

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

INTERVIEW #49

Interviewed by: W. Haven North
Initial interview date: May 30, 2008
Copyright 2008 USIP & ADST

Executive Summary

The interviewee started serving as an economic advisor to a PRT in Iraq in early 2008, and at the time of the interview, had nine months to go.

The PRT has been operating in three locations for two years: The PRT has had two team leaders, who lacked organizational skills. Personnel on the FOB numbers about 35-40, plus six British security guards (considered superfluous), 2-3 Iraqi citizens, six or so Iraqi-Americans and large (almost 2,000) military group. Bicultural-Bilingual Advisers (BBAs) are assigned to program teams. USAID has a Community Stabilization Office on the FOB, but there is little information or coordination on its activities.

The PRT had no official goals or plan; the team members were pretty much on their own. The people in the PRT are doing an “incredibly good job.” Certain leaders have been able and went out of their way to help the PRT members logistically. The capacity for PRT members to get to the places they work is key to effecting change.

On security, the province has become more volatile. While Al Qaeda has been largely forced out of the region, the Jaish al Mahdi (JAM-Shi'a fighters) is a force to be reckoned with and major militaristic incidents have occurred. Monetary costs and personnel numbers required for the protection of PRT teams, as they travel, is high. On the other hand, if one were able to double or triple the freedom of movement, the capacity of the PRT would be double or tripled.

The PRT has a mission statement, a broad goal, but lacks defined steps for its accomplishment.. The interviewee had a major problem, at the outset, getting oriented to living on the base, learning how things operate, and seeking guidance on his responsibilities, owing to a lack of guidance manual and a mentor. There was very little planning done on the PRT level. Although they attended monthly conferences which gave an opportunity to learn from others' experiences. the conferences However, generally, there is a lack of communication between subject matter specialists.

The interviewee worked on making Iraqi offices more secure and cleaned up. He worked with the regional officials on economic issues and on the problem of spending government budgets. Other PRT activities include improving the infrastructure, rule of law program (too much on putting people in jail and not enough on commercial contract

law), public affairs work on local radio/TV communications (an issue: US laws prohibiting telling the PRT story in the US press). USAID is funding unskilled work for 23,000 Sons of Iraq group, but they need vocational training to be self-sustaining.

There was no funding from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP); but there were some State Department Quick Reaction Funds (QRF) with a \$25,000 limit. The latter have been used for office building renovations, agricultural equipment.

Our relationships are excellent between civilians and the military, no problem working with the Iraqis. The Iraqi's professional qualities need to be judged according to their rules, not American rules. They get by, but they are not remotely as efficient as the Americans.

PRTs are worth having, but they are not as effective as they should be. They have the capacity to becoming superb organizations, but they need a system for measuring effectiveness.

On recommendations and lessons:

- Need more direction from Baghdad;
- more information on the plan for each individual staff person before arriving in Iraq and a PRT handbook to help a staff person get up to speed
- avoid using Iraqi officials' time unless you have something meaningful to say;
- ensure continuity with longer assignments;
- PRTs should be driven by rules and goals not personalities;
- PRT team leaders should have experience running large organizations: better screening in filling positions;
- need more Americans to help with budget and project implementation;
- a cohesive plan for long-term job training and employment for the 12,000 Sons of Iraq now on paid make work tasks;
- a better understanding of the tribal shadow government: the provincial tribal support councils and tribal reconciliation councils;
- additional one or two week training with a syllabus on site with a mentor would shorten the learning curve.
- better transportation for PRTs

Major achievements:

Generally, the PRT can claim credit for some improvement in conditions such as water supply and budget execution.

- timely budget approvals and execution with increased expenditure rates;
- infrastructure—pumps operating in drought afflicted area, more stable electricity,
- date spraying—but more eye-wash than helping the economy;
- help to wounded civilians.

Interview

Q: When were you in Iraq?

A: I was sworn in and arrived in 2008. I am home on a two-week break. I leave on Sunday for Kuwait. I will be back in Iraq on Monday. I was there about three months and I have another nine months to go.

Q: Where were you located?

A: I am located in Diyala Province, at one of the Forward Operating Bases (FOB).

Q: This was a PRT and not an embedded PRT?

A: This was a PRT. We have an embedded PRT on site also, but I am an economic advisor to the PRT.

Q: Can you describe the organization of the PRT?

A: The organization: the PRT has been in the region for two years. In the previous two years they have had two different team leaders. The team leader that was there when I got there —there was only an overlap of a week and a half or two weeks — was a delightful person, but seemed to lack a tad in terms of organizational and leadership skills. There were no plans for any facet of the PRT. There were no goals; thirty, sixty or ninety days or three, six, nine, twelve months, or even two-year goals. There were no goals established at all. So people were pretty much on their own.

They were replaced shortly after I arrived and went back to the United States, and were replaced with a new PRT team leader.

Q: From the State Department?

A: From the State Department, Senior Foreign Service Officer, who had been dismissed from an embedded PRT? They dismissed this individual and gave them a job with significantly greater responsibility: a PRT with thirty, or forty, or fifty people. This is a delightful person, I would love to have a drink with them sometime and talk about philosophy, but there is a real lack of leadership.

I am not certain how PRT team leaders are chosen, but whatever the system is, sometimes folks that are doing it are right on and other times they are not. And a lot of the focus of these individuals is based on leadership that is given to them.

I will tell you that I have been in the private sector for over thirty years and the quality of the people that I have met at the PRT, by and large, subject matter experts, *et cetera*, are some of the finest individuals I have ever met in my life. So I do not know who is selecting these guys, but they are doing, by and large, an incredibly good job. There are some folks that are there for their own reasons, either they are trying to rehabilitate their career or something like that and they come there and they just put in their time, but most

of the people that I have met and worked with are there for the right reasons and are working incredibly hard at trying to get things done.

Q: Was there a military deputy?

A: In Iraq there is invariably a military deputy, recently promoted. They are nano-managers and are exactly what that PRT needs, because from a leadership standpoint, they are the leadership; they are the ones who we look for and go to to get things done. The person is open minded, friendly, tactful, with a strong constitution. They have a couple of other military officers operating in the office that are very, very talented individuals. Were it not for the capacity of the military deputy team leader and their staff, we would be in absolute disarray.

Q: And was there a military brigade or something that you were associated with?

A: We associate with, generally it is a brigade, they have just recently ripped out and been replaced with a regiment which has two less battalions. The brigade leader was an individual more focused on kinetic activities. We are located in a very volatile place and so the brigade leader's focus has been on capturing and killing enemies, as opposed to giving the PRT the amount of movement that was necessary for it to be more effective.

And it is quite different; the attitude of the brigade commander versus the battalion commanders, is quite different. Every battalion commander there went out of their way to try to help the PRT get to where they needed to go in a timely fashion and to help them out.

In my opinion, if there is an area to be improved in PRT operations in Iraq throughout the entire country, it is what I would categorize as movement, the capacity to get PRT members to the places they need to go, to work with the people that they need to work with, in order to effect change.

Q: Explain a bit more about the security situation.

A: Security is interesting. For example, there are many places in Iraq where I would be safer than I would be in southeast Washington, D.C. at any time of day. That would be most of Iraq, but there are some places that tend to be more kinetic and where we are is right on one of the main travel routes from Iran into Baghdad. And so you have Al Qaeda, which has been pretty much forced out of most of the region, there are still some very small pockets, but too small to be able to engage militarily.

Then you have something called JAM, which is Jaish al Mahdi, and is a force to be reckoned with. These are the Shi'a fighters that work with Muqtada al Mahdi, the gentleman that are quite active.

So we went thirty days without having an attack on Forward Operating Base but three weeks ago we had five incoming missiles and they were all 105s manufactured in Iran.

Four of them exploded, one did not, 14 people were injured, five of them seriously. So we still are in a kinetic activity.

Recently, in the capital of the province, a VBIED, a vehicle borne IED, exploded in front of the Government Center, killing many people. Some of the Americans in the PRT live at there fulltime, with a platoon of soldiers, so we're maybe sixty yards away, seventy yards away, from that explosion.

So we do not have the capacity to go out in unmarked cars or in unarmored vehicles yet. We only have capacity to go out in vehicles that are called MRAPs: hummers and Strykers. Those are the three vehicles that we tend to use and when we go out we use the same rules as the military. This means that we probably have 15 to 18 young men and women with us. It is unfortunate. We could accomplish so much more if we had the capacity to move with one or two vehicles, but army rules say three, and so it is three.

So it is a kinetic province. Things are still happening there.

Do I feel at risk whenever I am out there? I do not. Honestly, I grew up overseas and I have spent time in fairly volatile situations. I do not feel unsafe at all, not at all. My feeling of wellbeing and safety is certainly not an issue and if they said, "You are going out in a couple of up-armored vehicles with one humvee," I would jump at it. That would not bother me at all. I do not expect to be protected at any level greater than what they would normally do for any other type of serviceman.

And the economics of it makes it so that at some point we are going to have to start scaling back on some of the transportation and protection issues, because it costs so much money to protect somebody like me that is going out to meet one person or two people. And there is a scale on that. If it costs a dollar to protect me 50% and costs ten dollars to protect me 60% and a hundred dollars to protect me 80% and a thousand dollars to protect me 90% and ten thousand dollars to protect me 95 per cent, I would just as soon be protected at like 87 per cent, because that is a lot of extra money we could use to do an awful lot of other things.

I do not want to be captured. I do not want to be shot. I do not want to be killed. I do not want my head cut off. But if I were just living in a particularly safe area, I cannot tell you that a rocket is not going to come right through my window anyway. So I am willing to accept this.

Q: That did not inhibit your ability to get out, then?

A: The risk part, on a personal level, never inhibits my ability to get out. What inhibits my ability is the capacity of the military, either through lack of capacity or through willfulness, not to give the PRTs as much movement as the PRTs need to be effective. For example we are allowed, right now, one movement down to the Government Center and one movement from the Government Center, but you have thirty professionals in here and that is just not enough. If we were able to double or triple the movements we

would double and triple, literally overnight, the capacity of the PRT without increasing any costs of the PRT.

Q: This would mean getting out around the province as well?

A: Even around the province and I've been fortunate in that I've had the opportunity to travel. In setting up some of our outposts, while most of the other folks in the PRT have not had that opportunity yet.

Q: Is there a mission statement for the PRT?

A: There is a mission statement, but it is a mission statement that I could pull off of any website. It says we are here to help the government of Iraq and the people of Iraq and to help with infrastructure and help in yadda, yadda, yadda, but there is nothing that says how you accomplish that mission statement.

Q: And nothing specific to your province?

A: The first time, and I kid you not, now I have been away for about three weeks now, a couple of weeks on leave and then a week before that I was consulting up at division level, the man in charge of the economic side is a USAID representative who does not have any educational background in economics. You have to wonder how someone like that becomes in charge of something as important as economics. But it has only been in the last two weeks that I have ever seen any planning happen out of there.

I think it is for a number of reasons. They are getting pressure from division. There is a new regiment coming in that is requiring them to do more planning and some pressure has been brought on the team lead. It has only been two, three, four weeks max, that anyone has talked about doing any planning. It has been one of my hot buttons and one of my biggest frustrations. I am really good at what I do, but if you cannot plan, then put me someplace else or give me something else to do, because I am not going to just sit here.

So there has been, at the PRT level, very little planning. There are some planning tools that I have found in the last few weeks, though. I went to the governance and economic meeting that division has on a monthly basis. I did that recently and I picked up a lot of information. The problem is that I never even knew that there was a monthly governance and economics meeting at division level until our G-9 approached me about attending it. So that was a tremendous asset to me, in terms of being able to go back and do longer term planning.

Q: Tell us about that conference a bit, what you learned from it.

A: Something that most of us at the PRT level were not aware of was that there was a monthly conference at the division level that handles seven provinces. Three of them are

Kurdish and nothing is done there, because they operate like an autonomous, independent country right now. And the other four included our province.

I was invited to this conference and for me it was a real eye opener, because, first of all, I learned only one or two people at our PRT was even aware of the conference, and second, there was a tremendous amount of information that I was able to garner, not only from the people that put it on, which was the G-9 of the division, G-9 is civil-military operations. And I met a number of other folks from other PRTs there and that was a wonderful experience. It was great to see and hear the kinds of issues that they have, that they were going through, which in some ways were quite similar to mine. It certainly was a learning experience.

If there is a flaw in the PRT set-up, one of them would be the lack of communication between subject matter experts from different provinces. By that I mean I just do not know who the economics person is in a neighboring province, although I could find out who they are. We do not have any correspondence of any kind. As a consequence, we continually reinvent the wheel and spend a lot more time and money doing things that others have already gone through. So a lesson learned: we spent a lot of our time redoing things that others have already done, perhaps better than we have.

Q: Can you pick out one or two things that stand out as what you learned from that conference?

A: The purpose of the conference is to give the high level officials an idea about what is happening with the PRTs, that is truly the purpose.

Actually, there were two purposes, let me go back. The first purpose was how can we make things better as things become less kinetic. We had a group leader that was leading us all in discussions and we ended up with, oh, maybe with twenty or thirty different points and I am happy to go through those with you, because I have my notes, in terms of how we can operate better and such. So that was the first part of the conference.

The second part of the conference is the presentation that is done on a monthly basis to a very high level official and I thought the presentation was a little uncoordinated. This official has an incredibly full plate and wants to know of what the PRTs are doing (the Reader's Digest version). They are not interested in every project that you are working on or having you repeat things that you have already put in a written form. They are looking for what are you doing that is really going well and what do you need help with.

Those are the two things that they are really concerned with. And I found that most of the PRTs were giving them information on how many new jobs were created on this thing or that thing when you already submitted that in your report. And so they tend to be reading their reports to a two star general who can read just as well as they can.

And so he started to lose patience. I was sitting in the room with him. You could see the losing patience after about 25 or 30 minutes when people just kept droning on and on,

instead of saying, “You have got my written report. The other things I would like to add to that are we had successes at A, B and C and we really need some help from the division to get our brigade to be able to give us more movement and these are the reasons why and this is where we want to visit.” That is what they want to hear, because, then, that is something they can effect change with. No one wants to hear stuff that they cannot do something with.

And so for me it was an “Aha!,” primarily because I never even knew that these meetings took place at all and the only two people in my PRT that ever went to them was my direct superior who was from USAID and the former number two person in the PRT, who worked for brigade and still had a tremendous amount of influence over how the PRT operated. This was number two at the PRT, which is invariably a military person. Then when the new person came in as a replacement, this person was still on base and still wielded an inordinate amount of influence in terms of what happened at our PRT and how it happened. Now they are in the process of being moved out of the base that I work at right now back to the United States and this is a good thing, because you got too many chiefs and not enough Indians sometimes.

Q: Are there any two things that you picked out of this conference that really made a difference for you?

A: We were looking for best practices and discussing some challenges and there were a couple of things:

- The lack of agricultural personnel in the PRTs; most of our economies are in fact agriculture-based, but we have a limited number of agricultural people.
- Lack of division-level Department of State equivalents, which hampers the PRT-BCT relationship. We could coordinate an awful lot better if we had someone at division level that understood PRTs, who could really coordinate the activities of three or four PRTs.
- Developing value chains to assist in identifying priorities of effort.
- Lack of information: we all talked about knowledge management and the lack of information and a better way to share information.
- And then we got into redundancy of effort, which I guess is similar to the lack of information, where we were spending an awful lot of time duplicating efforts and attracting budgets and projects and processes sometimes.
- Again, lack of partnership between the PRT and the brigades.
- A “we know best” concept; many PRT members approach the problem of assisting Iraqis with a “we know what the answers are, we are going to train you” as opposed to remembering that the good Lord gave you two ears and one mouth so you could listen twice as much as you talk.
- PRT movement support, just absolutely insufficient to accomplish the mission.
- And a lack of joint common plans between the PRTs and the Brigade Combat Teams.

The proper complement of PRT personnel is important. Sometimes we get some folks that just do not belong out there and there appears to be, even though these folks are 31-61s, there appears to be a lack of will on the part of team leaders to get rid of deadwood

in PRTs, even though we are all on personal service contracts and if I am really deadwood or if I am really toxic, you ought to be able to just get rid of me, but there is a lack of political will within State to do that on a regular basis. In my opinion, it is okay to say, "Listen, we made a mistake with you. We are going to try to find one other place where you might work out, but if it does not you are going back to the States, God bless America" and just be done with the issue.

What happens is they tend to promote people or move people who just should not be there at all, just to get them out of your tent, understanding that you are putting that problem on one of your other brother or sister PRT team leaders. You are not solving the problem. You are only mitigating it for yourself.

No overarching cross-provincial strategy; that is a biggie. We are all doing our own thing without fully understanding the relationship between our province and other provinces, because the lines between provinces are totally artificial. The folks go back and forth all the time. We really do need, in a one, two, three, four, five province area, some type of cross-provincial strategy, so that we are not continually either reinventing the wheel. Let me give you an example: we have a tremendous capacity to produce dates where I live, but we have limited capacity to be able to turn them into date oil or canned dates and things like that. In the province next to us, they have a monstrous capacity to process dates, but they do not grow nearly as many as we do. How would I know that without talking to these folks?

So, again, we get back to the lack of an overall coordination of effort. But if there were somebody that really understood three, four, five of these provinces and knew what they were doing, they could say, "Hey, Jim, I know you are into the date thing. So-and-so over here has something that really complements that. Here is his email and his phone. I would like to set up a conference call for you guys tomorrow at eight, or would nine o'clock be better?" and just spend ten minutes on the phone with each other and see if there is some way we could make this work together. That does not happen.

Q: Do you think the Iraqis know that?

A: The Iraqis know where the dates are made and where they are processed, because it is where they have already done it, but the Americans do not know.

There are two things with the Iraqis. First of all, I have only met a handful who do not want us there. The great majority [I have met?] want us there. The second thing is, if you had a really high skill set and education and money, you have already left the country. You are gone. The people that we have there are the ones that either did not have the full skill set or for some reason wanted to be in this political process or chose to stay and they are the best we have and in some respects they are not all that good. They are what we have. If you could afford to move and leave and take your family with you, you did.

And all this nonsense about money to be invested into Iraq from outside, it is utter nonsense, because the only ones that are going to do that are going to be the people that

really understand the rules and those are going to be Iraqis that are repatriating their money.

Q: Any more points?

A: MND North-level organizations should not be a mini-OPA. OPA is generally viewed as ineffective in providing operational support. That would be true.

Let me give you an example. If I have a big factory that needs a lot of things done, but if I get it done, it employs a tremendous number of people and I have only one or two people I can rely on. Maybe I can get what I do in two or three other PRTs to come in for two weeks and we do our own surge and fix it and then they go back. And if they ever need me for a couple of weeks I show up there. There is no concept of anything like that being done. But PRT members working with large factories are window dressing. One or two people just cannot do it. There needs to be more Iraqis in the process. There needs to be a necessity for them to buy into this.

There needs to be a codified mentorship program where the PRTs educate military leaders on the ways to enhance non-lethal operations. That is a biggie. That is a huge one. If these folks are truly going to go from warriors that can win any battle to warriors who assist civilians in keeping the peace, these folks need to be mentored and tutored in that process. You just do not flip a coin and say, "Today is my killing hat and tomorrow is my peace hat." Create a continuity book on the PRT side and a leader's book on the military side that includes a portion on how to effectively work in an interagency environment.

Q: What about the PRT's work on governance and economics?

A: There is, I will not say it is a perceived lack, it is an absolute lack, of information on things that are happening at the national government level or at the embassy level that relate to the provincial level.

All this nonsense about bringing money into Iraq, when you find out that these folks have not signed any of the bilateral agreements that would enable any international company with any forethought to be able to come in there, you got to wonder why the Federal Government just spent a couple of million dollars to send 150 or 200 Iraqis and thirty or forty Americans to Cairo to an international investment conference on why people should invest in Iraq, when the international protocols that are necessary for any investment have not been signed. I do not understand it. All it was was a junket. That is all it was. And the Iraqis sometimes must look at us and say, "How did they become a superpower? All they do is have meetings."

Q: Let us go back to your PRT, some more on the organization. Tell me about the staffing: how many people, what kind of people did you have in your PRT?

A: Right now, our PRT operates in three locations. We have one person that is up in a city who does not need an interpreter, because they are fluent in Arabic. They operate as

the equivalent of an EPRT. And then we have seven or eight Americans that are living down in the Government Center and they have perhaps a staff of three BBAs (Bilingual/Bicultural Advisers) translators with them and a whole platoon of soldiers. And then up where we are, we have three people in health, three people in economics, three people in agriculture and two people in Rule of Law and two people in infrastructure and then we have associated translators and BBAs. In addition we have a team leader, we have a deputy team leader who is a colonel and then we have a couple of folks that work with that colonel. And then we have attached, in part of the same building, a civil affairs team. And that is the entire organization.

Q: About how many, do you think?

A: If you look at what the numbers say, they are false. For example, next to us, in a beautiful compound, is a USAID representative who does community stabilization. They have half a dozen armed security guards, while living on an army base with two or three Americans with them. So we count those armed security guards and those two or three Americans as part of our group, but we do not have a clue what they do. They do not interact with us, except to use the same transportation to go downtown as we do.

So maybe 25 Americans, plus support personnel, but it will show up as like 35 or 40, but I am not going to count six British personal security guards that are totally superfluous and unnecessary as part of the active PRT.

We tend to have a lot of high level subject matter experts and we do not have a lot of medium level subject matter experts, with the exception of one or two folks in agriculture and that would be something that we could really use. We do not need somebody with my skill set, a lot of people like me. What you need is somebody like me and some people that have less of a skill set who can actually do some of the other operations we need done.

Q: You have a large number of Iraqis working with all these people?

A: We are on a Forward Operating Base (FOB). We have virtually no Iraqis. We have two or three Iraqi citizens that work with us and we have a half a dozen more Iraqi-Americans that work with us.

Q: And then there is a large military contingent on the base?

A: Yes. Normally that would be a brigade level. Right now it is a regiment level and you have maybe four battalions underneath that brigade.

Q: And they provide all your logistic support and housing and food?

A: Most of that is done through KBR. When I got first there I was trying to put my furniture together with a hammer and screwdriver and a rock. There were no tools. We put together all of our own beds. We put together all of own furniture. We helped each

other clean these places out. Apparently that is not normal. In other areas they are living in places with hot and cold running water and toilets and queen sized beds and where we are it is significantly more primitive. I walk a couple of hundred feet to the Porta Potty.

Q: Now let us turn to your role. What were you trying to do, or what was your work?

A: I landed in the country; I spent three days in Baghdad where I had things signed off before I could go out to the site. So after three or four days I had my stuff signed off on and I got out to the site and there was no one there, with one exception, to mentor me, to help me, to tell where the johns were, to tell me where anything was. There is no system set up at our PRT. When you get dropped in, you are dropped in naked. There is no, "Here's your Big Brother for the week," you hang around with him and he or she tells you everything you need or want to know. There is nothing like that.

The only good fortune I had is I knew somebody that was already there that had been there a couple of weeks ahead of me and he was a tremendous asset and I have discussed it *ad nauseum* about how you do not take professional people and dump them in a place like this. You show them where the dining facility is and how to get their laundry done and so on and so forth. They tend to leave people on their own and that has something to do with the levels of leadership, not only of the entire PRT, but, more specifically, of the team leader that is working with you.

I mean anyone that would allow people to be on the ground, and you do not even walk in their office. They did not even assign me an office. They said I would find a desk someplace. It was that level.

That has improved, because I have screamed and yelled a lot and that it has improved a little bit, because I know that the number two guy does not like this stuff to happen. The PRT team leader is totally blind to this. They don't get out of their office but a few minutes a day.

But that was just a real problem. And so I am trying to follow people around, trying to see what they are doing and while the culture is not totally foreign to me, as I grew in the Middle East; but how things operate on a Forward Operating Base and how things operate with the State Department and these PRTs is a totally different thing and I am hearing people say, "Look, whatever you think you are going to do, just cut it back about ninety per cent so that you are not totally disappointed."

I had been there about a week and a half and I am just following people around, trying to get a feel for the lay of the land and my team leader says, "Now I would like you to write out what it is that you expect to accomplish. What is your work plan?" And I am thinking to myself, "I am sitting here trying to figure out what my work plan is. What are your goals and aspirations? What have you done in the last ten months you have been here and what are the plans for the next thirty days, ninety days, 180 days, 360 days, two years, three years and so on? Show me the plan of the PRT."

There was none and they are only starting to develop that now, because I have seen emails in the last two or three weeks going back and forth. There was nothing.

Most of my work was private sector. That is not how we do things. Before you get the plan, why do we not figure out what the issues are, so that we can start to attack them and not just superficially. If there are twelve issues, I can address every one of them and accomplish nothing in all of them, or I can address two or three and maybe accomplish something on one or two of them. But there was nothing like that.

So I wrote up a plan that said: "I have gun, will travel." I am one of those nasty private sector consultants that if you just point me in a direction and say, "Do this!" I will get it done or I will tell you why it cannot be done and I will do it very efficiently. But if you just leave it up to me, then my world is going to be so big that someone is going to have to start reining me in, because I'll not know what I can or cannot do. That was the issue I had when I first got there.

They gave me PDS, which is the Public Distribution System, which means that I could meet with high level officials for an hour or two and talk about it. And they also, one of the BBA's, who is very bright, said, "Why do you not work with this Iraqi official, who really needs some adult leadership and we will talk about what you can do with him." And so I spent a reasonable amount of time there. But I can only go down there four days a week and then when I am down there I cannot monopolize their whole time. They have a full plate. So maybe an hour, hour and a half, at a time or two hours at a time, I can do something like that and talk about setting up a Public Distribution Working Group, finding out where offices are out in the field, which are terrible, writing a Quick Response Fund (QRF) grant proposal to move them into a new building that was more secure so we could get our computer systems back from the Ministry of Trade and so on.

And special projects, for example, when they were going to set up a PRT post in another, they chose me and they said, "Go on up there." I said, "Give me a week and I will be able to give you all of the life support stuff that you need. I will be out in the field every day and I will figure out what kind of PRT person ought to be up there." And in a week I had three reports done and they were very comprehensive and I came back and now we have a guy up there; working on the plan I put together during that week. There were not a lot of other people that work on the PRT site that are capable of doing that kind of thing. So they want me to do that on another site. And that is the reason why the division found me.

And so a couple of weeks ago I received a reply from my superior saying that my plan, submitted two months ago, was disjointed and want me to write a new plan whereby I take over the Electric Company. It used to employ three thousand people but now employs eight hundred people and they want me to write the economic plan for the province. They gave this to me three weeks ago, which means that somebody is sitting on them, either that or they know that division wants me to come up. I can do either one of those things; I just cannot do them alone. It is like me dropping you into the middle of Uganda and saying, "All right, you are going to be in charge of writing the plan for

economic development in Uganda and you are also going to consult on the largest industry in Uganda and you can spend four hours a week on each.” It is hard to do.

Q: What did you think you were able to accomplish after your mission became clear?

A: As my mission became clear, a roadblock got in the way and that roadblock is what we call movement. Let me give you an example: the voting system in Iraq is based on the rolls that we have on computers that are for the Public Distribution System. Those computers were taken away 14 months ago, when the place was really kinetic and they are down at the Ministry of Trade.

So in order to get them back, so we have really good voting rolls, I have to make the facility more secure. I looked at their facility. It is a crappy, terrible facility. We found a new facility in a secure area and it is going to take about \$25,000 worth of QRF funds to clean it up and move it there. It will be much more efficient for the folks, their customers, who are the people of our province and it is in a very secure area and then I can try to sell that to the Ministry of Trade to get the computers back.

So I go out to visit that place once and it is a separate movement. There are two hours. I go out there again to visit it with one of their contractors, that is another movement. What I really needed was to spend ten or twelve hours over two days there with their contractors to draw up the plans, but I am not allowed to do it that way, because movement is so restricted. So they are drawing up the plans but when I am asking them for budgets I am getting a line item of three thousand for painting and five thousand for this and four thousand for that and I am saying, “No, no, no, what I want to know is, in each room, what is the use of the room, where is the electrical cord going, does it have an air conditioning system, where are the toilets for the men, where are the toilets for the women?” And we are doing a complete critical path management program on how to redevelop this building and how to come up with numbers that are accurate, but in order to do that I need to be out at that place a few times.

This is not hard stuff for me to do. I could probably do it and rehabilitate it myself in a few weeks. But in order to get American movement to bring me out there and to coordinate these things, if I did not really push, would take four to six months to get done what I could do in three or four days if I had appropriate movement. And that is the level of holdback in terms of progress.

Q: What are some of the other specific things you were working on?

A: I am working on the PDS. I am working on economic planning with high level Iraqi officials. And then we start getting into some of these turf areas. For example, the person in charge of governance actually lives down at the Government Center. So I am working with these officials and I am out of economics, not governance. And while there should be, in my opinion, nothing but gray area on these overlaps, with some personalities you get black and white. It is like, “Well, if you are going to continue working with them that is really a governance issue.” It really involves planning on

economic issues. It is an economic issue and why Americans are fighting over whether it is governance or economics is beyond me. It is like let us just get them working, because we have such a disastrous record working with these folks in terms of getting budget execution done.

Which brings me to another point. If we focused most of the PRT on one or two things, instead of letting these folks decide what they are going to do, we could be a lot more effective. We would not have nearly as much pretty window dressing, but could actually be a lot more effective if we really took everyone in governance and economics and said, "Look, what we are going to work on for the next 90 days or 120 days is budget execution. Everything, we are going to work together to get budget execution done, because if we cannot get these folks spending their own money we are screwed."

In the 2007 budget, we have only spent one per cent of the 2007 budget. We have allocated almost seventy per cent, but we have spent, we have actually doled out money for one per cent..

Q; Why was that?

A: ...because the budget execution process in our province is very difficult to do and we do not have enough people working on it. So some people are talking about working with the date farms or going out and helping somebody raise a crop here or do this or that. Those are all wonderful things. But what happens is because we have no cohesive and comprehensive plan at the PRT level. We cannot triage our best people to go in and just live and work with these folks to get this thing started, to do our own surge on this one thing, which is budget execution.

If we tore budget execution apart, so that we could start getting the provincial government, which turned back tens of millions of dollars last year and never even applied for this supplemental 2008 budget, because they do not have the capacity to spend the money, do you have any idea what our level of unemployment is in the province? It is sixty per cent. And we are screwing around with some of these things when all we ought to be doing, in my opinion, is working to find ways to spend their money on capital projects and operations and maintenance. And that is it.

The people are not getting tens upon tens of millions of Iraqi money that is available for them, that could help get them to work, because the Provincial Government is not performing well in terms of budget execution. If that is the only thing we concentrated on, we would do yeoman work, even if we are all just a little bit outside of what our field of expertise is, we are smart enough to be able to see what is going on there and we are not doing that. And so we do a bit of this and a bit of that and while we can write some fabulous reports, it is not truthful.

Q: Let us just turn, to follow up on that, to some of the program areas, what the PRT was doing, not just you, but in say, first, in the world of governance. Was there a particular program or were there particular activities being undertaken?

A: Oh, yes, we have folks that are living there. Let me tell you where we have been the most successful. And that is, we have an individual that has been running infrastructure. They are a workaholic; very bright. And they are working with the Provincial Government on the infrastructure level, primarily electricity and water and fuel, bringing fuels in. And there are four or five assistant governors. Only one is a non-elected person, who is as apolitical as you can possibly be in that kind of a position.

And the person that we have running infrastructure absolutely awes me. They are just kicking butt and getting things done and I envy their capacity to do that, because I do not have a job that is quite like that and I wish I did, because I have the capacity to work tremendous hours and get a lot done. They have a one-on-one BBA, who has a doctorate in engineering and is fluent in English and in Iraqi Arabic. So the two of them are joined at the hip and they are going down there and they are hiring engineers to go out and review projects that have been under construction and so on and they are doing what I would consider incredibly meaningful work.

I envy them, because while at the end of the day I am as tired as they are, they accomplish a lot more than I do.

Q: What specific things were they accomplishing?

A: Trying to find ways to mitigate the fact that we are in the midst of a monstrous drought. In a nutshell, they are working with high level officials on a nine-point plan to get a lot of the water issues solved, because we only have a 45 or 60-day supply of potable water right now. It involves negotiating with some neighboring regions and it also means probably having to backflow part of the Tigris River into the canal system and actually pumping it uphill. But they have been instrumental in getting pumps replaced and repaired for the canal systems.

They have also been instrumental in getting a lot of the petroleum tanks repaired and the flow of petroleum back. If you live in Maryland and Maryland is allocated X gallons of fuel and you do not send the trucks up to get the fuel, you lose it and you do not get it next year. We were losing that. And if the Federal Government says to Maryland, "Send us a supplemental budget for another \$200 million for what you want to build" and Maryland says, "I am all out of people to be able to write that budget up, so I am not going to apply for that extra \$200 million," that is the situation we are in right now.

Q: Is there any training being done in government administration, budget work?

A: Oh, sure, we are doing it, but we have one person that is doing banking and finance, we have one person that is truly working in budget execution, we have one person completely dedicated to a very high level Iraqi official, we have one person that acts as an Economic Advisor to lower officials, me and that is it. And then we have some folks that will flow back and forth, having meetings with some of these Iraqis.

But if we really triaged and concentrated just on projects in budget execution and implementation and we said, “This is the PRT’s goal and that is it. Let the agriculture staff go out and do this, but everyone else, we are just going to gang up and work on this problem until we solve it,” because when you put only one person or two people to work on a monstrous program, first of all you show them something but you are generally ineffective. But if you had three or four or five people working on that same project you can actually break the logjam up to the point where one or two people could actually handle it at some point.

Q: Is there anybody from RTI?

A: RTI finally showed up at our place about two months ago. The individual we are working with primarily has a doctorate in engineering and is a very, very good, bright person. As of now, they have yet to put on one training seminar, but they are hoping to do one in Irbil some time in the next couple of weeks for a lot of the folks involved in government.

Q: Let us turn to another area, what specifically is being done by the PRT in what you call economic development, which is where you were working yourself?

A: In economic development we have one man that is writing grants, or trying to write grants, to put the CLCs or the Sons of Iraq back to work.

Q: CLCs?

A: The CLCs are the Concerned Local Citizens, which became the Sons of Iraq, they changed the name to Sons of Iraq and our person is working on a program to try to get funding for jobs. And I am not a nay-sayer on this, but we are paying these people three and four hundred dollars a month. That is more money than a superintendent of schools makes. That is more money than an engineer makes, in many cases. Why these people would want to go into a training program so they can make \$130 a month, when they are currently making three to four hundred, is totally beyond me. So we have really a row to hoe there.

There are some funds that are available to take these folks and put them through vocational training; that has some limited capability. I was at a meeting a few weeks ago and a person said, “We created 23,000 jobs in the last month” and I just was totally astounded, because that is a large fraction of the population of that area. I said, “What government is paying for it?” And he said, “Oh, we are!” It is through one of these Community Stabilization Programs through USAID, where they give everyone a rake, a hoe and give them three hundred dollars a month. I can create all the jobs you want like that forever, but they are not self-sustaining.

In the last three weeks, things are different, because I am seeing different paperwork, but there has not been an overall economic program for job creation. For example, we have a really bright individuals that is working with the Chamber of Commerce, which is not

what we think of as the chamber of commerce, it is quite different, setting up a Provincial Investment Council and I cannot tell you they are ready to quit, but was in spitting distance a few weeks ago because they could not get movement down to see these people.

Everything, for us, comes down to movement. I could have the best plans on earth, but if I cannot get out and see you and work with you, what good are my plans? I could even do without translators, we could do with fewer translators, but I cannot do with less movement.

Q: Is there a Provincial Development Reconstruction Committee (PDRC)?

A: No. There is no provincial investment council. It has been mandated by law that they have one, but the folks cannot agree on who should be appointed; the reason for that primarily is because none of the Sunnis voted in the last election, so you have an entity that is dominated by Shi'a. That is going to be temporary, because you have new elections that will be coming up and the Sunnis are going to vote with a vengeance.

Q: But there is no Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee?

A: There is no Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee that I work with or that I am aware of.

Q: Are there any other economic development projects? You mentioned the one on dates, but are there any other projects?

A: Depends on what you think of as economic development. Are you talking about job creation itself or...

Q: That is part of it.

A: ...Or are you talking about consulting with, we do not have a business center. One of the things we wanted to do is set up a business center, but USAID would not fund it because they say it is too kinetic, which we think that is nonsense. So I think I found a place where we could put up a temporary business center, working with the Ministry of Trade.

But this has been a pretty wild place. Time goes fast, but six months ago you could not possibly do the things that we are trying to do today. Some of these other provinces are a year, year and a half, ahead of us because they have not had the kinetic activity we have had, or the number of murders.

Q: Do you have a rule of law program?

A: We have a rule of law program and I would love to spend a moment with you on that, because I think it is just totally backwards. We have three lawyers in that program right now; one is a military and two are civilians. One of the civilians retired as a high school

teacher and then got their law degree and started working abroad and then came down here and will be gone in a few months. They are really gung-ho on throwing people in jail. The other one that is there used to work with the Attorney General's office in Texas and I have probably worked with 300 lawyers in my career and I would put this person and their capacity maybe in the top ten of attorneys that I have ever met. They have a lot of depth.

There is one thing rule of law is doing and two things that they ought to do. What these people tend to do is they go out and they talk with judges and they look at prisons and they find out if the prisoners are being coerced or talk about the Geneva Conventions. And in most of the other provinces you will find that most of the rule of law people are coming out of the Justice Department and Justice Department people are very good at what they do and something the United States is incredibly good at and efficient at is putting people in jail. We are dealing with a culture that generally did not have a lot of people in jail. They were punished by their family; they were punished by their tribe and maybe they were punished in jail, but that was normally a second or third level.

But we really miss the point when we bring in people from the Justice Department to show Iraqis how to put people in jail, because what I am more concerned about in an economic development context, it is a total disaster not to have contract law. What about the rule of law when it comes to property rights? What about the rule of law when it comes to whether or not I can set up a UCC form to create a secured agreement with chattel?

For example, loaning money on a truck: that truck can be moved around, so there has to be some central location where I can put down that this white truck with this serial number, I have a lien on it, because someone owes me money. There is nobody like that. There is nobody working on the commercial, private side of rule of law. And rule of law is more than putting people in jail. If you do not have a system whereby my contract is enforceable, or that you cannot just take my date farm away from me or my house away from me or that I cannot mortgage my house, or borrow money on my car or borrow money from a bank and secure it with something else, what good is putting people in jail? And I would say 95 per cent of our effort in rule of law is judges and court houses and criminals, when it ought to be at least fifty or sixty per cent on is an enforceable contract. Can I leave my business to my family; does this partnership agreement work; can I hypothecate this piece of land; can I borrow on this piece of equipment; can I secure this chain of material that comes into my factory that I used to manufacture my widgets? And nobody is working on that.

Q: Is there any system for tracking detainees: who is in jail and who is not and where are they?

A: I am sure there is, but it is an area that I have never gotten into. But, again, I would respectfully say that you are not going to find a lot of private sector people that you are going to interview, I am telling you that rule of law when it comes to property rights and

contract rights is a monstrously big, big thing and no one is anything with it on the American side.

Q: Is there a Public Affairs program, working with the media?

A: I can only tell you what I know of it, because I do not work with it. I know that we rent advertising at a local radio station for a thousand dollars a day or something like that and that we can get our people on to be interviewed by that radio or television station on a regular basis. I can tell you that there is a Public Affairs Officer (PAO) on the PRT and I like them tremendously, I think they do good work, but let me tell you where I think one of the other issues is on this.

Apparently there is some type of regulation that says the State Department cannot use the press to try to make their case in the United States and let me tell you where I have an issue with that. You have, right now, four or five hundred men and women out there that are subject matter experts from the private sector or the public sector but not necessarily from State that are work very hard to do a good job and every one of them has one or two hometown newspapers and in my opinion the PAO ought to be writing an article every week or twice a week on different people there and sending them not out to UPI or AP or to the wire services, who do not really give a damn, but to the Lewiston-Auburn *Daily News* or to the Tupelo *Daily News* with a feel-good article on what the PRTs are doing, because it is one of the best things that has ever been invented by our government and getting that word out and at the end of the article saying, "If you want to learn more about provincial reconstruction teams or how you can help this effort, please contact the following" name or number or website or email or something.

I think all of these Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) are willing to write these things, but when they get down to Baghdad, they all get killed, they all die right there and in my opinion that is inappropriate.

Q: But is there any work on developing the Iraqi media?

A: The PAO that we have is trying to develop some type of an online newspaper, because the costs of setting up a newspaper would be too great. The Iraqi media that we have where we are is television and radio, but almost everything is done on television through some satellite, primarily. And there is a newspaper that comes out once every week or two or three, depending on what they can get in and out of Baghdad. We do not have the capacity to print newspapers. And what the thought was: what if we set up some internet cafes and you could go in and pay your 25 cents and the local proprietor prints off your newspaper, right there?

Q: Anybody that helps to interpret the local culture for you?

A: We have what are called BBAs, which are Bilingual Bicultural Advisors, but they are not assigned to a PRT team, they are assigned to an individual or a couple of people.

We have a BBA for infrastructure, we have a BBA for rule of law and we probably have a BBA in governance and they stick with that person or couple of people that they are working with, but that is not something that is PRT-wide. We do have one of the BBAs who give free Arabic lessons one day a week for a couple of hours, so that we learn to read the numbers and letters.

Q: Let us go back to reconstruction: are there specific projects that the PRT undertakes on reconstruction?

A: That is too broad a question. If you could narrow that down.

Q: Is the PRT building schools?

A: We are not building any schools. There are no Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds available.

Q: You do not have any funds?

A: We have no funds for any CERP. No CERP funds are available, period.

Q: You do not have any of the Quick Reaction Funds from the State Department?

A: We have QRF funds, but we do not have CERP funds.

Q: But what do you use the QRF for?

A: The grant I wrote to redo the office building for all of the regional centers. The agricultural staff has used them to buy honey machines to filter honey and also spraying machines for agricultural uses. And there is a new program that has come out in the last few weeks which is called ICERP, which is Iraqi CERP funds and we are just in the process of starting to write grants on that fund right now. We can have things approved in-house for \$25,000 and lower. When we start going over that we hit new tranches and then we hit the bureaucracy down.

Q: Are there other big reconstruction projects that are not through the PRT that are occurring in your province that you know about?

A: Very few, with the exception of community stabilization and they are running their own show: USAID has a Community Stabilization Office on the Forward Operating Base. I know they are working on a fountain and I know that they are working with an agricultural entity, but we know very little else about them.

Q: Is there much communication between your PRT and USAID or Baghdad about what they are doing in your area?

A: There is very little communication. The biggest frustration that I have is the individual in charge of the economic division is a USAID full-time employee. Why aren't they not handling all of these grant issues so that every one of us, instead of having to reinvent the wheel and learn each one of these programs. Why aren't they handling those for all of us and saying, "These are what we have, these are the priorities, these are the parameters. Tell me what you want to do and I will get the paperwork going and we will get this money out there and help?"

For example, there is an individual nearby with USAID, whose work I read, and I wanted to cry, it was so beautiful. I am bringing it back with me to the PRT and I am going to give it to my team leader, who is a USAID representative because they've never done anything like this. When you get a key person who is inappropriate for the position you screw up over two-dozen other people.

Q: Let us talk about relationships. First, the relationship between the civilians in the PRT and the military. How does that work?

A: I am unaware of any relationship between civilians and military that is not excellent. Everyone respects each other and gets along well. We do not always agree with what the other person does, but in terms of relationships and respect it is all there.

Q: What about relationships with Iraqis that you work with, or try to work with?

A: I have never had a problem working with an Iraqi; when I grew up it was very difficult to find a rude Muslim. You did not find them. They were not there. When I moved back to the States as a teenager, I had spent about 12 years overseas, I thought Americans were the rudest people I ever met in my life.

There is more than one way and more than one face in terms of how to do things, but in terms of working with Iraqis I had one issue when one person kept calling me "the occupier" and I said I am a civilian and I did it two or three times and finally I said, "I am a civilian. I could be home with my family. I am here trying to help you. I do not wear a uniform. A few years ago, if you used the kind of language you are using with me Saddam would have shot you. So I may be an occupier and I may be here but you have the right to say whatever you want to me and I bless you for that."

And that was the worst that had ever happened to me. I never had anyone in Iraq that is an Iraqi be rude to me or even remotely close to rude to me. First of all, I know it is not within their culture. I know that they are probably not going to always tell me the truth and I know we are going to operate on different wavelengths, but I have never seen hostility.

Q: How do you judge their professional capacities?

A: First of all, you have to judge them according to their rules, not ours. They have had a culture there for thousands of years. They can do things and get by. They may not be

remotely as efficient as we are and they may not be as knowledgeable about new ways of doing things as we are, but they can still do what they need to do. We may have twelve steps to the program; they may have two.

Are they ever going to be as efficient as we are in some areas? The answer is no. Culturally, it is just not going to be possible and it is totally understandable. Their obligation is not to hire the best person to work at Diyala Electric. It is to hire your brother's cousin or your wife's nephew or whatever, because their extended family is ten times the size of our extended family and their obligation is not to produce a profit in this business, it is to make sure that the family is employed. And as long as you understand that you can be a little more open minded in terms of what you are trying to accomplish.

Q: Is there any specific area that we have not touched on?

A: I wish there were more direction out of Baghdad. I wish there were more direction for the PRTs as a whole. I wish that we had metrics to be able to measure some levels of success and I wish we did not do as many projects as we are "doing," but, rather, concentrated on two or three specific areas to really be able to effect change for a long period of time.

Q: This falls into the area of what we call "lessons learned." Please elaborate on any lessons learned that you have.

A: Again, I can only talk about the PRT I am involved with.

Q: That is what we want.

A: And I can tell you that there is no handbook. When I am in a company and we develop a handbook for an employee, it goes to a level of "Turn key to the right, door unlock. The light switch is on the left hand side. Push it to the up position. The lights will go on. Your desk is thirty feet to the right and your computer is such and such, your password is such and such, log on." This is how Taco Bell is efficient. This is how McDonalds is efficient. They have books that have information in them so that people are not continually reinventing the wheel. And in our PRT there is no employee handbook that tells you anything about anyone. This is where we get our information and these are all the different websites, these are the contact people in Baghdad, these are everyone dealing with agriculture, these are the projects that we have worked on and to get more information on this, go to this site, this site, this site, this site. None of this is being done. Virtually nothing is passed back from the person who you may be replacing. Now, I replaced an individual who was a hospital administrator in the Navy who they put in charge of banking here. Sometimes we just get silly on these things.

But there is no handbook. There is nothing to help a staff person guy get up to speed in less than two or three months and that is nonsense. He ought to be up to speed in two weeks.

Q: Another lesson?

A: Besides a very comprehensive handbook, he should know what the plan is for the kind of work he is going to do before he ever even came to this country. And if he knew that he could gather resources or information or materials back in the States that he could reference when he got here to make his life easier, or to have correspondence with people that he is replacing before he gets here, because many times you might have an overlap of a few days but sometimes you will not have any overlap at all.

Q: Any lessons related to relationships with the Provincial Government?

A: The Provincial Government is so used to the revolving door of Americans coming through wanting to meet them and have appointments that they have had it up to their eyebrows with us. Unless you have something meaningful to say you should not be meeting with these people at all, because they still have other lives. But none of them will turn you down on an appointment, because they are courteous, or because they think they have to see you. I call for an appointment with anyone and get it, but it does not mean that I am going to accomplish something, but I am stealing the man's time.

Q: So continuity of relationships is important.

A: Continuity is incredibly important. In some respects you ought to consider having these jobs be not 12 months but 15 months or 18 months, maybe take a three week break in between, whatever, or set up your breaks differently, but try to keep people here just a little longer. By the time they really get it and they are really effective it is time for them to leave.

Q: Any lessons related to the general operations of a PRT?

A: Yes. They should not be personality-driven. They should be driven by rules and goals. You should be able to run a PRT by taking either any Foreign Service Officer, any military officer or anyone with significant civilian experience and have them follow the rule book and get the PRT up and running and continue running. Some of the people that are running PRTs should not be running PRTs, which is not to say they do not have tremendously wonderful skill sets and that they are not good people or anything else, but you cannot teach a PRT leaders to run thirty or forty or fifty people when he is used to running two or three or four people. He cannot do it.

And the people that can run it, believe it or not, are the military. They are used to that. But they do not have the mindset and there has to be a blend in there someplace and we have not hit it right, yet.

Q: Any lessons about appropriate program priorities?

A: More appropriate to talk about is this need that State has with filling positions with human bodies as opposed to people with appropriate skill sets. I have been in the private

sector for thirty plus years and I was never interviewed on the phone before I went up for my day administrative processing. Somebody ought to be talking to some of these folks that are going over there and maybe you ought to have to have a psychologist do part of the interview, because some of the people that are being sent over there, either from the private sector or the public sector just should not be there.

It is not the majority of the people. It is a minority. It is not a large number. But they require so much of the good energy that everyone else has that they really are detrimental to the system. I do not know where some of these folks come from but they should not be where they are.

Q: Let us do some summing up. I know your time has been short there, but what would you size up as the major achievements, so far, of the PRT?

A: Believe it or not, it is going to be budget execution, in spite of the fact that the job has been abysmal, it is so much better than it would have been had we not been there. So, budget execution and infrastructure,

Q: You mean the Iraqi budget execution?

A: You betcha. Here is something to keep in mind. These folks passed, in a little over six and a half months, three years worth of budgets. Try that anywhere.

So while I am down on how much money they have been able to actually get allocated out here, this Provincial Council passed three annual budgets in less than six and a half months. That is huge. Americans have an awful lot to do with that and that if they had more people we could have gotten another hundred million dollars for this province and that would have been a very good thing.

Q: These are budgets of specific projects to be undertaken?

A: Budgets of specific capital projects to be undertaken. We are talking about spending the 2006 and 2007 budget. We have not received the 2008 budget. The overall job is abysmal in terms of how much money has actually been put out so we need more people to work,

Q: How did we help them?

A: With the staff that we have down there, if we did not have it down there they would still be working just on the 2006 budget, they would have never even submitted a 2007 or 2008 budget.

Q: But how did we help them to get these budgets done?

A: We have people that are working with them on their budgets. But in my opinion we do not have enough people working in that area. There is only so much one person or two people can do.

Q: And you found the Council was able to agree on a budget?

A: The Provincial Council did a remarkably good job, passing three budgets in six and a half months, remarkably good job under the circumstances they did a wonderful job and kudos to the Americans that helped them. I just wish that we had three times as many Americans in that one area helping them, because we could have gotten through that log jam.

Q: What about the implementation of these projects?

A: We do not have enough people to get them implemented. That is why I said to you one of our big problems is budget execution. So the Americans have done a wonderful job helping these guys get these budgets passed and the Americans are doing their very best to get them implemented but there is not enough people to do that and that should be, in my opinion, the top three priorities of this PRT ought to be budget execution, budget execution, budget execution, because until the money gets out into the field forget your economic development.

Q: Another achievement?

A: Another big achievement would be in infrastructure. The Infrastructure Team has done a remarkable job in an area that is in the midst of one of the worst droughts in over a dozen years. We happen to have, as I said earlier, a remarkable person that is working on infrastructure in terms of getting the pumps up and operating and in terms of looking at the big picture of the entire thing. I think that there is more electricity and the electricity is more stable.

Please understand how limited the capacity of a guy on a PRT is relative to issues that are national in scope, like electricity and oil and water. So any time we can get something like that done on a provincial level is a real milestone.

Other achievements? We got some date spraying done. Between you and me, that is eyewash. That is great for half a dozen shots and getting in the paper, putting it on the news but in terms of what it is really going to accomplish in terms of the economy, it is more of a photo op than a real achievement.

And we had a lot of those. We are getting a girl who had her legs blown off a new set of legs. That is a wonderful thing. I am just very touched by it. But we are talking about one girl out of a hundred thousand that we are getting a pair of legs for.

So, again, these are eyewash, feel good stories, but if you are really going to make a change there, it has to be getting the budget out and getting these projects going and

creating more employment and really trying to utilize some of the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to get them just minutely more efficient so that they hire hundreds more people and getting ICERP.

And then the last thing I will tell you is we have over 12,000 people here that we pay every month to not shoot at us and those are the Sons of Iraq. And out of those 12,000 people, most of them will never have skill sets greater than that of a security guard. And it is incredibly important that we try to get these folks long term employment as facilities guards or security guards or truck drivers or something to keep them going. And I think that we have done a good job of creating the peace by giving them money, but it is a temporary solution to a permanent problem.

If there were something else that was really necessary, it would be a more cohesive understanding as to what the government of Iraq and the U.S. government's plans are for these folks in the long term and just a little more information from the Government of Iraq or U.S. to the provincial level folks like us in terms of these things. And let me give you one very quick example of that. There is a shadow government in every province and it is the tribal support council and the tribal reconciliation council. These councils are actually supported by the government of Iraq. Tribes have a tremendous amount of influence and it varies from province to province, but in our province it is quite extensive and some Americans feel that it should not exist because this is an extra-governmental organization. And I have tried to explain that it does not really matter, because if you go to Uganda or Nigeria or whatever, they may say they are Nigerians, but they are really Yoruba, or they are really Ibo, or something else. And until we really understand that when you have a very weak form of government, then governance goes back to the tribe and the clan and the family and not to the province or the government. And we need to really, as individuals, understand that a little better.

Also, we need some guidance from the American side to the PRT relative to what our relationship with these tribal councils should or should not be. What happens is we tend to send information to Baghdad and they tend to put it in their reports, but there ought to be some overarching information coming out of OPA on tribes, these are what are goals are. I think that ... under the circumstances has done a phenomenal job of getting these PRTs up and running and I do not think the kind of changes that are necessary within them are big changes. They are one degree in this direction or two degrees in that direction. They are not big changes. The basic structure is there. The basic ideas are there. It has taken a tremendous amount of work to get them to that point. What is necessary now is some modest refinement.

Q: Have conditions improved, both security and economic, in the province?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think the PRT has some credit for that?

A: I think the PRT can claim credit when it comes to a little bit of the water issue and I think they can claim credit when it comes to the budgets. I do not think they can claim credit for anything else. I think the people that can claim credit for everything else is the United States Army, for getting rid of Al Qaeda and controlling Jaish al Mahdi.

Q: Is there any other area we have not touched on?

A: There are two areas. For me to be able to take a break, I have to go down to Baghdad by helicopter. It can take me two or three or four days to get to Baghdad, because of the weather. And during those two or three or four days I can be efficient, but not terribly efficient, because I cannot go downtown and do things like that. When I am leaving Baghdad to come back it will be two or three or four days for me to go sixty miles away. Transportation is a major issue, because what it does is it creates tremendous downtime for somebody like me, where I am not efficient or effective. And I am allowed to have between three and five breaks during the course of a year. I could not possibly justify five breaks, because that would be just about derelict. But if I knew I could get out on this day and back on that day I could increase my efficiency pretty dramatically. So transportation to and from Baghdad and the efficiencies that become lacking as a result of that are a problem.

Q: Is that all by air?

A: It is all by air.

The second thing is this. When we get to Baghdad and you have hundreds of people now in PRTs there, you always have 10 or 15 or 20 that are floating through Baghdad. We do not have any workspace. There is no temporary place that I can go, fire up a computer and continue to do most of my job while I am there waiting for a helicopter, which is a tremendous waste of assets. So if we had a place where we could go and work while we are in Baghdad, just a room with a bunch of cubicles, would be a real blessing.

The last thing is, do you know how a 31-61 gets paid? I am going to go through it with you and hopefully get your hackles go up. There is a federal statute that says that no one gets paid more than, say, \$212,000 in a calendar year. Are you familiar with that, sir?

Q: No.

A: There is a limitation in terms of how much you can get paid as a Federal employee in a calendar year. You cannot go over a certain amount of money. For example, you cannot get paid more than the \$212,000 in a calendar year. On my basis, about \$140,000 and when you add seventy per cent onto that, which is my combat pay, living condition pay, that is another hundred thousand, so that is \$240,000. So that means if I started on January 1, I am going to earn \$240,000, but I will only get paid \$212,000 and the other \$28,000 gets rolled over into the next year. Okay, I do not get paid overtime. There is no overtime for me, because I cannot earn it, because I will be over the limit. So I work eighty hours a week, I get paid for forty. That is my pleasure.

I am starting on January 1. On the other hand, someone who starts on July 1 and in the next six months earns half of that \$240,000. He is going to earn \$120 thousand. But he did not break the \$212, so he is going to be paid for forty hours of overtime. He is going to make ten thousand a month more than me, because from July 1 to December 31 he is going to earn his 120 plus sixty of overtime. He is going to get paid \$180,000 in that six-month period and then he will start a new calendar year, not fiscal, calendar year and in your next six months, from January 1 to June 30, he is going to make another \$180,000. So for twelve months he is going to get paid \$360,000 of federal tax money and I am going to get paid \$240,000 of federal tax money, for the same job, in the same location, under the same circumstances, at the same pay grade and rate. He will make ten thousand a month more than me.

Now, I don't think that he is worth 360 and that 240 is more than enough and I wish somebody would close that loophole, just use the word fiscal, instead of calendar, because we are seeing, and we hear it in the PRTs, people are actually applying to work in PRTs starting in March, April, or May or June, so that they can do their twelve months over two calendar years instead of one and be able to milk the system. Where one guy will get forty hours a week of overtime, the guy sitting next to him will get zero overtime. And I am not suggesting that we all get the \$360,000. I am suggesting that you just change the word calendar to fiscal and that no one make more than the \$212,000 plus the rollover. But you could sit next to a guy doing the same job and he is making ten thousand a month more. It does not make any sense.

Q: Are there other points like that, or others, that you want to cite?

A: No, let us see that is the one that I found; everyone is on a different pay scale there and everyone is on a different vacation schedule there, but that one to me was egregious. And I am not looking for the extra money. I just want them to close the loophole, because if they close that loophole they will save 10 or 15 million dollars a year with the stroke of a pen. It may not be a lot of money but it is some.

Q: Are there any other areas that we need to touch on?

A: I cannot think of anything that we have not talked about. I have only been there a few months but I suspect that when it comes time for me to leave that there will be others.

I think that leadership issues relative to the PRT and having uniform goals and crossover goals with other PRTs are really the critical issues.

Q: To sum up here with an assessment, do you think the PRTs are effective for governance or economic development?

A: PRTs have the capacity to be superb organizations. I know it was tried briefly during the Vietnam War. They are worth keeping. They are worth having. But they really need to have some system whereby we can actually measure effectiveness, success, *et cetera*.

And that generally does not exist at this time, but they are remarkable institutions and will be around for generations. Overall they are very good, even if they are not as effective as they could be, yet.

Q: Last, quick, point: did you get any training before you went out?

A: The training that I got was a week at the Foreign Service Institute on PRTs and then two and a half days on driving cars and crash and banging and two and half days on medical and then a week on culture. And I can tell you that it was certainly worthwhile and all of that would have been wonderful if there was a comprehensive book that I could look at when I got to my PRT that gave me the Readers Digest version of everything else, or the capacity to read the situation reports for the last three months to bone up on what was actually going on.

And, again, this varies, because these PRTs are run by personalities, not by rules, but it varies, I am certain, from PRT to PRT. But if there were some kind of a training system once you got there for two weeks where you were reading old situation reports and you were spending a day at governance and a day at economics and a day at agriculture and a day at something else, to get a feel for what these people are doing and who they are talking to and what their goals and aspirations are, so that when you become a member, you are really not just a member of your economics team, you are a member of the PRT, because the level of co-influence between these entities, whether it is economics, agriculture, governance and so on, is just overwhelming, in terms of how they overlap each other.

So I think an additional one or two weeks of training with a syllabus on site and a mentor would shorten the learning curve pretty dramatically. I cannot think of anything else.

Q: Thank you for the interview.