

United States Institute of Peace  
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**INTERVIEW #5**

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**Executive Summary**

Governance is the area in which the most measurable success is seen: Governing bodies are governing; provincial councils are meeting; officials are beginning to understand what it means to be answerable to their constituencies.

Reconstruction is coming along. The Provincial councils are learning to ID requirements, write and fund budgets, and manage projects.

There is limited progress on the economics front: small businesses are being established through the help of small-loan programs; however, major economic development is still not happening. The US may have over-promised and under-delivered in the economic development area.

“Rule of law is not at all where it needs to be.”

There are few courts, and those that exist do not function well. There is a shortage of judges, intimidation and corruption of officials. Prisons are overcrowded.

Public information needs attention. Winning over the population is essential. There has been a failure of public relations in informing the population about the accomplishments achieved, and in crediting local governments for these. You need to take credit for the fact that local government is succeeding, thanks to the Iraqi government working in conjunction with the international coalition.

With good PRT and brigade command leadership, success is impressive. “I believe that we are winning the Iraq war from the bottom up, and that the heroes and the heroines of the Iraq war are the brigade commanders and the PRT leaders. Where you have a good marriage between a PRT and a brigade combat team, they are making wonderful things happen. In most cases they get along very, very well.”

PRTs should become integral to operations in Iraq, with defined responsibilities and chains of command. We need a standing core element that is ready at all times. Ideally, these would be called in pre-conflict instead of post-conflict.

Staying in-country long enough is important to making contacts, establishing trust and seeing that promises are kept.

Quick-release funds need to be made available to PRT leaders.

Provincial Reconstruction Development Councils (PRDCs) were controversial because unelected officials were essentially establishing priorities, thus creating competition with elected councils.

Cultural advisers (BBAs) are essential. "If there is one thing that every PRT would agree on ... in terms of what they would like to have more of, it would be the BBAs, because those guys were incredible and tremendously courageous. The Iraqi nationals working for the coalition in Iraq, they were not good life insurance risks. They became targets regularly, very courageous, very effective and very much a prized asset."

### **Interview**

*Q: Perhaps you could start off by just describing you did in Iraq, what your title is, your area of expertise.*

A: I was the director of the National Coordination Team in Iraq where I was responsible really for the operations of all the PRTs in Iraq. I did that from 2006-2007. I realize this is an Iraq focus, but I was also the combined joint task force commander in Afghanistan and commanded all the PRTs in Afghanistan for a year, that was 2004-2005. Now I am a special advisor to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), and I keep my hand in PRTs that way. So PRTs are still kind of part of my business.

*Q: Is SIGIR going to put itself out of a job in a certain period of time, or is this an indefinite thing?*

A: There is legislation now that will say SIGIR will continue to stand until there is something less than 350 million dollars of US money still in spend on reconstruction in Iraq and that could be forever, so I think SIGIR has still got quite a run in front of it.

*Q: Could you give me an idea of your military status as well?*

A: I am a retired military officer; I reached the rank of major general. That was a major general when I retired. I was an infantry officer before I was a general officer and I've commanded infantry formations at all levels from platoon up to and including division. While I was a division commander I was also combined joint task force commander in Afghanistan, CJTF commander, and that was a formation of 20,000 from 20 different nations and they are all different services, so that was kind of my capstone assignment.

*Q: I know that it's been mentioned before that the PRTs are quite different in Iraq than they were in Afghanistan; some people have said that maybe the choice of title was a little misleading, what do you think about that?*

A: There are two questions there, one is a comparison between Iraq and Afghanistan; I wouldn't say quite different. They were certainly different. If I was going to highlight the most salient differences I think the first one which jumps to mind is the PRTs in Afghanistan were more military than the ones in Iraq; they were commanded by a military officer and in the direct line of command, ultimately to me. They were part of the military chain of command. The Iraq PRTs were civilian-led.

The second big difference was the focus of the PRTs in Iraq versus the focus in Afghanistan. In Iraq the primary mission was what we called capacity development. It's kind of a longer term, let's say, less high profile, more about developing a capability in governing bodies to deliver to the people what governments deliver to their populations. Whereas in Afghanistan they were more intimately involved with the counter-insurgency effort, they were more interested in near-term effects, and a high profile that would win the hearts and minds of the people: basically, to convince the population that the coalition and the Afghan government had a more attractive alternative to offer than did the Taliban and insurgents. We needed to do that in the short run in such a way that was readily apparent, so that was their focus.

The third difference I guess between the two, and I probably should have started with this, is the size and composition. The Iraqi PRTs are larger and more diverse in terms of the interagency representation. The Afghan PRT is smaller and definitely not as much civilian agency presence in those PRTs.

The second question you asked has to do with misnomer. I think that there was clearly a misnomer in the Iraq case because not all PRTs had a provincial focus, and no PRTs had a strictly reconstruction focus. The PR in Iraq was probably was not particularly apt. In Afghanistan, I think it is pretty close. I think the Afghan model, reconstruction was more their business. Provincial construction team, there was one per province, and they were all provincially focused, so provincial reconstruction team was a suitable name for the entities in Afghanistan.

*Q: Looking on now at the embedded PRTs. Is the nature of these distinct from the PRTs?*

A: Yes. Toward the end of my run in the NCT, we fielded the embedded provincial reconstruction team. They differed from what we called the standing PRTs in Iraq. First of all they were smaller, because they were embedded in brigade combat teams, and we couldn't take 40-60 person PRTs and embed them in a brigade combat team. They were smaller, more narrowly focused. There was less of a standardized composition because we tried to meet the brigade commanders' desires, when it came to specialties.

*Q: You mean less standard from one to the other?*

A: Yes, less standard from one to the other. Because each brigade area of operations was slightly different. So if one brigade commander said he needed an agricultural expert, we tried to get that into his embedded PRT. If another one said he needed a rule of law, we looked for specialty and embedded that in his PRT. The most significant difference between the standing PRTs and

ePRTs was that the embedded PRT leaders were specifically tasked to work for the BCT leader, whereas the standing PRT leaders worked for the National Coordination Team and later the Office of Provincial Affairs. That was done expressly because the ePRTs were supposed to be one of the tools the BCT commander had in his tool kit to fight the counterinsurgency, whereas the standing PRTs had the mission or the purpose that I described to you earlier on.

*Q: In retrospect, would you say that the PRTs have been successful?*

A: I get asked that question a lot, and one of the problems I have in answering it, is what do you consider to be the measures of effectiveness?

*Q: Then talk about the mission, the elements of the PRT mission.*

A: Economics, political, governance, rule of law.

*Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, please assess the degree to which they have met the goals that were stated.*

A: Even though you've done a nice job specifying the question, I still have problems. You know rule of law, let's take that for example. How do you measure whether or not the PRT was successful? Do you measure the number of judges that are now functioning, or do you measure the number of courthouses that are built? Some of these are input measures, some of them are output measures, but what you really want is outcome measures, and you want to know has the rule of law taken hold in Ninawa province, for example. It's a tough thing to put a specific measure on, so what I am going to be giving you is kind of intuitive answers.

In the governance area, I can say that for PRTs across the board, that was the most successful area. Because in most cases we now have provinces with at least a rudimentary understanding in the governing bodies on how to govern. Governors who are now better off than when they started out. Provincial councils that are actually meeting, governments that understand what it means to deliver to the people. Provincial governments that understand how to get things from the central government, although they are not always successful in getting them, they at least know who to go to and that sort of thing. I think in governance we've been doing pretty well.

In the reconstruction arena, pretty good there too. We've got political entities, be they provincial reconstruction development councils (PRDCs), or provincial councils that know how to identify requirements. They know how to write budgets, and they are getting money which they put against projects which they in turn manage. Infrastructure is being rebuilt, although it is not being rebuilt fast enough to satisfy anybody. Some of that is a local problem, but I'd say the burden for that problem falls squarely on the national planners, because there are huge problems in the national system, in the electrical system, the petroleum system. If strategic plans have been done, they have not been put into effect. You can fix a local electrical transformer so you can hook up as much as you want but if you are not getting the power delivered. But I think reconstruction is next in the order of success.

The next one is probably economics, and I make a distinction there between economics and infrastructure as we did in the PRTs. There are small businesses being stood up. The USAID micro-loan and micro-grant programs are in fact stimulating small business and that is a good thing. Major economic development is not occurring. The kind of things that sustain themselves, employ large numbers of people, have investment tracks, well, they're really not happening yet. So we've got a ways to go.

*Q: Does the security situation have an effect on it?*

A: It's got something to do with it. Even in provinces where the security situation is not as dire, economic development is still lagging. It is still lagging expectations. I think in some cases, we over-promised and under-delivered in the economic development area.

Rule of law is rudimentary at this point. That ties right into the security situation. There are very few courts, and the ones that are out there are not functioning the way they would if they were in a society where the rule of law had been established. There is intimidation that goes on, there is corruption, there is a shortage of judges and there is a shortage of people who are willing to serve as attorneys, or as juries. Prisons are overcrowded, and on and on and on. Rule of law is not at all where it needs to be.

The last thing is public diplomacy, and the reason I list that last is I'm not exactly sure what we wanted from the public diplomacy pillar. I think if you are talking about public information, most of the public information that goes on is probably international media, Al-Jazeera. Iraqi public information instrumentalities are nowhere near where they were under Saddam.

*Q: You mean the media?*

A: Yes, the media. There are papers that are being published, but probably only 10% of the population reads papers. There aren't the radio stations that run the diversity. That's kind of the public information side. If you were looking at public diplomacy from the standpoint of using information to keep political goals, that we don't do well at all, and when I say we I'm talking about us with our Iraqi partners. Some people would argue otherwise, but we have not been effective.

*Q: How should we have been behaving in that regard?*

A: We should recognize that is important, winning over the population. You can do it lots of ways, but one of the ways you can do it is public information, broadcasting the right message to the right people consistently through the right media. And I think the second thing is that you need to take credit for and make known where it is that the government, the local government, is succeeding. The people don't know that. They won't know that this project is the result of the effort of a provincial government or the national government. There are some exceptions to that, but by and large, I don't think we have effectively used public information as

a tool to support our efforts over there, and that's the Iraqi national government supported by the coalition.

*Q: That was a good answer to a question that was vague.*

A: It wasn't vague. The problem with answering that question is if you ask me how Lebron James is doing playing basketball, well he's got 35 points a game, 8 rebounds, 11 assists per game, and he's doing much better than he did last year. There are statistics there to tell you how Lebron James is doing. If you ask me how Ninawa province is doing in the governance arena, it's not as easy.

*Q: Were you in Baghdad or were you roaming?*

A: I was roaming. My place of business, the headquarters of the National Coordination Team was in Baghdad in the Green Zone, but I tried to be out and around as much as I could.

*Q: How many people were under your command, how many teams and how many individuals?*

A: It's pre-surge and post-surge. Pre-surge, up until about the March-April time frame pre-surge, in Baghdad with me I had a staff of between 10-15. A lean staff. Out in the field I had on the order of 350, spread across 10 PRTs, -- seven that were US and three that were coalition. Korea, Britain and Italy were in PRTs around the country.

*Q: What happened to the Polish? That didn't happen there?*

A: No, the Polish never had a PRT, not in Iraq. In Afghanistan, yes, but not in Iraq. The post-surge, we doubled our numbers, not in Baghdad. We added a few folks, but we never had when I was there more than 15-20. In the field, we had over 700 and we got up to 11 standing PRTs because we added one in Wasit and 14 embedded PRTs, so that's a total of 25 right now. The embedded PRTs were in Baghdad proper, and then in some of the circled ring provinces around Baghdad.

*Q: What do you think is the future of this idea, the concept and execution of the PRTs?*

A: I'll tell you what I hope first. I believe that we are winning the Iraq war from the bottom up, and that the heroes and the heroines of the Iraq war are the brigade commanders and the PRT leaders. Where you have a good marriage between a PRT and a brigade combat team, they are making wonderful things happen. In most cases they get along very well. While I was there, I had one exception to that and we worked a fix.

I would very much like to see PRTs become routinely a part of whatever we are calling them now, security, transition operations, stability operations, peace building, peace enforcement, there a lot of different names that are being used. On a routine basis, PRTs ought to be deliberately planned to take part in those operations, because quite frankly they are the only operating agencies, outside of the military, that we have in Iraq.

In USAID they would say USAID has operators out there on the ground I won't argue that, but the USAID programs were coordinated through PRTs, so they just play a very important role. In order for them to play that role on a continuous basis, we have to do some things. We have to try to figure out who owns PRTs, who is the proponent for PRTs, who is responsible for writing doctrine for them, who is responsible for trying to figure out what they need to look like? Who is responsible for training them up so they are ready to go, ideally as units, as whole parts as opposed to the way we did it, which was individual training. We threw them out there and said hope you get a good team leader, because he'll tell you what PRTs are supposed to do when you hit the ground.

*Q: Isn't this going to be happening at Fort Bragg?*

A: It depends on who you ask, and that's one of the problems. At Fort Bragg, there is military training going on for the PRTs, there is State Department training going on, there is USAID training that is going on. The contractors are becoming parts of PRTs and are training their people.

I participated in PRT training with the military, with the brigade combat teams that are out there. I did it last week, for example. I've been doing that regularly. But I have no idea what the State Department's doing over there.

*Q: You are saying the whole team ought to be a unit before the final training takes place?*

A: I would say this: there ought to be a core element that either gets together regularly, ideally they are a standing element. There are 20 PRTs in a box, and there are 4 or 5 guys or gals that when the balloon goes up, you open the lid of the box, they jump up and you build around them. I think that is one way to do it. I think we'll probably never get there, the best we are going to be able to is identify a reserve system like the military has where we identify 4 or 5 and once or twice a month they get together and look each other in the eye, that kind of thing.

*Q: Could you see any other country situation where such a thing might be appropriate in the near future?*

A: I think what I'd like to see is PRTs and related capabilities used pre-conflict as opposed to post-conflict. Reconstruction is a misnomer, but you think about, for example, the tsunami in Southeast Asia a few years ago. After that tsunami, that is a place that is ripe for instability. Thank God for the United States Marine Corps, and in the absence of a quick reaction like that, there is the potential for mass civil unrest, and looting, and things like that. If you could get a small military force in there with provincial reconstruction teams that could go to work right away for providing relief, channeling relief, working with local government, working with the military force that is there, working with the Ambassador, the US Ambassador that are there. I can see a lot of opportunities for these PRTs, and it's not all necessarily in phase IV stability operations.

*Q: It sounds a little similar to the Lebanon situation. When the Israelis invaded Lebanon and the three embassies there were working with the military and the fleet and got together, these teams really handled it well.*

A: I think that's right, lessons that you learned over there. Something like this might be useful capability.

*Q: What about the relationships between the brigade combat teams and PRTs; within the PRTs; between the PRTs and the military and State elements; and the PRTs with the Iraqi people?*

A: We'll talk about the internal dynamics first. Very few problems internally. Time to time, because there were military members within the PRT, there was a little bit of friction because of the military mindset to make things happen fast, whereas on the civilian side they were more interested in enduring effects. But there wasn't too much tension.

USAID is an interesting organization; they like to operate in stove pipe a little bit. At times we had USAID representatives in the PRT that preferred going back to Baghdad as opposed to going to their PRT leader. We had a little bit of an issue there, but we had a good mission director in Baghdad the majority of the time I was there, and we worked well together. We pretty much were able to make ends meet.

Internal, that's the interface that I was always watching. Between the military commander, the brigade combat team commander and the PRT leader, I saw very good alignment, even though their interests weren't always aligned. There was, however, very good cooperation, and that cooperation was crucial to success, especially to the success of the PRT, because the PRT relied on the military for support, for intelligence, for money, for Commanders Emergent Relief Program (CERP) funding. In most cases we had very good relationships, primarily because -- this is going to sound immodest, but it's really a statement of fact -- of the working relationships between all the senior military leaders, because of my experience, and we saw eye-to-eye.

*Q: You mean the Americans?*

A: Yes, I'll come to the Iraqis in just a second. We saw eye-to-eye on the importance of PRTs. The military commanders made it a priority to get along with the civilians and PRTs, I made it a priority for the civilians to get along with the military, and it worked.

Now the last interface is between the PRT members and leaders and the Iraqis, and that was the trickiest relationship and it very much mattered province to province. There are three factors that really weighed heavily.

The first was the capability of the officials that the PRT had to work with. If we were working with good government officials that had the light switched on, who wanted to do the right thing, then PRT leaders worked well with them.

Second effect was level of corruption, and there were corrupt leaders there, and there were sectarian leaders there who were sectarian partisans before they were Iraqi, and those people were hard to work with and it was very hard for PRTs to pursue an agenda that was aligned with the interests of the coalition when they were dealing with corrupt or sectarian government.

The third factor was the facility or comfort level of the PRT leaders or members with Iraqi culture, customs, language, that type of thing. Some people were able to work through it, some were not. They were just not good at working with local officials, and local officials got turned off. That hurt. If you had PRT members that couldn't interface with their counterparts in the local government, they weren't going to be effective.

On the other hand is the great example of this young Foreign Service Officer. He spoke Arabic like a native speaker, he was marvelous. He was in a PRT in Baghdad, and he was able to walk down the streets in Baghdad in virtually any neighborhood and recall things like: "See that guy over there? His brother was killed in a car bombing, and that guy over there we can't really trust him." People would come out to see him and shake his hand, it was wonderful. He was a national treasure.

*Q: How long was he there?*

A: A year.

*Q: Is that enough?*

A: No. It should be longer.

*Q: Is that applied to everyone, not just the cultural people?*

A: Well, the military is there for 15 months. It's cultural expertise, and it's also the contacts that they make. A provincial governor gets to know a PRT leader or brigade commander, starts to establish a good working relationship, gets to the point where they are starting to trust each other, where promises have been made and they are starting to deliver on them, and then everybody leaves, and the Iraqis stay.

Their butts are on the line, and if the next group comes in and doesn't deliver on the promises, those officials have got problems.

*Q: Do they move in and out as a team?*

A: No. And that's a good thing in terms of the PRT. Not the military. The military moves out en masse; the whole brigade moves out. That's good in terms of the standpoint of military effectiveness -- you probably don't want to go back to the Vietnam system of individual replacements -- but from the standpoint of continuity, it hurts. I would argue for more stability, both on the civilian and the military side, though we are really eating up our military; we are rotating units in and out.

*Q: What would be an ideal length of time?*

A: It is so situation-dependent. If we had had the same crew throughout for about 2 years, that would have been very helpful. When the CPA stops, a new group comes in, and takes us through the presidential elections through some other benchmark, maybe provincial elections. Between two or three years. But that is absent the effect that would have on the force, because that will flat wear people out. But in terms of the mission, that's what I would say. It goes water mark to water mark.

*Q: In terms of finances, who pays? Is that another issue?*

A: Big issue. When you talk about PRTs, there are two dimensions to that. One is operating costs, the other is capital investments. On the operating costs side, there was a huge food fight between DOD and Department of State about who was going to pay for the life support of the PRT members.

*Q: Security?*

A: No, that was never really a fight, because the security the State Department paid for. Now I'm really going to get into the weeds a little bit. In some PRTs that were located on Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and we had some PRTs that were not located on FOBS.

In the cases where the PRTs were not located on FOBs, there was no issue at all about support, because it all fell on the State Department. They paid the security; they paid for the food, etc. The issue was with the PRTs located on the FOB and that was most of them. Security not such a big question because I think everyone recognized that the military was going to provide it, though the specific arrangements weren't worked out. PRTs have been around for a while, though procedures weren't worked out until my last couple of months there. We finally hammered out a memorandum of understanding that also covered the FOBs' support arrangement. If the PRT needed paper and pencils, could they go the brigade for those, should they go to the brigade for those, should they buy their own food?

*Q: Life support?*

A: Right. The food, okay, we're on a FOB, so we ought to be able to go to the mess hall, and nobody disagreed with that. But back here in Washington, is DOD going to go to the Department of State for the reimbursement for that food? It got very interesting but that's the subject of operating costs.

On capital investment, and this is reconstruction funding we are talking about here, there were different flows of funds. The biggest ones were CERP, the military had CERP, well, the biggest one was IRRF.

There was IRRF I and IRRF II and we add it all up and the total is about 24 billion. By the time I got there that was pretty much all committed and PRT played in that by identifying requirements and that type of thing, but they didn't actually spend that money. IRRF funding was a big hammer. There were commanders emergency relief program funds and CERP funds, which were all military. There was kind of cooperation between the PRT leader and the military commander to kind of see where that money ought to be spent. They had to agree on that. Most of the time they did, some of the times they didn't, and that was okay.

Then the PRTs had access to emergency support funds (ESF). The State Department's ESF that was used for capital investment was spent through a process called the provincial reconstruction development council (PRDC) process, but we had ESF going through the PRDC to buy reconstruction projects. There were also ESF resources spent by USAID on the LGP or local governance program, which was money that went to train governors and provincial councils. They had community stabilization program money, about 100 million dollars of which they used to fund programs that were about stabilization.

Then they had one called community assistance program, I never did quite get the distinction between it and the other programs. The money was literally fungible, but that was USAID money. That about captures it. INL over at the State Department had some money too. Those were the funding streams that were available, and we never had too many problems with somebody buying something that directly worked against the goals of somebody else. We had pretty good coordination there. There was some duplication, but not too bad. The funding piece of it worked okay except for two things, one, especially the State Department funds always came too late, and the second thing was there was never enough of it. There never is.

*Q: In terms of lessons learned or next time. Do you structure these bodies differently, would there be a tinkering of how this worked financially?*

A: That would not be a major issue. The only thing I would tinker with is to make sure PRT leaders had monies readily available, something that would be the equivalent of the brigade commander's CERP funds. We wouldn't have to go through this huge song and dance to get the money available now. One of my proudest accomplishments as director of the NCT was getting what we called Quick Reaction Funds, QRF, for the PRT leaders. That was 9 months into my tour there. Next time around, we ought to think that through and have that money available up front, so that tool is in the PRT leader's tool kit.

*Q: Can you give an example of a time when you needed funding for something quickly, and the State Department system created a serious problem?*

A: I can give you one on operating funds. When I first got there, PRT leaders really didn't have a budget. I had PRT leaders calling me about copying paper, they couldn't buy pad and pencils and that kind of thing. That was a fact, I had two or three PRT leaders call me up saying the military guys were giving it to them, they couldn't buy it, saying, "Hey what am I going to do?" That was State Department money that should have taken care of that. In terms of project or program monies, there really were two types. There were projects that PRDC identified, in most cases the

PRDC had standing priority lists, so whatever money they got, they plugged that in and drew a line. Now if we had gotten more money would we have bought the next thing? Yes, but that is kind of standard budgeting practice. Now there are programs, and the programs like the LGP, the funding for that was pretty reliable, so we never had to stop and wish for money to come in, not in my experience or recollection.

*Q: Would you say that the PRDC were effective?*

A: The PRDC program was very controversial. The controversy revolves around this concept of capacity development. We stood up PRDCs before there were provincial councils so these PRDC were extra-governmental and you had this body of unelected officials that were establishing priorities.

*Q: Were they American?*

A: No, they were Iraqis and that was a good thing. We were teaching that group of Iraqis how to budget, how to execute a budget, and handle finances. But when they elected provincial councils, the question was: should we have stopped using the PRDCs and started using the provincial councils for those things? In some cases, that was exactly what happened.

In other cases it did not, so we were basically empowering an extra-governmental organization that could have been viewed as in competition with the governmental organization at the provincial level.

Second point is that in some cases we had dysfunctional PRDCs because they weren't really representing the needs of the people; they were establishing priorities based on some criteria other than the needs of the people. The reasons why that happened are virtually endless. Then, too, you had governance and PRDCs that often went head-to-head, so you had to be careful about a PRDC that was buying something if you are going to have a governor that was beating on your door saying we don't need that, we don't want that. The PRDC was not without its problems.

*Q: Were the conflicts between the elected officials and these committees sometimes political?*

A: Yes, sectarian, tribal, party related, yes is the answer to that question.

*Q: What is your view of RTI?*

A: RTI was a USAID implementing partner and they had several contracts, but the most important contract that they had was the local governance program.

*Q: How big is RTI and where is it located?*

A: It is in North Carolina in the research triangle, and I don't know how big it is. It's big. I would

recommend that you talk to them, because they will give you their viewpoint. At my level, the RTI representatives were very cooperative. When I came in there was a little bit of a rough relationship. I got regular complaints from PRT leaders about RTI because RTI's contracting people, and most of them are local nationals, when you got down to where the rubber meets the road, they were not interested in the PRTs knowing what it is they were doing. This was for a couple of reasons.

First of all they claimed security. The PRTs were not secure, and people would find out where they were and perhaps could get killed. That did happen on occasion. There were suspicions expressed though, that they did not want oversight, and USAID was not interested in PRT oversight because it was their contract.

I do not know if USAID gave them the kind of oversight that they needed. They were not particularly accountable. They were hard to deal with, especially when I first got there. They cleaned house in Baghdad, though, and the guys I was dealing with initially, left, and they had some other guys who they brought in who were very good, very cooperative. When I had an issue, they jumped on it. But at the local level, the relationship between RTI and PRTs, particularly PRT leaders, was not particularly good.

There are problems with contracting some of these things. The bottom line is that we couldn't do this without some types of contracts in place.

*Q: Is agriculture among these?*

A: The thing that jumps to mind about agriculture was that the Department of Agriculture was slow in getting reps to us. They are a small department, the guys that they did get to us, were some real quality people to us, guys and gals. They were really sought after, especially in some of the provinces where agriculture is important. Here is a pop quiz for you; What is the number one economic activity in Iraq? What springs to mind? Of course petroleum ... but the answer is agriculture.

I'll tell you this story: It's about the infamous date palms spring in Diyala province. You know the deal: If the date palm crop fails in Diyala province, the government's got a huge problem on their hands. We are not going to let the date palm crop harvest fail, and in order for that to work you have to do this spraying. This thing called the "Dubas bug" attacks date palms, or the dates. The spraying is a fairly complex operation and the Iraqis needed help to pull this off. There was the segment or the school of thought that we've got to get the Iraqis to do it themselves. If we do it for them are just going to let us, they will never develop the capacity. Then there was the school of thought that okay, but if the date crop fails, we are going to have thousands of more insurgents on the streets, it's going to be a huge problem for our military, so we need to strike a balance between the two.

*Q: Was there a tradition of spraying, or was this something new they needed to learn?*

A: Spraying was something that went on regularly. But like a lot of things in Iraq, there is a very long tradition of a strong central government. If the national government didn't say this is going to happen, then it didn't happen. But the national government wasn't totally insensitive to the needs of the people, so they would direct and make date palm spraying happen. The problem with that was the happy beneficiaries were the strong central government.

*Q: What is the government's goal? Is it to disperse the power to the province?*

A: Yes, in part. I think that is probably the prevailing opinion over there now. It is some form of power-sharing between the central government and the provinces, a redistribution from the center to the provinces, to empower provincial governments. After all it is the provincial governments that understand the needs of the people more so than the central government. Then there is the notion of regionalism and the word I would use is semi-autonomous regions that are governed from Baghdad, so we don't want to see independent regional provinces, which would be a huge disaster.

*Q: Is there a model for this anywhere in the world?*

A: Canada, maybe Canada is. Again, I am not an expert on the Canadian government, but the thing about Quebec is that it is rather, I wouldn't say independent, but there is self-government there. It is not a separate nation per se, but I think people think of themselves as Quebecois. So I think maybe Canada. I don't know.

*Q: Former Yugoslavia, maybe?*

A: Well, you don't want to say that because there has been so much violence, it's been such a traumatic experience, but maybe so. There are some examples of nations that have been like that that are run by a very strong central government that can afford to allow some autonomy. Some of the former Soviet bloc nations fall into that category. But of course there is the difficult story of Tibet and China. But you know, Tibet has a certain amount of independence, though how much they ought to have is very much in question now. I think if you are a sharp political Scientist it would be a good subject to look into.

*Q: What was your impression of the international and non-governmental organizations working in Iraq?*

A. There was and is reluctance by international organizations or international NGOs to work with any entity that's got US military in it. The smart PRT leaders figured out what the NGOs were doing and basically structured their work load to let the NGOs do their thing and it kind of filled a gap. The ones that weren't so well-tuned would go out and be doing the same thing as the NGOs. So that was kind of a disaster. But it was very difficult to get the NGOs to come in to a PRDC, put down their map and say we are doing this. Now it wasn't unheard of. In Afghanistan I used to have PRT commander conferences where NGOs would come. We reached out to them in Iraq and in some cases they took the helping hand; in other cases they shunned us.

*Q: Would those commander conferences be a good idea to try in Iraq? Inviting them?*

A: You mean NGOs? I didn't invite them to those. I don't know why I didn't do that; I guess I never got around to it. Some of the regional PRT conferences we had, they were invited to. I hosted some regional and military commanders, especially in the North. But there is room for improvement there, I would say.

*Q: What do you see as the importance of cultural advisers?*

A: Cultural advice and cultural awareness are in real short supply everywhere in Iraq, but a cultural advisor can make or break an operation. What we had over there were these guys called BBAs (Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural Advisers). If there is one thing that every PRT would agree on, and there aren't a whole lot of those, but if there is one thing they would all agree on in terms of what they would like to have more of it would be the BBAs, because those guys were incredible and tremendously courageous. The Iraqi nationals working for the coalition in Iraq, they were not good life insurance risks. They became targets regularly but were very courageous, very effective and very much a prized asset.

*Q: Were all the BBAs Iraqis?*

A: No. But the most effective ones were the Iraqis. They understood that specific culture.

*Q: How many BBAs were in each PRT?*

A: It was interesting because it was feast or famine. In one PRT we had perhaps 7. In several PRTs we had zero. I did a redistribution, and then when we stood up the ePRTs, and each ePRT had one. I think by the time I left, one could probably say 25 would be a good guess.

*Q: They would not necessarily be living in their own areas?*

A: No, they would live with the PRT.

*Q: I guess the bottom line, the last question has to do with the lesson learned, what do we need to do differently, what are the top priorities?*

A: There are lessons learned to be pulled from several things that I have talked about, so I'll leave that to you. If I was going to leave a bottom line, the top three lessons learned, I would say that the first one is if we want to make this program go, we've got to make it more habitual, we've got to establish routines, we've got to have standing organizations, we've got to have a doctrine for it.

Second lessons learned, would be that if we want these things to work, we've got to resource them. We've got to get the right people to them, and we've got to give them adequate funding so they can make a difference.

The third big lesson learned is we've got to sort out the relationship between PRTs, the military, and the Department of State. Part of the Department of State, and course they will never admit this, but part of State is USAID. The PRT is kind of in the center, and it is kind of a tug of war. We've got to sort that out.

*Q: Thank you very much!*

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