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Executive Summary

The interviewee served in Iraq between 2006 and 2007 as an agricultural adviser. He was located in Anbar Province at a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) based at a Forward Operating Base (FOB). He had also served in a PRT in Afghanistan.

The security situation was in flux as both Ramadi and Anbar were both very hostile environments, but security improved considerably by September 2007. The Marine Corps and the Army handled the security task differently from the way they handled it in the Afghanistan PRT where there was more mobility, less bureaucracy, more latitude. The PRT's mission in Anbar is to extend the Iraqi Government to the people of Iraq; how to do it was left to discretion of the PRT team members.

The PRT in Iraq was under the control of a State Department Foreign Service Officer. The Deputy Commander was a Marine Colonel. While the State Department had its own security arrangements in Baghdad, they did not extend to the PRT, but the Regional Security Officer (RSO) in Baghdad determined whom the PRT staff could go out of "the wire" with. As a consequence, the PRT staff did not get an opportunity to get outside the wire into the rural areas as much as would have liked. It had no dedicated protection force. The exception was when a military unit went out and had extra seats available, it would take the PRT staff with them. The interviewee got out three or four times a week, mostly to the Provincial Council meetings, which he found next to useless.

He had a problem with the Iraqis on the Provincial Council "skimming off the top." For example, he had this problem with an agricultural official when he tried to set up a demonstration farm. When he did visit farm communities he was well received, but he had no funds—not even, \$1500—to buy seeds, shovels, etc. Nothing was set up to allow him to buy small amounts of supplies and tools. Also he found that Iraqis who were in the agriculture department and claimed to have degrees in agriculture were not able to discuss the subject when talking about specifics. Some inroads were made, such as an agricultural radio show. The experimental farms did not get started because of lack of funds. Rural Iraqi farmers were reluctant to speak through Iraqi interpreters.

Overall the PRT is an absolutely grand idea, and it changed the situation in Anbar, but not in agriculture.

Lessons:

The PRT was better organized and operated in Afghanistan but the lessons were not passed on. The civilians should work under the military while they gain experience on running a PRT after the military leaves. The State Department needs to give additional attention to base unit control. There needs to be a better understanding between the RSO and the State Department on force protection arrangements. When serving in a PRT you have to be flexible. More attention should be given to agriculture systems, university education, co-ops, youth involvement, a women's movement, and getting out to the field. If it cannot get its people out to Iraq, the State Department should listen to someone who has been there. Let the people in the PRT have their own pocket money and a budget so they can reach the little farmer.

Interview

Q: Where were you located?

A: In Anbar Province. Anbar Province is the largest single province in Iraq, and it is west, northwest of Baghdad, right on the Euphrates River. I was stationed at a Forward Operating Base (FOB).

Q: This was a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team), right?

A: Yes.

Q: Not an ePRT (embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team).

A: No. I was there before the ePRT.

Q: What was your position?

A: Agriculture adviser

Q: How would you describe the security situation there?

A: It is a very multi-faceted question. Security was the prime concern in most of Iraq when I was there. Do you want to look at it from where I was?

Q: From where you were in terms of the PRT situation.

A: The security issue was in flux. When I got there, Anbar Province was a very hostile environment; we were taking casualties at the FOB (Forward Operating Base). About February or March of 2007, things began to change and when I left in late 2007, things were considerably improved. The Marine Corps and the Army had joint responsibility, but Anbar Province itself was under the primary control to the MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force). I worked with both the Army and the Marine Corps. Individually and collectively they were doing the best they could. They certainly did provide security. There were a few days when things were very hostile, we did have gunfire exchanges, but

that was more the exception than the commonplace. When those occasions did occur, the Marine Corps and the Army handled it well. They handled it considerably differently than how it was handled when I was in Afghanistan.

Q: How was it different?

A: Well they were different. I was in Afghanistan in 2003 and 2004 at a place called Gardez which was on the Afghan-Pakistan border. It was also a hostile zone. The army provided force protection for that unit, and they did it differently than what was done. I do not know that it was any better, certainly not any worse. But it was done differently.

Q: How different?

A: One of the limitations of providing security is the number of people that are available to provide it, and then the equipment they are given to provide your security. In Afghanistan the PRT itself was considerably less defined, had more latitude, less bureaucracy, and I think accomplished more than the one I was with in Iraq. Security was handled considerably differently. The PRT in Afghanistan was the primary object of existence. Even though it was a hostile zone, probably the intensity was less than in Iraq, but Al Qaeda and Taliban insurgencies were still there, and the population was extremely mixed. There was a definite percentage of anti-Americanism. That can be said for both countries. But when the PRT staff needed to go somewhere and needed to do something, the force protection by the Army, and mixed elements in between were there to provide protection to take a PRT member where they needed to go. Having said that, you could not just say OK boys, tomorrow we are going in the middle of the hot zones and go from there. No, it was controlled. The limiting factor for the PRT in Iraq at my location when I was there was mobility, because of security. At my location, the PRT was a tenant within that FOB. But it was not the reason the FOB was there. And we had to beg for and borrow any kind of protection, including force protection for mobility. There was no dedicated security element to the PRT. Now, let me qualify that. The Marine Corps did have a civil affairs unit at our FOB in Anbar. But it was very undermanned. It was a downsized unit, and they were concerned with the Marine Corps application of winning hearts and minds as well as nation building from the Department of State side, which was the PRT entry level. All this gets complicated, because coordination and control were unclear in PRT between DOD (Department of Defense) and DOS (Department of State).

Let me back up just a little bit. The organization of a PRT in Iraq was different than that of one in Afghanistan, and that is why I have such definite opinions about it. Let us stick with Iraq. The PRT in Iraq was under the control of a Department of State, professional diplomat – a Foreign Service Officer. The Deputy Commander was military. In our case the PRT team leader was from the Department of State, the Deputy Team leader was a Marine Corps colonel. I never quite understood why this would be set up like that. The Department of State has its own security units. Those security units do not extend to and away from the centralized Baghdad embassy. However, the RSO (Regional Security Officer) for the Department of State is located in Baghdad at the U.S. embassy, and he has complete control over anybody assigned to the Embassy in the country. So here was

a PRT under the command of a Department of State Foreign Service Officer, who had no security to provide, and the Marine Corps did have security there; they would help us when they could, materiel, men allowing, but they were there also to promote their own civil affairs unit. The table of organization for the PRT could have been done differently.

Q: In what way?

A: I wonder if Iraq was in the position to accept PRTs run by a civilian entity in 2006, because a lot of the PRT persons lacked mobility, which came from a shortage of personnel assigned to provide protection and security outside.

So on many occasions, PRT personnel had to remain inside the compound when the real gains were to be found outside the wire talking not with somebody at the diplomatic level, but in many cases someone in agriculture, a farmer, a tenant farmer, mom and pop who live from day to day on what they could raise in a two acre square garden out back. So security was the overriding issue because it was not a matter of being insecure inside the compound—aside from indirect fire, mortars, snipers. That was not so common. On the other hand it was present, and no one wanted to take the responsibility of putting the civilians in the PRT outside the wire so they could interface with those persons who really needed their help. If you talk to one of the Foreign Service Officers, they will rightly disagree with some of this because they spoke with many government officials. That is where their money is made. But that is not where you make the point in agriculture. And we could not go to establish points; we could not get in the game so to speak, because we could not get out of the wire when it was necessary to get out.

Q: To get out into the rural areas?

A: Yes. Now this is not a criticism of either the RSO or the Marine Corps, because both of them had restrictions. The RSO never came to Anbar, so he only knew what his intelligence people told him. He was responsible for us, so he would say, “No, you cannot ride with certain people,” certain people being contractors (Blackwater was not there, but everybody knows Blackwater.) There are other force protection contractors, whose reputation is different from Blackwater. The RSO said even though they are there at the FOB where I was, and have the facilities, the means and the personnel, you cannot ride with them because they are not on our approved list. DOD people did not fall under the protection responsibilities of the RSO. So he had no control over civilians working for the Corps of Engineers. RSO could not say, “Well I am not going to guarantee their security, but I do have to guarantee yours,” speaking to those of us who worked for the State Department or one of the other departments. So I understand his situation, but he did not understand that if the contractors were capable of providing security to defend life and limb of a civilian working for the Corps of Engineers, Department of Army, why could Department of State people not ride in those vehicles?

Everybody knows this and everybody had the same argument. We even —we meaning the persons who were in the FOB and wanting to get out — we would keep asking, “Look, can we ride? They are going where we want to go? They have guns, trucks,

armor? Can we go with them?" The answer was always no because the contractor was not on this approved list to transport us. So the result was that we did not get an opportunity to get outside as much as we wanted.

Q: Did you get out at all?

A: Yes, we did, and it was up to the individual how he wanted to do this. Some persons got out more than others depending on how each person there wanted to respond to the rules and regulations. Any DOD, Army Marine Corps, going somewhere was willing to take us if they had room to take us. A humvee will only carry five people at most, two on the front, two in the back and a gunner.

So what it would amount to is when one of the Civil Affairs Units, either Army or Marine Corps, went somewhere, they would have one, two, three seats available, because they would go in four or five trucks. When I was there I think the minimum was three trucks and ten shooters. There was a minimum requirement. So if you figure five seats to a truck, which we called the humvees, and three humvees went, there was room for 15 people. The driver, the vehicle commander, and the gunner; that's three out of five right there. And there was always another soldier. It was uncommon to have more than one seat available, but if we did have two seats, you have five trucks, two seats, ten people. When I left, there were over 30 persons in the PRT.

A: What I am doing is just giving you the math of how difficult it was to get out, but to answer your question. We did get out.

Q: How would you characterize getting out? Did you get out every week or several times a week?

A: It depended on the ingenuity of the individual. I got out more often than some of the other people; I would get out maybe three or four times a week.

Q: You went out to rural areas and the farmers?

A: Yes I did. I would go on occasion to the Provincial Council, the PC meetings, which I found next to useless, because of those persons in my case.

Q: Let us talk about agriculture.

A: Agriculture deals with a different set of people than does civic affairs or rule of law. So when I went to a PC meeting, I would find my counterpart was a Provincial high official in Agriculture. This person was appointed by Baghdad, not the Provincial Governor. Many of the persons on the PC were not in favor with the Provincial Governor, and the Provincial Governor found that he would not work with everyone appointed on the Provincial Council because many of those persons were appointed by Baghdad, that is at the national level. That was one problem, meaning that there was no real meat on the Provincial Council. There were plenty of people wanting to get things

done because they were skimming off the top. Anybody is going to tell you this. I am not talking about the Americans; I am talking about the Iraqis. Now depending on whom you talk to, they say it differently; let me say most of the time we dealt with the Iraqis, somebody was in it to get what they could and put it in their own pocket. Now this is why I am telling you it was of little value to me to go to the Provincial Council and try to get something done. I can give you examples.

Q: Give one example.

A: I met with a high level agricultural official, and suggested that we could get some agriculture money if he were willing to put in some Iraqi money, because the Iraqis had money, but they were not spending it, at least in Anbar Province, because they were willing to let the U.S. government buy, supply, lend, donate anything they needed.

So the deal was very simple. I said to the official, we were going to set up demonstration farms. I said, "I am going to try to get you \$10,000 if you can match it, you can give \$5,000 Iraqi dollars from the Province. It will be a real honest to goodness cooperative venture. This was approved by the PRT by the way. What we were going to do is set up a demonstration farm, and the \$15,000 would go towards setting it up, the expense of setting it up, that is, buying seed; irrigation was a big thing. On top of that after it was done, the Iraqis could sell or eat whatever was there. So it was a pretty good deal for them. We wanted to take pictures of a field that was dry, barren, dust covered, come back three months later after some money was put in with irrigation, seeds and so on, and show that it is now knee high, green with something growing. Because at the time, everybody was concerned about the 2007, Congressional Presentation that would determine to some extent what was going to happen, when and for how long. So we wanted to show that we have turned 15 acres green. It was a dog and pony show. To make a long story short on this one, the official knew that we were talking about U.S. money being put with Iraqi money because that was part of the agreement. We could go to the Embassy and put in a weekly situation report, SITREP, well, look we accomplished this and we got them to spend some of their money. That was part of the deal. We were supposed to engage them to commit some of their own money.

What the official did, about two weeks later, was give me a bill for \$5,000 U.S. dollars and demand payment. About two weeks later, and I can be exact with these dates, he just saw me at the PC the next meeting and said, "Did you bring the money?" "What money?" "Well you owe me \$5,000. I put out \$5,000 around the Province on our project." I said, "Well wait a minute. First of all we have not identified where it is going to be. We have not looked at the site. We have not done anything." He said, "Well could you give me my \$5,000 now." I tried to explain to him that if I were going to give him \$5,000 that is not the way it was going to be exchanged. We needed a bill. So he came back about an hour and a half later, gave me about three sentences in the local language and down at the bottom had a \$5,000 mark. There was no overt tangible product to be seen. In translation the whole thing came out like transporting workers from there to there, digging ditches, but yet there were no pictures of any of this and when pushed, he was always evasive as to where these fields were. We immediately thought the guy was

taking us for \$5,000 quite openly like that. He would not let go. He went to several persons in the military and the PRT saying how he had been cheated out of \$5,000. First, it was never to have been his \$5,000. Secondly, there was no evidence that \$5,000 worth of anything was spent anywhere. This is a long example, but it gives you the atmosphere of dealing with somebody politically. These high level officials were political appointees.

On the opposite end of this, when we did get out, we would meet mom and pop... well, you would meet pop. You would never meet an Iraqi lady out there, but a family is what I meant. We would go to a family farm. They had nothing. They gave us a spread. They brought in store bought cookies wrapped up in cellophane. You know they did not do that all the time. In return they wanted agricultural help. There was no money available to simply buy them seed, shovels. No one could go to USAID, or the Department of State and ask for small amounts. You could write a request for \$150,000, which was much more likely to be filled than going to somebody and saying I need \$1500 for this guy to get him motivated, to get him jump started, by buying seed and buckets. You cannot do that. There was nothing in place. Now somebody might say: yes there was, but let me tell you something, those people were not there. They were in Baghdad. They were at the Embassy in the Green Zone. They were not out in the field where you could look a man in the eye and say, I am back in a week with a truck load of shovels for you.

Because there is nothing set up to go ahead and buy for \$50, \$100, \$1200. It was in fact simpler to finance a dam or a road, well it was not as simple as I am making it out, but that was part of the problem of dealing with the person in Iraq in the PRT. When you did get out you could not help anybody. One Iraqi farmer said in English, "You want to help me? Give me seeds." I had nothing to say. I had no way of buying him \$25.00 worth of seeds. Now somebody is going to tell you "baloney." Because INMA, there are several acronyms of NGOs that were government subsidized, well it was all government subsidized. But they would say we had a budget of \$712,000 so we could buy seeds. Yes they did. It never got to the people that planted in the field.

Q: I see. This was with the NGO or with some other...?

A: It is one of the complications in this issue of distribution. I do not want to imply, and I certainly do not believe that somewhere down the line the Americans were taking the money and doing something else with it. No, I never knew anybody, never heard of anybody that was doing anything like that. But yet you get the Iraqis who would cash in. You would get somebody with two or three trucks and he would want to charge you \$15,000 a day for their use. I mean it was just unbelievable. The U.S. went to Iraq giving away money, and it did not take the Iraqis long to figure out, "hey, they are giving us money, let us go get it, let us take it."

Q: All right, but you did not have any access to any funds?

A: The PRT at the agricultural level, I would have to say no. The PRT at the Agricultural level had access to those persons and organizations within and outside of the

federal department and outside of federal agencies who had programs to help by buying. But in my opinion it was money lost.

Q: I see. Let us go back to the PRT itself. Did it have a mission statement, particularly for agriculture, as to what you were supposed to do or were trying to accomplish?

A: What we were trying to do was extend the Iraqi government to the people of Iraq, showing them that this spade indeed was coming from their representative, their government in Baghdad. And how did we do it? Much of that was left to our own discretion with the tactics; the strategy of it was dictated to winning hearts and minds and extending the Iraqi government into the Iraqi countryside.

Q: Was there any written statement of the mission for the PRT?

A: Oh, yes. The Department has many things in writing. But you do not really need to talk to me if that is what you want to talk about. You need to talk to the people in Baghdad because they controlled that.

Q: Each PRT had its own mission statement and plan for their operation?

A: Yes, that was structured. When I first got there it was made clear that the DOD civil affairs units, both Army and Marine, had money to spend. They had maybe \$1,000 - \$10,000 that a commander could use. But there were restrictions on how it could be spent and who could spend it. DODCA, (Department of Defense Army Civil Affairs Team) was very helpful within their limitations. There were individuals in Baghdad at the O6 level who wanted to do things, and they tried to do them. But things were very seldom accomplished. I do know that the intent was there, and I personally sat in a meeting with both diplomats and DOD when it became very heated about who was running the show.

Q: In your own PRT were you the only agriculture person?

A: I was in the beginning. When I left there were three, there was myself and two others, and a fourth individual who was assigned within the PRT, not in agriculture, but who was working towards agriculture, so I would say something like 3 ½ men.

Q: What was your understanding of the rest of the staffing of the PRT?

A: I cannot comment on them. I have a Ph.D., and I do not know anything about rule of law or nation building.

Q: But there were those units.

A: Yes, there were, so as far as I know they were very capable people. I could see that they were making progress where agriculture was not, because some of the persons at the PC, Provincial Council, were more cooperative and had a different mindset than some of

the people that I was dealing with. I am not so sure that all the people in agriculture, not the farmers, but the administrative agriculturists in Iraq, had any agricultural education. Now I am not saying they did not. Just in talking with them, I was always impressed that they were making certain that we knew they were educated. This guy had a Ph.D., the other one had a Masters, but you could not get them to talk about any specifics. I spent a lot of time in research, and I have published some things in research as most U.S. agricultural people have. So I would say things like, "Do you have any of your publications in English that I can read?" "Oh no, we did not publish in English." "I understand that. Could you give me a summary that I could have translated into English?" I do not think they had many publications. But they wanted you to think that their education was on par with the Americans. I do not think it was. Some of the people certainly were. It was not unusual to find agriculturalists who had been educated in the U.S. That was quite common. Those people did have a different attitude than the high level official, and some of the politicians in agriculture. What I am saying is within agriculture when you try to get something done, you start out by being general and then be a little more specific, definitive, each time you go further, at each further step. Pretty soon they did not want to talk about it anymore because I think that these persons, not generically but these persons, did not want to discuss it because they did not know what you were saying and had nothing to say in return. But these were the persons who were running the agricultural show in Anbar Province.

Q: Was there anything being accomplished?

A: Yes, we made some little inroads here and there.

Q: Such as?

A: We did little things like starting an agricultural radio show. We would write, we and the other two guys in the PRT would write in English questions and answers to be read like a DJ would do here. We sent them to the Embassy. There was an army unit that had radio stations in Anbar. Those stations would reach out, it had an extensive range. They would translate it and it would be read over the radio and the Civil Affairs people would distribute radios to the local populace. Those radios would receive this radio station. That was fairly popular, but I think it was also ephemeral. We started that early on, and when I left I had the feeling it was struggling. One reason why: we would start just by writing questions and answers. They guys on the radio would read them. Now the U.S. people would translate them, but they would give them to the Iraqi contractors to read. Come to find out we had an Iraqi who was working with us in agriculture towards the end. The Iraqi contractor was telling that me the whole program only lasts three or four minutes. How could that be? We would write out pages of stuff. The fictitious Omar says, "How do I grow corn?" Abdul replies, that kind of thing. Come to find out, we think the guys who were reading it were just cutting it short. They just did not want to do it or I do not know why, but that program was ephemeral.

Q: Did you have some other programs?

A: Yes, we had several programs. Some of them never got off the ground for funding. The program about the experimental farms never got anywhere. We could not get anybody interested in it. INMA came with all these big guys an American university. But when you get down to it and ask for \$75,000 to buy seed and all this to get in thousands of acres, that is when the system breaks down, because all of a sudden you find out well now wait a minute, I cannot buy seed. You need to talk to John Smith. Well Yes, Great. John Smith is in Amman. He would not even come to Iraq or INMA would not allow him. I am being general here because I have forgotten the names of the players. The restriction is that the difference between enabling money and distributing the product was vast. Congress enables \$50 million to build a road somewhere, and it never gets built. I am not suggesting somebody pockets the \$50 million, I am just saying it is very difficult to get these things done. Now some of it is much easier. The politicians, and the Foreign Service Officers, do not have an easy job dealing with these people, however they are dealing with a better educated person, and they can usually speak English. In agriculture, when we could get out to meet these fellows, it was very seldom that we were speaking English. Some of the guys we wanted to speak to, the farmers and workers, would not talk as long as our interpreters were there because our interpreters were Iraqis. They would speak only when an American interpreter was there. Now you can only guess why but they would not.

Q: What was the agricultural situation in Anbar that you were working on?

A: Basically it is pretty open country. It is mostly dry. There are a series of irrigation projects. They are anything from simple ditches dug to concrete lined ditches that have been made but are in disrepair. One of the pet projects of the Civil Affairs team was to clean these ditches. It was relatively easily done, and it was done quickly and it had high visibility. It was very expensive regardless of what you might think with cheap labor, but it was a very popular thing to do. We were not involved in such large scale things because first of all agriculture did not have its own budget. The Department of State or the PRT did not say: "Ok, you guys have \$125,000 fiscal responsibility for this year. We had to get all of our money from some other source. We could find it where ever it was available, but we did not have a checkbook to fund our own ideas.

Q: That was very inhibiting I am sure.

A: Yes it was, and when you couple that with the difficulties in getting outside the wire and then dealing with some of the locals, it was a very restrictive experience.

Q: Do you think that the PRT had any impact generally, not just yourself, in the agricultural area?

A: Yes, I do. I think the PRT is a fine idea. I am disappointed, after having something else to compare it with, another country, I am thinking that there were other alternatives that could have made a difference. Now a significant difference, I do not know. I am not at that level. I did not operate at the decision making level. I operated at the tactical level.

Q: You were saying there were some alternative ways of approaching the PRT work.

A: The force protection part. In Iraq, we had to go when, where, and if somebody else could take us. In Afghanistan, I am not saying that the force protection belonged to the PRT, but that is why it was there. The distinction is, if we could not order, we could not go to the company commander, they were company sized elements in force protection. We could not go to any of the captains and say, "Look, here is where you need to go tomorrow." But it came close to that. Every night after dinner everybody, every section leader, would stay in the mess area and we would discuss what we had going on for tomorrow. We would go around the table. Everybody would say, "tomorrow I need two trucks and ten soldiers because I need to go here." You would see the first sergeant writing down all the needs. They were limited so they would prioritize what they could accomplish tomorrow with their restricted personnel and trucks.

Q: Did you participate in those meetings and put in your bid?.

A: Absolutely. Everybody did. Every section head would say OK, they would go around the table after we had eaten supper after everybody else had left. "What have you got for tomorrow" this kind of thing.

Q: Did you get your bid?

A: Oh, like everybody else. I might get three days in a row and then I might go a week without it because someone else's priority was higher. But we all understood that. But in Iraq it did not work that way.

Q: You are talking about Afghanistan.

A: Yes, that was Afghanistan.

Q: But in Iraq you did not have that.

A: No, we did not have that. We had no dedicated force protection. Now the force protection was there. It was extremely capable. The young men are just unbelievable. Do not let anyone tell you that our young soldiers are not worth a damn. That is not true. But what I am saying is their primary function was not there to support the PRT. And if you wanted to go somewhere, are you familiar with the ring routes, the helicopter's ring routes? There are literally a dozen or so ring routes within Anbar Province and every night the helicopter would make a circle, circuitous route. The marines flew at night for security reasons. Sometimes they would not fly for any number of reasons, weather, maintenance or whatever. What you could do was go down and put your name on a list. If you were authorized to go, you would get down to the aviation shack and wait for your ride to show up and get on it and go.

Q: Where would you go?

A: Wherever on that ring route that you needed to go to hook up with some soldier or marine at that FOB to take you out in the field. So what I am saying is, this is not a complaint, this is just how it worked. On many occasions you just would not get to go. Either there were other priorities that you personally could not get on the helicopter, or the helicopter could not come to your location or the helicopter was diverted with another priority mission. So you see it was not just locally, it was trying to move about within the province, and this certainly was not the fault of the force protection, the security people. It was simply that there was not enough materiel. There were never enough trucks. There were never enough helicopters. The marines were overworked. It is interesting that when I came home to watch television all the politicians were saying the answer is not more soldiers. They should spend more time there, not at the Green Zone or at the Embassy, but they should spend more time where the soldiers are really soldiers and see what they really think.

Q: Did you get any support from your team leader or the PRT to help you do what you wanted to do?

A: Oh yes, they were good guys. They were not just sitting on their thumbs all day long. They had the same restrictions as we did. The Deputy Team leader was a Marine colonel. The marine colonel had no more luck at getting these facilities from the Marine helicopter than I did.

Q: What about getting an off duty team to go out with you to some rural area?

A: Like I said, in Afghanistan, yes. It would happen, but in Iraq it could happen if there was a DOD team going in that direction, and if that team had a seat available. If they did have a seat available then it became a priority within the PRT as to who should go there.

Q: So they were not particularly programming it for your work or the other sector work. They were going for their own business.

A: They had to. The army and marines had their own missions. One of their missions was to support the PRT, but there was never enough of anything and anybody that they could support the PRT as much as the PRT needed to get out. No fault of their own, the Army and the Marines, went places, they got in harm's way. They would take us if they had space available. They would invite us. You would see them going to supper or something, and they would say, "Hey, just be aware tomorrow morning we are going here or there. I do not know if we have got any seats yet." It was never restrictive from them. I know that they actually supported the PRT as a force multiplier. That is the way they saw us. We had no difficulties working military and civilian. The leadership roles were reversed. I think that the Marine colonel should have been in charge of the PRT and not a Foreign Service Officer. Now these Foreign Service Officers are great guys. They are career diplomats. I do not know that all of them have experience in handling 20-30 men in a hostile zone. I think that some of these things were arranged among personalities within the Marine Corps that allowed us to do things.

Q: How do you assess achievements? I get a sense that it was very limited but how do you assess the achievements of the PRT?

A: The PRT as an entity did well. The PRT post at Anbar I am going to say was the premier PRT. Anbar was a traditional hot spot. So Anbar had problems that maybe some of the others did not have. But when I was leaving, that was changing. The marines took hold of that situation, especially with the surge, and they turned Anbar Province around. The PRT both as a concept and as an entity in Anbar is highly successful. But you know, looking back, I would say that persons, and jobs of the PRT had to be handled differently. It is very difficult to do anything agricultural if you cannot get out and look at the farms. Now the big-time Foreign Service people, their jobs were more difficult than agriculture, to win these guys over and teach them how to make city budgets and have a police force. But they got to meet with their counterparts. They would actually meet with the politicians, not because they were politicians, but because of the priorities. They could get dedicated helicopters and pick up people and go here and go there. But let us face it, who is going to do that for agriculture?

Q: Did the province have an agricultural organization?

A: Yes, it did. Of course, every province in Iraq had a bureaucracy for agriculture and for everything else. One of the problems was, however, the provincial DGs were appointed not elected. When I first got to Anbar, I met with a high level provincial official. One of my questions was who is your DG for agriculture? He would not answer my question. So after asking several times in several ways, I realized he was not going to answer. The translator told me that the DG for agriculture and the governor do not get along very well. The governor did not have a choice because it was Baghdad who sent him. So who do you think the governor is going to give any interest to when it comes to budgeting and so on?

Q: Do you have any sense of the capacity of the agricultural staff?

A: At what level, provincial?

Q: Yes, the one in Anbar.

A: That is an interesting question. I only met one high level agricultural official. Every time he showed up with his own entourage, but most of the time they were different. His office was one of the war torn buildings; the damaged building in Ramadi was about three or four stories. It was hard to tell because the top floor had been taken off. They said there was more to it than what was there, so you can only believe them. But what I am getting at is the U.S., the Marines said one of the buildings that we are going to rebuild was one of the agricultural buildings. We were told that 400 people worked in this structure and they required that much space. That said, I do not know what those 400 people could possibly have been doing if indeed they all had offices in Ramadi. And Ramadi was the provincial capital.

Q: So you had no sense of what they were actually doing in the agriculture program?

A: No, because we did not even know who in charge of agriculture until some time later. Nobody wanted to point him out, and he certainly never stepped forward. So all these little niches that people fall into; why did he not want to be identified? Then all of a sudden when he was identified, then he starts suggesting how we could cooperate. But it all turned out to have a money exchange. This is how that \$5,000 came about.

Q: So you were never able to develop any kind of a cooperative relationship the high level agricultural official?

A: I was not.

Q: And your colleagues?

A: After I left them we wrote back and forth for a month or so, and then it faded off. The stories I heard were just more of the same. But that has been almost a year. There had been a lot of progress made.

Q: Progress where?

A: In country.

Q: In the country

A: Yes, a lot of progress has been made in the country.

Q: How about in Anbar?

A: Yes, I think so. In Anbar Province it is noteworthy how the U.S. changed the situation from what it was in 2003 to what it was in 2007. I think it is commendable what happened there.

Q: Do you think that was the result of the PRT in part?

A: In part, absolutely. As I said earlier, in concept the PRT is absolutely grand.

Q: Do you think the PRT leadership and its planning was thinking about what the agricultural part of it should be?

A: I do not think there was any planning for agriculture in the PRT. I think somebody told the Secretary of State, "Well, now you have these PRTs, who do we put in them. One of these and one of those and two of these." Then somebody said, "What about agriculture?" "Oh yes, you have to have agriculture." Then it stopped. Now let me show you how these things work.

If you were going to run an agriculture program, and you did not have an agriculture guy, how would you go about filling that agricultural spot? What would you do? Of course that is a rhetorical question. What I am getting at is if you are the Secretary of State, of course she does not make these decisions but in her community. Why not go to the Secretary of Agriculture and get his help if not his personnel? They did not do that. They went out and got their own agriculture guy, me. I had been working with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and I had been to Afghanistan so they said, "Do you want to go for a year to Iraq as an agricultural officer?" "Sure I do." "OK, Let us go." But they would not give me anything except the job title. I did not need a staff in the sense that I was looking for a lot of go-fers and office space, but how was I going to do anything in the agriculture business without talking to farmers?

Q: Without any funds?

A: And without any funds. But you see State went out and hired its own people. Ok, I guess you can do that. It does not seem very cost effective, but ok. Now look what you are getting. Pretty soon the PRT itself begins to expand. Anbar is a big province. There were about seven or eight people in Anbar PRT when I got there. There is no way that these people are going to be able to commit to the entire province. Ok, we need more.

More came with the surge, the military surge, because the DOD went back into the files and said: ok, who do we have in the reserves who is also a professor in agriculture? They found some of these people, but certainly not enough, but there is a wealth of veterinarians in the DOD, and all of a sudden the veterinarians began to show up, as did agriculture specialists. So far ok, there is nothing wrong with that. You think agriculture, you think of corn plants. You should also think of goats and sheep and cows in Iraq as being in agriculture, so we need veterinarians. But now the veterinarians find themselves in a PRT without an agricultural guy in the PRT. So they start making plant-type agriculture programs. It is nothing personal against the veterinarians, but by design veterinarians do not get educated as much in plants as they do in animals. Then here comes another level with the ePRT (embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team). Ok, look at this. Anbar Province PRT has responsibility for the entire province of Anbar. All of a sudden you bring in three additional ePRTs. each in a different city. These three ePRTs not only are autonomous, they are commanded by State Department personnel who outrank the Anbar PRT team leader. So as soon as we leave the wire of the FOB, we are in the area of operations of an ePRT. We could not devise programs because the ePRT said we were infringing, encroaching, stepping (on their area). Now how in the world should something like this be organized?

Q: So you had several PRTs without proper planning or coordination?

A: They were duplicating. Before the ePRT personnel showed up, everybody thought that when the ePRTs get set up, they will be part of the Anbar PRT. That is not what happened. They were completely independent.

Q: Did they have agriculture people too?

A: Yes, they were very small. They had from three to five. Their agricultural people were primarily from USAID, which is good.

Q: What were they doing?

A: They were doing agriculture. They were assigned to the PRT and worked for the Department of State as a loan from USAID. Now this brings up an interesting thought. USAID is the US Agency for International Development. Why then is Department of State responsible for PRTs? Should not it be USAID? The reason I am mentioning this is that USAID came with its own money. If you want to talk money you talk to USAID people. They are the ones who would not look at you for a \$150,000 request. They would say we only handle big projects. Go home and write it for \$4.5 million. I am simplifying this, and I had better be careful. I am being a bit facetious here.

Q: But you did not have any connection with USAID?

A: No, because USAID looked at other agriculture people as “why do we need you?” “We are USAID. We can handle this. Why do we need you?”

Q: Were there any USAID projects in your area?

A: Yes, of course. And they were good projects. I am not denouncing USAID. All this is in support of my earlier suggestion or question: why is the Department of State in charge of PRTs?

Q: The USAID projects in your area were independent of the PRT? They were not connected to it?

A: They were not independent because they were the product of the ePRT. We never had a USAID complement at Anbar PRT until about mid 2007. The ePRT was already there and up and running and producing. They hit the ground running. They were in their three locations before the Anbar PRT had a USAID representative. I mean all this seems so counterproductive. First of all, if USAID has the people on their payrolls right now, has the money, has the experience, and has the commission, why is Department of State running the PRT. The question I am asking is leading to the point that the Department of State found itself much like the Department of Defense, responsible for a huge program for which they were not really trained. And for the Department of State to bring in ePRTs with their own internal organization, having them at a higher level than the Anbar PRT team leader. The Anbar PRT team leader had a tough job, he was responsible for the entire Anbar province. But yet his superiors within the Department of State were sub units, specialists within Anbar province and the Anbar PRT team leader was very conscious not to step on their toes.

Q: What would you say were four or five key lessons that you have learned from your experience there?

A: The PRT is a great idea, both in Afghanistan and Iraq. I am saying this from my experience; in another PRT in another location and another country it could have been a disaster, but in my location in Afghanistan and Anbar in Iraq, it was damn good idea. However, specifically Iraq should have been handled differently in the sense that I do not see a lot of continuity. I do not see a lot of the lessons learned from Afghanistan having been applied to Iraq. Any time you wanted to say something like you know there is another way of doing it, I always had the feeling that I was an old timer, saying "Well, the way we used to do it..." I would catch myself and think, these people do not want to hear me say that.

Q: What other lessons come to mind?

A: Organizations. Should be from the military. It really should be. The civilian entity needs to be there and as I understand the future of Iraq, the way we would like to see it is to get the military out and have the civilians run the entire PRT. But you see if we were smart about it we would have done this and let civilian operatives gain the experience while working under the military so that when the military leaves the civilians could do it.

Q: You mean the civilian Americans?

A: Yes. I am talking about the American emphasis on PRT. Closely following this is force protection. There has got to be some understanding between the RSO, The Regional Security Officer and the Department of State. The RSO has a huge job. I imagine that person does not sleep well at night. But they are responsible for each party member under the Ambassador within the country. So I understand their concern, but they are not capable of controlling the security provided by the army that the PRT has to use because there is no commercial contractor. Now having said that, Blackwater did have a commercial contract in Anbar until the Fallujah tragedy; they were told simply to get out of Anbar and stay out. There can be persons of quality, integrity, responsibility other than someone of the Blackwater experience, so that the RSO could allow you to ride with them, but the argument was always, "we already have a contract." Yes, we do and it was with Blackwater, and you will not let Blackwater in Anbar. So I always got the feeling that it was the easy way out. No, you are not going to ride with anybody but the Army and the Marine Corps. The Army and the Marine Corps would very happily take us when they had room. It never was a question of "we do not want you civilians riding with us."

Q: Other lessons?

A: If the Department of State is going to maintain a presence with a PRT, it really needs to give additional attention to unit control, basic unit control. They are used to dealing with countries and committees, and when you get to the PRT, isolated within a hostile zone, you really need to draw on some of the experiences which are traditionally gained with the military more than the Department of State.

Q: Anything in your lessons that relate to your agriculture work?

A: Anybody in a PRT must be extremely flexible. My specialty was never even mentioned. I did offer to give seminars at the university, but they said that at that point there were no students. I had been on campus once with the army and we were fired on with small arms. They did not even control their campus. You know there was never any reason to give any seminar with my expertise. I mention that because in agriculture we all have a PH.D. in water movement or something specific again just to get a degree. But that is not what Iraqi agriculture needs right now. They need somebody who can talk a lot about irrigation, what species to plant, other than what has traditionally been there. Agriculture probably started somewhere in Iraq thousands of years ago, so what are we going to teach them? We are going to teach them how to do it better. We are not going to teach them how to do it. We are going to teach them how to do it cheaper, bigger, and better. And they sure need help with that. Agriculture economics seems to be the key in agriculture in these developing countries. I do not know that we need to teach them how to plant beans. What we need to do is teach them how to sell their beans and how to make the bean factory, to make beans into some product locally that you could sell internationally. That is important.

Q: Agricultural systems?

A: Yes. And we need more emphasis on agriculture simply because when you look at Iraq, you have to see that agriculture is such a strong component. It is within the United States as well, but you can do a lot of GNP improvement simply with hard working guys who do not mind getting dirty. You have that in Iraq. So all those guys in business suits and all those sheiks and Imams, yes they want it all because they are getting a cut out of it. But those are not the people we need to talk to in agriculture. We need to get out and talk to the farmers. We need to establish co-ops. We need to assist the university with a good solid undergraduate agriculture program. We need to get youth. We need to get 4-H. We need to get a women's movement. They go out and work in the fields. And that is ok. But we have also to show them alternative uses of 50% of their population.

Q: Any other recommendations like that?

A: Yes, you have to have somebody who has been there with enthusiasm to talk to these people who do not go over there and do not know the program but are back here writing all the scrolls of regulations. Ok, if you do not want to go there, and I say this not sarcastically but straight out, the Department of State could not get its own people to go there. If you do not want to go there, listen to somebody who has been there and, you do not have to believe or accept what they tell you, but at least you will have another concept about something that you might not know anything about because you do not want to leave Washington, DC.

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

A: No. What I want to say is the PRT is a great idea. The people who are in them are real movers and shakers. Turn them loose; give them a little more movement and latitude. Support them with something like a funding limit. Give them a budget that is reasonable. Let them have their own pocket money to go out and buy shovels and corn plants. Not just get somebody in there that is authorized to import 1500 Ford tractors. Everybody wants to think big. Ok, but it is the little farmer out in the mud flats that you have got to reach.

Q: That is a good point. Anything else we should touch on?

A: No, I really felt that I could not do as much as I hoped I could have done. I am trying to think of ways that somebody else could pick up and go forward with this thing. I left there with really a sense of "I did not get much done did I." I was there for a year, and I could not look around and see a green bean field.

Q: The system was not geared to make you effective?

A: You know, that is what bothers me. Had I taken a different approach personally, maybe something could work out. We are not going to give up on it. There are going to be more PRTs and I hope that there are going to be more people and just get them so that they are flexible. They do not mind getting dirty. They have got to know when to shut up and do what they are told and then they have got to know when to speak up and say: wait a minute there is another way of doing this!

Q: Thank you very much.