

United States Institute of Peace
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Iraq PRT Experience Project

INTERVIEW #43

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Executive Summary

Interviewee spent 12 months in Iraq; seven months with the Al Muthanna Blue Force Tracking team, headquartered some distance away, at Tallil Air Base (about 300 kilometers southeast of Baghdad). Team was short-staffed at first (5) but grew to 12 after seven months.

(Note: Blue Force Tracking is a network of interconnected software and hardware designed to link satellites, weaponry, vehicles, aircraft, communications devices and other technology, so U.S. military personnel can recognize and communicate with each other.)

Job of interviewee was as senior governance advisor; had served in a previous tour as advisor to Iraq's minister of defense. Now a 31-61 from the private sector.

Mission of the PRT was to support the Al Muthanna provincial government in gaining capacity and becoming self-sufficient. Also kept open communication with Iraqi non-governmental groups (agricultural and women's groups). There was no military person on the team; both team leader and deputy were Foreign Service officers. Organization worked extremely well for the particular situation. No improvements needed.

The PRT went to OPA for funds and personnel support. There was no stovepiping; most team members were DOS or USAID and worked well together. Functioned very well together.

Cooperated very successfully with an Australian battle group and other military units on medical and veterinary assistance projects. The services were appreciated; Iraqi farmers and citizens responded in numbers, coming in to get help.

Security environment in Al Muthanna was permissive: The tribes kept any aggressive elements under control. The team made it clear they were there to help and that the only way this was possible was if they could move about in safety. In addition, excellent security was provided by Triple Canopy. If you can go out low-profile, as civilians, you can get out farther, and more often. The team got out three to four times a week.

Effectiveness in strengthening governance is still a question; they might simply be doing what was asked. The test will come when we leave. We did get them on track with budgets, though. Muthanna was the first province to stand on its own, almost ready to sustain itself as well.

Public affairs handled by a foreign service officer. Worked effectively communicating to Iraqi citizens; for instance, about availability of the medical and vet services. We gave the Iraqis the credit for achievements. Team didn't want credit and remained in the background. Wanted Iraqis to see their government stepping up, doing things for the people. Got a lot of media coverage for them. Baghdad TV did interviews with Iraqi military leaders. Public affairs was great success, and very effective.

Another main focus was strengthening counter-insurgency, in consultation with OPA and DOS. Aim was to get grass-roots support for developing a stable environment in the province. Tribes were looking out for their people. When tribal disagreements arose, tribal leaders came together, and took a vote. They have their own democracy – not like ours, but a sort of democracy that is their own.

RTI budget person did outstanding work with budgets, although he was not there long enough to establish the kinds of relationships you need to develop. RTI was also good in agricultural advising. One, from India, observed similarity in environments between this region and India; and recommended beekeeping.

When interviewee got there, agriculture was merely at the level of just sustaining a family. No profit. They were not advancing themselves. In time, cooperatives developed.

Other programs involved education and hygiene. Building schools, bridges. These were successful. Help came from the Army Corps of Engineers, working on the large projects; but they were not part of our PRT. While some PRTs had close relations with the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC), we did not.

Most of my rule of law work related to police, courts and prisons. Upgrade court house system, work with judges, do security and upgrade police training, through International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL).

Training for PRT work was good; most prior to departure for Iraq. Since interviewee had been there before, it was easier to jump in, get to the province and start working. Most people do not do that. They need more time to adjust.

A major achievement: showing the Iraqis that change was possible. Before that, a lot of projects begun were perhaps not what was needed by the people. They might not even have been completed. We hit the ground running. Chose small projects with high impact and high visibility. Roads in places where they were needed by great numbers of people. Built bridges to places people needed to get to. Built schools. Brought in drinking water, by digging wells or hooking up water lines. Brought water to an entire village.

Can only speak about three PRTs that were familiar. As for their effectiveness, on a scale of 1 to 10:

Muthanna PRT: 7 or 8

Masan PRT: 4-5. But that is a very volatile province, and the PRT had no access to the province. The PRT could hardly be justified, under those circumstances. It's getting better now.

Basra PRT: 5-6. Had a robust governance program; a lot of good programs. But security was not stable.

Economic development in Muthanna rates a 6 or 7, Masan, lower (4-5); Basra higher (7-8).

Muthanna stood out in terms of its counter-insurgency work. Our PRT was probably the model for counter-insurgency work.

Lessons Learned:

1. Foremost message to anyone going to Iraq to work with Iraqis is: Do not promise something that you cannot deliver. If you promise something that you can't deliver and then don't deliver, they will never trust you again. If you just tell them, "I don't know if I can do this or not, but I am really going to try and I need your help," they will be more than happy to work with you.

2. You can give them equipment, which is fine. But the ability to sustain that equipment is really what they need. You can give them an Abrahams tank. But if a component breaks, that piece of equipment is probably going to get driven off into the desert and buried someplace because they have no means to repair it.

We have billions of dollars in equipment and things like that, but we are really not giving them the ability to maintain that equipment.

3. Don't build facilities that are very technologically advanced and expect the Iraqis to be able to run them. Building energy stations that rival or even surpass the kinds of things we have in the United States is just not working. They have no training. They could certainly learn it, but we are just simply not giving them that sort of training.

Interview

Q: There are 20 questions. They have to do with the location and the purpose of the PRT you happened to be associated with. And then there are a series of questions on your personal perception of the performance of the PRT and the system itself. The idea is to try and make them better. The first one is a basic one about location and organization.

A: I was with the Al Muthanna BFT (Blue Force Tracker), that type of BFT, it is a little bit smaller unit. It was actually in Tallil Air Base. But the province that we were supporting was Muthanna Province. We are remote from our province.

Q: Was it in place before you arrived? Did have some longevity or was it a newly formed one?

A: It had been there for some time, but I think it was not even a year that it had been in place. It had been very short staffed, I believe. When I got there, there were, I believe, five people there. By the end of my tour -- I spent seven months there -- it was up to 12 or 13 people.

Q: What was your position in the PRT? What was your job?

A: I was the senior governance person. And I had served a tour prior to that in Baghdad as an advisor to the minister of defense.

Q: And are you a State Department person?

A: I am a 31-61. From the private sector.

Q: What was the particular mission of your PRT? Was there one particular mission that it had or did it have a whole series, governance, courts, agriculture, the whole thing?

A: I guess our mission was in line with the PRT mission in general. To support the provincial government in gaining capacity and becoming self-sufficient. Specifically, our team had its own strategy in which we contacted smaller non- governmental organizations.

Q: Were they U.S. NGOs or Europeans or Iraqi?

A: Actually Iraqi. We tried to focus on Iraqis helping Iraqis.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about the PRTs relationship with the Provincial Affairs Office or the NCT (National Coordination Team)?

A: The Provincial Affairs Office and I don't think the NCT exists any longer. It is now called OPA (Office of Provincial Affairs). Our relationship with OPA was that we would go back to OPA for CRS type funding, ESF (Economic Support Funds) funding with our request to them and they would process those. They would also give us support and they provided a desk officer for us which was extremely helpful, because being away from the embassy in Baghdad, having a desk officer in place there to do some of the leg work really inside the embassy was very helpful.

Q: How far were you from Baghdad?

A: You know I am not even sure how many kilometers it was. I never really figured it out. I think it was probably about 40 minutes by helicopter.

Q: So it was too far to just run back and forth by jeep?

A: Yes, it was very difficult to do that. I went to Baghdad in the seven months that I was there maybe two or three times.

Q: Were you located on a base or was it a stand alone?

A: We were on Tallil Air Base. But it was also home to the Sustainment Brigade that was there, which was located kind of in and out while I was there. We had the Province Sustainment Brigade which was an army Brigade and the 82nd Airborne, which was also involved in some sustainment-type activities when I had first gotten there.

Q: The next question has to do with organization: What was the chain of command, civilian and military? What was the internal organization of the PRT?

A: My title was the senior governance advisor or senior governance specialist. And I believe our PRT was unique in that we didn't have any military personnel on the team. We had a foreign service officer, who was the team leader. And for some time we had a deputy team leader who was also a foreign service officer. After he left, one of the people that had come in as a 31-61, (temporary exempted position with the state department), took the deputy team leader position. I believe the only other foreign service position we had was a public affairs officer .

Q: How would you rate the effectiveness of the PRT leadership and management structure itself? You said you didn't have a military component, so that probably removed one of the issues that some PRTs had. But would you say that the way it was structured was effective?

A: I think the way it was structured was extremely effective for our particular situation.

Q: Would you recommend any improvements or changes in the structure of the leadership and management?

A: No, actually I don't think I would. The organization itself was good.

Q: Did you experience what they called "stovepiping" in your PRT?

A: Not really. We were all state department for the most part. We had a couple of USAID people, so there certainly wasn't a separation of the things that we were trying to do, the difference between military and state department. We really didn't have any problem with that.

Q: Closely related to the organization question is this one about relationships. Can you describe the relationship and interaction of PRT members? Did the PRT function effectively?

A: Absolutely. I think we functioned very well together. A lot of the people on the PRT had become really good friends. I maintain contact with them.

Q: That is great. This was not an ePRT (embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team) was it?

A: No it was not.

Q: Did you have any relationship with the Brigade combat team?

A: Absolutely. We also had coalition partners there. We had an Australian battle group. I guess that was their area of operations. Which we coordinated with on a number of occasions, specifically on MedCAP and VetCAP. MedCAP is a Medical Civic Action Program, and VetCAP is a Veterinary Civic Action Program. We did a couple of those while I was there, and I believe they have probably done more because they were so successful. But it was simply we would team up, our PRT along with OBG-3 or AN-4. Either the 82nd Airborne or Province Sustainment Brigade, whatever the sustainment or support was at the time. We would just go out, the three of us together, and provide medical assistance, veterinary assistance to the Iraqis and their livestock.

Q: Was your location particularly relevant to the veterinary component? Was this an area with a lot of agriculture or a lot of animal husbandry going on?

A: Absolutely. Muthanna is in southern Iraq. There are some larger cities, but the majority of Muthanna province is devoted to livestock. You know, being able to provide veterinary assistance was almost as important as providing medical assistance to those people.

Q: What kind of animals?

A: Goats, sheep, some cows, camels. Comparatively, there were a lot of Bedouins in the area. A lot of farmers that would bring their one or two sheep or goats in to the VetCAP. From miles and miles away. Bring them in on the back of a truck just to have them seen. It was effective enough that word spread pretty far pretty quickly. People would come in for it.

Q: Was there a veterinarian as part of the PRT?

A: No, we didn't have that. The veterinarians we had were from the Province Sustainment Brigade.

Q: What about an agricultural advisor? Was there one of those in your PRT?

A: Yes, we had an agricultural advisor. When I first arrived, the agricultural advisor was actually a foreign service officer who was kind of doing double duty. We got a real agricultural advisor through USAID. He had a Ph.D. in agricultural sciences. I am not exactly sure what the title was, but very good, very competent, and was able to provide a great deal of assistance in agriculture.

Q: What about security? What was the level of security threat in your region?

A: We had a very permissive security environment in Muthanna. It was largely a Shiite province, but because of the strategy that we used to talk with the tribes in the area, we were able to deal with them and talk with them so that they would keep their more aggressive elements within their tribes under control so that we could do our jobs effectively.

We made it very clear from the outset that we were there to help the people and to help to build capacity. The only way that we could do that is if we were allowed to move freely. The tribes saw the sense in that and actually helped us to do that.

Q: Did they actually provide security or did they just spread the word not to bother you?

A: They didn't physically or overtly provide security, but I guess they used their power over the tribes to maintain control.

Q: When you did go out, who provided security? Did you go in convoys? Did you have a military or a private security contingent with you as part of the PRT?

A: We had private security which was Triple Canopy.

Q: Is that the name of a company?

A: Yes. It was very much like Blackwater in what they do. I have worked with both Blackwater and Triple Canopy. Triple Canopy was an outstanding security firm to be working with in that environment.

Q: They didn't have the same requirements as the military that for instance you needed to have four vehicles. Could you go out a little bit more easily?

A: Yes, we could.

Q: OK, so that was an advantage, I assume?

A: Absolutely, and that is something that I have given briefings on. On how PRTs work and how they should be the most effective. In my opinion at least in that particular environment, if you can go out as low profile as possible in that permissive security

environment, if you can go out low profile as civilians rather than military, having done the proper ground work in advance, it can certainly be a benefit to do that.

Q: Did you feel that you and your fellow PRT members were able to get out as often as you needed to into the field?

A: Yes. It certainly would have been better if we had been in our province and had greater access at some times, but that being said, we were still able to get out three or four times a week on average and sometimes more often than that.

Q: You mentioned working with some Iraqi NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations). Did you also work with international groups?

A: I didn't really work with very many international groups. There really wasn't any need to do that. The NGOs that we worked with were largely dealing with agriculture and women's groups. As far as governance in that area I really didn't find any NGOs that would have been a benefit.

Q: Were you able to effectively do governance work with the local leaders?

A: To some degree. I tried. I put a great deal of effort into doing just that. How effective I was is difficult to say. We did on a couple of occasions do some good work, I guess. It is difficult to say because we are still there supporting them. They are not standing on their own yet. So it could be they are doing simply what we asked and when we leave, they are going to do what they want. Which might be fine, too. But to say that I was effective in advising on governance, I can't really say that I was or I wasn't. I certainly was able to form some good relationships with the governor, with the provincial council, and with the lower or more localized government units. But we had them on track to creating their own budgets.

Q: That is a big accomplishment.

A: Yeah, it really was. It was extremely difficult but they were doing pretty well on their own. Muthanna was the first big province in Iraq with provincial Iraqi control. They were the first to be able to stand on their own. Security was to a point where they were able to do that, and I think the government was ahead. Not ahead of the governments in the north, but very close. Enough that they were almost ready to sustain themselves even when I was there.

Q: Was there a public affairs officer in your group?

A: Our public affairs officer was a foreign service officer.

Q: What was his audience? Was there media in the area for him to deal with or was it the population?

A: Actually, that was a big part of how we got the word out to the people for the MedCAP and the VetCAP. We also worked with OBG and the 82nd Airborne and Seventh Sustainment Brigade. The other key parts to do that were the Iraqi military. Although we coordinated everything -- we bought the supplies and got everything there and got everything prepared -- we put the Iraqi military in the forefront.

Q: You mean in terms of announcing things or describing what you were doing, you gave them a lot of credit for it?

A: We gave them all the credit. We stayed in the shadows. We didn't really want any credit from the people in the province or in Iraq. We didn't want them to see us in the forefront. We wanted them to see the Iraqis themselves, the government stepping forward and doing things for the people. Because of that we were able to get a lot of media coverage from radio stations and TV stations. A couple of times Baghdad TV stations would come down and do interviews with the Iraqi military. We also got interviewed as well. But we had great media coverage, and that was largely due to our public affairs officer, him getting out and getting those people involved.

Q: So you would rate the program effective?

A: Oh absolutely. He was excellent.

Q: The next question has to do with counter-insurgency. PRTs are intended to bolster moderates and provide the economic component to the U.S. counter-insurgency effort. What comprised this effort in your PRT? Was it effective?

A: Yes, absolutely, and that was probably the main focus of our strategy. It really shaped the way we did things. Our team leader came up with the strategy, in consultation with OPA and with State Department. But the way we did things really was aimed at encouraging grass roots efforts, not rebellion against the local government, but rather a grass roots involvement in a movement toward creating the most stable environment in the province. That is why we went directly to the tribes and directly to NGOs that were willing to work with us. An example that I can give you for that effort was shortly after we started doing projects with the tribes, giving out food for Ramadan for after dark for the immediate people in the immediate community, also giving out wheel chairs for the immediate people. We had in one of the cities where we worked something along the line of two or three hundred people who went to the city council meeting and peaceably forced their way in, you know not with any hostility, but forced their way into the meetings and demanded that the city council perform in the same way that the PRT was, at least as they saw it.

It was outstanding, very good. It was very encouraging to see that happen, and things began to change at that point within the province. Where prior to that the provincial council and the local governments were kind of snubbing us, not dealing with us and thinking that if they kept doing that we would go away. After that happened, they started

coming to us and asking for our help. That was really a huge turning point. It really was great.

Q: What were the PRT's activities relative to promoting democracy and the ability of provincial or sub-provincial governments to function effectively?

A: The way the tribes are structured and the way things are done, it may be a little bit different style or brand of democracy than is here. But it certainly is a version of democracy.

Q: It is people taking responsibility for their own governance?

A: Yes, absolutely. And where the local or provincial government wasn't doing that, the tribes were, absolutely they were. That is another reason why we chose to deal with the tribes as much as we did. They were actually looking out for their people, and it worked. It worked to a very good degree. When the tribes came to an impasse -- and when I say tribes, we are talking in some cases of thousands of people. So it is not really a small unit that we are talking about. But when the tribal sheiks would come together the leaders of the sub tribes, sub units would come together and get to an impasse, at least on one occasion we saw them take a vote. They took a vote and decided which projects and in which areas they were going to serve, because they simply couldn't come up with a short list.

Q: Is this something they would not have done in previous times, dealt with an issue like that?

A: I think that is actually the way that they dealt with it. It wasn't something that we could guess. They just did it. They didn't have formal ballots or anything like that. I think they wrote their projects on pieces of paper and they sent them forward. I think we have got this on film. They had a very small young boy come in with no real affiliation to anyone. He chose the projects they had all submitted.

Q: What about RTI? Did you deal with RTI and if so could you evaluate the role that they played to promote governance?

A: Yes. With governance we had an RTI budget person who came in. He started doing all these budgets where I had been doing it, and quite honestly, I am not an appropriate person for that task. So as far as that goes, I owe them a debt of gratitude. He did a very good job in the short time that he was there. I think he was only there for a short tour, which in my opinion is too short of a time. You can barely build relationships in that short of a time.

I mean, you can build fairly quickly a good relationship with an Iraqi, but it is not going to be a very deep relationship. To get other relationships particularly in depth, the way someone actually trusts you and will do something for you without questioning or going somewhere else to get a different answer. It takes more time than that.

Q: But in terms of RTI's usefulness?

A: They were great. They were not only governance but also agricultural advisors that were on our team. Our one agriculture advisor was an RTI agricultural advisor. He was from India which is very much the same environment as southern Iraq. He was right on target with so many of the things that he did. He saw that bee keeping and some of the things of that nature, small co-ops, were the way to go. He implemented that based on his experience. I don't know if the USDA advisor would have come up to that.

Q: As a result of his presence there did you see any changes in the way they handled their goats and bees and camels and so on, or was it just kind of maintaining what was already going on?

A: Well really when he first started, and I can't speak a whole lot about agriculture, other than what I saw. I am not any type of expert in agriculture. But just looking at what I witnessed, when we first got there, agriculture in Muthanna was largely just sustainable, or used to sustain the family unit. They weren't producing anything for profit. They weren't advancing themselves in any way. I don't think they had the means to at that point. Southern Iraq was so brutally oppressed under Saddam that they really didn't have anything to work with. After our advisor started coming out with his projects and actually implementing, things started to change. People started seeing a little bit of light in doing these things, and wanted to join the co-ops and wanted to start up a bee keeping business. Certainly the things that he came up with were very helpful.

Q: Were there other projects that would be described as development or economic reconstruction that your PRT was involved in?

A: At the stage of development that we were at when I was there, we were largely addressing education and hygiene. Building a school system within the community.

We were building schools; we were building bridges, so that the kids wouldn't have to walk across fallen-down date palms to cross the river. Really trying to help with the educational system. We were, I think, very successful in doing that, at least to the point where I left. I am sure that they continued.

Q: Were civil affairs soldiers taking part in these construction and reconstruction projects?

A: We had the Army Corps of Engineers and there was Gulf Region South (GRS). I believe that they were all the engineers. They mainly worked on the large projects. They helped us with our project and trying to get awards and things like that, that we could use because we did have an engineer on our team. But that was outside of even his resources at that point. So those civil engineers did help us but they were not part of the PRT.

Q: Was there a connection between your PRT and Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee? And how did that work, the PRDC?

A: There really wasn't. A lot of PRTs had very close relations with PRDC. We did not. That was largely because of our relationship with the provincial council, and the provincial council's ability to do things on their own, or maybe their inability to do things the way we were asking them to. But no, to answer your question, we didn't have a lot of contact with the PRDC.

Q: Did you have any opinion about the effectiveness of the PRDC?

A: No, I really don't. I don't simply because we didn't work with them.

Q: Did rule of law come under your area?

A: Actually it did.

Q: So you were the rule of law officer as well as the governance person?

A: Yes. Only because it came in most closely under governance and I had some background in security type issues. From the 60's.

Q: OK, would you talk a little bit about how you worked with the Iraqi police, courts and prisons?

A: Actually that is largely all I did under rule of law. The court house systems that we were working with, we were trying to upgrade, and improve security and things like that through INL.

Q: What is INL?

A: That is International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. It is part of the State Department, a bureau of the State Department. They were entirely responsible for rule of law and police training in Iraq.

Q: Did you have direct contact with Iraqi police and judges for example?

A: Not direct contact, but I worked through the agents that I had developed, Iraqis who would go and work directly with the people that we were helping. But yes, the judges and the police that we were coordinating with, we had very good contact with them.

Q: How did the PRTs relate to training programs run by the Multinational Security Transitions Command? (MNSTC)

A: Actually while I was an advisor to the ministry of defense I was part of MNSTC. But at the PRT we really didn't have a whole lot of contact with them.

I worked with them while in Baghdad. They were very good to work with. We were a coalition team that advised specifically civilian elements within the ministry of defense. I worked in a number of areas: international relations, international defense relations, and with defense attaches. I advised the secretary general on a few issues. And I also did training, I was the civilian training coordinator for the ministry of defense. That was in Baghdad previously.

Q: That was separate from your PRT experience.

A: It was. I thought that that may help me to find training and things like that for the provincial officials in Muthanna when I got there. It turned out that they really couldn't help us much at all. Simply because that was outside of their purview. The police training and things like that we were not able to fund, but MNSTC already had that and Femat and those elements that were already engaged in training.

Q: It is hard to predict what you are going to need and what will be useful before you get there isn't it?

A: Absolutely and that was really disappointing because I had been thrown into an ash pit. I ran into a brick wall immediately.

Q: That kind of brings us to the issue of training. Looking back on your experience, was your training appropriate to your PRT work? Did your home agency provide you with the programmatic training for your position?

A: Yeah. The training that we went through here and the training at this point has changed somewhat. It was actually a very good course. I really don't have any specifics.

Q: How much of the training takes place here as opposed to when you hit the ground? Are you supposed to be ready to run as soon as you land?

A: Once I got to Iraq I didn't receive any training. That may have been simply because of the way that I came back. I had already done a tour and was already familiar with how things were. I basically checked myself into the embassy, and went down to the Province on my own. Most people don't do that, I don't think.

Q: In terms of your PRT's effectiveness, what would you say that it achieved during the time you were there in terms of specific projects or identifiable achievements?

A: I think that probably the largest achievement that we made was, and it probably is going to sound kind of corny, but showing the Iraqis that change was possible. It wasn't something that was not doable really. I think prior to our arrival and our starting our strategy, a lot of the projects that had been started were maybe not exactly what was needed. I don't want to say inappropriate but not necessarily what was needed by the majority of the people and were not finished in the way that they should have been or

maybe not even finished at all. They may have been dropped at some point. When we went there, we really hit the ground running. We chose small projects that had high impact, high visibility. We did them. We did them quickly. They affected a large number of people immediately.

Q: These included the schools and the veterinary and the medical projects?

A: Yes, the veterinary and the medical project, that was MedCAP and VetCAP. Those were largely supplemental to what we were doing. Those were to help people with immediate medical things. The projects that I am talking about are more infrastructure type projects, building roads in places where roads are needed. A lot of roads were being built, but largely for a very small number of people that had the money and the influence to make it happen. We didn't do it that way. We put roads in communities that helped large numbers of people to get access to school, to get access to the businesses and things that they needed to get access to, that previously they had no access to. We built bridges, both vehicle bridges and foot bridges. Like I said, we built schools. We brought clean drinking water, which doesn't sound like much but that was a huge success to be able to bring clean drinking water.

Q: Did you bring it in or dig wells?

A: We dug wells. We either did that or hooked up water lines and brought it in on some existing water lines. I have pictures of this as well, but we went to a village that sticks out in my mind, of a little girl, a picture of a little girl who had brought livestock down to a pond where they would drink, and at the same time she was beside the livestock drinking water. That is where the entire village got their water including the livestock and the animals. We brought clean water to that village.

Q: I only have two more questions. One is an assessment of PRTs in general, and I would like to know your assessment of their success in the four areas of their general purpose: improving government; promoting economic development; using American military and civilian resources; and finally, counter insurgency. You could use a scale of one to ten if you want to, or you could just describe your view of how effective they have been in those areas.

A: I had contact specifically with three PRTs, my own and two others that were based on Tallil. For me to talk outside of that really exceeds my knowledge. I can't judge how they were doing because I honestly don't know. The three PRTs that I was working with, and I guess the Basra PRT to some degree as well, four I can talk about. The first is governance you said?

Q: Yes.

A: OK, on a scale of one to ten and you are talking effectiveness of the PRTs?

Q: Yes how effectively they are accomplishing their goals in these four areas.

A: That is really hard to say because for Muthanna PRT I would say seven or eight. For Masan PRT I would say maybe a four or five, but that was because they had no access at that time to their province. Masan is a very volatile province. It was at that time. I think it is getting better now. If they ever talked with their local governance officials it was because those individuals came into Tallil Air Base and had meetings with them there.

Q: So it was a very insecure situation there.

A: It was horrendous. While there may have been a need for that PRT to exist, honestly under those circumstances it would have been difficult to justify. So they just went on continuing at the capacity they were at. Basra PRT had a very robust governance program. They had a lot of good programs, but again that province was so volatile it is difficult to say how effective they really were. Five or six, I really don't know. Becar province again not as permissive a security environment as Muthanna but very good by comparison to either Basra or Musan. They were pretty permissive. They did extensive work with PRDC (Provincial Reconstruction Developmental Council), whereas we had almost no contact with the PRDC. They would go out and actually sit at the meetings with the PRDC and hash things out on a weekly basis. And they were able to get a lot of things done. It was such an entirely different situation than where we were, a different strategy that it really doesn't seem fair. But on a scale from one to ten I would say seven or eight, maybe even higher than that.

Q: What about economic development?

A: Economic development in Muthanna I would say maybe a six or a seven. Masan naturally lower than that, maybe a four or a five at least at the time I was there. I don't know now. Basra, probably higher than that, seven or an eight I think. And Bekar probably even higher than that, eight or nine.

Q: How would you rate the utilization of American military and civilian resources?

A: In Muthanna, because it was a PIC province (provincial Iraqi control), there was virtually no military presence at all. It was being secured almost entirely by or entirely by Iraqi forces. The only military presence there was at the air base and at forward combat outposts simply for protection along the main transportation routes. It was to provide security for the entire province, so there was for Muthanna virtually no utilization of military. We did MedCAPS and VetCAPS, so I guess there is a little bit there. There were no large projects being done by the military. So I would say maybe three or four. I honestly don't know how to put that on a scale.

Q: Finally, how would you grade the counter-insurgency effort? How effective were the PRTs in achieving that part of the mission?

A: Our PRT was extremely effective because of the strategy we undertook and that was largely due to our team leader's strategic vision. He had worked on counter-insurgency

in the past. He brought that expertise to the table, and that was extremely helpful. I would say our PRT was probably the model for counter-insurgency work.

Q: Then the last question; a very broad one. It is what lessons you drew from your experience there that would be helpful for people who follow?

A: I would say the absolute first and foremost lesson that I would tell the people going to Iraq to work with Iraqis is do not promise something that you cannot deliver. If you promise something that you can't deliver and then don't deliver, they will never trust you again. It would be a very long road if you went about doing business that way; and a lot of people do.

A lot of people go over and say we are going to bring these huge sweeping changes, and then for the next eleven and a half months don't really do much of anything. Then the next team or group are met with that resistance and absolutely nothing gets done. I think that is largely why. And if you just tell them: "I don't know if I can do this or not, but I am really going to try and I need your help", they will be more than happy to work with you. They understand, as most people would. If you are up front and tell them the truth to begin with. Don't try to make it seem like you are the savior of all of Iraq. You will actually get a lot more done, because they are not incompetent. They are very competent. But if you tell them you are going to do it, they are just going to sit back. That is what they will do. They will sit back and let you do it.

Q: That is very good advice. Is there anything else you would like to add to that?

A: Yes, actually. Something I advised just last week to a group going from DOD. Staff officers going over not to a PRT but to work with PRTs. They were talking about equipment and what kind of things are needed. I told them that you can give them equipment, which is fine. But the ability to sustain that equipment is really what they need. You can give them an Abrahams tank. But if a component breaks, that piece of equipment is probably going to get driven off into the desert and buried someplace because they have no means to repair it.

We are pouring huge sums of money into equipping things and we are not focusing on teaching them how to maintain the equipment, even preventive maintenance.

Q: Preventative maintenance was important even to police units?

A: Very, very critical. I asked them what they needed and what I could do to help them and their response was not more guns or more ammunition, not more body armor, things like that. You know what they asked me for?

Q: What was it?

A: They asked me for training on maintenance on humvees, because they had humvees that had been given to them that they couldn't maintain. I mean they didn't have tires.

Q: Are we sending anybody like mechanics and experts in that area? Are there enough people like that going over there?

A: In my opinion, no. We provide billions of dollars in equipment and things like that, but we are really not giving them the ability to maintain that equipment.

Q: That is very important for you to say.

A: Absolutely. I saw far too much of that. It is equipment that is by and by being destroyed by the elements or whatever, because the Iraqis can't work on it. Even if at a later date they learn how to replace a transmission or drop a new engine in, it is not going to be worth it because that piece of equipment has been sitting there for years and is destroyed.

Q: So providing sustainability is another lesson we should remember. OK, those are two really good important things. I appreciate you mentioning them.

A: Yeah, well those are the things that I saw that were probably the most critical. You know there is another thing: building facilities that are very technologically advanced and expecting the Iraqis to be able to run them. Building energy stations that rival or even surpass the kinds of things we have in the United States is just not working. Again same type of thing. You are giving them something they don't know how to maintain. They have no training. They could certainly learn it, but we are just simply not giving them that sort of training. There was a water pumping station, a huge station that could have provided water to a huge number of people in Iraq, that was built and hooked up to the existing water lines. As soon as they turned the pumps on the pressure generated by those pumps blew out all the water lines.

Q: Oh, I was afraid you were going to say that.

A: I mean you know, that type of thing. We are not dealing with the same type of infrastructure that we have in the United States or in the West. And it is difficult. I don't know how to resolve that. Certainly a lot of thought needs to be put into that before we dedicate millions of dollars to those types of projects.

Q: Well I think that your saying it is very important. One of the things people have said to me in the course of these interviews is 'nobody asked me what I thought. I was never debriefed on what I learned and what I can offer.' I think that this exercise, this survey is designed to help correct that and to make use of experience and knowledge of people like you who have been there and can see what has been done right and what hasn't been done right. So your ideas are very important and I think they will be useful and help in the next wave of PRTs.

A: Good. I certainly hope so. I am here and at the same time I am briefing the people who are coming through and going to the PRTs. I brief the PRTers before they go out.

The Pol-Mil desk has asked me to come over and brief military guys that are going out. I am very happy to do that because these are not things that you would think of on this side. My God, who would think if you built a new facility it wouldn't be helpful? Who would guess it would destroy all of the old structures that were there, just by turning the thing on?

Q: Will you be going back?

A: I don't know. I will if it is necessary. My wife has been without me for a couple of years, so I am happy to be back.

Q: All right, great. Thank you so very much.

A: You are very welcome.