of knowledge and skill sets.

Q: What were the Iraqi's reactions to this kind of effort?

A: We actually made the decision in the beginning that if a provincial government did not want a PRT, we would not have a PRT. So part of it was marketing in the beginning. Myself and my MNFI counterpart or the Ambassador, my boss and I and his MNFI counterpart, we would go out to each province and meet with the governor, the deputy governor, the provincial council chairman, at least those three and talk to them about the concept and hopefully get them to determine that they thought it was a great idea and would welcome it with open arms. In pretty much every instance that was the situation. The biggest problem that affected us was the name Provincial Reconstruction Team. The Iraqis would be quick to tell you that Iraq is not Afghanistan, because that is the only place they had heard about PRTs. Next question would be and where is the money? Reconstruction has the connotation you are going to provide money to build with. No, we want to build capacity. We want to use these resources as a tool or mechanism to help us build capacity.

Again, the original name of the teams in Iraq was not PRTs, they were Provincial Government Assistance Teams. But PRT in Afghanistan had a different mission to a great extent, and we did not want the confusion on reconstruction, because it was about assisting the provincial governments.

Q: So the title was misleading?

A: In my opinion, it was very misleading and it caused us quite a few problems. It still causes problems to this day. I still run into people who say, “Oh, yes, PRTs in Iraq. They started in Afghanistan. That is where the concept came from.” No, that is not the case. People have transferred and it is quite amazing to me.

Iraq, civilian leadership, we are here primarily for capacity building. We are actually trying to build up the capacity of the provincial government, as opposed to helping extend the reach of the central government, which is a key effort in Afghanistan and no security role whatever. They are apples and oranges.

Q: On the role of Research Triangle International (RTI), they were involved in this capacity building effort. What was your reaction to their role?

A: I was primarily responsible for their role on the PRTs. RTI is the USAID Local Governance Program in Iraq. Between my CPA time and my NTC/IRMO time as a 3161, I was Director of Operations for the Local Governance Program in Iraq. I only did that for about half a year.

Q: What time was that?

A: September through December of 2004. I went back to another country the end of March in 2004 and then resigned from the State Department to go back to Iraq as the Director of Operations for RTI. I came back from that in December and then went back as a State Department 3161 in June of 2005. That was the Local Government Program LGP-1 program, which had fizzled out; it had overspent and it had, some fairly significant management issues. However, what I did recognize is that with the PRT program we needed to get something going now. We did not have the time to start from scratch, let us look and see what is out there. Looking at the LGP-1 work plan, it matched the need pretty closely, so we worked with USAID and rewrote USAID’s contract with RTI and developed the LGP-2 program and the LGP-2 work plan. As a result the LGP-2 work plan is more tied to provincial capacity development and in sync with the PRTs.

That is where we had immediate access to people. We had former parliament members from England. We had people who had worked with the UN in Iraq. We had people from all over the world; city managers from the U.S. Bringing those specific skills to the PRTs.

The key part about RTI is that there were three RTI staff in the provincial level PRTs. There is additional RTI Local Governance Program staff at the regional hubs and they have regional hubs elsewhere.

Just like with any other program, there are sometimes one step forward and two steps back. There certainly have been issues, but there have been issues with every program in Iraq. There were huge issues with the Rule of Law initiatives, but this was a capacity development effort out there.

Q: How would you assess the RTI effectiveness in this work?

A: They have been fairly effective: a lot of their effectiveness is missed. There have been some issues, but, overall, they have been fairly effective and have become fairly responsive. That was an evolutionary effort. Probably the biggest thing that affected that has been agency stove piping. You have various agencies and USAID is one; it is basically a fall-out of USAID's semiautonomous relationship in most of the world. However in Iraq, the programs have to be coordinated under a synchronized effort. So there are a few rubs, sometimes from agency staff, who felt that "We should control this, instead of them". You can go back and look at the book *Losing the Golden Hour* when you see that heavy, resistance to the effort of the CPA to provide a centralized coordinated effort.

A good example of one of the key successes: RTI has been largely responsible for the provincial development strategy. That has been a huge effort by RTI, their Local Governance Program and the Provincial Government Association, required an incredible effort. I went to their second meeting. RTI set this up as facilitators, but it was an Iraqi thing. The second meeting they had was in Baghdad. I and a higher-ranked colleague went. He said a few words and we left. But this was an organization bringing together three representatives from every Provincial Council in the country. They continue to meet and they have been instrumental in drafting the Provincial Government Powers law. That is a huge thing and the fact that that does not make it into the press is astounding to me. That is a very good example. The Provincial Development Strategy and the Provincial Government Association are just incredible.

The amount of training hours that occur at RTI's regional hubs providing Directors General and Governors' offices with training on budgeting, basic computer skills is just astounding in numbers of hours. Sometimes that is invisible because sometimes people (this is one of the things that we fight a lot about, particularly the military staff) tend to focus on the very short term. "I want to do something now." "We need to change this before tomorrow." In the development world that does not work. We and the PRTs specifically have to keep this mid- to long-term focus, with the ability to adjust to short-term changes as needed. Specifically, when we set up the requirement that the PRTs develop a work plan we set that up so that it is an annual work plan that is updated quarterly.

Q: Was that done with the Iraqis or separately?

A: It should be done in coordination with the Iraqis.

Q: But it was not their work plan?

A: No, no, it was the PRT work plan. It was bringing together all the coalition resources in the province, but to address the specific needs of that province as assessed and those assessments are based on interaction with the Iraqis, to a great extent. I tell my military

colleagues when I do their training, “You think you need to build a school or refurbish a school. Maybe that is not the top priority, if local dads are sending their kids to school through sewer sludge. What is more important? Cleaning up the sewer sludge, building drainage fields, maybe that is a higher priority.” But the point is, you have to be in synch in with Iraqis, which is the beauty of having the Provincial Development Strategy now, so the work plans are being, right now, modified as the Provincial Development Strategies (PDSs) come on line.

But they were set up for quarterly updates, not monthly updates, not a knee jerk weekly, a set of monthly updates. We update things on a quarterly basis as a receivable.

Now Embedded PRTs (ePRTs) are much more short term focused because they are at a local level and they are embedded with a brigade combat team or regimental combat team. Military organizations tend to focus on the 12-month cycle.

Q: Those are commanded by the military, not through the State process?

A: No, that is not true. The ePRT team leader is a civilian and reports to the Office of Provincial Affairs. It is not like Afghanistan, where that PRT belongs to the Brigade Combat Team. In Iraq, they are embedded in the Brigade Combat Team, but as a State-led effort and the State Department team leader has the lead for governance/political and economic initiatives.

Q: Somebody commented that in these arrangements the military kept pushing for quick construction projects: schools or clinics or things like that.

A: Exactly and that is one of the key things: the military is always going to be short term focused. They are more focused on “What can I do right now to stop bad guys from killing my people?” We have to be able to address that. It is always a challenge. How do you address short-term needs while maintaining a mid- to long-term focus? With the ePRTs and the PRTs, they really have two key funding pots that allow them to address short and long term. In the short term it is more the QRF, where if it’s \$25,000 or less, the PRT team leader can sign the voucher and draw the money out of the military finance office.

Those are State funds, QRF and ESF for the PRTs. It is the CERP money that is the military’s. So the military has CERP money that they can use for very short-term projects if they want and the PRT team leader now has the QRF funds which allow him to spend as much as \$200,000, but only up to \$25,000 on his signature alone. Above \$25,000 for grants, he has to go back to Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) for approval.

But the PRTs also have Economic Support Funds. QRF is really a subset of ESF, but the bigger pot of Economic Support Funds is for larger projects than \$25,000. You are looking at a \$200,000, \$300,000, \$500,000, million dollar type projects. Those actually have to go back to Baghdad, to OPA for approval. That always is a challenge, trying to

balance the short-term push with the mid- to long-term capacity development effort and not doing it for them.

Q: Was any of this related to USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), which had a big program in Iraq in the early days?

A: OTI was drawing down as we were standing up the PRTs. So they were not a player. They were a player under CPA. I coordinated a lot of programs with OTI on the governance team, but they were really out of money and winding down as we started thinking about a PRT process. They were pretty much a non-player.

What did come on board, the Community Stabilization Program (CSP) was refocused so that it would synchronize better with the PRTs.

Q: What was that?

A: That is an USAID program, initially focused on the ten strategic cities, but synchronizing through the PRTs. That really became not completely an equivalent but a follow on that helped a great deal in areas... the same type of things that OTI could do before.

Q: Are there any program areas: you mentioned the rule of law program, was there an agriculture program, were there other specific areas, other than the capacity building directly?

A: The key point was that the PRTs were to be modular and ePRTs are to a certain extent as well. What do you need? So, essentially, in the beginning, we are going to give you three subject matter experts. We are going to give you a subject matter expert in finance and budgeting, one in civil administration and one in municipal planning, because we recognized across the board, every province, every provincial government had huge weaknesses in those three areas. Now we also recognized there was going to be a need for economic development staff, agricultural development staff, business development staff, but you have to come back to us in Baghdad and justify your need. So if you tell me you need an agriculturist, then you should have an assessment that says you have a lot of weaknesses in the agricultural area and you should have a work plan that describes how you are going to address agricultural issues. It is a no-brainer. Now I can justify going back to RTI or whoever for an additional subject matter expert.

In the beginning, it was RTI. Our subject matter experts came either from RTI or the BBA program. The BBA program, Bilingual Bicultural Advisors, a DOD program, in which they brought Iraqi-Americans out to be advisors working with the brigades. What we were able to do was tap into that program and get up to six, say, on a PRT, and we were able to ask for specific skills, like veterinarians, agriculturists. So in the beginning it was only either the BBAs or the LGP program that allowed us to bring in the subject matter experts.

Now, with the surge and the DOD Secretary opening the floodgates and throwing DOD behind the program, we brought in, this past year, a large number of subject matter experts that were DOD civilians, National Guard staff. And State and USAID at the same time started beefing up their effort and are now replacing most of the DOD staff with contractors, Personal Service Contractors (PSCs) or 3161s.

In the beginning, there was not a “Here is the agriculture plan.” The idea is that you, at the provincial level, need to determine what your needs are and then develop a plan for addressing the needs of that province. It was not dictated from the center.

Q: Did most of the PRTs have an agriculture program?

A: Several of them do. It depends on the area. There are areas where agriculture is critical and areas where it is not and there are areas where agriculture has suffered significantly, such as the Diyala Province, which needs a lot of help getting back on board. There is no cookie cutter approach to every PRT. They are different.

Q: And most of these agriculture programs are capacity building, or are they construction type things?

A: Most of it is capacity building. If I am going to bring an agriculturist in, I am bringing an agricultural specialist to help the Iraqi Director General for Agriculture in the province and the Provincial Council develop their programs. It might come down to something as simple as “I am going to teach them about drip irrigation, to get more use out of the water, instead of canals.”

It does not mean there are not projects. As I am doing that, I know that I need more water flow and the canals are clogged. Therefore, I need a canal clean up program.

But the idea is that it is tied into an overall program in the province and that goes back to the PRT’s work plan. If I am here in stage one of agriculture development, I am trying to get Mom and Pop to produce a surplus and try to boost the economy, maybe what I am going to be doing in the beginning is helping to develop farmers markets, but maybe in phase two we want to get to more exports to neighboring provinces. Okay, I have to come on board with and teach them how to run coops, how to establish coops, provide some micro-financing assistance for establishing a coop. Maybe phase three would be five years down the road, “We would like to move to processing, instead of just production. The question then might be: “How does that fit into the Provincial Development Strategy and synchronizing that with the ministry?”

Each one has to be worked out at the provincial level and then synchronized at the national level through the Office of Provincial Affairs and the Iraq Transition Assistance Office.

Q: You mentioned Rule of Law as being one of the programs. What were the specific areas it was concerned with?

A: There were huge concerns. The biggest concern was that (one of my greatest frustrations trying to get that on board) was there was no cohesive rule of law program. I am going back, now, to September of 2005. The Justice Department was moving people to the field under the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCCI) Expansion Program. They had a couple of officers out in the provinces. I negotiated with Justice to speed up fielding those staff to the PRTs as we stood up the PRTs, so that that person would then take on the responsibility of Rule of Law Coordinator, not just the INL mandated things but would take on an overall Rule of Law Coordinator role on the PRT as well.

And then, going to the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL); INL was trying to bring a program on line to put Personal Services Contractors as Rule of Law advisors in the provinces. We synchronized that with the PRTs, so that those staff would work on the PRT as part of the overall Rule of Law effort.

Then we went to MNF-I and tried to get MNF-I to come on board with their Senior Justice Advisers (SJAs), because they had some SJAs at MNF-I headquarters. Since we knew that INL, Justice and DOD looked at Rule of Law with slightly different views, we thought it best to have all three as a cohesive team on the PRT. MNF-I never came on board with that. So as a result, it was a great effort to try to get everyone to concur on at least a baseline agreement on the Rule of Law. We succeeded in the beginning in having a baseline agreement of what Rule of Law was and what everyone was going to do.

To me, the biggest missing piece is still the DOD piece. You have lawyers on the BCTs. Look at the bigger picture for Rule of Law, then they tend to work very closely with the PRT Rule of Law staff. And it is critical, because looking across the board, the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) has responsibility for fielding police training teams, putting a platoon of military policemen in a police station to teach them basic police operations. State/INL has Iraq Police Liaison Officers (IPLOs), civilian (former or retired) police officers, in the police stations teaching them police station administration and management. Then you have the DOJ officers out here working with the court systems, the Central Criminal Court Iraq (CCCI) expansion and the major crimes court out to the provinces. But you have to synchronize all those efforts, from arrest, evidence handling, detainee processing, moving them through the justice system into the courts and then what happens after that?

So that is still a weakness. It is still *ad hoc* in the provinces, based on personalities and individual desires. That is unfortunate, because it should be a more cohesive program.

Q: Are there other sectors? You have mentioned agriculture and rule of law, apart from the general capacity building work; are there other technical areas or specific areas that were dominant in these programs?

A: Economic development is the next largest — agriculture and economic development. So many of the provinces recognize the need for agriculture development. The Department of Agriculture, this past year, has put probably close to twenty agriculturists

out into the field. That is on top of some of the agricultural specialists that came on board through DOD last spring and there are a handful of those, maybe a couple of them, through RTI. Also, there is the USAID program that brought in more agricultural specialists. So, again, the challenge is at the provincial level to coordinate, synchronize their efforts, utilizing the PRT to do that.

Q: Other than agriculture, were there other economic development activities?

A: Yes, there are a variety of programs: microfinance programs; USAID has a microfinance program. We have been able to use CERP money; we have been able to use QRF and ESF money to develop microfinance programs within the provinces and the districts. Absolutely, yes, there are a variety of programs. There are also specialists, particularly in some of the EPRTs and the more industrial areas around Baghdad; there are industrial development specialists; there are business development specialists.

What is missing is an overview program approach from OPA. NCT, for example, (other than the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that was produced and was disseminated in early 2006, by midsummer 2006) had actually put out work plan guidance, a several page document for USAID that said: "Here is what your focus needs to be, big picture." Again, we have cables and they tell us what our end-state goals are and tasks and all that but it will not tell you, "Okay, for 2007, here is our focus." That has been missing.

Q: The cable you're referring to was on economic development specifically, or just across the board?

A: No, that was overall for the PRTs, how we want you to spend government money trying to address capacity development. The missing piece should have been national level programmatic guidance, whether for agriculture or for economic development. To me that should be via a work plan guidance document of some sort. The first one produced in 2006 set the stage but that should have been expanded on.

Q: Any other specific areas that stand out that we have not touched on?

A: A key area that cannot be overlooked, is the importance of DOD being on board with things like this. Their concurrence is key. If not we can lose two to three months of activity fielding future teams while we participate in "proof of concept" papers did not have the authority to do that. I do not know that for a fact, but I was told that second hand by someone who was in on it. Nevertheless, over the next couple months there were enormous roadblocks thrown up. Instead of agreeing to field all the teams, as it was in the beginning, we were going to have to do "proof of concept." So we lost two to three months in fielding future teams, other than the first three, while we did a nonsensical "proof of concept" papers.

Q: Why was there opposition in the beginning?

A: There was a great deal of opposition because the military was not in charge and I say this as a retired Marine Corps officer; I am just telling you that is my absolute perception. “We are not in charge, therefore we do not like it.” We were in need of veterinarians out in the field and they would husband veterinarians and I would find veterinarians being watch officers, absolutely incomprehensible stuff.

And then there were parallel initiatives that undermined some of the PRT efforts, such as efforts to have an overall Baghdad development conference where the National Coordination Team and the PRTs were not even involved.

Initially the opposition was just rampant. I would not say wasted, but we were dying on the vine for a year. Still doing some good work, but nowhere near what we could be doing.

Q: Was this simply a matter of control or a matter of not accepting the concept or not thinking it was useful or needed?

A: The Pentagon has a hard time not being in charge. The point that we tried to get across and that I still try to get across is we are in a period of transition. You have the military in the beginning. In the end, you want to have all civilians. And in the middle there has to be a transition. That transition period has to bring together the civilian and military resources that can be dedicated to capacity development and infrastructure programs. That has to occur in the middle. You particularly need to fork over civil affairs staff, because they are the ones that do this in a non-permissive environment, as a general rule. That is the transition idea. At some point those staff fall out and turn a lot of their work over to contractors, such as RTI.

State has now come to the table. There are more civilians out in the field in Iraq than at any point since Vietnam, not only State Department FSOs but USAID FSOs, contractors, civil service. It is quite incredible, the numbers that are out there.

It is important that the State Department not lose focus. That is my next biggest concern, is we have a tendency to lose focus. I have been in the Near East and Asia Bureau/Iraq (NEA/I) recently and the amount of effort expended to ensure that the program is supported effectively in Iraq is not adequate, in my mind. NSPD-44 to me lays it out pretty clearly, it and other National Strategic Policy Documents (NSPD), about what State Department’s responsibilities are and who should be leading these types of efforts and it is State. That takes a great deal of effort to do that.

I am very pleased that finally State’s Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (CRS) is doing a lessons learned program, to start capturing the lessons learned. That was one of my disappointments. There was no lessons learned effort anywhere during the initial 3 times I came back from Iraq. The last time there was someone interested in speaking to my staff when they came back from Iraq.

Q: The Institute of Peace is doing a lessons learned program.

A: I am also working for CRS doing another in-depth survey. So there is a lessons learned program; how do we fix this in the future and what are the key points and so forth.

Q: Let us step back from all that you have said: how would you describe three or four, major achievements of PRTs? What kind of lessons would you put forward? What kind of recommendations...a broad-brush of what you have been talking about. What would you put in those categories?

A: First and foremost, there has to be an interagency understanding that there has to be a single coordinating entity in conflict and post-conflict development efforts and everyone has to be on board. That has to start at the principal level in Washington. Resources have to be dedicated. It took a great deal of time to get adequate FSOs to volunteer to go to Iraq. That is unfortunate. We all signed the paper in the beginning for worldwide service, so, people have to step up to the plate. You have to allocate the resources effectively from the beginning, certainly manpower.

Number two, there should be a “here is how we might do this in the future.” I do not want to call it a flyaway kit, but there should be some baseline, interagency agreed structure, purpose, mission, with a number of variables thrown in there, options: “In the future we are going to do it this way and it might be option A, B or C of that. But here are the core principles, core concepts, core teams structures “because the principles are not going to change that much, if you are doing capacity development, whether it is Afghanistan, Sudan or Iraq the principles are going to be largely the same but your implementation and your techniques are going to be radically different. There should be an interagency, cohesive program developed to address this and it ought to be under CRS. The interagency process ought to be led by CRS or co-chaired by their counterpart in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

Programmatic integration, agency stove piping is a killer, whether it is DOD, State, USAID, INL, whoever, it is a killer. It detracts from the program and makes us look like we do not talk to each other and, in fact, our programs at the implementation level end up demonstrating that we are not talking to each other when agency stove piping is able to creep back in. That is something that you have to be looking for all the time. The radar has to be up for that.

There has to be a national level coordinating entity. One of the key differences in Afghanistan and Iraq is that we recognized in the beginning the need for a national entity to coordinate and support programmatic efforts and that was the National Coordination Team, now OPA. They did not start that way in Afghanistan. They are still struggling with that. There must be a national level entity that coordinates at that level between the departments and the agencies and the coalition partners. That is absolutely critical.

One of our greatest challenges was coordinating, getting the British to synchronize with us at the provincial level. The British were more, “Just give us all your RTI resources in

the provinces and we will take care of it.” No, we need to agree to a cohesive coordinated effort and you are going to bring your USAID counterpart to the table and we are going to agree on a comprehensive coalition strategy and we will apply our resources where the group feels is more appropriate, you apply yours, etc. That simply has to occur.

Personnel policies differ a great deal, not so much by civilian agencies but between DOD and the civilian agencies. It is tough when your DOD civilian on the PRT gets one R&R in a 12 to 18 month tour and your other staff gets two and three. Again, that goes back to the very beginning, the interagency leadership needs to agree. You have to recognize that the military personnel specifically are going to be on a different Rest and Rehabilitation (R&R) policy, that is just the nature of the beast. We are not going to be able to affect that and DOD would never agree to the things that the civilian world do to get people to volunteer, like three R&Rs. The cost is prohibitive, too much turmoil.

Q: Associated with that, of course, was a turnover factor. Was that a problem?

A: Turnover is important. On the military side of the house the turnover ends up being relatively good, at least for the civil affairs staff. They come in country and they have a two-week overlap, what they call a right feet, left feet, they work side-by-side, hand-in-hand with the staff that are outgoing. We have had some gaps of key people on the teams, like the deputy team leaders.

But most of the gaps have been on the civilian side. State is primarily on a summer rotation schedule, summer cycle and embassies around the world are used to there being a gap of a month or six weeks, many times. That is unacceptable in Iraq. You cannot have gaps. A team leader cannot be absent for six weeks, which has happened a couple of times. We just cannot afford that. The policy that State needs to adopt for fielding difficult places like Iraq and Iraq specifically is two fold: core people in the embassy, permanent change of station order to the embassy, no problem. For the PRTs, you should do a combination of two things, in my mind: number one, assign them there as Temporary Duty staff (TDY) for a year. You simply go to a post and you say to the Chief of Mission, “We need a person for a year. Either that or you are going to give up a position. Which would you like: lose a staff person one year out of a three year tour or give up the position?” Most of them are going to go for: lose a staff person for a year. But that gives you the flexibility to bring people in. That person has now volunteered, so you can bring that person on board whenever. You are not waiting for the summer cycle or the winter cycle. I have a team leader changing over March 30th. I need a staff person over here March 15th. Okay, John Smith, you have agreed to volunteer for Iraq. You are going to be in country March 15th, ready for that two-week turnover.

Another, smaller group should be sent through NEA. You are assigned to NEA for two years and of that two-year period a year is going to be in Iraq. But now, again, I can put you in Iraq when I need to put you in Iraq, to ensure there is a good turnover. And for those who are going to be key people, key people for OPA. That would give them a three to six month opportunity or more in NEA to learn Iraq and to work on Iraq, serve there and then they return to NEA for another six months or whatever, so that there is

continuity in NEA/I on Iraq, something we do not have now. Right now you have the deputy director for development when I was deputy director for civil/military operations in IRMO; he is now the PRT boss in NEA/I. That is not enough. One person is not enough. There should be an OPA in headquarters; someone in NEA/I who works for the Coordinator for the Office of Provincial Affairs and there should be a handful of other people who are on their way to Iraq or on their way back from Iraq who are doing some time in NEA/I, learning the job and then bringing back experience from Iraq to NEA/I specifically afterwards.

Continuity: you have to have some permanent people there; but you augment those with people who are learning their role before they go and then bring their experience back from OPA. Those should be key OPA people and maybe a handful of team leaders. The rest of them should be TDY. We have had successes with the TDYers. Some of our best team leaders in Iraq have been TDYers. Why not? If you can send a person from the UK to Iraq for a year TDY, you can certainly send him from somewhere else.

Q: Any thing else?

A: I should emphasize up front, again, going back to the interagency process, an agreement in the beginning, having an interagency MOU that lays out things like development integration, budgeting, resources, etc. That is really critical.

Q: This has been very helpful, but I do not want to cut you off if there are some other recommendations or major points you want to make, looking overall at the program.

A: It is very important that State recognize the role that it has been assigned by the NSPD and they must learn it. State does not have typically, traditionally, a lot of planners like the military does. So maybe a greater effort reaching out to DOD to bring some more staff in who can assist with that. But learning the process, because I think State is the right agency to be in the lead of this type of effort, regardless of where it is at in the future. I would just close with that.

Q: We are grateful for your time

A: My pleasure.