

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

**INTERVIEW #4**

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**Executive Summary**

The interviewee was a former mid-level management NGO representative in the Baghdad PRT, working on governance issues from July 2006 to July 2007. She initially saw management problems in the PRT because of its merging of military and civilian cultures, but concluded that the structure, as unusual as it was, ultimately worked effectively, although at times, she did not know who was ultimately in charge. The PRT had a slow start in her view because, for a three-month period in 2006, PRT representatives were unable to leave the Green Zone in Baghdad because of the worsened security situation.

Security issues dominated the interview. The informant found the monthly interagency/international coordination meeting to be ineffective, because NGO and foreign government representatives were afraid to go to the Green Zone. Her NGO in turn was skittish about having her travel outside the Green Zone to attend meetings, although she ultimately succeeded in getting out. Security concerns were often the excuse for projects not being completed.

The interviewee was particularly proud to have placed an Iraqi woman and four Iraqi men into a business development training program. The Iraqis wanted to open Internet cafes. She found that overall the opportunities for women decreased during her tenure, because women were afraid to leave their homes. And when they did, they were heavily veiled. She was also happy to see the Joint Planning Commission grow in importance and to see its chairmanship transferred from American to Iraqi leadership.

The informant had a particular compassion for the welfare of local mission employees. The Bilingual Bicultural Advisors (BBA) and their families were at great risk because of their cooperation with the Americans. Iraqi U.S. mission employees in general were in danger and often received threats. She viewed in one case the body bags of an Iraqi husband-wife team who had been killed because of their employment by the USG. The informant felt that the U.S. should arrange for expedited immigration to the U.S. for those family members who could no longer remain in Iraq because of death threats.

**Interview**

*Q: Can you please describe for us the location, history, physical structure and size of the PRT in which you served?*

A: The Baghdad PRT was the largest, is the largest PRT, as far as I know, Provincial Reconstruction Team in Iraq. I was there from July, 2006 until July, 2007. The PRT began in March, 2006, and it was located in the Green Zone, or the International Zone (IZ).

*Q: Can you also describe for us the staffing at the Baghdad PRT?*

A: To go back to your previous question very quickly, I will do that. In the middle of my tenure there. The PRT expanded. When I began, the PRT consisted of about 40 or 45 people. We expanded to 75 plus people by the time I left in July, 2007.

The staffing consisted of the team leader, the senior Foreign Service officer and the deputy team leader, who was a military person.. They co-managed the PRT very well. We had a civilian military team of about 10 or 12 departments; health, reconstruction, public relations, media. The State Department had similar structure of leaders in governance and media and reconstruction, and we had a local staff. I really would like to note here, early in our discussion, the real importance and really key place our local staff, our Foreign Service nationals, played in the PRT. There were maybe twenty or thirty of these, men and women who were support staff: interpreters, secretaries, technicians, and engineers. All of them but one lived outside the Green Zone and came in every day under difficult circumstances when the violence was extremely challenging.

*Q: Can you describe the role and mission of the Baghdad PRT and be as specific as possible.*

A: The mission was to attempt to reduce violence, attempt to jump start infrastructure reconstruction, attempt to use governance and democracy and transparency and accountability to stimulate the local government, the Baghdad Provincial Council, in particular. The council was our primary counterpart that needed to pick up more, to assert its authority more, and to represent the people of Baghdad.

*Q: What was your particular mission, the areas that you worked in? Was it political reconstruction, was it economic, was it infrastructure?*

A: Governance tends to provide liaison in all of those areas. Because the PRT had its own political governance team, which was small when I arrived, I became a governance team leader and liaison between the local governance and a Research Triangle Institute International (RTI) contractor, also living in the Green Zone. The Research Triangle Institute is located in North Carolina. They had their own secure office and secure living quarters in the Green Zone, and I was their Baghdad PRT representative. I was subbed out to the Baghdad PRT, basically. So I represented them and we also fell under the USAID rubric, and so I worked in the PRT. I collaborated with the economic PRT team, with the infrastructure PRT team, with the governance political team, and with the finance team.

*Q: Could you describe the PRT's relationship with the provincial affairs office or the national coordinating team and with the U.S. Embassy and military commands? How did they fit together?*

A: I did not work on an executive management level. My comments here would be what I saw and not what I participated in. I was a technician on a middle management level. The Baghdad PRT was a part of the national coordination team infrastructure or structure and the team leader and deputy team leader attended NCT meetings. We were, because we were the largest PRT, the touchstone for the primary activities that the NCT was trying to coordinate. As I was leaving in July of 2007, the NCT was eliminated because the NCT had been a product of ideas from the CPA. The NCT and its infrastructure disbanded, and all of the PRT and all the reconstruction and all of our efforts fell under the embassy per se. So at the time I was there in actuality, the PRT, the ones outside of Baghdad too, were always rather insulated in our own mission or our own work plan, our own work goals. We submitted to the NCT monthly reports. We had a long list, we had it all computerized of course, of project reports. We used yellow, red and green colors to indicate progression or growth in this or that area, i.e., reconstruction, governance, and cooperation with the Baghdad Provincial Council. We would submit these reports monthly and quarterly to NCT, and they would get back to us. The NCT basically monitored our work product areas.

*Q: Can we get a little bit more into the organizational structures? Can you describe the chain of command, both civilian and military, as part of the internal organization of the PRT? How did you see the chain of command there?*

A: I think different people you are going to talk to are going to have different answers, and I do not think that is all bad. I am going to refer back to the first GAO report of PRTs issued in draft form in March, 2006, and I am going to read one of its summary paragraphs:

“On balance the PRT experience in Iraq demonstrates individual successes based on individual efforts and ad hoc work-arounds that allowed some PRTs to move forward with their compassion developed mission.”

And so I think there was always a bit of challenge between the State Department as team leader and the military deputy team leader. There was always a bit of a challenge to coordinate. The State Department had its own governance teams, on reconstruction and on public relations, etc., and so did the military. I am also leaving out the rule of law team. Let me not leave that out. That was a very important military- civilian effort of the PRT. The effort of coordination and collaboration between the two elements was exceptionally positive, although there were some flare-ups sometimes.

*Q: So you would say on the whole the leadership and management and structure was effective?*

A: Yes. I would say in the Baghdad PRT, the leadership was effective.

*Q: But do you have any improvements that you would have recommended?*

A: I think we never really knew who was in charge. But I am not saying that to be negative. We respected the management on the middle management level I was working and on the coordinating level I was also working on. I am a pragmatic, positive person. I do not let things that are obscure or opaque bother me. I would just note that there were individual successes based on individual efforts. I would just take the general instructions from the team leader, the deputy team leader, and I would mesh them together. I would communicate with both of them on a very positive and daily basis if they had time for me, and I would go out and do what they wanted me to do, what they indicated should be done. Their ideas resulted in the two major projects we were able to do in the governance area in the spring of 2007. There were tensions; there are always going to be tensions in a situation where you are dealing with tremendous violence, tremendous worry, and security issues. We had several of our PRT people killed.

*Q: We are going to get to security issues in a minute.*

A: I think overall my experience with the PRT was very positive, and the management and the coordination were excellent.

*Q: And the organization itself was effective, ultimately.*

A: I think it was effective. Now, to be very frank with you, the team leader left in March or April of 2007, and he had been doing a really fine job

*Q: Did you encounter within this fairly large PRT what they call “agency stove piping”? Did different agencies or representatives, in your case NGO representatives, find themselves isolating programs and not coordinating? Did you coordinate and integrate programs or did you find everyone had a little piece of turf that he or she was working on or standing on even?*

A: Well, yes. I think that the Baghdad PRT was never stove piped. I believe we did then and are still doing really fine work. I do not think the Baghdad PRT received the support from the mission of ongoing activities from the GRD, the NCT, or the State Department. I will give you an example of this, an example of outreach. I do not want to call this stove piping. That is what it is called, but I do not think the PRT was such an animal. It began in March of 2006. In March of 2006 there was violence in the city, and so the Baghdad Provincial Council would not work with the Baghdad PRT, would not recognize its existence until July. Of course, our primary counterpart was the Baghdad Provincial Council and so we were really sitting there for three or four months just trying to diplomatically get a toehold in to our local governance and infrastructure development project list.

Let me go back. We had a slow start and I do not think the other players in the IZ, the political players, ever really provided the support and the recognition the Baghdad PRT

deserved. That said, I think the Baghdad PRT, in my area, at my level just went off and did our work and made our own avenue and paths, working with the Council and some NGOs and with USAID and DFD on other projects.

And so I want to go back to my small example. I am giving you mid management ideas and thoughts, happenings. There had been a very important interagency coordinating meeting. It was called the IAC. DFID (the UK AID organization) and USAID started it. Once a month all these donors, NGOs, Japan, Italy, coalition partners, EU, etc. got together. We would get together once a month, our senior managers attended along with donor and country representatives. The Baghdad PRT was not invited to that meeting until September because no one knew we existed. Finally, once we were invited, I began to go and others began to go from the rule of law team. But finally USAID began to drop out because it was an administrative nightmare. We had terrible security issues in getting NGOs that had been working outside of the IZ in that day. The PRT decided we would go in and co-sponsor this meeting with DFID. DFID tried to drop out. The PRT picked it up by itself for a couple of meetings and did the tremendous amount of footwork involved. We did this to get the donor agencies together so we could utilize our resources better in order not to overstep our bounds, and so we did not waste resources of each of the donor countries in the joint effort. I am saying it took a while for the Baghdad PRT to really be recognized, to be able to be a coordinating effort with local governance and infrastructure development as it was set up to be. I believe our State Department, our NCT, and our stove piped elements with politicians were not sufficiently supportive of our efforts.

Also there was an issue, and I will be real frank with you with the Baghdad PRT and my friends and we had made real efforts to get out into the community. We had convoys going out, outside the wire, security issues aside, two or three times a day, the rule of law team, the economic team, the governance team. But the Baghdad PRT did pick up on that, and really did make an effort to show the flag and to communicate with our Baghdad local counterparts outside of the IZ.

*Q: You found your relationships within the PRT were harmonious and effective, am I correct in saying that?*

A: I saw them as that. I am a relatively assertive person. There may have been people that I stepped on sometimes but the team leader thought I was doing a wonderful job; so did the deputy team leader. I was always welcome in their offices. I was always welcome in the econ department, the rule of law department and by whomever I sat beside. My personal activities in the PRT were respected.

*Q: And in general, you felt that was true of most of the individuals there that they were working well with others?*

A: Yes.

*Q: If we could move to civil military relations, did you have a good relationship with any brigade combat teams?*

A: USAID coordinated my work. The USAID coordinator was concerned about my ability to go outside the wire. And also the RTI project, called the LGP-II Project, was working under strictures. The chairman of the RTI in North Carolina said that if anyone from RTI were ever killed, an expat were killed, they were going to withdraw the entire project. So they were very careful about allowing their people to go outside the wire to work with brigades, individuals in the brigades that operated in and around Baghdad. I was asked one time to go out to Mahmudiyah to do some work because the local council was getting together for the first time. They were getting Sunnis and Shia together for a very first local council meeting and I was asked to go to represent the Baghdad PRT. And my RTI people would not let me go. They strictly forbade me to go outside the wire. It was going to be a quick helicopter ride and a quick motor, PF, detail to the local council meeting involving an overnight stay in the brigade camp and then back the next morning. They put their foot down and said no. Ultimately the team leader went on this mission and there was some resentment there that we, USAID contractors, could not participate as far as the PRT would have liked us to and I also was resentful of that because I like to do my job.

*Q: You felt pulled between RTI and your mission there.*

A: Definitely. But I was under contract and unless I received permission to do this-- authority to do this--I could not do it.

There were pushes and pulls like this and someone did not grant the authority to travel. A lot of issues were related to security and some were related to jealousy of turf, but given the tremendous stress we were working under, overall the Baghdad PRT then and I think now is doing some exceptional work.

*Q: You touched on this issue before, but I would like us now to focus on the security environment and what would you say was the level and nature of the threat that you faced?*

A: Well, several different levels. One level is getting either military PFD or getting military support to go outside the wire to attend a Provincial Council meeting, to meet with a Provincial Council leader, to meet with an NGO.

*Q: I am talking about the threat levels that you experienced there from indigenous and insurgent forces.*

A: The primary threat we felt inside the IZ world were incoming mortar and missiles. That continued, as I understand. It abated for a while and now for the last few weeks it has increased. The day before I left--I left July 15--there were 23 mortars coming over the wall and we would always retreat into the middle of our room. We were on the sixth floor so there was the seventh floor above us and a roof. We were always in danger, I

mean, a little bit. I never worried about it. Most of us actually felt we were almost as safe as walking on the street in New York in a busy rush hour kind of thing. The day before I left, two people were killed in a multi-mortar attack. One was a driver. There was a little mini bus service that went around that Halliburton supported, a little mini bus service that would usually take military but also others who needed a ride from the west side to the east side and drop them off at their barracks and/or the hotel. One of those drivers was killed that day, and someone else was killed, a civilian or something. That did not seem to bother us.

Now let me tell you a couple of personal anecdotal thoughts here: I did give platelets once a month to the CASH (hospital) next door.

*Q: We should make that clear. Those are blood platelets.*

A: Blood platelets. I gave blood platelets next door once a month or six weeks to the CASH and I would give up to 12, or the equivalent of 12 pints of blood once a month, which was a phenomenal level for a person of my age and size. I am a little lady and I am near sixty but I have O positive blood and everybody needs me, pretty much.

My sixth floor office window overlooked the helipad of CASH, and so throughout the day, I would come in at 7 or 8 and leave at 8 or 9 at night, usually, throughout the day. Helicopters always flew in pairs, the double helicopters landing and dropping off wounded people, soldiers as well as civilians. They were then scurried into the emergency room door. I saw the little cars, the little jitney buses. They sometimes would bring in body bags from the helicopters and then the convoys would come, and we could see the body bags being taken out of the emergency room door to the helicopters. Sometimes we would form little freedom lines of people. My friends and I would go out there and I would cross my heart and the people in the military would salute if one of our friends had been killed. There was a person at the embassy killed one time whom much of my PRT military knew, and so I went out there and said good-bye and paid my respects.

Another note: we would be sitting there in our PRT building and between about 4:30 and 7:00 any evening any day of the week, and we were having a meeting and having a little tie up of our memos or we are having a discussion, and all of a sudden a big boom happens and you look out the window. There half a mile away was a big, gray cloud of smoke and there might be fire coming up from it. Here you are sitting in your relatively safe quarters and you know there are maybe 15, 20 people who are dying at that moment from a car bomb or an RUD or a suicide bomber, or maybe there are just people who are hurt or burning. It is disconcerting.

*Q: Did you feel more danger or a higher threat level when you were out in the field, in convoy, as opposed to being inside the Green Zone?*

A: Yes, yes. You always felt a little more in danger when you were in a convoy.

*Q: But, nevertheless, you felt the personnel were able to operate in the field with the cooperation of the military.*

A: Yes.

*Q: Did you ever get assistance from Iraqi security forces or did the PRT ever get any?*

A: At the time I was there, the Iraqi army was not in the position to offer the type of security that was required of U.S. military or U.S. government or contractor types of employees.

Now whenever we did go out on convoy in the streets, I do know the Iraqi police would help direct traffic from the intersections. There was communication on their upper high frequency radio with Iraqi police about where we were and where we were going. Should we need some help, they were there. Yes, there was communication, using of course, GPS on various convoys in and outside the IZ and in the city, so I think there was good collaboration in getting us around. There was always danger outside the IZ.

*Q: Can you describe for us some of the PRT's external relations with international and nongovernmental organizations?*

A: The PRT lacked an identity and a role for three months after it was initiated and then we operated from the IZ, and most of the NGOs operated from the city. Many of the other donor projects operated out of secured bunkered walls in the city in Baghdad. Getting the donor communities into the IZ: that was the importance of the interagency coordinating meeting. It is really difficult in that environment to get people really to cooperate and collaborate. You know the U.S. had their coalition partners, I am sorry. I go from place to place. My mind goes very, very fast; much faster than I can talk but our coalition partners, the Romanians would provide some security. The Ukrainian partners would provide security at the Freedom Building pool, the recreation complex. The Nicaraguans would provide security maybe for something else. But these are minor coalition partners.

Our main partners, Italy, Japan and the UK primarily provided money, Japan providing money, Italy providing money; it was hard to get them together on an operating level. I know they got together with the NCT on say, meetings, but that was not filtering down to get things done. I am an operations person. I want to work at a level where I can actually meet the people, provide assistance to them. I think there was a lack of coordination. Maybe that has been helped now that the NCT has been folded into the embassy because there were two kinds of management entities until July 2007 and I left in July 2007 so I do not know what is going on now.

But at that time it was very hard to coordinate and to get coordination and collaboration. People would say something and it would not happen. You would have to go back later and get them to do it and they would say, "oh, it was a security issue". I worked hard to bridge these gaps in the meeting context and also just in my relationship with people,



trying to call them, continuing to work with them. Others did not try as much as I did, I feel.

*Q: And how about your interaction with the Iraqis, who were your Iraqi counterparts and can you describe your interaction with Iraqi provincial local government?*

A: That is a big question. We could spend four hours on that and then four hours tomorrow and four hours Sunday too.

The Baghdad Provincial Council was elected in January, 2006. You know, the purple ink on the fingers. One councilman was a Communist and irrelevant. But the leader of the PC liked me a lot. We worked together but he was a very dominant Shia, a friend of Maliki, and really would rather have been a central governor where he could get a lot more money, a lot more corruption going, a lot more visibility, but he was chairman of the Provincial Council. They had been elected, not directly elected, but they had been selected from the party list. I worked with other people. One councilman was frequently in Iran so it was very hard for the team leader and deputy leader to get to him. He could be very difficult to work with, to get a decision from and cooperation. I worked with chairman of the strategic planning committee, a very important committee in the PC management complex. And I worked with a chairman when we did the SENS (Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise), which was a big five-day training program in March, 2007. He was a moderate, a Shia, a big fellow, a moderate Shia. Really there was a big conflict between others and him, because he had wanted the job and had been previously elected to the job, but political forces forced him out. There were tremendous, tremendous political forces at operation inside the Provincial Council.

And I also worked with the chairman of an important civil society committee, He was a small man. He had been imprisoned after high school by Saddam Hussein. He never got to college because of it. He had been imprisoned and tortured. He was a moderate Shia from the Kurdish region so he really was hated by Saddam. We met at least once a week and he spoke very little English and I speak very little Arabic but my bilingual, bicultural advisor said you should try to talk with him if you can, using our translator. We also had another translator who would take over when the first was tired. The Kurd and I had a wonderful relationship. We became almost like brother and sister. When they told him I was leaving, he cried, as did I. He had a wife and many children. He chaired a civil society committee. He would walk around the streets of Baghdad, and just give out money. He owned a plantation in another province and farmed several different plantations and was very successful. His father had given it to him. He was a wealthy fellow, to a certain extent. And so he really felt for the people of Baghdad, but he was a conservative Shia. When I was leaving, he was planning a project to mix the blood, have a whole big conference and a big PR thing about mixing blood of Shia and Sunni so he was really into conflict resolution, into communication.

*Q: I am sorry. What do you mean by "mixing blood?"*

A: I do not know. I never got to that. That was the week I was leaving and I left that project, I turned my work over to the rule of law section, to the NGO coordinator. She is a military liaison lawyer on leave from her post in Hawaii.

This councilman whom I mentioned earlier wanted to get people together and have them share their blood in order to try to better relations between Shias and Sunnis. He was also under Amadi army threat, three or four of them. He would show me his cell phone where he would show me a text message in Arabic of an Amadi army threat. "You are collaborating with the Americans. You are dead. Your family is dead."

To go back to your question, there were two people in the Provincial Council who really went out of their way to collaborate with the Baghdad PRT: one was the councilman, and the other was in the economic department, a fellow who had been in the former oil ministry, before Saddam Hussein. He was in his mid to late 70s, a very respected, urbane, English speaking, Western oriented Iraqi, a moderate.

So there were two Baghdad PC people who really communicated with the Baghdad PRT; one in economic areas, one in civil society.

The councilman arrived in tears one day and told me he wanted to thank the military and myself and others for coming in, for working with them, for freeing them. This is the day after I read his text message from the Amadi Army saying he was under threat. He said, "You know, it is bad now, it is really bad now." But he said, "It's good because we had the potential for being free. We can make our own decisions, we are not in prison." So he really thanked the military.

*Q: Did you have any contact with the local business community or local citizen groups?*

A: Yes, I did. As I told you, because of my governance hat, I was able to go pop from place to place. As a matter of fact, the councilman in March of 2007 recommended to me five entrepreneurs, skilled technicians who wanted to open Internet cafes in Baghdad, and this was during massive violence in March, April of 2007. Those five friends of his were again people he knew well. He learned of their projects while walking around Baghdad and giving out money; five dollars or whatever to people in need, mothers whose husbands had been killed in violence who were raising four children, that kind of thing. He just had that feeling in him.

He gave me the names of five people, one was a woman, and the other four were men. So in other words, there were five potential entrepreneurial opportunities in five distinct areas of Baghdad. These folks wanted to open Internet cafes and so I collaborated. I interviewed each of them and brought them into the Baghdad PRT with the councilman, and we introduced them to the Baghdad PRT economic team. Then I turned them over to Baghdad economic development because I did not want to interfere with their work. I had done my collaboration and coordination work. As I was leaving, they were going to attend, I understand, training classes with the USAID Economic Development Project.

They were going to attend training classes and receive micro financing to open these businesses. How about that? That was really cool.

*Q: Wonderful.*

A: I left with a good feeling. And one entrepreneur was even a woman. And again the potential for outreach to women to become entrepreneurs was decreasing as I came and went during the year, so I really felt it was one of the biggest things I enjoyed doing.

*Q: Did you say "increasing"?*

A: Decreasing for women. It was really decreasing for the year that I was there. Our local women employees began to have to wear black scarves when they came in to work, and they felt that they were at risk at the checkpoints more than men. So the danger level for women, independent, single women on their own, the danger increased significantly and their potential outside of the home decreased. I was really happy to be able to provide at least hope for one woman entrepreneur with the possibility of some business, micro financing training, etc.

*Q: Did the PRT have a public affairs officer and a public affairs program?*

A: Yes. The PRT had a State Department Public Diplomacy Officer and an assistant officer. That was the State Department and then the military had a Public Affairs sergeant and they worked together in a small cubicle and they worked together very well, from my viewpoint.

*Q: Who was their audience?*

A: This is another great story. The Baghdad Provincial Council and the Baghdad PRT, used funds provided by the State Department--the PRT had no independent funds. The funds provided by the State Department, the Baghdad PRT were funneled into the Provincial Council Public Relations Department, and we helped pay for their media, and helped them cover the central government, local government, district government and committees and councils and businesses. It was a free newspaper that passed out news. It was supposed to be a way for the Baghdad Provincial Council to gain the respect of the people and open up a dialogue of communication between the community and the newly formed, newly elected council. And it seemed to be working; it was, and we looked at the newspaper, read the files, read the editorials, and it was not dogmatic, it was not overly conservative. It was informational, and it was helpful, and we felt that this was really strong public relations, a public diplomacy communication outlet between the Provincial Council and the community, as advised and supported by the Baghdad PRT.

*Q: The PRTs were partly intended to bolster moderates and to provide an economic component to the U.S. counterinsurgency effort. What comprised this effort and was it effective?*

A: On my level I worked with the PRT governance section, the political governance section and we held several meetings. We held two meetings with educators. We went out into the field and found moderate educators and we provided lunch for them in the IZ and again, there was always the problem of getting people in and then getting them out. You know, bringing them in at ten and out by three. No one wanted to be wandering the streets of Baghdad after four o'clock, because of the curfew, because of danger. We always provided lunch for our people when they came in to meet with us, and we called these meetings for moderates. So we held two meetings with educators, and we tried to find people who wanted to talk with us about their problems and who could help us provide solutions. We could pass these solutions on to the State Department or we could refer them to the PRT rule of law, or economic teams. The governance arm of the PRT acted as a conduit for the economic, rule of law infrastructure area, because that is what governance is. Governance is really putting together all these aspects to promote democracy and transparency and accountability.

So we had two successful meetings with educators. I had my civil society meeting where we got NGOs and business community leaders together in the IZ for a full day meeting, and as a result of that, one of the generals requested me to do a special report for him on civil society in Baghdad and Iraq.

People were so afraid. Yet I think they thought that what we were doing was helpful and that we were trying to open up a dialogue with the moderates. I really think that our work with the Provincial Council, which had a Shia majority, was important even though the council leader especially was so fixated on his own agenda that I am not sure whether we made many inroads on promoting moderates at that time.

Remember I left just about the time the surge began to work, which was July of 2007. The surge began in January. Our Baghdad PRT hosted and trained the eight or ten or twelve ePRTs, the embedded PRTs, that came the last week in March to promote the surge. It was, of course, counterinsurgency, which was to promote the moderates, was to open up communication between the two parties and to provide more confidence building and to reduce violence.

We helped train the Baghdad PRT. We held meetings with the new ePRT people and then they went out into the field, in late March, in early April. I left mid July. There was a lot of violence between March and April because of the early surge. I used to lie in my bed at night in the IZ compound and I was right beside the Tigris River. Right across the river was Sadr City, and I could hear at one o'clock the gun battles in Sadr City.

At the time of my departure, I think probably the development of the moderate agenda or our agenda to promote moderates, may have moved along, but when I was there I did not see that we moved along all that much. We tried.

*Q: You have already described a lot of the PRT activities promoting democracy and increasing the ability of provincial governments to function effectively. Do you have any more comments in that area, particularly in regard to their providing services? This is*

*really more an infrastructure question. There are really two aspects of this: the democracy aspect and the public services aspect.*

A: As I was leaving, the area of communication and collaboration between the PRT and the military, reconstruction and the brigade reconstruction were really taking off. When I arrived, the team leader asked me to sit in on a Thursday meeting called the Joint Planning Commission, the JPC. It began at one o'clock on a Thursday afternoon and it was not finished until four or five. It was a Joint Planning Commission, and it was infrastructure related and we had great big slides on the wall and we had all the districts of Baghdad. This was not in the other provinces. There were slides on the wall about Baghdad and the various districts and units. The military civil units were trying to repair a gas line or repair a water main, to repair sewer lines, to create a sewage disposal agency, pick up garbage better, start a school, or open a bank. We covered all those things. When I began attending these in August of .2006, only the U.S. military would come. By the time I left in July of 2007, this meeting was chaired by a representative of the Maliki government. It was no longer chaired by the American military although we had generals. The one time in that room with JPC, there were about fourteen generals in attendance, and one of them had five stars. It was discussed as being too military heavy. You know, that was like January, 2007, but by the time I left, the American military presence was still there but it was chaired by a very senior level central government assistant minister, and we would cover a different district each time. For instance, the chairman of the local government district would come in and we would discuss what needed to be done, the new school in the western district, the sewer now was broken in the eastern district, more lighting near the city hall, etc..

And I failed to mention to you that at the end, the Baghdad PRT team leader was rather political. But the deputy team leader, military, was in charge of the infrastructure part and so he, the two guys with whom I worked, would always sit in on these JPC meetings. So I think as the reconstruction and the surge moved forward, we began to get much more coordinated using our resources more carefully and in providing better infrastructure and public services for the people. There was so much to be done, so much to be done and I am sure that is the case now.

*Q: You were of course, an employee of RT International and can you describe and evaluate the role played by RT International and the PRT's efforts to promote good governance?*

A: I am afraid that that would be negative for the first answer, the first answer to your question. I had little or no support from RTI. I was hired as a local economic development specialist because I spent eight years at the FCC, and eight years as the broker dealer compliance officer. But the team leader said, "hey, we have got a full economic department," so when I arrived in July the PRT needed, USAID needed to put more people on the Baghdad PRT. The team leader said, "we don't need a development specialist, we need a governance specialist. I looked at your CV and see that you have done governance work." I had done this work in Bulgaria and Rumania because really and truly economic reform and governance are linked. And so the team leader said,

“you’ve got to do governance.” I said, “Yep.” So I did governance. That is why I liked so much working with the economic team.

*Q: Did you get any problems from North Carolina because you switched?*

A: It was just the lack of management skills and support from the RTI onsite office, i.e., where I lived. I lived in a compound, an RTI compound. The RTI headquarters’ office was in the IZ and I lived in that compound. They had 25 or 30 employees; you know a team leader, a deputy team leader, a communications director, a monitoring and evaluation expert. I lived there and they did not understand, did not seem to me to understand what PRT’s goals were, what the stresses were. From my room I would drive in every morning, cross the IZ to the Baghdad PRT. You know, it is a seven-minute drive or something. I am afraid as a consultant my interface and my support from my direct employer was really tenuous, and I still consider that to be a dysfunctional element in the project.

But as I read to you earlier, the GAO report about individuals making a difference. Because I received so little instruction from RTI, so little support, I would just go off and find a hole. The team leader said, “I want you to go to the JPC meeting on Thursday and then coordinate some of the activity” which I did. “This IACM meeting is falling apart. Let’s have the Baghdad PRT involved, let’s pick up on that. Let’s make ourselves more well known.” So I just worked with the team leader and his deputy to begin to build up the PRTs activities in governance and was away from my direct employer.

*Q: So your support, certainly from the local offices was not what you wanted and how about the support from the headquarters in North Carolina?*

A: I think the headquarters was supporting the home office in Baghdad as much as it could. There were frequently representatives out to visit. I do not think a very conservative North Carolina firm really understands the tremendous stresses involved in operating a full project in this consultancy project. This consultancy project operated five offices around the country. It was centered in Baghdad operating a full-fledged project with five major offices and one headquarters office in Baghdad in the IZ in a full war zone. I do not believe a really conservative, Southern based company ever really understood the needs and their ramifications.

*Q: And the need for flexibility?*

A: Yes, and the need for flexibility, the need for support, the need for understanding of individuals; so therefore I just said, “OK, I will live at the RTI compound and I will be nice to everybody there but I will take my instructions from the Baghdad PRT.” After all, that is whom I am working for. I was seconded out to the Baghdad PRT. I am doing governance work for the team leader and his deputy, and so I focused on that area.

So as you mentioned earlier there was a stove piping. I think there were always communication gaps, but in a war zone you have to look at what you can do and you have to find ways you can make a difference.

*Q: Can you describe the PRT activities related to economic reconstruction and development?*

A: I can give you some in brief because I attended some of their meetings but you really should go to current members. One very important thing the economic team did was they began having monthly, sponsoring, managing, coordinating, meetings in the IZ of the economic committee chairmen of each local district council. Now, let us go back. Remember, the provincial council were elected by party list, but then in each district, Sadr City, Amadiyah, whatever, there is a local district council. They were not elected with the purple fingers vote of January, 2006. They had been elected earlier, the election processes were begun and the caucusing effort begun by the CPA troops, you know, the OECPA days. So they were really representative of the community. They were community leaders who the community had elected, had appointed to be local district committee leaders. Each of these district committees had a governance officer, had an econ officer, had a security officer, you know, x, y, z. So the Baghdad PRT econ department was the first to begin to get these econ people from the local districts together, bring them into the IZ once a month, give them lunch. And the Baghdad Provincial Council would host a meeting with the district council leaders about economic issues and then the Iraqi representative could bring this information back to the Baghdad Provincial Council. The Baghdad Provincial Council would meet with these various districts to promote economic development, to solve problems, to solve security problems so that businesses could continue to operate, etc. So the econ committee PRT began this monthly meeting of econ local government leaders and that was excellent. At that time that was threshold, special work.

*Q: Did you see civil affairs soldiers actively involved in these reconstruction projects?*

A: Early on not; later on, yes. And the econ office through these monthly meetings also promoted these goals and, indeed, by the time I left, every local district office council hall or the local city council hall had provided space for a micro finance officer, a local Iraqi micro finance officer, which involved money from another project. So indeed these econ efforts were as strong as or stronger than governance. The rule of law PRT efforts were as strong as the governance efforts. But these regular meetings and providing the impetus to get a micro finance officer into each local district, full time so that they could provide micro financing and training, launching entrepreneurs within each district. Those were two really strong positives.

*Q: You mentioned the provincial reconstruction redevelopment committee, the PRCD. How would you evaluate its performance?*

A: Fantastic, triple A, just very, very good.

*Q: Could you now describe the work of the rule of law officer and how the PRT assisted Iraqi police, courts and prison?. Did you connect with any of that?*

A: Yes, I did. My office was next to them and I did a little bit of work, especially on the NGO level with them. To get specifics you need to talk to a rule of law person. He probably left around Christmas. He was an assistant district attorney in Illinois and took a year off and then extended six months because he was doing such fine work. They went to police stations to look at conditions, and to assess police work. They provided training, they met with judges, they went to adolescent detention centers. It took about six months, but the military gave us a generator to provide electricity to one of the adolescent detention centers because they had no electricity. Sometimes in a war zone successes are measured in little increments. It is awfully hard to do the big things. The rule of law team was out of the Baghdad PRT almost everyday of the week. Sometimes they would have two missions, two convoys outside the wire if security permitted and they went to the places I just mentioned. They held judges' training courses and so they would be featured in one of newspapers courtesy of public diplomacy. The econ PRT team met with the local council. The rule of law team had stand out activities and is leaving us a positive footprint in the rule of law area, but it is very slow.

*Q: And did you observe the PRTs relationship to the training programs conducted by the Multinational Security Transition Command, Iraq?*

A: Generally speaking, the deputy team leader was in charge of interplay with MSTCI. I was not a part of any of that.

*Q: Did you have any interactions with the PRTs agricultural advisor?*

A: Yes, the PRT agricultural advisor was a part of the econ team and they met, and during my first few months there was a young sergeant or specialist.

*Q: You had touched a little bit earlier on the Iraqi cultural advisor. Could you describe and evaluate the advisor's role and effectiveness?*

A: Triple A. I worked with three or four of them. The econ team had an excellent BBA (Bicultural Bilingual Advisor). When I arrived I had already worked many other USAID consulting jobs throughout Eastern Europe. They are not supposed to be translators. The Baghdad PRT had eight or ten translators, some very good and some iffy, but they all tried. Again, they came in from outside everyday and it was tough. The BBAs lived in the IZ and they were generally Iraqi Americans who had fled around Saddam's time and became Americans and they wanted to come back and really add to their country's development. They were paid a competitive salary. Millions of dollars were allocated to the Baghdad Provincial Council, the PRDC. The U.S. government gave money to the Baghdad PC, to the Baghdad PRDC committee mechanism, and the Baghdad PC members through the PRDC determined how this money was to be spent. So many American dollars and coalition dollars, pounds you know, were going, were being spread



out all over the place so the PRDC mechanism was to give American dollars to the PC and for them to manage it without corruption and to determine their needs in the community. So our BBA managed that. The BBA in the econ department was from Europe. He was then an expat, his family had migrated to Europe and he was a tremendous help. They provided just what their name described; bilingual, bicultural advice. They gave more viability to us expats who did not speak the language; they would give us little hints if we were overstepping bounds. They helped me understand the place of women in the household and whatever. I just cannot tell you how strongly they performed. They acted as intermediaries between the local government and our work and us English speaking advisors, counselors, managers, etc.

*Q: You have already touched on many of the projects of the PRT. Did you have any further comment in this area of some concrete accomplishments during your tenure?*

A: I think we have covered so much today.

*Q: We covered a lot. Do you have any further assessments that you would like to make of the mission and its accomplishments in the areas of governance, economic development, utilizing American military and civilian resources and the counterinsurgency area? Do you feel the PRT is accomplishing its mission in the sort of very broad way?*

A: Yes, I do.

*Q: Do you think it is making headway?*

A: Well, when I was there, it was. That is six, seven months ago.

*Q: You were maybe a little uncertain in the counterinsurgency area but then I guess, you left before any real effectiveness was demonstrated.*

A: Exactly. As I was leaving in July. The last troops of the surge, which was to bring the counterinsurgency to the community, did not arrive until June or July. Since then and from what I have seen and friends have written me, I think things are improving a great deal, at least in the short term. As for the long term prospects politically, I just do not know. I do not want to comment on that. It is so confusing right now, politically. Shia, Sunni and Kurds and women's rights and I just, I am pretty depressed about it, long term. But from what I saw the level of commitment by the Baghdad PRT military and civilian people was high and strong.

*Q: Did you feel that you had adequate training to prepare you to serve in a PRT?*

A: No, I did not. I had no training at all.

*Q: No training at all. And your home agency did not provide you any training?*

A: No, that was a big sore point. To go back, I believe they have begun to train people better now. I arrived at a difficult time; it was early in the history of PRTs. Nobody knew what to do with PRTs. Actually, in the little briefing they gave me, they said they were not sure what I would do with the PRT and they were not sure what the PRT was, but they are going to put you there because by contract they must do that. But that happens.

*Q: Do you have any, and this is the last question, lessons that you would like to share with us based on your experience in Iraq?*

A: I think the one lesson I would like to share at this time to recommend that our State Department and our government provide more openings to hire relevant and needy local Iraqis who help us in interpreting. We need more BBAs. We also need to allow them to emigrate to America and not be left in the danger that they are frequently in.

And here is a quick story; on July 4, 2007, a couple of weeks before I left, I was walking between the PX Exchange and our PRT building, I was in front of the CASH, the hospital, and there was an ambulance there and they were offloading two very dirty body bags, black body bags. Body bags that stunk and had mud and water on them and the military was off loading them and there was a nurse there receiving these two bodies and a lady standing there and I asked that lady, "who is this?" She said, "I am State Department. These are two of our employees, our local employees who have been missing for two weeks, and we are pretty sure these people are in the body bags. These employees were found this morning and we are pretty sure these are the two employees who have been missing for the last couple of weeks." It was a couple, a married couple who worked together at the embassy and you know, here it was July 4 and I kind of put my hand over my heart, as I saw the bodies, and I walked away very sad. I just think that the treatment we receive, that we are providing to the people who are our core workers, who are providing core assistance to us--we could be much stronger and better with them. We are a very big hearted country.

*Q: In this regard you think that easier immigration for them is the answer?*

A: Yes.

*Q: Are there any other kind of support and security measures that might be taken to assist these local employees? I mean, would you recommend compounding them?*

A: I think that the new ambassador, who came in March of 2007, has requested more support, more appreciation for their work. I think that may be being addressed as we discuss this.

*Q: I thank you for your interview.*