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

**INTERVIEW #46**

*Interviewed by: Marilyn Greene*
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**Executive Summary**

A retired military officer, interviewee was member of the governance team in the Baghdad PRT in 2007 and was more highly qualified for that work than the actual head of the team. This created discomfort. He wanted to move elsewhere, but there was no money. There was no mention of the shortage of funds during training at FSI. Also, Iraqis were unwilling to do much more than have tea, since there was nothing we were bringing to the table in terms of funding.

Ended up leaving the PRT to work in the private sector. Had a good job for a while, as a liaison between the Baghdad PRT and the E-PRT which showed up with the surge brigade. As soon as the E-PRT team leader showed up, the last thing they were going to want was some guy walking around their neighborhood from the Baghdad PRT. So as soon as the surge brigades, the E-PRTs and their team leaders showed up, I was out of a job. I got tired of just sitting around doing nothing and collecting a big fat paycheck, so I left. Came back two weeks later with another team, to set up Provincial Program Teams in each of the provinces.

Role of the PRT was dual: Advise Baghdad Provincial Council, acting as middle-men with them and the NCT; acting as arm of the US Embassy. One PRT member in particular was fluent in Arabic, and ended up working a lot for the embassy.

Relations between the PRT and military were excellent, largely because the deputy team leader was a highly regarded officer. He also acted as division engineer. He made sure the military side and the State side were in sync.

Organization of the PRT was fine, with a solid team leader who had some good ideas. Everyone knew what their job was and who they reported to and who was accountable to whom. Stovepiping was not an issue. If the embassy needed PRT members, the team leader realized they needed to go.

While the PRT was *organized* effectively, it did not necessarily *function* effectively – because resources were unavailable. There were missions that were really well thought out, but without security or transportation provisions. You can't do anything if you don't bring resources to the game. And the ones who brought resources to the game were USAID. The PRT thought they could use other people's resources but in reality it was a

matter of how well they could convince other people to use their money for PRT's goals. Only when goals overlapped, in the case of USAID or the Army, would it work.

There were a lot of tasks that never got done because we couldn't get out of the town; all of our transportation security was provided by the Army. And if they had higher-priority tasks, we didn't go anywhere.

Until the Surge, security was very tenuous, mostly because of mortars coming into the compound. Security measures were inconsistent for members of the PRT and embassy staff.

There was not much work with NGOs since most had left. Later, this improved. An Arabic speaking member of the PRT worked hard to get NGOs to return.

It was very disappointing not to be able to produce anything. A disproportionate amount went to security. Without money, you have nothing to bring to the Iraqis – water system, sewers, schools, etc. We went in there with the idea of spending $18 billion on new water treatment plants and electrical grids, but we ended up spending a lot of money just buying guards to make sure that the stuff we built wasn't blown up the day after it was finished.

The small public affairs unit did a pretty good job. They tried to generate opportunities for people in Baghdad to produce media, whether it was newspapers or radio. Iraqi press was active, with some 30 newspapers alone. PRT public affairs worked closely with embassy program, almost as an extension of it.

Work in counter-insurgency was somewhat effective, as our Iraqi counterpart was influential. He was in the Baghdad Provincial Council, and enjoyed credibility with the council and other officials. He obtained input from the Iraqis so we were not building things they didn't want.

For example, the Iraqis didn't want schools where we wanted to build them. Why? Because they didn't have the resources to maintain them, once built. The problem was there had been no communication about this, no pre-established understanding of how it would work.

RTI was very helpful, as USAID contractors. They showed provinces how to come up with programs, starting with a mission statement, and converting that vision into programs and a budget. RTI had their own compound in Baghdad, but they also had teams spread out through Iraq. They had a big program in Fallujah, and they were up north in Kirkuk, they had a really successful program down in Basrah. For security they had a private contractor.

Economic reconstruction: The Baghdad PRT had a small team of Iraqi-Americans and Iraqis that worked with the Baghdad Provincial Council to coordinate projects that were being funded by GRD. The responsibility ended up in the PRT even though it was the GRD money.

Civil affairs people in the PRT would meet with their counterparts in Baghdad, but many weren't really trained or equipped for their jobs. For example, the Baghdad PRT guy who handled agricultural issues was an expert in retail marketing. Most PRT members were not experts in their area of assignment. They were sent out based on the needs of the PRT, not on their skills.

Getting out was a problem. Only six PRT members can go out at once, because of security requirements: four humvees, with security taking up the first and last. Cost was high, about $10,000 per excursion. Plus, there was no place to park all of the vehicles near the Iraqi buildings. Iraqis were reluctant to come to us, for fear of being targeted.

Rule of law people were very active. Got out a lot. Wrote good reports and gave a good idea of what was going on with judges, police, prisons. They were good eyes and ears for the PRT.

Training for the PRT: Medical and emergency training was good. In terms of preparation for the situation in Iraq itself, training was very poor. Trainers are without value if they haven't actually been in country. A waste of time.

Most significant achievement of the PRT was keeping lines of communication open, so when we finally got money in late summer of 2007, we had people in place who knew who to deal with on the Iraqi side of the government, so we didn't waste any more time bringing these funds to effective use. Other than that, without money, the PRT was impotent.

But you could go to Iraqi officials, you knew who they were, you knew who the power players were, you knew what had to be done – so you identified that aspect of them. That's what made them effective, when they finally got some money. Until then it was everyone sitting around drinking chai and talking about how bad things were and what we were trying to do and trying to coordinate more meetings.

Lessons learned:

1. Need to figure out who does what, so PRT isn't trying to reinvent a wheel already developed by USAID. State Department has no business setting up IRMO. Not their job; a waste of money. Should have let AID do it.

2. It was a mistake to turn the 31-61 program over to a contractor who has no idea what's going on in Iraq.

3. Job descriptions need to be matched better with people hired. And once a person is tasked, that task should not be changed by a third party.

4. Situation reporting is best done by civil action people attached to military units. They know what is going on inside Baghdad, at the local level. They get out and actually mix with the people; know what is going on. You cannot get the flavor of what's going on by hanging around the palace.

The problem with the PRTs is that the State Department doesn't know how to do it.

Among the main problems with the E-PRTs: They didn't have any transportation and they didn't have any security with them.

Most of the E-PRTs found a way over a period of time to be successful, especially after funding legislation in 2007 . They were not effective until they could really sit down with Iraqis and come up with projects focused on training instead of building.

**Interview**

*Q: Tell me about the location and organization of your PRT.*

A: I was with the Baghdad PRT

*Q: What was your function there?*

A: I was part of the Governance Team. I thought I was brought over there to work with Iraqi officials in the Baghdad provincial government. But once I got there, there was no space in those jobs. They initially wanted me to work in the embassy with the National Coordination Team because I have considerable military experience and they wanted me to use my executive and administrative expertise up at the palace. I had no qualms doing that, but I had no credibility with the other PRT because I had never been in one. I wanted to put some time in down in the trenches in order to be able to make more informed decisions. I finally talked them out of putting me in the palace and they sent me down to the Baghdad PRT. There was an individual who was brought on as head of Governance Team, but I had a lot more experience than him. So there were some internal politics there.

*Q: Was he a State Department person?*

A: Yes, he was a 31-61.

*Q: Did he have a military or diplomatic background?*

A: He had spent a year in Iraq with a civil action team, and when he got out of his reserve time he moved over as a 31-61. They were reluctant to put a person in charge of me when I had more experience than he did, and they were reluctant to tell me that, but once I figured it out I was like, "Hey, wait. I think I can use my experience better elsewhere." But they had no role because they had no money. That was always the issue with the Baghdad PRT, before they finally got funding towards the end of 2007. During the whole

week that we did our orientation at FSI, it was never mentioned that the PRTs had no funding. So we didn't realize that until we got over there. Then, once we got over there, we were informal advisors to Iraqis, if they chose to invite us into their offices. Most of them would sit and have chai with us, but none of them would really engage with us because we brought nothing to the game.

*Q: Were you part of the NCT or was there a PRT that acted in a role that answered to the NCT? Just because you were in Baghdad did that make a difference in how your PRT was organized?*

A: We were next to the flagpole, so we could walk down to the palace. So the NCT and the Baghdad PRT were pretty hand in glove because of our proximity and also because we had the largest PRT in Iraq. We also did a lot with the surge brigades, so we had a lot more interaction with the NCT and the other PRTs.

*Q: How many members belonged to your PRT?*

A: There were probably at least 60, a mixture of military active duty and National Guard. We only had two State Department people -- the team leader and another guy. The rest were all 31-61s like me, most of them were on the governance team, and then I'd say 85-90% of the team was active-duty military.

*Q: Talk a little about the role of the PRT. Was its mission clear to you?*

A: Our role was a dual thing. First it was to advise and support the Baghdad Provincial Council as much as they'd let us. We were interlocutors between them and what the NCT was doing. And the second thing is that we were sort of a subsidiary of the embassy. The reason I say that is because as it turned out we had a few on the PRT with special skills, such as a 4/4 in Arabic.

*Q: 4/4, what does that mean?*

A: In language ability. She was the next thing to a fluent speaker, so that gave her a lot more chance to interact with Arab politicians and government officials. So she was kind of sucked off by the embassy to do special things, or write cables.

*Q: Was she supposed to be a governance person or a cultural advisor?*

A: She was supposed to be governance. We had the CVAs, they were Iraqi-Americans, and they were spread out throughout the team, but she was just an American and she had traveled extensively through the Middle East and had learned the language through her travels.

*Q: I see, and she was not as available as she could have been, because the embassy was using her?*

A: Yes, we were at a time where the embassy needed her. I don't regret that, she had to do what she had to do, and I had a high degree of regard for her.

*Q: What was the PRT's relationship with the Office of Provincial Affairs?*

A: The provincial affairs council, if that was up at the NCT, it was broken up by regions, and the provincial affairs people had a special area of Iraq that they were in charge of, the office was a multinational office with a Korean officer, British officer, and several U.S. military, an Army and no Air Force or Marines, but Iraq was broken up and they were responsible for their region. I was up at that office several times; especially if there were any issues of coordination with the embassy then I would go up and work with them.

*Q: What was your interaction like with the military commands?*

A: It was terrific because of the deputy team leader, an officer who is highly regarded by the commander, the one that owned all the brigades in Baghdad. He had a dual role: He was the Deputy PRT Team leader and he was also the division engineer of the second Cav. But clearly, this was an officer that we spent most of our time dealing with, he was an extremely competent officer, he picked up on a lot of the political issues that most officers wouldn't pick up on, to make sure that both the military side and the State Department side were in sync.

*Q: So you were a 31-61, that means that you did not wear your military uniform?*

A: No, no. That was a State Department contractor, it was a civil service employee of some designation, but we weren't State Department.

*Q: Addressing now the organization and chain of command in the PRT, would you say that the organization was well thought out and effective?*

A: Yes, the organization was fine. We had a really solid team leader and he had some great ideas on how we would develop solid mission statements for the PRT, and everyone knew what their jobs were and who they reported to and who was accountable to whom.

*Q: In some of the PRTs, where there were State Department people and military people, there was apparently something called "stovepiping," where people would report to their own kind and wouldn't integrate well with people from another background. Did that occur in yours?*

A: No, it didn't, because I think our deputy team leader understood that if someone in the PRT was called off by the embassy, then that guy spoke for the ambassador, who was the big dog in Iraq. So the colonel understood that sometimes his people would be called off by the embassy.

*Q: So you'd say that the PRT functioned pretty well in that the organization was satisfactory?*

A: I'd say that the PRT was organized effectively.

*Q: You wouldn't say that it functioned effectively?*

A: No, because – this is the reason I left – there was no money. We had these missions that we had spent a lot of time developing and we thought they were really well thought out missions. But you can't do anything without security and you can't do anything without transportation and you can't do anything if you don't bring resources to the game. And the ones who brought resources to the game were USAID. And, although we had a USAID member on the PRT and they were kind of integrated, they never really bought into the program, and if you bring money to the game then you're the one that is driving the train. The PRT thought they could use other people's resources but in reality it was a matter of how well they could convince other people to use their money for PRT's goals. As long as the goals overlapped, in the case of USAID or the Army, then it would work.

There were a lot of tasks that never got done because we couldn't get out of the town because remember all of our transportation security was provided by the Army. And if they had higher tasks, we didn't go anywhere.

*Q: That brings us to the security question. You were in Baghdad, so the level of risk was at what, on a scale of one to ten?*

A: I'll tell you between March and September of 2007, it was pretty bad. We were in Iraqi leased real estate which turned out to be a favorite target of our friends outside the wall.

*Q: How much distance was there? What was the perimeter around your building?*

A: The buildings were inside a compound and the compound was guarded. But we weren't really worried about people getting past the guards; we were worried about the mortars. And we were rocketed, and the building and the grounds were frequently rearranged. Between March and the middle of September, when the surge brought the situation back under control, you took your life in your hands. There wasn't a guarantee you'd make it back from Iraq, let's put it that way.

*Q: How far were you from the embassy?*

A: It was about a 15 minute walk.

*Q: You walked? Without any security with you?*

A: No. There were all kinds of Iraqis running around with AK-47s in the IV, I don't think people realize how much Iraqi engagement there was within the IV, and not only did I walk between the palace and the workspace but after I worked there, I drove between the

northern part of the IV and my workspace every day. We had checkpoints within the IV, and we had Air Force security police over watching them, and they were all armed. It was never an issue for me.

The ECM in the palace had an RSO trailing this person everywhere they walked in the building. That was the mindset of the RSO in that building, that was a security mindset echoed by all the FSOs in the building, so even they would take a convoy from the palace down to where the PRT was.

*Q: Why was there such a discrepancy in the security?*

A: You'd have to ask the RSOs.

*Q: So that was something that the ECM chose to have, then?*

A: No, that's something that the RSO worked on and convinced the Ambassador was needed.

*Q: At what point, at what distance if you were traveling, would you get the military escort.*

A: When we left the IV.

*Q: And that was standard procedure? Four vehicles?*

A: Yes.

*Q: And how often did you do that, how often did you get out?*

A: Well, when I moved over to the private side, I did it two or three times per week.

*Q: Okay. Can you talk about the PRT's interaction with either NGOs or International Organizations?*

A: Well, it was limited, but not because of anything the PRTs did. It was because most of the NGOs had left after the UN bombing. The lady on the PRT that spoke fluent Arabic, she was working with one of the USAID contractors on trying to get the NGOs back together again. And they had irregular meetings. But the reality is that they didn't come back until after the surge. The British had some organizations there, some of the Arab organizations out in town had some organizations. There just weren't that many.

*Q: When was your tenure there?*

A: I was there through most of 2007.

*Q: Who were your Iraqis counterparts in your governance work?*

A: I didn't have any.

*Q: Okay. So you had no contact with the tribal councils or the local business community?*

A: I'd go to the meetings that we had at the IV, I went to the Baghdad provincial council building a few times where we had meetings. It was just getting started in a manner where we were getting in there to talk to each other. Even if I had a chance to get out on the town more often, the initiatives were just in the beginning stages and didn't really mature until the awakening council got the military set up and started being effective.

*Q: Was this a function of having no money?*

A: No, it was a matter of having no security; and the Iraqis. The Iraqis were more interested in self preservation. So even if we would have had these relationships with them, we had almost lost control of Iraq and would have totally until the strategy changed.

*Q: You did mention that you didn't have anything to bring to the table, and others have noted that unless you can actually back up your promises that it's counter-effective. Is that a factor in your work?*

A: Absolutely. You know, I have almost 15 years in the Middle East, and the biggest problem was that there was no trust, which is the biggest thing for the Arabs. It takes a good six months minimum before they'll bring anything to a discussion with you and you can become effective. And because the security situation was so bad, it was very hard to meet with anyone. There were some PRTs that were completely stuck and couldn't go anywhere. At least we could go out sometimes. But the problem was that they themselves weren't coordinated, on the Iraqi side. They were still learning their responsibilities and finding people that knew how to do their jobs. Unless you could bring something to the table, like a project or some way to get them to improve the security on a situation, or a way to improve the security or one of their civic services, like water or electricity or sewage, it was a one-sided conversation. And that was the big issue, and all of that was private security. As you probably well know by now, most of the funding went to buying security to protect the projects we were working on. We went in there with the idea of spending $18 billion on new water treatment plants and electrical grids, but we ended up spending a lot of money just buying guards to make sure that the stuff we built wasn't blown up the day after it was finished.

*Q: Did the Public Affairs person on your PRT have a cogent program, and manage it okay? Was the audience Iraqis?*

A: Yes it was.

*Q: And what kind of message did that program convey?*

A: What they were trying to do was to generate more opportunities for people in Baghdad to produce media, whether it was newspapers or radio, and I think there were only two or three people in that whole section, so they were limited in their capability. But there was a very active Iraqi press at the time I was there; they had almost 30 newspapers alone. So I think that they were to communicate the message from the embassy, and the guys in the PRT spent a lot of time at the embassy working with them and they were an extension of the embassy program. But I thought they did good work.

*Q: PRTs are intended to bolster moderates and provide the economic component of the US Counter-insurgency effort. What comprised this effort; and was it effective?*

A: Well, I think it's effective in a limited way because we had a terrific Iraqi counterpart, who was on the Baghdad Provincial Council. He had a lot of credibility with the Iraqi Provincial Council, and also with the mayor, and the head of the Provincial Council. And the Army Corps of Engineers had something called a JROC, which was a Joint Reconstruction Operations Center, and that was in our building too. They were the ones responsible for overseeing all of the construction that the US government was doing in the region, and they were called the Gulf Reconstruction Division and they had them spread out through Iraq. So we were in GRD, which is the central part of Iraq, and most of the reconstruction money that went into Iraq went into the Baghdad region because of the serious degradation of the infrastructure that was there before the war. We didn't do that, but Saddam just didn't spend any money on them, so the problem was we were doing projects with the Iraqis, but it wasn't really well coordinated until about 2005 or 2006. So this counterpart worked with the GRD and with us to get input from the Iraqis on projects we could build with the money the U.S. government was giving us and to be sure that we were spending our money in a place where the Iraqis wanted. Because believe it or not, we were building things for the Iraqis that they didn't want.

*Q: Oh, what for example?*

A: Oh, well, schools.

*Q: They didn't want schools?*

A: They didn't want them in the areas where we were building them. If you go to the SIGIR site, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, and read some of those reports, you'll see that we are trying to turn infrastructure over to the Iraqis and they're not taking them. And, the issue is not so much responsibility; but if you take them, you have to fund the operations and maintenance of them. And that isn't in their budget. And the Iraqis position is, 'We're not going to spend money on something we told you we didn't want.' And that's where the JROC finally came in to be effective. They quit building those things that the Iraqis didn't want. In some cases, not only were we building them, but the Iraqis would fund the same kind of project in the same area a year later.

*Q: How did this happen?*

A: Because there was no coordination between the Americans and the Iraqis. Part of it was that there was no standing government in Baghdad and part of it was when the Iraqi government was dissolved, so went the local governments because they were Baathist.

*Q: So you had no one to work with as a governance person for part of the time?*

A: Well, yes that's true. I was just sitting around. I had a good job for a while, as a liaison between the Baghdad PRT and the E-PRT which showed up with the surge brigade. My argument to my team leader was that as soon as the ambassador showed up that was the E-PRT team leader, the last thing they were going to want was some guy walking around their neighborhood from the Baghdad PRT. So as soon as the surge brigades showed up and the E-PRTs showed up and their team leaders showed up, I was out of a job. So that was fine. When the last guy showed up and I briefed him and let him know that I was here to help him -- but of course they never called because it took them two or three months to figure out what they were supposed to do -- I got tired of just sitting around doing nothing and collecting a big fat paycheck, so I left.

*Q: You left voluntarily then?*

A: Yes, the colonel understood that, but I think they were all surprised when I came back two weeks later with another team.

*Q: Did you have any relations with RTI?*

A: Yes, I had a lot of relations with them, but mostly after I left the PRT. They were very helpful to us.

*Q: In what way?*

A: They were USAID contractors. Maybe some background: My job when I left the PRT was to set up these things called Provincial Program Teams, each of the provinces (and you see this in the newspaper all the time, that the Iraqis aren't spending all their money, and they need to spend more money on projects and we're giving too much money to the Iraqis, and I have to agree with that but what I tell people is, I could give you a billion dollars and if as a government official you don't know how to budget it and program it and execute it properly, then you're just wasting money.)

What happens in Iraq is if you don't have a person that properly knows how to program money and then spend it, it all disappears in corruption. So what I did for my last eight months there was I went around and worked with an Iraqi-American to set up teams of Iraqis who would go out to the provinces and be a fire team to teach them how to program budgets and spend their money. That's what we did. And RTI had a training element that had some very successful programs that they did as something for TTD, where they showed provinces how to come up with programs, starting with mission statements. And then you convert that vision into programs and a budget. That's what

they did. And they already had a partnership with a lot of these, so we just kind of joined on to that and used a lot of their experience in working with the Iraqis, and we used their training element in teaching Iraqis and we formed a partnership with them to send out these teams to just become part of the local governments.

And of course there was a big problem with that because of course they always thought these teams were spies for the Iraqi government. But it worked out, because the whole team was Iraqis. The only American involvement was in the background. We set up the classes and provided the funding for it, and then for the first year we provided funding for the salary and the equipment in these small offices. And then after that the Iraqis absorbed them into their budget. So because it has a completely Iraqi flavor to it, they came to see them as being beneficial. How successful it's going to be is up to the Iraqis. So RTI was a big part of this and I spent a lot of time over there with them. They had weekly or biweekly meetings and briefings. I knew everyone from the team leader on down.

*Q: Where did the RTI folks live and work? Was that in the Freedom Towers also?*

A: They had their own compound, but they also had teams spread out through Iraq. They had a big program in Fallujah, and they were up north in Kirkuk, they had a really successful program down in Basrah, so like I said, I was impressed by a lot of their stuff.

*Q: Who provided security for RTI?*

A: They had a private contractor.

*Q: There's a question here about reconstruction. You've alluded to this in many comments. Can you describe PRT activities related to economic reconstruction and development? What U.S. agencies and PRT members were responsible for these, and did Civil Affairs soldiers take a part?*

A: The Baghdad PRT had a small team of Iraqi-Americans and Iraqis that worked with the Baghdad Provincial Council to coordinate projects that were being funded with the GRD money. That was their job. The fact that they all showed up clearly showed that they had a lot of respect for them, a lot of these guys were in Iraq for up to two years, away from their families. I was impressed by these guys, but you know, clearly, it was something where it could have been responsibly done by the GRD but the responsibility ended up in the PRT even though it was the GRD money.

*Q: And what about the Civil Affairs soldiers? Were they involved?*

A: Well, the PRT was made up of soldiers that had civil affairs specialties. They would go out and meet with their counterparts at the local Baghdad municipal building, which is where the water guys and the sewage guys were. They'd go out there and do what they could. But the reality was, for instance, the Baghdad PRT guy who handled agricultural issues was really a retail marketing expert.

*Q: How did he end up there?*

A: Well, that's what most of the PRT was. They were not experts in their area, they were simply called to active duty and showed up at Fort Bragg to do their training, and then they were distributed out based on the needs of the PRT. There might have been some matching of civilian skills with their Iraqi counterparts, but it was pretty limited. And they went out to the municipal building on an almost daily basis, but not that frequently because there was limited transportation. And it's difficult with 60 guys, because the humvee can only take two guys at a time. And you've only got four humvees, so the passengers usually go in the middle two humvees. So the most you can get in one trip is six guys, because the rest are taken up by guys with guns.

*Q: That's an expensive mode of excursion.*

A: There's no way to get all sixty of those guys out every day. You'd take up all of your resources just getting around town, and plus there was nowhere to park all of these vehicles around the Iraqi buildings.

*Q: Was there a better way to do this? Did you need all of that security?*

A: Yes, in the Red Zone you did.

*Q: How else could you have the meetings?*

A: The Iraqis could come to us.

*Q: But they didn't want to do that?*

A: Well, it was a matter of being targeted. I could have gone out, but there were two things limiting me from going out of town every day to meet my counterpart: one was that every time you went out of town it cost your company $10,000 or $15,000 for the security detail; the second thing was that the continued American presence in a building would assure that that building would be targeted, or the people that you visited would be targeted. You didn't want to set them up as targets. You had to spread out your visits, and they were being courageous in accepting you. Coming into the IV wasn't as big of an issue as being tracked when you came out of the IV, so my Iraqi counterparts would visit us on a regular basis, plus I had an Iraqi colleague that went back and forth every day if he needed to. On the PRT side, it depended on the warmth at the time the meeting was being generated. There were times when the Baghdad Provincial Council was not happy with the American Embassy so they simply shut down the visits. We were pretty much a victim of the political whims of the Iraqis with regard to the American involvement in actions in Baghdad. So you had a job to do, but the Iraqis drove that train.

*Q: What about the PRDC? Do you have anything to do with the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee?*

A: Yes, that was that section I was talking about, working with my counterpart and the PRDC, they were very highly regarded by the Iraqis.

*Q: And did you feel that their performance was satisfactory?*

A: Yes, oh sure, they were definitely doing their jobs, which was partially to get Iraqis more involved in the process of identifying projects and getting them in front of the Americans so we could stop building projects that the Iraqis didn't want.

*Q: Was there a rule of law officer in your PRT?*

A: Yes, they were the second most active in the PRT.

*Q: Who was the first most active?*

A: The people going back and forth to the municipal building

*Q: So the rule of law people were busy, they went out a lot. What did they do? What did they achieve?*

A: They went out a lot. They would probably tell you not very much, but they wrote very good reports and you got a good idea of what was going on out about town. You got a good idea of what was going on with the judges, the police, the prisons. They were good eyes and ears for things we'd never know if we stayed in the IV.

*Q: So they were communicators. Did they actually help the Iraqis to construct things?*

A: No, that was another project. My idea was that the embassy had built the big compound with all of the judges and they were going to do most of the judicial process out there, but also in the IV, in the parliament where they were trying guys like Saddam and big guys like that, but for the local judicial processes for crimes and capturing insurgents, that was all taken care of out in town.

*Q: You talked before a little bit about the preparations at FSI, and then after you got there. How would you assess the training and preparation that you got overall for this job? What would you suggest for improving it?*

A: The medical part was done really well, in fact there was a lot of opportunity to use it. There was a day-and-a- half course on emergency medicine, First Aid, that I thought was really well done. At the time we thought it was overdone but when we got there and we started getting rocketed every day, we understood why we needed it.

*Q: Did you ever have the chance to use it?*

A: Well I personally, fortunately, never had the chance to use it, but I know a lot of other people were in situations where they did need it. So I thought that that was something that was really well done. I thought that they did well in the defensive driving course that they taught; but unfortunately nobody drove, so we didn't need it. I got to drive a little bit in the PRT, to go down to another building to have a meeting with the Baghdad operations center, but for the most part the kind of defensive driving they were talking about would have happened in town and nobody drove in town, that was all done by the Army.

*Q: What kind of vehicle did you drive when you did drive?*

A: I had a Suburban. We all had armored Suburbans.

*Q: And you said that nobody told you that there was no money to fund your programs.*

A: Let me put it this way. We had one brief where the person giving the brief was standing there talking about pictures. The person had never been to Baghdad and half of the information was wrong. It was embarrassing.

*Q: The person was talking about pictures?*

A: The person was saying, for instance, here's the defac at the palace, and it wasn't true. It was actually somewhere else. You should never put someone up there to brief someone unless they know what they're talking about. And I felt sorry for the person who was just doing a job, but because the person had never been to Baghdad there was no way they should have been up there briefing it.

*Q: Any other parts of the training either here or when you got there that were notable?*

A: Well, we had a one-hour lesson on language that was a waste of time. Arabic is one of the more difficult languages. We had one guy speak all afternoon on Iraqi history, which was fascinating but you could have read a book on it. I thought the training was pretty much a waste of time. It didn't help me with my job, that's for sure, because it didn't explain the relationship between the PRTs and the National Coordinating Council and the embassy and the NCT. You could have just showed up in Baghdad and gotten just as much out of it as you did by going to the FSI before.

*Q: Could you talk about, in general, the achievements of your particular PRT? Could you specify a few things?*

A: I think the best thing they did was they kept the lines of communication open so when we finally got money in late summer of 2007, we had people in place who knew who to deal with in the Iraqi side of the government so we didn't waste any more time bringing these funds to effective use.

*Q: So you couldn't list project one, two, three, four, five, we did this and this?*

A: No, because remember, we had good projects but without any kind of resources there wasn't anything you could do. The Iraqis were focused on survival on a daily basis, and they were trying to bring some level of organization to their governance process. And you have to remember RTI advertised that they had taught… Let's put it this way … they spent $250 million educating local Iraqi officials, and by their own powerpoint slides they instructed. But I think when I got there they had been given $250 million by USAID and they had instructed tens of thousands of Iraqis on local government processes. My question was, if you taught that many, why wasn't the country running itself any better? Well, it took me a while to realize that whoever you taught in 2004 and 2005, they've either been killed or they've just left. So every year you're teaching new people, who have very little chance of hanging around. Until you get some kind of stability in government officials, they're not going to be efficient in local government, and that's all related to the local security and stability. That doesn't mean that they gave up. They kept trying, and everybody had no better choice, because otherwise you'd just make the hole even deeper.

*Q: Does the same thing apply for economic development, and counter-insurgency? We're talking about the effectiveness of the PRTs in addressing these main goals, and it seems to me what you're saying about the people leaving or dying could apply to all of these things.*

A: Yes, right. Well, you know the condition of Iraq in early 2007. I'll be the first to tell you that when I got there I thought that if we hadn't lost the war, we were about to. All the way until the spring of 2007 things just got worse. But that's because we had brought all these extra soldiers and there was all this extra fighting going on. But that's the cost that we paid because in 2007 we lost more soldiers than any other year of the war. That's the cost we paid because we waited so long for a proper counter-insurgency. Once it was in place and it was finally joined with resources, then the PRT could be effective.

But you could go to Iraqi officials, you knew who they were, you knew who the power players were, you knew what had to be done – so you identified that aspect of them. That's what made them effective, when they finally got some money. Until then it was everyone sitting around drinking chai and talking about how bad things were and what we were trying to do and trying to coordinate more meetings.

*Q: Do you want to talk a little bit about lessons learned in general? Would there be five points that you'd want to sum up with in terms of lessons learned?*

A: Well I think one of them is the State Department has an arm that does economic development. It's called USAID. These two organizations need to figure out who does what to whom. And they might have that in writing, but they sure as heck don't do that in action.

*Q: You mean the State Department and AID?*

A: Yes. You know, the State Department has no business doing things like IRMO (Iraq Reconstruction Management Office). It's not their job, nor is it their capability. They came in and tried to set up an organization within the embassy that ran the 18 billion dollars that came from Congress in 2003, and I'm telling you it was the most bloated and ineffective bureaucracy that I've ever seen.

*Q: So AID should have done that?*

A: That's AID's job. That's their mission. They've been doing it for decades. They know what they're doing. But when you have an organization within the embassy and AID in the same pool, then it's not going to work. There's a lot of coordination involved. And they joke that State Department people do two things really well: they go to meetings and they write about them. They do not know how to do what AID does, and they tried to do that, they brought in contractors. We spent a lot of money when we could have turned that job over to AID. I'm not saying they're perfect, but they certainly knew a lot more about development than the embassy did.

*Q: So you're saying that money was wasted?*

A: Yes, I think the money was wasted. I just went to meeting after meeting at the embassy where week after week it would be the same subjects, and remember that a lot of these guys that were part of this IRMO team were military guys that were brought in because the State Department couldn't find enough people to fill these billets. And the military, you give them a job and they go out and do it. But a guy that flies helicopters, you tell him to learn banking, it takes a while to learn that. So six months after he gets there he finally learns his job, then in six months he's gone. There's so much turnover. You don't have that with AID. They either bring in a contractor or they do it themselves. And you have this continuity that's very critical.

*Q: So that's one lesson: Let USAID do its work.*

A: The second thing is, this 31-61 program, they've turned that over to a contractor, I thought they were all State Department but they're not. They're all contractors that run this program. And they brought me on, they have this program, and everybody goes through the wickets, then they go through the other end and they go to Iraq.

*Q: Is this one contractor that runs the program?*

A: They're nice people and they do their thing, but they have no idea what's going on in Iraq. It's like, I was in military and when I go to a headquarters I know everyone in that headquarters has been somewhere that involves military operations so I know they've all been somewhere that I've been in the world, so even if they haven't been to Djibouti, they've been to Saudi Arabia and the issues are the same. We have common ground.

These guys at this contractor, their only job was to process people through, and they did their job and we ended up in Iraq, but when we got there, I suspect that most PRT people

you talk to showed up in Iraq with very little understanding of what their job was, and when they got there it was different from what they said it was. There was a lot of turbulence in the personnel in the PRTs and in this 31-61 program. When I was there, there were a lot of guys flipping around trying to find something to do to justify their extraordinarily generous paycheck. They need to match their job descriptions better with the people they hire and when they send them there they need to tell people in Iraq, these people are here to do this job and it's not your provision to go and reorient them somewhere else. Because we were contractors, our salary was tied to our job description, and if you show up in Iraq and they want to move you somewhere else, you should be renegotiating your salary, too.

*Q: By people in Iraq do you mean the American military people?*

A: No, the NCT, and in my case the Baghdad PRT. Like I said, when I first got there the first thing they tried to do was pull me away from the job I'd been sent there to do.

I'd say the third thing is that the best reporters about what was going on were the civil action people attached to the military units. I read their reports every single day and if I wanted to know what was going on inside Baghdad at the local level, I would read their reports. They were incredible. You'd swear there were ten thousand of these young men and women doing these jobs.

*Q: Civil Action? They weren't PAO people?*

A: They were civil action platoons attached to the brigades. Their job was to go out in town and look at the projects the US was building, do recon of a certain district in Baghdad, and report on it.

*Q: They were military people?*

A: They were excellent, they had pictures, interviews with officials, descriptions of conditions on the ground, I really had a great sense of things going on on the ground from reading the reports.

*Q: Like these were military people whose job was civil action?*

A: Yes, and I tried – now the embassy has a Political Military section – and their job is to report on the political military situation in Baghdad. You can see right now the problem. You have these guys in the embassy who have a difficult time doing their job, reporting on the situation, unless they go out and hook themselves up with the Army units, and go around with these civil action people, plus there weren't as many as there were civil action people in the Army. It was critical in 2007 because everybody was trying to measure the effectiveness of the benchmarks that Congress had mandated when they approved the surge. You had these 17 benchmarks in 2007 that were evaluations of how effective the Iraqi government was developing its capability to govern itself. And these civil action people were key to this because they could report what was going on at the

grassroots level. The Pol Mil guys were talking to the people in the Iraqi government, who of course had nothing to do. It's all kumbaya, so of course they're not going to shoot themselves in the foot by saying there's no electricity and nothing to eat.

And so … it's come a long way, but we need to break out of this 20th century State Department mold where you go to functions and you report on them. You have to go out there, and you have to mix with the people. I'm sorry, sometimes that involves putting your life on the line to do that and if you're not willing to do that, then you need to look at another line of work. In the old days, I did two tours in embassies in an official capacity as part of the country team, I know what embassies do. And at least for Baghdad and the Middle East, you cannot get the flavor of what's going on by hanging around the palace. You have to go out in town and join up with the people that are out there, and that includes military people. And you have to suck their brains dry. And I keep saying this: The State Department needs to come in to the 21th Century in training its people, because the days of Chip Bolan and George Kennan, those days are gone. The threat is much more fragmented with the populations of these radical Islamic extremists, and you won't find the answers you need by talking to the guys in government because they won't have the answers you need.

If you've ever seen a map of Iraq and seen how much territory the Marines have to cover, there's only 20,000 Marines in Iraq, and Anbar is just gigantic. You could put 20,000 Marines in Fallujah alone.

*Q: In the course of less than a year it was possible to turn that whole region back to the Iraqis?*

A: That's exactly right. In one year the surge made that much of a difference. I know that because the UN has come back, the NGOs have come back, the international community has come back, they believe enough in the security situation of Iraq that they'll come back and start doing their jobs. And when that happens, Iraq is going to return. Look, they have money. They have a zillion dollars in oil money, so they're going to be rebuilt because they have a commodity that the world wants, called oil. And everybody that's sitting in Dubai and Abu Dhabi is just waiting for it to get a little bit better and then they're going to rebuild Iraq in a way that's going to make us all just stand in awe.

*Q: Did the PRTs help or is Iraq recovering in spite of the PRTs, or were they irrelevant?*

A: Remember there were two kinds of PRTs. There were the ones that were stood up in 2006, and then there were the E-PRTs, that came with the surge brigades. Petraeus from the outset said, no, every brigade has to have an enhanced PRT. So we went from 10 PRTs to 20 Enhanced PRTs in a matter of a year. And of course, that's a large population of people you have to assemble and train … A lot of these guys were brought off the retired lists, we had a couple colonels that were on our PRT in Baghdad that had retired from the Army. One of them was getting ready to collect Social Security. So I mean, my hat's off to these guys that probably could have found a lawyer and said "I put in my 30 years in the Army," but instead they got back in the uniform and they came back to Iraq

and put in their year there. The problem with the PRTs is that the State Department, bless their hearts, they just don't know how to do this. And the clearest example was, they brought these Enhanced PRTs, they advertised it, it was in the 2007 State of the Union Address, and there were two small problems with the E-PRTs: they didn't have any transportation and they didn't have any security with them. The only way to get out into town is to have a security guy with you and to have transportation, and they didn't have either. So what they did was, they flew some of them in among the brigade commanders and they were smart E-PRT commanders, and they found a way to schmooze their way to the brigade commanders to get some additional humvees or every now and then have some transportation available for them.

There were a couple of high ranking non-military people, and this is between you and me, one of them was fired by the brigade commander. He put the person in a humvee and sent that individual home. Because there's only one god at the FOB, and that's the colonel, because he owns the guns. And some of these high rankers thought that they were still holding the same authority but the colonel just saw them as another guy that he had to feed, house, and carry around. That's because the whole concept was not coordinated. They just dropped them into Iraq with the E-PRTs. Most of the E-PRTs found a way over the year to be successful and they got really successful when they finally passed that funding in the summer of 2007 but it still took 60 to 90 days to get the money through the system out to the field to the Baghdad E-PRTs so they weren't really effective until this year, when they could really sit down with Iraqis and come up with projects. Most of them focused on training instead of building, and most of them found from the Iraqis the best way to be useful, it just takes time.

*Q: Thank you.*

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