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INTERVIEW #35

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Executive Summary

The interviewee has been in Iraq since October 2005 and expects to continue there until January 2009 as a Provincial Program Manager and Infrastructure Section Leader. The Salah Ad Din PRT Main is on the Forward Operating Base (FOB) Spiker, near Tikrit. The PRT has several satellites in smaller communities in the province with one officer.

A State Department Officer heads the PRT with an army colonel as Deputy Team Leader. With a staffing level of about 60 people—about half military—the PRT is divided into sections each with its own section leader: infrastructure, health, planning (smallest with two people), economics (largest with six/seven people) and governance. Iraqi members include two U.S. citizens and one French citizen; there are no Iraqis from the local area. There are other Iraqis who work as translators and Bilingual Bicultural Advisors (BBAs). The PRT reports to the Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) and the interviewee also reports to the Iraq Transitional Affairs Office (ITAO).

The PRT is in a dangerous environment with some soldiers and a contractor killed recently. The staff is able to get out two to three times a week with full military escorts.

The Mission Statement for the Salah Ad Din PRT (see copy attached) emphasizes a commitment “to establish stable, effective provincial government that meets the basic needs of its citizens...” The interviewee works to develop their capacity for self-governance through project planning, prioritization and approval primarily with the Iraqis on the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC). It has a budget of about \$18 million from Economic Support Funds (ESF). The PRDC had been dysfunctional, but Iraqis are now taking charge of the organization, which is now more public with agenda and minutes and procedures for processing project priorities for decision by the Provincial Council. (See the description in the text of one example of PRDC procedure reform-on the penultimate page of the interview.) The projects are now projects that the Iraqis want. The projects include electrical systems rehabilitation, school buildings, technical training. The U.S. Corps of Engineers is responsible for bidding, contracting and selection without Iraqi involvement. There are “literally hundreds” of projects funded centrally (USAID, Corp of Engineers, U.S. military) not involving the PRT or the PDRC.

Other PRT sector work: health team—clinic buildings, safe drinking water; education

team—school building; planning team—developing a strategic plan for infrastructure; governance team—budget development and execution; rule of law team—courts set up and judges trained; public diplomacy team—media development; economic team—agriculture, banking, microfinance and jobs. PRT coordination is via daily 1600 hrs meetings. PRT operating relationships are good. Relationships with the military are also good, but it has a different focus: providing security with movement teams. Experience working with Iraqis is positive: capable, but a different culture—have to establish a personal relationship that you care and can be trusted.

Major issues: tours of duty are too short—one year is not enough; extreme difficulty in getting into and out of the area for short leaves—a disincentive to work in the area.

Progress is evident, not because of the amount of money but through taking time to build good relationships with Iraqi participation. The PRT has been successful in building relationships; governance in Salah Ad Din is better than when we first came.

On lessons: approach job with infinite patience; never underestimate the people we are working with and recognize the profound difference in cultures, particularly re timelines; work with Iraqi staff who are not at the top of the managerial level; develop modern forms of leadership among the Iraqis.

On training, it could have been longer; people should be carefully reviewed because it is a physically demanding environment; they should talk with someone who has been here to get feed back on what to expect re “is this what I really want to do?”

In sum, the PRT is effective, is necessary, and is doing what it is supposed to do.

Interview

Q: How long are you going to be in Iraq?

A: I have been in Iraq since 2005, here and I expect to be here until sometime in 2009.

Q: And that is located where?

A: We are near Tikrit.

Q: And your PRT is based at the FOB?

A: Yes, that is right.

Q: Can you describe for me the PRT organization and staffing? But first, let me ask, what is your role in the PRT?

A: I am the Provincial Program Manager and just recently I became the Infrastructure Section Leader. When I speak about infrastructure, I do not have a technical background

at all but there are technical people who I work with in that section. At the present time we have about sixty people. We have what we call PRT Main, which is the facility here at Spicher, and then we have several satellite PRTs in some of the smaller communities in the province.

A State Department employee heads the PRT. The Deputy Team Leader is an army colonel, and then we have the infrastructure section, a health section, planning, economics and governance and each of those sections has its own section leader; the planning section is the smallest with two people working in it, and economics is the largest with about six or seven people. It is a joint civil-military organization. About half the people are military.

Q: And then your satellite arrangements are the same way, or how are they related?

A: They are much smaller, and they can consist of maybe just one person. They are just small offshoots of the main PRT that work with the military in that area and give us a much better hands-on sense of what is going on in those areas.

Q: Are there a number of Iraqi members of the PRT?

A: We have three who were originally from Iraq; two of them are U.S. citizens. One is a French citizen. But we do not have anybody from the local area that is a member of the PRT.

Q: Do you have linguists and cultural people?

A: Yes, we have some; we call them Bilingual Bicultural Advisors (BBAs). Those people are not local hires. They are people from Iraq, but they are now citizens of different countries. Right now we are down to two translators who work here, but we have other translators who are rovers and translate for us when we go to locations off the base.

Q: The Base provides all your logistic support and administrative arrangements?

A: Yes.

Q: And then the chain of command relating to Baghdad is what? Who does the PRT report to?

A: The PRT team leader reports to Office of Provincial Assistance (OPA). I have a dual chain of command. I report to the PRT team leader, but I also go to Iraq Transitional Affairs Office (ITAO), because of some of the work that I do. It is the successor to the Iraq Transition Assistance Office (IRMO).

Q: That is in the embassy in Baghdad?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that a military unit?

A: No, they are both State Department.

Q: But the, the National Coordination Team (NCT) is not active?

A: The NCT has morphed into OPA.

Q: But this other, ITAO, is separate from OPA, right?

A: Yes.

Q: What makes it separate?

A: The purpose of OPA, as I understand it, is to support the field activities, much like the NCT used to support the PRTs. In fact its title is Office of Provincial Assistance.

And ITAO has a broader function. There are people in ITAO who work with the various ministries at the ministerial level. There are people who are there to support some of the things that we do here, such as the Economic Support Fund (ESF) projects.

Q: What is the security situation like in your area? How has it changed?

A: It is still a dangerous environment. We have had some soldiers killed fairly recently. We had a contractor for Corps of Engineers killed a little over a week ago. So it is still a dangerous situation.

Q: Are you able to get out to provincial offices?

A: Yes. In my own case, I go out usually two or three times a week, sometimes less, simply because there is not a good reason for me to go, perhaps, at that particular time. Most of us probably get out on an average of two to three times a week.

Q: With a full military escort?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Let us turn to PRT programs. Let us talk about the program you are working on. Could you describe what that program is and what you are trying to do?

A: Sure. My primary purpose, as Provincial Program Manager, is to work with the Iraqis to help them develop their capacity for self-governance. And the way that I do this, the way that Provincial Program Managers do this, is through projects. We have a certain amount of funding available which is fairly small in relation to what is being spent over here.

Q: What do you mean by small?

A: This year we had, for a project that I am involved with, about \$18 million and when you compare that with what has been spent over all in Iraq, relatively speaking it is a fairly small amount.

Q: What are you spending it on? What are the activities?

A: In June of '05 an organization called the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee was set up at the insistence of the Americans and the purpose of that organization was to review projects, put them on a prioritized list and then refer the list to the Provincial Council. There are other things that they do, too, but in essence that was their main function.

When I got here, that organization was dysfunctional. The Iraqis were not used to doing things that way. We held out the incentive to them, the possibility to them, of getting certain projects for critical infrastructure if they got the organization, if they got the PRDC running properly, if they had open voting and if they put together a prioritized list of projects.

It was very difficult at first. They had about seven and a half million dollars available to them in IIRF funds. They got about less than half of it, because they did not do what they needed to do. We got together and helped them at pretty close to the eleventh hour; they submitted the projects with awards to four electrical projects.

The next year we did not have IIRF, we had ESF, but the mandate was the same. By that time they were beginning to get the organization functioning. Where previously the meetings had been just maybe three or four Iraqi movers and shakers sitting in a closed room with a bunch of American soldiers who were trying to get them to act, by the second iteration came, the Iraqis had taken control of the organization and they were holding the meetings in a place that was more accessible to the public, they were having an agenda, minutes of the meetings. They put together a prioritized list of projects and we were able to get twelve electrical projects for them at that time.

We went through that again just recently, submitted some more requests for projects, project nominations, in March of this year and by this time the Iraqis were very much involved and there had been a lot of progress made. They have come a long way. They have quite a bit of Government of Iraq funds that are available to them, but the fact that they went to the trouble of developing these processes speaks pretty highly of the Iraqi leadership here.

Q: Is this the Provincial Council or the PDRC?

A: Both. The PRDC does the lion's share of the work but they do not have decision-making capability. They can only put together their recommendation in the form of a list

of projects and refer it to the Provincial Council. The Provincial Council votes on it and, of course, being a political body, they can accept or reject or change it.

Q: How many on the Council?

A: 31.

Q: Are they fairly representative of the community?

A: I know that they come from different areas in the community. There are some parts of the province that are not represented, because they did not take part in the elections in '05. How representative they are of their particular areas I cannot say. I can tell you that they do come from various locations within the province.

Q: You were describing the procedure that they followed to approve these projects and I interrupted you.

A: The first year it was really just a rubber stamp, because the Provincial Council was also dysfunctional. The second year they had, just not too long before this came up, adopted some rules for procedure that the PRT had really helped them a lot with. When the projects came before the Council they had some tough decisions to make as to whether they were going to follow those rules or not, because the rules require a quorum before they can take any action and one of the communities here in the Province was boycotting the Provincial Council meetings. There were 14 people in that particular delegation who were not participating, so that prevented a quorum from forming.

The list came before the Council and they wanted to go ahead and approve it, just by a majority of the people who were there but that did not comport with the rules that they had adopted and I questioned them about that. Of course, I knew what the answer was, but I questioned them about that and they finally agreed that, yes, the rules did not allow it and that they would wait until they could get a quorum.

There was a lot more to it than what I am telling you, because they had to have these projects in by a certain time to meet the ITAO deadline. Also, I had been planning to take leave as soon as I got the projects in. Finally, during the course of this meeting, I said, "All right, I will delay my leave if you can promise me that you will get a quorum here so that you can vote on these things." And they made the promise and they did follow through with it.

So that was a real step forward, I felt. They had a choice as to whether to do things the right way or not do them the right way and they chose to do it the right way.

Q: When you say projects are presented, how much detail is presented for each project, or is it just a line item?

A: No, no. They actually have scopes of work prepared. Usually the scopes of work that

they prepare do not meet our expectations. They do not meet what the Corps of Engineers would require. So we have taken to working with them. They put together the scopes of work and then we will work with them to put them in a form that is going to be satisfactory to the Corps of Engineers.

When I say “we,” I do not include myself in that, because I do not have that ability, but the Corps of Engineers is also here and we work very closely with them. So we worked out a pretty good system.

One of the things that is important to note is that in the past many projects have been given to the Iraqis and some of those have not been all that successful, have not been all that good a use of money. But this particular program, the PRDC program, I think has been very successful. When you compare the money that’s being spent on it with all that is being spent in Iraq it is fairly small. But most importantly, the projects that go through this process are projects that the Iraqis themselves want. They are not things that we think would be good for them. And they have to have the active participation of the Iraqis or we would not allow them to go forward.

Q: Is there public awareness of this process and the projects that are being considered? I mean the Iraqi public.

A: Yes, there is. I cannot tell you how wide the awareness is, but the Provincial Council meetings are now open to the public, the press is normally there. The press is not would not measure up to our standards at all but at least it is a beginning of getting the door cracked open. As I do not understand Arabic I do not know what all appears on television but I do know, at least I am told, that a lot of the proceedings and the information about the projects and the meetings does come out on television; so there are some steps being made forward in that direction.

Q: Describe the projects. Are they all bricks and mortar or what else?

A: So far, we have had four electrical projects from the IIRF funds. Those were rehabilitation of existing systems. Then the second year we had twelve more electrical projects. Some of them were rehabilitation of existing systems; some of them were local substations.

This year so far we have had 23 school projects approved. This is to replace mud hut schools with modern structures. We have also submitted a nomination for two other projects. One is a technical training program, in other words a program to train people in operations and maintenance for critical infrastructure. The Iraqis want to go further than that with this particular program. They want to have people trained in governance skills as well: using computers, budgeting, a number of other things. The second project is a technical training center itself, the physical structure. So both of those projects have been submitted to ITAO and we are hoping that they are going to be approved.

We broke these down into two projects when the Iraqis first started talking about it and

we began talking with them. We were treating it all as one entity, but it was better to break it down into the bricks and mortar part of it and the program part of it.

And I will tell you something interesting about that, as well: the lack of maintenance and operation on projects has been a real problem here, both for some of the projects that the Iraqis themselves have put up and certainly for some that the U.S. has put up. I talked with a high government official about this close to a year ago now and suggested to him that it would be good to have a program to train people so that they would know how to take care of the electrical system and maintain generators and maintain their rolling stock, how to take care of the water system, the sewer system, communications. At first he was not at all interested, but then six or eight weeks later I spoke with him again. At that time, for whatever reason, he was extremely interested, latched on to the idea, talked with other people. Of course, we worked with the Iraqis consistently, but he talked with the other provincial leaders and the PRDC elected to put this project as its top priority on the prioritized list of projects. Then when it went before the Provincial Council to be voted on, when the list went before the Provincial Council to be voted on, there was a lot of discussion, the meeting was well attended and the Provincial Council voted to keep it as a top priority project. So it has a lot of support from not only the provincial leadership, but also people had heard about it, they are interested in it, they see it as something that would be good for the province. We just hope it will be implemented now.

Q: How is the implementation of these projects? Are they being carried out in good order?

A: Yes. The Corps of Engineers is the contracting agency that puts the projects out to bid, and then they supervise the construction. More than half of the electrical projects have been completed. Others are rolling along; they are going to be completed within the next few months. Seven of the schools have now been awarded for contracts.

The technical training center and the technical training program is before ITAO at this time. Once ITAO gives its blessing, then it will go before what is called the NET, the National Embassy Team and they are the people who will decide whether it is going to be funded. So not only for the program itself and what it can bring to the province, but also because this is so clearly an Iraqi initiative and they see the importance of it and they have participated so well, we are really hoping that it is going to be approved.

Q: Does the Corps of Engineers work with the Provincial Government on this? Are the Iraqis involved in this bidding process and selection?

A: The Iraqis are not involved in the process, to the extent that I, at least, would like to see, but, of course, it is Iraqis who bid on the contract and we are moving, when I say "we" I mean the coalition forces, are moving towards more Iraqi involvement in the contracting process. Not for them to have a veto power over who gets the bid, but at least to be able to put forth a list of who the good contractors are and who people are that are not good contractors.

Q: So they are not really taking responsibility for the implementation, once the Council approves it?

A: No, that is up to the Corps of Engineers.

Q: So that is a further step for them to get involved in, right?

A: I do not know that I can say that, because the Corps wants to, they put the contract out for bid, an Iraqi contractor gets the bid, the Corps wants to make sure that the project is done properly and then they turn it over to the Iraqis.

Q: The Council has several Director General (DG) units?

A: Yes and I am not sure how many they have. It seems to me that they have well over twenty.

Q: Representatives of the ministries of the central government?

A: Yes.

Q: Are they involved with the projects?

A: The projects that come to the PRDC can come from various sources. Certainly, if it is an electrical project, it should be put forth, for instance, by the DG of electricity for the province. If there is a water project, it should go through him and then to the PRDC. Incidentally, projects can come to the PRDC from other sources. It is not just the DGs, but the DGs need to be involved, so that they know what is going on. We want to make sure that we are not doing something that is not going to have Iraqi buy-in at some point along the line.

Q: Is the power up and running at all? Is anybody getting electric power?

A: We are not increasing the amount of power. This province is already getting more power than what it is allocated, according to the Central Government. But what these projects are doing is providing for the more efficient use of the power that is available to the province.

Q: Let us turn to some of the other areas. You mentioned health. What is being done in that area?

A: I do not want to talk about anything that I am not directly involved in, but I can tell you a bit about health. We have had an individual here who, he is from CDC and he has been heading up the health team for several months. They have become very involved, I know that they have worked with Iraqis and pushed to get some of the clinics completed and opened that were either incomplete or for whatever reason were not being used. They have some of that done.

That section is really interested in safe drinking water. There is a lot of concern it is going to be a real big problem this year because we are in a drought and there is concern that people will start drinking water from contaminated sources. So he has been instrumental in putting together a water-working group, working with Iraqis to take some action to get the different water providing sources to use chlorine. Relatively minor improvements to these facilities will make the water safe for drinking. There is a lot of concern about cholera.

Q: Water and sewage is part of the Council's projects? Among those projects you are talking about, was water and sewage among those?

A: Let us just take an example. Let us say that there is half a million dollars available for a hundred or so small projects. We want that whole effort to go through the PRDC and from the PRDC on to the Provincial Council, so that everybody is informed. We do not see this as something that has to slow up this process, but certainly the Iraqis have to be involved in it. Does that answer your question?

Q: Are specific projects for water and sewage were among those?

A: No. Not that I am involved with at this time. But I do know that the U.S. has funded a number of water projects here. But I have not been involved in those.

Q: On education, is there anything specific that you are aware of?

A: Just the 23 schools that I mentioned. That is a big deal. There have been efforts to get books to some of the schools, but we have not been all that much involved in the schools.

Q: The PRT is not that involved?

A: Not that I can recall.

Q: You said something about plans. Is that what you were talking about when you referred to the infrastructure projects with the Council, or was that something else?

A: No, that was something else. I just mentioned that there are several sections within the PRT and we have one section and it is a new section in the PRT, for strategic planning.

Q: What do they do?

A: I cannot answer that all that well either, except that I understand that their goal is to work with the Iraqis to develop an actual strategic plan for the province for development infrastructure, for instance, according to a certain plan, rather than as hit or miss process.

Q: This is an economic development plan?

A: Yes. That's part of it.

Q: Is there another part?

A: I do not want to speak for the planning section.

Q: Then on the governance side you mentioned building up the capacity and you already described how you do that. Are the other elements of the work being done to build up governance capacity?

A: The governance people do a lot of work with the budget, helping the Iraqis learn how to do a budget. We have had people working with them on how to do this on a computer instead of manually and encouraging them to execute the budget. This province is right on track to get its budget executed. So they have been very much involved with that.

As I mentioned well over a year ago now we had some people in the governance section that had very practical experience in government and worked with the Iraqis to develop rules of procedure for their meetings, for the Provincial Council meetings and getting those adopted was a big step forward.

Q: Is the Research Triangle Institute working there, have people working there?

A: Yes. I cannot go into much detail about their work, but I do know that there are some of them who work consistently with the Iraqis off the base and we have some RTI employees who are part of the PRT.

Q: You have any sense of how well they are doing?

A: No, I could not answer that.

Q: You did allude to the fact that there were activities there that were outside of the PRT. They are activities from the Central Government or from USAID or from other sources. Is that right?

A: The PRT has people from various organizations. For instance, several people are from the State Department. We have somebody from USAID. We have people from RTI, have somebody from the Department of Justice, a couple of people from the Department of Agriculture. Is that what you were asking?

Q: They are part of the team, though, right?

A: Oh, sure, yes.

Q: But in addition to that, are there projects that are sponsored by USAID or the Central Government that the PRT is not engaged in?

A: Really the only projects that we are actively involved with are those funded by ESF and before that the four IRRF projects." When I said this I was thinking of the larger infrastructure projects. However, the PRT is involved with many smaller projects. These include helping to establish NGOs, setting up a micro-finance program, planning, helping to set up courts, health projects, agriculture projects, working with Iraqi youth, providing training for firemen, etc. One of our members was instrumental in revitalizing a large canning that had been closed because of the war. When it is fully active it will provide a lot of much-needed employment. We have funded many smaller projects through QRF-- Quick Response Funds.

Q: Are you informed about what these projects are and where they are and if they are coordinated?

A: There is a large report that we have access to, that we could get if we wanted to, if there was something that I wanted to know I could find out about it, but there are people who are responsible for the projects who track them. So it does not make any sense for me to try to do that unless I had a specific reason for doing so.

Q: Does the Provincial Council have any role with respect to those projects?

A: I do not think the Provincial Council has much involvement with them. Someone may report on projects to the Provincial Council, but a lot of them, most of them, have not gone through the PRDC. A lot of projects have been built without the direct involvement of the Iraqis. That is what makes the PRDC program different and valuable, because the Iraqis are very much involved in it.

Q: You mentioned there was an economic team. What do they do?

A: I will gloss over this because it is not my area, but I know that they are involved with a microfinance program. It has been very successful. They are involved with agriculture. The people from the Department of Agriculture are part of that team. They have been involved with the flourmill, getting the flourmill operating. And, of course, they are really trying to work with the Iraqis to create jobs. That is probably their primary focus. Also they have been involved with banking, getting the commercial banking system going. There are other subjects they have been involved with, too. It is hard for me to talk about somebody else's area.

Q: Is there a rule of law team?

A: Yes, there is. We have a fellow from the Department of Justice who heads that up. We have had a rule of law team for almost two years, maybe more than two years. There has always been a Department of Justice (DOJ) person who has been in charge of that team.

Q: Do you know what they have been focused on?

A: I know that they have been focused on getting some of the courts functioning. That

has been their main focus, both as far as getting the physical courts set up and then working with the judges to get them operating.

Q: You have a Public Affairs Officer, somebody that works with the media in the province?

A: Yes, we have a Public Diplomacy Team and a woman heads it; she is a Public Diplomacy Officer with the State Department. I am not certain exactly what they do. They are fairly new to the PRT. But they do work to try to develop the media. I really cannot go into much more detail than that about their work.

Q: You have these several teams and you have your leadership. Is there any arrangement for getting together as a whole group to talk about what each other is doing and how to coordinate among each other or does everybody go their own way?

A: No, no, we have what we call the 1600 hrs meeting and every day except Friday at 1600 hrs we get together and everybody gives a little report on what they are doing. It takes about half an hour, 45 minutes, but it is a good way to keep posted on what is going on, making sure that we are not tripping over each other.

Q: Do they really bring up issues or problems with interaction?

A: Yes.

Q: And this is led by the State Department leader?

A: By the Team Leader, yes. Actually, it is the Deputy Team Leader who leads that particular meeting. The Team Leader is there, but the meeting is conducted by the Deputy Team Leader.

Q: How do you find the operating relationships among the various teams?

A: For the most part it is pretty good. Any time you get a group of people who have strong personalities and an idea that they want to get something done then there are going to be occasions where there will be friction. But I think that everybody who is here really is here to accomplish something; they want to make a difference and I would conclude that overall the relationships are pretty good.

Q: How about the relationship with the military group that you are dependent on for your going out?

A: We have a good relationship with them.

Q: They do not restrict your efforts in any way?

A: Their focus is different from ours. We are here because we have a certain job that we

have to do and they are here, some of the military people are working in the same way but what we call the movement team, the people who are responsible for getting us to and from where we have to go, are focused on our security, so there are times when there has to be a compromise there. But we work things out. Overall the whole team, both military and civilian, works pretty well together.

Q: Do they have their own projects? There is the Commander's CERF funds. Do they have their own projects?

A: The CERF funds go through the Brigade Combat Team. They do not go through our people. And, incidentally, there are fewer of those CERF projects now than there were not too long ago. In years past a lot of schools and clinics were built with those funds; I know that the Commanders are much more careful about where that money is spent now.

Q: So they are not doing as much of that as they used to?

A: Yes

Q: Remind me again about the resources you have to work with. You have Economic Support Funds?

A: Yes, the ESF, that is my bailiwick, you would say. My job is to see that those funds are properly used.

Q: Do they come through USAID or through another channel?

A: No, through the State Department, through ITAO, which, of course, is part of the Department of State.

Q: Remind me again about what ITAO stands for.

A: Iraq Transition Assistance Office. It is the successor to IRMO, Iraq Reconstruction Management Office.

Q: So they allocate to the different provincial teams, based on requests, is that it?

A: Each province is allocated a certain amount and then, let us say that there is \$18 million for each province. And then we go through the process that I described, working with the PRDC and the Provincial Council putting together a nomination packet and sending it up to ITAO. We may get all of that \$18 million or we may get less, depending on whether our projects are accepted. We submitted a number of extra projects just in case there might be some extra money, small projects, to improve some roads, for example.

Q: Does ITAO have the final authority, then, over approval of projects?

A: Actually the NET has final approval, the National Embassy Team and I cannot tell you exactly what the membership is but the Ambassador is represented there and I know that some of the senior consultants are on the NET.

Q: How about your relations with the Iraqis? How do they feel about your presence there and the work of the PRT?

A: I cannot read into it too deeply because I do not speak Arabic, as I said. I think that they see us as a necessary evil. We are foreigners. We are in their country and I think it varies so much from individual to individual. In working with them a person has to establish a personal relationship and prove that you really do care and prove that you can be trusted and work forward from that.

Q: You have to work through a translator all the time?

A: Yes, though some Iraqis speak English.

Q: But you found you have had good relations, then, with your Iraqi counterparts?

A: Yes. I enjoy working with them; my experience has been that they are very capable people. They do things differently because they are from another culture, but very capable people.

Q: What do you see as major issues that you have to deal with or your PRT has to deal with?

A: You mean with respect to the Iraqis?

Q: Trying to get your job done and get the PRT's job done. What are the major issues?

A: Of course, the major issue is security. In an ideal world we would have an office down in the Provincial Government building or the Provincial Council building and we would be there to be on call and have a kind of relationship that would follow from that situation. As it is, when we want to meet with Iraqis, it is a major military operation. We go down in humvees and MRAPs. We have to limit the time that we spend, because of security and also because of the fact that it gets hot and uncomfortable and the soldiers can only be expected to sit out in a humvee for so long guarding us. So, without a doubt, the major problem is security.

Q: Any other area of major issues?

A: Probably the fact that the tours of duty for most people here are one year and that is not enough time to get to know the people and for them to get to know whether they can trust you. This is my own personal opinion, but the short rotations make it difficult to accomplish things that need to be done.

Q: You have a high turnover?

A: I do not think that we have a high turnover. People almost always complete their full tour. What I am saying is that one-year is not enough time for most people to really get their teeth into and about the time that they do get their teeth into it, it is time to leave.

Q: How about the professional quality of the people you find being assigned, broadly?

A: I am only going to speak to the people that I work directly with, because it would be inappropriate for me to talk about anybody else, but I have two individuals on the infrastructure team who are very well qualified and we work very well together. They are both technical people **from** the Corps of Engineers and I find them very good to work with. They are very dedicated to their jobs.

Q: Is there any topic area that we have not touched on that is important to you to comment about?

A: Just one thing that I would mention. I mentioned the fact that most people come here for one year. I think that more people would be inclined to stay longer if it were not so difficult to get in and out of here for leaves and breaks. It is just extremely difficult. To leave here we have to go out either through Kuwait or through Amman, Jordan is very time consuming, very, very difficult, physically demanding. I would just like to suggest that if we could have an easier way of getting out of here, it would make it easier to visit family, so there were not such long separations. Probably more people would be willing to stay longer.

Q: These are for short leaves?

A: Yes, but to take a short leave, it is really difficult. But it would not have to be that way; it seems to me, because there are other places in the country that we could get out from, especially where commercial flights come in.

Q: How do you get out now? Go through Baghdad?

A: There are two ways. You can either take a flight to Baghdad and then by military transport to Amman, or take a flight to Kuwait and from Kuwait to where you are going to go. But it is a rugged haul and then because of the weather and other reasons, it may be very difficult to leave or to return. So there is a lot of time wasted sitting around waiting.

Q: You fly from the base, is that it?

A: Yes.

Q: On military transport?

A: Right.

Q: Any other area that is important? Is there any other topic we did not touch on?

A: I would just say that for me, it has been a very gratifying experience. I have seen considerable progress. At least as far as my work is concerned my expectations were fairly modest but little by little there has been progress and it is good to see it and I think that, I keep coming back to this but the progress has not been because of the amount of money that is being spent but because through that PRDC program and through taking the time to build good relationships, we have the Iraqis' participation in this process.

Q: That relates to one of my last questions. How do you assess the overall achievements of the PRT to date?

A: The PRT has been very successful. I was here before the PRT stood up, so I have seen a lot. The PRT needs to develop a working relationship, first among the members of the PRT, both military and civilian, secondly with the Brigade, which is our maneuver unit, then with the division and then with the Iraqis, both at the provincial level and at the national level. That is a lot to ask, but the PRT has done so, very successfully.

Q: How would you describe success?

A: The fact that governance in Salah ad Din province is better than when we got here and that particular success contributes to improved security. I am careful what I would say about security, because as I mentioned at the beginning, it is a dangerous environment, but it is better than it was in the past and our efforts have contributed to that.

I would say one more thing. The PRT has developed these working relationships with many different Iraqis and when they see us and they see what we are doing, we convey a different image than what the military conveys, try as they might. I do not mean to denigrate the military at all, but our missions are different and the Iraqis see the difference.

Q: Is there a mission statement for the PRT?

A: Yes, there is. I cannot recite it for you right now, but we do have a mission statement.

Q: Beyond that, on achievements, you have talked about some specific ones in your area related to electricity. What lessons would you point to from your experience? You have had a rich experience. This is going help other people understand the future of PRTs. What four or five lessons would you pick out?

A: You mean with respect to working in Iraq?

Q: Yes, working in Iraq and the organization and operations of the PRT?

A: I would say that the first thing is we need to approach the job with infinite patience.

The second thing I would say is that we should never underestimate the people that we are working with. We need to recognize that there is a profound difference in cultures and that ours is not necessarily the only way to do things.

Q: Anything stand out in what this difference is? I know it is complex.

A: One thing is time. We are very used to coming in with a timeline for getting something done and we are going to quickly get it organized and get the job done. The Iraqis approach it differently. This is a relationship-based society and we need to recognize that. It does not mean that it is either good or bad, it is simply fact.

Q: Any other lessons that stand out, practical ones specific to operations?

A: Yes, that is the need to work with and develop people who are not at the top of the managerial totem pole. In other words, instead of going to the top people all the time, we need to try to develop relationships and the ability and confidence in engineers, people who are second and third tier. It is too easy to go to the top guy, which we can do because of our position here, but that is a short-term fix. The country needs to develop more people to take over managerial positions and to begin exercising some form of leadership.

There is one other point I would make. Again, this is just my observation but I think that one of the greatest needs in the country is the need to develop modern forms of leadership at many levels of society.

Q: Can you characterize “modern”? What do you mean by that?

A: What I mean by that is getting people to do things because it is the right thing to do, being able to motivate people rather than motivating by fear, developing the capacity of the individual. There have been strong leaders here, obviously, but some of their leadership styles would not fit in Western society.

Q: You have already alluded to several recommendations. Any other specific recommendations you would make about the PRT operation?

A: Not about the PRT operations, no.

Q: Or otherwise, about the program generally?

A: No, nothing more that I can think of now.

Q: If you step back a bit and look at an overall assessment, do you think that PRT is an effective operation and necessary and doing what it is supposed to do?

A: I would say yes to all three questions: yes, it is effective; yes, it is necessary; and yes, it is doing what it is supposed to do. You can verify that by seeing what has been accomplished, the fact that the government is operating better than it was previously.

There is one other story I would tell you about the Provincial Council. When I first got here the Provincial Council, as I mentioned, was dysfunctional. The Provincial Council chairman was pretty authoritarian and he sat at the front of the room with the members seating in rows facing him. He had the only microphone. Meetings were conducted sporadically. There really was not any discussion to speak of. It just was not a very good situation.

I talked with a couple of the Provincial Council members that I had gotten to know and suggested they might try to get a different table arrangement to change the physical layout for the meetings. At first they were reluctant to do that, because they said that the chairman would never allow that. So I suggested they talk to some of their colleagues and work this out ahead of time and then when there was a meeting that they could vote on it. They did this and everybody agreed that they would get this new table.

So they changed from a schoolroom format to one where they now have a horseshoe-shaped table. Everybody has a microphone, where previously only the chairman had a microphone. The chairman saw the way things were going and he has improved his ability or his methods of conducting the meetings greatly since then.

I do not mean to say that everything is all roses and light and sweet. It is not that at all, but there has been an obvious improvement there.

And when they voted, I told you about the voting on projects, especially when they voted to have this technical training center as their top priority, to see 31 of the 41 members seated around this table, having had a discussion about this, a lot of other people being present in the room, the press being present.

Q: You were there, too?

A: Yes, I was, just sitting on the edge, watching. And then seeing them raise their hands to vote, that is a pretty impressive thing. I do not know how you quantify that.

Q: It is an important step. Any other aspects like that you want to comment on?

A: Not that I can think of right now. But there have been many success stories here. I cannot recite them all right now.

Q: Did you get any training before you went out?

A: I had two weeks, that was at the Foreign Service Institute, they told us a little bit about Arab culture, some of what we should be expecting when we came here, that type of thing.

Q: Was there some area that they did not cover that you felt was important, that from your perspective should have been covered in the training?

A: I will not say that they did not cover areas that should have been covered but it would have much better if the training had been longer, because there is just a lot more to learn than what we were able to get in that amount of time. It would be helpful if people who were coming here were very carefully reviewed, because this is a demanding environment. It is physically demanding. It is stressful. It is not the kind of place where you are going to have all the comforts you might want. It would be good if somehow people who might be coming, say to this PRT, for instance, would be able to talk with somebody who was here and get that kind of feedback on what to expect [so they can decide on a realistic basis]: is that what I really want to do?

Q: This has been very helpful? Anything we missed that you would like to put on the table?

A: No, not that I can think of.

Attachment A: PRT Mission Statement

The Provincial Reconstruction Team Salah Ad Din Province is:

- A multinational staff comprising, diplomatic, civilian and military elements, that represent and serve the interests of the United States of America,
- A partner of the 1/101st Airborne BCT in executing the provisions of the Joint Campaign Plan under the direction of the U.S. Mission and Multinational Forces in Iraq under the authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1723, and,
- A partner of the Provincial Government of Salah Ad Din Province committed to establish stable, effective provincial government that meets the basic needs of its citizens in order to win their allegiance to the State of Iraq and convince them to reject extremism.*

To achieve this goal, the Provincial Reconstruction Team will:

- Work with local, district and provincial leaders, whether elected, appointed, or traditional, to develop transparent and accountable governmental processes and to improve communication between them,
- Work with Iraqi leaders, our military partners, and non-governmental organizations to enhance provincial capacity to provide public services through improved cooperation, training, communication, and management of public resources,
- Develop a legal system that respects and promotes rule of law,
- Encourage moderate political behavior and participation in government,
- Promote Iraqi initiatives to encourage private and public investment,
- Encourage the Provincial Government to communicate with its constituents by effective use of the media.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team members make these commitments:

- We will represent the American people, and conduct our mission safely and with economy in accordance with applicable policies, laws, management principles and American values. We will impart these values of public service to our Iraqi colleagues by example in working with them closely.
- We will respect our Iraqi partners, mindful that their democracy is new and replaces tyranny, their economy was ravaged by decades of war and corruption, and Iraqi citizens who work with us do so at great personal risk.
- We will listen to our Iraqi colleagues. Solutions must be by and for Iraqis, with our help and support, since without their commitment, we will fail.
- Therefore, we must measure our success by that of our Iraqi colleagues.
- We have a responsibility to work with the U.S. Mission in Baghdad to inform American policymakers and public of our progress.
- We will constantly review our work and continuously improve it.