

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

INTERVIEW #52

Interviewed by: Marilyn Greene
Initial interview date: September 24, 2008
Copyright 2008 USIP & ADST

Executive Summary

Interviewee worked with but not as part of the Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team (E-PRT) at an FOB, from 2007 until 2008. The interviewee worked in operations fire support, information operations, psychological operations and civil affairs operations. They helped unify tasks of the E-PRT and the Brigade Combat Team.

Saw E-PRT as bolstering efforts of BCT to strengthen municipal government and restructure Ramadi. The city was its job. The E-PRT was closely associated with the PRT located two miles away and responsible for Anbar Province. A Marine Corps detachment of 100 worked with them. The civil affairs team identified projects, provided access to CERP funds. They would award money to contractors for the projects, and oversee these to completion.

Relations between PRT and E-PRT sometimes confusing, with PRT sometimes getting involved in work that should have belonged to the E-PRT or BCT. The PRT was under supervision of the Marine Expeditionary Force, which “owned” the battle space. The E-PRT and BCT were one level down. Ambiguity arose from lack of definition of areas of responsibility.

Personnel turnover was also a problem. The leave period needs to be re-examined, guidelines set about number of people on leave at the same time. Suggest as in the military, where no more than 10 percent can be gone at one time.

Many things could bolster the PRT and E-PRT effectiveness:

- More technical support.... The team depended on the BCT for help with briefings, computers, supplies, housing, which meant we had to pull from our own team and work; it was extra for us.
- PRTs and E-PRT’s need their own Protective Security Detachment. Contracted security is the best way to go for E-PRT and PRTs, because it gives them a lot more flexibility.
- Enlarge E-PRT and PRT, as you reduce combat forces. A larger E-PRT force would be more beneficial and it makes more sense because it builds that capacity, fosters the

development of the government, even provincial government, and it fosters the reconstruction efforts going on, too.

E-PRT and Military civil affairs groups were successful in promoting women's rights and were able to foster better relations with the Iraqis. The ability of the E-PRT to speak Arabic could have greatly facilitated this endeavor.

As far as fostering operations in counter-insurgency, just being present and being out there talking to officials. Making our presence known and letting them understand that we are one and the same. We're all human beings. And that was critical too. It's just getting out, meeting people and shaking hands.

Developing democracy: That was the key piece, the partnership with the municipal government. Democracy is a great thing in their minds, and a version of it is possible. Trying to change the tribal makeup and how it actually impacts their society is something that we cannot change. But we can definitely influence them.

Economic reconstruction: Civil affairs group led by the Marine Corps was the primary force in reconstruction efforts. They tied in with BCT civil affairs, cementing relationship between the E-PRT and the military force and utilizing CERP funds.

Rule of law: We had some outstanding individuals who were able to help establish a criminal court system

Achievements of the E-PRT

1. Partnership with the municipal government personalities came into play frequently.
2. Infrastructure. We got a state-of-the-art ceramics factory up and producing ceramic tile and bathroom fixtures. Got sanitary system up and running. Set up fuel supply routes and convoys. That factor was significant in turning the tide of the insurgency. Restored essential services – water and sewer.
3. Partnership with IRD was outstanding.

Assessment of PRT in four main mission areas

Improving governance: Rates 7 or 8 on scale of 10 – after the military and E-PRT each recognized the benefits of working together for common goal.

Economic development: Greatest contribution from military side, because it had access to CERP. In future, PRTs need to have their own money source. Military also offered lots of personnel assets. PRTs need more people.

Effective use of civilian and military resources: Once the benefit or cooperation is recognized, it worked great. We were like a family. Biggest asset brought by AID was IRD. Some other AID programs were waste of money.

Counter-insurgency: Money talks. Biggest impact was effective utilization of the CERP program. That led to the change that led to victory in the counter-insurgency itself. Hiring locals; developing partnership with local governments were key.

Training for the PRT needs changing. Primarily, bring team members together before they depart the US. Train as a unit, deploy as a unit, leave as a unit.

Lessons learned

Military has much to learn about working with State Department, PRTs and E-PRTs. We're not fully aware of what PRTs do. Create a capability brief as far as what the E-PRT can do for military members.

PRT idea is an outstanding one. Critical as military draws down from Iraq, a logical transition: as military forces draw down, State role needs to be larger. They can continue to foster local and provincial governments. Very critical, because without that mentorship you run the risk of those governments running astray and going down the wrong path again. They can also be used elsewhere.

Interview

Q: Could you tell me a little about the PRT you were associated with-- where it was, how big it was, what it comprised in terms of personnel?

A: I actually worked with the E-PRT, the embedded provincial reconstruction team, out of Ramadi. The number of personnel varied throughout the time frame that I worked with them. It was roughly about 10 personnel, sometimes a little less. We had 12 at the most. I worked with them from 2007 through 2008.

Q: And what was your job?

A: I received the operations fire support operations, the information operations, psychological operations and also civil affairs operations.

Q: You were a member of the BCT and also a member of the E-PRT?

A: I was not a member of the E-PRT. I was in a joint partnership which fell under the Joint-Common Plan, a plan that brought the E-PRT and the BCT together for one unified cause for the overall mission accomplishment.

Q: You lived together, worked together, every day?

A: On the same installation, correct. Offices were across the street with each other. We were within probably about a thousand feet from each other.

Q: You can give an observation of how the E-PRT. What was its mission, from your viewpoint?

A: It was a joint between BCT, the E-PRT, and the Department of State. And I saw their role, as far as bolstering our efforts, in regards to basically fostering our relationship with, mentorship of the municipal government, and building that municipal government. The E-PRT also worked on reconstruction efforts. And they were there to provide subject matter expertise in the area of government capacities, leadership and reconstruction efforts.

Q: What part of the E-PRT did you spend most of your focus on?

A: It was divided between government capacity, as far as municipal leadership and reconstruction. It was almost a 50-50 thing. We had a civil affairs group which was a Marine Corps detachment. And we also had a civil affairs team which was an Army CAT that was also attached to us.

The civil affairs people provide expertise also, very similar to what the E-PRT came to the table with. But the civil affairs group and the Army CAT brought to the table the ability to write CERP projects which is the Commander's Emergency Response Program. And they were able to go out and identify infrastructure that needed repair, write and underwrite those and allot money for the rebuilding or refurbishment of certain infrastructures in the city.

Q: Did they actually work on the projects physically?

A: No. It was supervision only. It was pure oversight. They would award money to contractors to begin the project and make sure that they stayed on track and to supervise to make sure that the projects were completed to standards.

Q: Can you describe the PRT's relationship with the Office of Provincial Affairs, the National Coordinating Team and/or the embassy?

A: We had the E-PRT and also the PRT, which represented the entire province. And the E-PRT represented the city. The city itself was REO-specific and the way the E-PRT tied into OPA was under a line of supervision.

A: That's what they reported to, and received guidance from, but they also received guidance from the BCT and from the MEF which was our hired headquarters too. So it was kind of almost a three-legged partnership where E-PRT had different liaisons with different entities.

Q: Did you also work with the PRT?

A: I did, on occasion. I didn't have as much interaction with them, but on occasion we would get together to work on different projects. For example, I worked with the PRT to re-establish the university agriculture college.

]

Q: Physically, how far apart were the PRT and the E-PRT?

A: The E-PRT initially was at the FOB, and the PRT was about two miles away, across the river. We had to get into armored vehicles and drive over there.

Two miles and the same thing for the BCT. We actually had units at the same location, but all the headquarters for BCT were stationed out of the FOB, same as the PRT.

Q: Oh I see.

A: Then eventually, I think it was in the beginning of 2008, the PRT relocated to the FOB so we were all within about a thousand-meter radius. Which would be about 3,000 feet apart.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about what you've observed happening between the PRT and the E-PRT? Was there confusion between the two?

A: There were times it was confusing, The PRT being assigned to basically living in city. There were times that they would get involved in some operations that I felt were more at the E-PRT level or the BCT level and instead of looking throughout the whole entire region, they probably should have been more focused on their geographic location. Were they were located they tended to focus more on our area. Sometimes they would do some operations that was not always coordinated with our battle space, even though they fell under the MEF, who controlled the entire battle space there.

Q: MEF?

A: Yes, Marine Expeditionary Force. That was our headquarters at the time. And that was basically the partnership: PRT and MEF. And we were the next level down, the E-PRT and BCT. The E-PRT, I'm trying to think, their relationship with the PRT, they did coordinate back and forth a lot, once the PRT moved. That relationship began to blossom a lot more than what it was before, perhaps because that little distance of two miles definitely had barriers. Even though they did coordinate, there were definitely some friction points at times between the two entities.

Q: Was there confusion at the top between the team leaders? As to who was really in charge?

A: I think that the team leader understood who was in charge. The PRT had oversight for the whole province.

But once the PRT started getting involved in some operations in the city, I think that there could have been better coordination going on. And that definitely developed and I think that it just came down to the fact that it was an immature relationship at the beginning. It was not quite understood how it was supposed to work as far as who had what responsibility. We had the same issues with our civil affairs teams working in our city, too, because we had battalions that had battle space throughout the city. It was divided up so there were some issues among the military forces, too: how the civil affairs team would actually integrate with the maneuver units. We had Marine Corps infantry battalions having parts of the city, so it was just something that needed to be exercised, and something that needed to be developed and basically more matured.

Q: Was it a situation that would arise every time there was a turnover in personnel on either one and have to be done over again?

A: That happened a lot. And that's one of the points, I wanted to bring to the table. It did break down. Speaking specifically towards the E-PRT, there was an initial transition period and that would be like with any other situation in the military or the E-PRT if we received new personnel. There was always a period where people were not quite sure what their capacity needed to be exactly. And there's basically the period of getting their feet wet to understand what was happening. So the new member of the E-PRT would arrive on the ground and they started basically putting feelers out trying to understand where they were, what they needed to do and how they could be most effective.

Q: Was it a function of their time; was the tour of duty too short? Too long? Too overlapping?

A: Well, the E-PRT, and I believe the PRT are falling in the same category, I think it was a 12-month tour of duty. There were some that were cut short and we did receive replacements. But it was often under-lap – so one person would leave and the next person would come in; not always with any kind of transition. And there were other times where we had a sufficient amount of transition, sometimes more than sufficient, which was outstanding because we were able to double-hat certain areas with the E-PRT. Several people within the E-PRT were outstanding personnel and they were very dedicated to the mission. In fact, all of them were dedicated to the mission at hand as far as succeeding in operations, as far as reconstruction, and basically reconstruction of the government itself. They were all dedicated to it. It was just trying to get them on board with the mission at hand, what the BCT was tasked with. We were battle space owners. That was the hardest part, trying to get them to understand that we have one mission and that we need to go forward in this unified effort.

Q: Would you make any changes in the structure or the chain of command in this E-PRT?

A: I would strongly suggest one. The way it was organized, we had a Department of State team leader for the E-PRT. Second was a USAID representative. I believe the team might have been better off with somebody else from the Department of State as the Deputy. The USAID representative had a full load as far as his this job went.

Q: Was the position itself was overloaded?

A: The USAID representative had a lot of oversight with different contractors. IRD, for example. They were trying to manage the E-PRT, and also manage duties as the USAID representative. It was probably a little bit too much, and it was kind of confusing at times. So the USAID representative probably would have been better off without that position.

Q: It's also unusual for the deputy to be a civilian. Usually it's a military person who is the number two.

A: And that did happen after the fact. The USAID representative took leave on numerous occasions and in their absence we actually had a Navy officer. With that military background, it did mature the relationship with the BCT. If somebody understood how a military person did work, as opposed to Department of State coming in with their mentality – and there's nothing wrong with that, it's just two different thoughts in mind – it would be more beneficial to have a military service member to be the liaison and to communicate to different aspects of military operations to the Department of State.

Q: Did you see a problem in the fact that the State department and maybe the AID people had a lot more leave time than the military?

A: It was a problem. I believe it was three-week periods that they were authorized. The military personnel working under the E-PRT had the same leave period that all military personnel did; 18 days for a 15-month deployment. I think they actually had 14 days because they were on 12-month deployment. But that was not the issue. It was that the Department of State personnel had 25 days total of three periods, so that would be, what, 75 days, I believe. But then you add in travel time and everything else onto it and they were usually gone 30 days at a time.

And sometimes they would make trips to Baghdad prior to, so you would add another week onto that. So you're looking at five to six weeks they they'd be out of the loop, multiplied by three. You can do the math on that: Out of 12 months, they were out of the picture quite a bit. Now they would go back to the States and they were sometimes still engaged in operations. I know that our team leader did some meetings, met with the President and also Condoleeza Rice and engaged in basically the operations that we were doing in country. So they were doing things back in the States, but it did hinder operations where they were assigned to.

That was number one – being out of the loop so much.

Number two was that oftentimes the team leader, the deputy and several other personnel would be on leave at the same exact time, so instead of having 10 or 11 personnel there, we'd be down to six personnel. It really had a huge impact on our operations because they'd be gone for four or six weeks and then they'd come back. And in four weeks a lot of things changed in the AO (Area of Operations), so it was almost like a new learning experience again for another week or two.

The leave period, definitely, needs to have some relooking done on it and tweaking. Definitely some guidelines as far as having a certain amount of personnel on leave at the same time; making sure that there is no overlap, so it's a certain percentage gone. In the military I think we were authorized 10 percent at any given time.

Q: How would you rate the effectiveness of the organization structure? Just, maybe, on a scale of one to ten?

A: Of the makeup and everything? I think it could be better, definitely better organized. It always comes down to funding, that's the obvious thing. The effectiveness on one to ten, with ten being the best and one being the worst, I would say initially it was at a five, maybe a little less, a four or five. And toward the end, I think that they different split the plate and it was more around maybe a seven or an eight

And eight is probably pretty strong and it's nothing against the personnel. It's just the way that it was. Individuals brought together that were not trained up like military unit prior to arrival. With our military units we usually do mission readiness exercises, go to NTC and we have a lot of time where we work together and then we deploy as a unity. Unfortunately they didn't have that available to them. They all basically arrived, had a little bit of a train-up and then they started working together.

Q: So, it's a matter of training?

A: I think training is a big aspect. Training as an organization as opposed to training as individuals. And that's something I understand that's probably not going to be feasible for the PRT, or for the E-PRT. But it's something that they can do that would greatly benefit the team.

Q: You mean have them come and go at the same time? Come in as a unit? Train as a unit?

A: And then leave as a unit. The only drawback from that is that you lose that transition. But truthfully, the way it worked, most of them came at the same time and most of them left the same time anyway, so it really wasn't a drawback. Going back to their initial rating of a four or a five, I think that there's a lot of things can be done to bolster the team's effectiveness.

Number one, they needed an administrative clerk, somebody to run their administrative operations, oversee ratings, paperwork, put together the briefings. They didn't come to

the table very skilled as far as putting briefings together and briefings are a very critical piece as far as keeping the battle space owner aware of everything that was going on.

Q: Oh, so this would be on a PRT to PRT basis not in the whole?

A: In the E-PRT partnership with the BCT, there are a lot of issues. Setting up, we provide a lot of support, almost 99% of the support to the E-PRT, and they were dependent on us for communications support, setting up all the computers, a lot of supplies, all their housing. A lot of times we were assisting them as far as putting together their briefings. Them having an administrative section, maybe one to two personnel who are proficient in Power Point operations, who have a background in communications as far as automation and computers, would have greatly benefited them. We were always trying to pull personnel from our unit to go and assist them on things. And our section was fully tasked out, so every day we had to sit and find time to go and support the E-PRT – which we would do every time we had an opportunity – but it was often limited.

The next thing that would greatly benefit the E-PRT and the PRT would be a PSD (Protective Security Detachment). We had to provide security for them, and a lot of times they were relying on us to provide vehicles and personnel as an escort to go to different locations throughout the city. It was very critical that they interacted with local officials and also, for the reconstructions side, with businesses and reconstruction projects. So we had them partnered up with our civil affairs teams and they would actually go out with them. But a lot of times those teams would just stay out at different locations. It was very difficult initially to get them out to those locations. So if they had a PSD that could transport them in up-armored vehicles it would definitely enhance their capabilities.

Q: What about the PRT? Did they depend on you also for security?

A: I'm trying to remember how that was organized. We did provide a PSD to them and I believe that they were working to get private contractor security for the operations. I don't think that materialized at the end, but we were trying to get that in place because we realized it would be a critical need.

And at the end, when we were drawing back, cutting back on forces, it actually was a huge draw on our capabilities because it would usually take anywhere from two to four vehicles to transport E-PRT. Actually it'd be eight. Eight vehicles for E-PRT and PRT operations. And you take that out of the loop for us and it's a huge detraction on combat forces.

Q: It's also a budget issue is it not? Where did that money come from?

A: It was a memorandum of agreement between the Department of State and Department of Defense. And that agreement was for us to provide that, plus the other capabilities too. We did agree, because we realized, I think DOD and DOS realized that that was going to be a drawback so we had to step up to the plate because we needed the Department of State's capabilities in place.

Q: So you would kind of rethink that memorandum itself?

A: I think probably contracted security is the best way to go for E-PRT and PRT, I really do, because it gives them a lot more flexibility. They can control their PSD and say, 'I need to go to this location here' and they just coordinate with our operations center so we know where they're at, we can track where they're at and respond to anything that may happen.

Another thing that can definitely benefit them is probably a larger E-PRT and PRT. PRT was actually fairly sizeable. But the E-PRT, being so small, trying to do reconstruction and also doing government capacity work as far as mentorship and building government capacity, they were kind of spread pretty thin.

They should get larger, as you reduce combat forces. The most logical step would be to increase your government-building capacity with Department of State personnel who are experts in that area. A larger E-PRT force would be more beneficial and it makes more sense because it builds that capacity, fosters the development of the government, even provincial government, and it fosters the reconstruction efforts going on, too.

Q: What about RTI? Were they helpful in the governance area?

A: Yeah. Toward the end they started coming in line a little bit more. It was very slow going though. There was not a whole lot done with RTI. There were a lot of programs they were supposed to bring to the table, GIS mapping of city infrastructure, but I never saw it materialize.

It was actually a service RTI was to provide, I believe. That was number one. And also they were supposed to provide a lot of contracts for hiring of local expertise and they did do the hiring. But there were a lot of drawbacks to the RTI in that the monthly salaries were not paid on time. A lot of the local employees that were contracted through RTI would get very upset about it. Sometimes it'd be 30 days' delay receiving their salaries. And I think that it was just the fact that there was not enough oversight in someone putting their thumb down on the members of RTI to ensure that they followed through with everything. And it was just almost like 'well, we'll get them paid when we have to get them paid.'

And it was a constant thorn in my side to ensure that it was being done because I had to deal with the ramifications when these personnel would come forward and say, 'Listen, we're not getting paid for this.' And they'd get upset. And in that culture they're very boisterous as far as their concerns sometimes, and it's nothing against them, it's just the culture. So it's very understandable. If you weren't getting paid for doing a job, you'd probably get upset, too. I'd just try to put myself in those shoes. And I often asked RTI to do the same thing, and it just kind of like fell on deaf ears. I really had to force the issue.

Q: How would you rate the relationship between the E-PRT and the BCT?

A: Once again, initially, I think that it was on a scale of one to ten, I think it was about a four. If that. There were a lot of issues with the standard of living that a lot of people expect when they arrive. We were living out of huts, lots of time living out of tents and living in barracks that were run down, with basically no lighting, or very limited lighting, heating, and air conditioning. When the E-PRT arrived on the ground we put them in the best accommodation we possibly could. Yet there were a lot of issues with that. There were a lot of friction points, as far as what we were able to provide in support. That seemed to be the number one priority. I understand that quality of living is a key thing and these were all volunteers to come over here, so I applaud them for that. I thank them every day for that.

But it did have a lot of friction points and the fact that they always wanted more and we were giving everything we possibly could ... the working relationship was very convoluted. I think that they saw it more as, 'Hey we're here, we'll work side by side with you.' The partnership and the unified goal that we need to achieve sometimes wasn't seen by both sides. I think that we were there originally and it was our brigade commander, with a mission and guidance and the necessity to execute that mission. The BCT was the battle space owner for the area of operations, so ultimately everything fell onto the commander. Even though it was a partnership, it was still our goals as far as what needed to be accomplished in that city, and the commander's goals in what needed to be accomplished in that city.

Q: So there was some stove-piping. Everybody had their own interests.

A: I think they saw things sometimes in a different light and I think that they wanted to go in different directions at times. And I'm not saying that they would never come back on line; they would come on line once a superior would talk to them. They would definitely come back and follow along, but sometimes it was a lot of nudging to get them to go along. And it's nothing against them and I understand the situation and but speaking candidly; it's just that's how it worked out. Toward the end, the partnership definitely did blossom and I think that they did realize that we were there to support them. And we were there to be their partners and I think they realized the benefits of working as partners toward one common goal. And they realized that that common goal was working. It definitely did flourish.

Q: What was the E-PRT's relationship with NGOs in the area? And with international groups, if any?

A: The women with the E-PRT, and those from our civil affairs group, and from our BCT (that were not involved in civil affairs) would partner up and they would work with the local women's group. Also in coordination and conjunction with the IRD (International Relief and Development).

Q: And what was the Iraqi women's group all about? Was that for women's rights or business development or what?

A: It was, I think, a little bit of everything. It was to definitely promote women's rights to a certain extent, but in a way it was to allow women an opportunity to have a place in the work force. A lot of the women there have lost their husbands and were dependent upon themselves, and this was a way to give them an ability to earn a living.

That's number one, but it also allowed them a means, an outlet for them other than just being at the house, to do certain things. It focused on a lot of things that back in the United States in the 40's and 50's were more typical work for women – like sewing and cooking types of things, but it was something that allowed them to flourish in that area. It allowed them an outlet to talk to us and understand our culture more. And it allowed us to understand their culture.

But this group did develop a relationship with the men in society, too, because the females go back, and they would sit and talk to leaders of the tribes. And if they were married and the husbands were still around to talk to them, it had a lot of impact as far as operations. So it definitely blossomed and allowed operations for us to flourish overall.

There's one NGO there, NIAC, you familiar with NIAC? I'm not quite sure if they would be considered an NGO, it was more a program that was set in place, it was National Iraqi Assistance, I can't remember what it is, what the C stands for, I apologize, but it was a program that identified children that were injured

We basically put them through evaluations to see if they needed higher medical treatment. They would go through evaluations, we'd send them to Baghdad to be evaluated there, and, once they were selected for it, to be sent to other countries to get treatment. It was a joint partnership between BCT and E-PRT.

But there were not a lot of NGOs in Iraq.

Q: What about things like the tribal councils and the Iraqi leadership? Did the E-PRT, have interaction with them?

They did, actually. They were dual-hatted a lot of the times. With tribal councils, for example. The team leader worked a lot with the local leaders, but would also engage with the sheikhs. Following that engagement, several other members would engage with sheiks at times, but it was mostly at the senior level of the E-PRT that they did the engagements as far as municipal leadership. And a lot of the municipal leadership were also sheikhs, so it was almost double-hatted. They had district council leaders who were sheikhs, but the E-PRT also had a lot of influence with tribal leaders. In a way they did control the region. That's who all the people went to, and they listened to them. So the E-PRT did, was heavily engaged, as far as the senior level. They were, let's put it this way, very persuasive as far as their communication abilities, as far as talking and communicating certain points. That was a very strong point.

Q: Who?

A: Like, for example, the team leader. This person is a very good diplomat. And if there were some issues, we would always communicate them, and they would always be dealt with. Not quite as much with sheikhs, but they would engage with sheikhs on occasion.

Q: Did the team leader speak Arabic?

A: No, they did speak Spanish, though, and were also working on Chinese too, because it was their next assignment. The one thing about the Spanish was that a Iraqi official spoke Spanish, so they were able to speak in Spanish a lot.

Q: Would language training be one of the things that you would recommend for the E-PRTS?

A: It definitely would help out. It'd be very beneficial and that would roll into the other thing, interpreters. But yes, if they could speak Arabic it would help them out considerably. However it's a very difficult language to learn. But even just a little bit of an understanding of the Arabic language helps out because it breaks down the barrier between the different cultures and it opens those doors up: talking to the locals, just learning one or two words. It fostered friendships with each other. It made the Iraqis happy and they were more willing to deal with us, they were more willing to realize that we were here to help them out: that we were interested in their culture, interested in the language. And it did provide a road forward for everybody.

Q: Did the E-PRT have some BBAs?

A: They had one, with a security background. The BBA proved very valuable in that area. Sometimes they went down the wrong path, though, and it caused some problems with our intelligence section and our brigade. We'd get some intelligence reports that were sometimes opinionated.

We had to sort through that on numerous occasions. We had to be careful determining what was opinion and what was actually fact. But they did an outstanding job as far as translating. There is more to being a BBA though, and they were able to go to meetings and then come back and give a good debrief to our intelligence sections and the E-PRT.

So having that BBA was critical. There were also BBAs in the civil affairs group within the Marine Corps. But the Army civil affairs company did not have BBAs.

We had some that were experts in sewer, some in electricity, so that was a very critical piece of the puzzle, having those guys there.

Q: What about the E-PRT's outreach public relations with either the Iraqis or with folks back in the United States? What did they do to promote what was going on there?

A: Outreach back to the States, we're even with the State Department. We tried to open up, we did open up, a museum/US-Iraqi cultural center. Working together, the E-PRT and the PRT were able to reach back to the States, reach back to the embassy and retrieve a lot of cultural items in regard to the US that we were able to put into the cultural center itself to start the center up.

We were able to build it, and it was actually placed in a museum initially and we were looking and we were never able to do it before we left, but they opened up a library which probably is a more suitable location for it. We also looked at culture corners. We looked at that as basically a cornerstone. That as basically the outline for our US-Iraqi cultural center and that was part of it. Although a US corner had to have, I think approval through the embassy and everything, so we actually did a knock-off spin off- of it and we were able to open that up at the museum.

Q: So this was accessible to Iraqis.

A: Yes it was. And we looked at moving it eventually to the library, but the library still under construction, it was never completed by the time we left.

Q: How did the E-PRT perform in the area of counter-insurgency and bolstering moderates?

A: In counter-insurgency operation, I think the biggest part that they played was mentorship of city officials, municipal officials. The DG, Director General of, say, Water, DG of Sewer, Electricity, Dams, they partnered with all of those personnel. There was something like 13 to 17 different DGs, Director Generals, in the city. And that partnership allowed a weekly interaction, where they worked out of a government center with these officials, they had a location where they can meet up and they can sit and foster that relationship and by doing that it built capacity within those DGS.

It allowed the sewer department to fix a lot of sewer breaks. It was astronomical, the number of sewer breaks we had. Water line breaks, fixing electricity problems, but this is all a concerted effort, though it was a combined effort between the civil affairs group, the Marine Corps primarily and the E-PRT and the government officials. So that in itself, by re-establishing electricity, water, a working sewer system, you're getting food out to them through a program where we were able to get food, warehouses, everything established and DG of fuel, having routine fuel supplies – gasoline, diesel fuel – stuff that we didn't have initially.

Having that all re-established had a huge impact on the counter-insurgency.

Q: In what way?

A: Public opinion. If you don't have power; you don't have water; you don't have sewer service; you don't have fuel; it leads to chaos in the community and people are left

distraught, unaware of where to go. A lot of times they might turn to insurgents in the community.

They had money available. They were able to pay people to do different things. But we restored those capacities. By doing that, it made the public more confident of their leaders, local officials and also of Coalition forces. And the Coalition forces in mind are E-PRT, PRT and US Department of Defense personnel.

That's where it was very critical and that's what in my mind turned the tide as far as what happened in our region. It was almost a snap of the fingers, it was done. I mean we went from getting shot at every single day to maybe one to two incidents the last 10 months we were there.

So, that was the critical piece. As far as fostering operations in counter-insurgency, just being present and being out there talking to officials. Making our presence known and letting them understand that we are one and the same. We're all human beings. And that was critical too. It's just getting out, meeting people and shaking hands.

Q: So they did a good job?

A: Yes they did, absolutely

Q: One of the other goals is to promote democracy and develop governance capacity. How did they do in that department?

A: Developing democracy: That was the key piece, the partnership with the municipal government. There were a lot of issues because they were under the Saddam regime social society for so many years and that's what they were raised with. And when you're raised in a certain way it's very hard to break from what you're taught.

Q: Did they even understand what democracy was?

A: I think they did, in some respects. But they were so stuck to their ways that it was hard to break them. It was a continual effort to get them to see, 'This is the way you need to go about this approach.' A lot of times they were waiting to be told to do things instead of trying to do things on their own. We would have to remind them, 'Hey you're an official who was put in the position lawfully – sometimes elected, sometimes originally nominated to be put in that position just because of where you were a tribal and it's OK. – Listen you're going to lead for a certain time period.'

And then we went into elections, well not really elections, but it was among themselves. In the district they kind of basically elected their own officials and by doing that I think that they were definitely understanding the way that it works. But tribal influence is something that will always be present there. And that tribal system is something that we learned, and our Army predecessors also learned. That they were very keen and realized

that this is the way we can start and foster a relationship and have a positive outcome in Iraq.

I think that democracy is a great thing in their mind. I think that a spin-off of it is possible. Trying to change the tribal makeup and how it actually impacts their society is something that we cannot change. But we can definitely influence them as far as how great democracy can be for their future successes.

Q: How about getting the Sunnis and the Shiites to talk and to work together?. Was that part of the tribal issue?

A: No. Where we were it was predominantly Sunni. Shia was not even one percent of the makeup of where we were. The entire region was Sunni for the most part. There was some Shia in certain areas. There were occasions where we had to do convoy operations, where we were trying to get the local government to go pick up electricity materials like power lines, telephone poles, stuff like that. And they had to go to Baghdad and pick it up. There was a lot of infighting going on between the Shia and Sunnis in Baghdad. They were afraid to go there because the entire rumor mill said that if you go there they'd basically capture us and kill us, torture us, whatever. And once we were able to develop that relationship where they realized that we're all there for one common goal and that was peace. Once they established those communications, those networks, it definitely did foster the working environment, and we were able to start shipping a lot of different things going between Baghdad. A lot of the DGs and ministries were able to get supplies into the region and that was probably the most difficult thing for us: that Sunni- Shia influence with Baghdad.

Q: What about physical and economic reconstruction? Did the E-PRT work a lot in that department?

A: I'll say this right now: the CAT that the Marine Corps attachment led was the primary force as far as reconstruction efforts. Commanders with the emergency response program, CERP. That program itself was something around \$85 million we'd spent in the 15 months we were there.

Q: In what area?

A: In the city itself, and around the outlying areas. So we spent a lot of money there. How the E-PRT tied into it, we had several SME's, subject matter experts, that tied in with our civil affairs group.

They tied in with our civil affairs group, partnered with them, and that's where the relationship between the E-PRT and the military force really came together. Once they realized that it was a partnership instead of a 'this is your line of operation and this is our line of operation.' That's what happened initially, but toward the end they came together and worked together as partners and ran it parallel on the same mission. And between those two entities, the Marine Corps CAT and the E-PRT, they were able to accomplish a

lot, utilizing CERP. And toward the end the E-PRT had some of their own funds that they were able to tap into, not quite as responsive as our CERP but it was in its infancy as far as developing those funds and how they were able to allocate them.

Q: Was there any connection between you and the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC)?

A: PRDC. Very limited. It was mostly secondary. I would get a lot of information from the E-PRT as far as what were the workings of that group.

Q: Let's talk about rule of law and what you did or what the E-PRT did in that area. How would you rate the E-PRT's performance in the area of rule of law?

A: The way the rule of law is broken down was that the MEF, Marine Expeditionary Force, had assigned a rule of law officer to the BCT to work with us hand in hand. That was more for the provincial level and initially was a military officer who was there for several months and had a lot to do with establishing the rule of law.

This was an individual with a background similar to the military police, I believe, and was outstanding; they had a lot to do with setting it up. We had established a rule of law representative amongst our judge advocates in the brigade who came onboard and worked with rule of law all the way through, hand in hand with a Naval officer. That was our BCT representative, who was actually an artilleryman but had a law degree in the States. They were very beneficial to us as far as having that background.

And that's very similar to the civil affairs at war. If you pull people that have backgrounds in those areas and they work in civil affairs, it is an outstanding approach. We're using an artillery officer having a legal background who was partnered to us through BCT, with MEF initially.

Then what the E-PRT combined with that was they had a legal representative, another military officer who had a civilian law background, came on board with a lot of ideas as far as legal matters go and brought those to the table from the civilian sector.

That helped to develop the rule of law in the area of operations, which was primarily the provincial area and also municipal but mostly provincial. We were able to establish the criminal court system. I think they tried several cases there before we left, which was an outstanding feat in itself. So having those three personnel dedicated, once again it goes to partnership. Working as a team, they worked hand in hand, day in and day out, with the local Iraqis. They worked mostly with the judges and were able to bring the judges on line.

There's always legal matters going on there, so these various representatives had a lot to do.

Q: Can you cite a list of specific achievements that the E-PRT accomplished?

A: Their partnership with the municipal government is of particular note. The team leader dealt with the highest official quite a bit. The official was very hard to please at times; often it was on a constant basis.

They frequently said they were going to quit. Almost every other day. So our official did a lot of work fostering that and keeping them on the up and up I think, keeping them happy I guess. So that was definitely a plus. Again, this was a very good diplomat. The kind who can talk the talk and walk the walk, and brought that big piece to the fight.

The next aspect would be probably our infrastructure work. This was actually a civilian employed under the DOD. An employee civilian contractor, an engineer, and came to the table to work on State-owned enterprises. We had a glass factory there and we had a ceramics factory. The ceramics factory was a big deal because it was a state-of-the-art facility that had not been run in years. They also were dedicated to fuel: re-supply and fuel distribution points.

The ceramics factory, was about 50% of one individual's time. It was a huge project and by the time we left they actually had a limited production line running. Ceramic tiles was one of the lines. Another one was bathroom sinks and toilets.

And they did have the sanitation up and running by the time we left.

In addition to that, the fuel. Fuel was a huge problem because without fuel there's not a lot that society can do. It runs everything, it really does. And fuel on the black market was a huge support thing for the insurgency, so we were able to take that away. What they were able to do was foster the fuel runs that we had to do.

Those fuel convoys were often attacked. But they dealt with our operations side a lot to coordinate the convoys and also our MIT (Military Transition Teams) that worked with the Iraqi army, and they provided armed escort for the fuel convoys too. These fuel runs were established with coordination of the PRT, MEF, BCT, MIT and the Iraqi army. That started bringing in a constant fuel supply to the area and that in itself probably had a lot to do with turning of the tide as far as insurgency dying out, being squashed.

Q: Ok.

A: The individual managing the essential services, water and sewer, was a very dedicated and positive person, who helped develop subordinate officers' capacities as managers. That was a critical Piece.

The biggest problem about what happened is you had the civil affairs group who worked with them because they were first on the ground and they were doing this. And the E-PRT came on board, and they were establishing ways to do doing certain things and the civil affairs group had their own certain procedures. It was working, and then the E-PRT wanted to change it. So they had a hard time kind of molding into it.

Eventually both came to a common ground and worked it out. So it's not a thing on the individuals, it's not a thing on them, it's just one of those things that caused a lot of problems initially.

I'm trying to think where else were really strong. There were so many areas that we covered down on. IRD, for example. That's not really E-PRT, but IRD had a huge impact on operations there. So I'm not sure if you can write that up or not but that was a subcontractor of USAID

Q: OK, so that was really good then?

A: Outstanding, as a matter of fact. The leader came to us and the brigade commander realized the benefit of having IRD in our area of operations. And we partnered with them immediately and brought them in. Whereas in other areas IRD would show up and it was kind of like 'yeah, ok. You're here, you're more of a hindrance to me than anything, so I really don't know what to do with you,' without fully knowing the capabilities or what they could bring to the table.

IRD was a huge benefit, and they did typically fall under PRT because they reported to our USAID representative on the PRT team.

Q: Ok, Good. This next question has to do with assessment and how the EPRT measured up in the four main areas in the mission: Improving governance, promoting economic development, utilizing American civilian and military resources well, and counter-insurgency. And then what I've been doing is asking, on a scale of one to ten, how did the E-PRT – or the PRTs in general, perform in those areas?

A: I would say on a scale of one to ten, in improving governance, it was probably about a seven or an eight. Now my caveat to that is: I think that things in our area of operations were a little different than other areas because of the partnership between the military and the E-PRT itself. And like I said initially, that partnership wasn't quite there. We were there working together a bit, but it did not come together until the last several months. And when it did, that's when I really saw a big change in things. When both entities realized the benefits of working together for one common goal. And I say it was seven or eight because it was military and Department of State as partners, not just side by side tied together.

Q: That's great.

A: And that goes for economic development, too. Honestly, I think economic development probably came more from the military side to assert funding. That's why I think that there needs to be an increase in E-PRT funds that they can actually utilize and tap out there.

And also an increase in size of the E-PRT, because their force, let's say 12 personnel, compared to a civil affairs group made up of 100 personnel. We also utilized other battalions, which were sometimes 200-person Marine Corps battalions. At one time there were three, maybe even four battalions in the area of operations.

We actually trained those battalion like company commanders, captains and lieutenants in there. We're talking probably a couple hundred people to be able to go out there and to do CERP-type funding. We authorized them to do that, we trained them up. And it was a huge CERP program that we ran there, probably one of the largest in the country. We actually pushed it down, trained the personnel and they were able to go out there and reach out everywhere and be able to help stimulate the economic development through day labor, through basically reconstruction by tapping in the local contractors which employed locals, kept them off the streets and from being enticed by the insurgents.

So economic development was picking up a lot of steam. If I had to rate the E-PRT alone on economic development, I would rate it at a four or a five, but if they were to increase the size of the EPRT and also increase their funding capability then I think that they would have a much larger impact on economic development. And in future operations, whether they be in Iraq or other countries, it's going to be very key that they are able to do that. It's very critical.

Q: How about utilizing military and civilian resources?

A: The American military, once again, I think that they realize the benefit of actually being a partner, so I'd rate that as a nine or 10. I really believe that, because I saw it come together and we're a family, we really were. We were like brothers and sisters sometimes, we'd argue but we'd always come back together and we'd always realize that we were together for this and it was one common goal.

The civilian resources, State Department and AID people. The biggest force in AID was IRD. Hands down. There were other programs that AID had that, honestly, I think were a waste of money, because there was not enough oversight.

Q: Ok, what about counter-insurgency? How did that go? How did the PRTs do there?

A: I'd say pretty well. But once again, it's that partnership. You can't really say that it was the E-PRT that had the huge impact, or that it was the military that had the huge impact. The military heavily outweighed the E-PRT as far as manpower, probably one of them to every 500 of us. Probably even greater than that, probably 800. We had something like 5,000 forces on the ground.

It'd be very difficult. I think the biggest impact for the counter-insurgency was the fact that we effectively utilized our CERP program. That's what I saw was the key thing. That led to the change that basically led to our victory in the counter-insurgency itself.

Q: Money talks, right?

A: It does, because we went out there and we did day labor, we hired local Iraqis. I think we were paying them seven dollars a day. And they would go out there and they would clean the streets up and pick up the trash and everything. It was a mess. I'm not sure if you've seen pictures or anything, but in certain areas, it was like walking through a landfill, with sewage and stuff in the streets. We'd have patrols walking through the streets and there would just be sewage backed up, we'd be walking through it and it was awful. Those were the conditions that they had to deal with.

And we were able to go in there and apply immediate funding to it through the Marine Corps civil affairs group detachment, primarily for the larger projects. For the smaller cleanup projects, it was the maneuver battalions.

The Marine Corps battalions and the Army battalions that were there were to be able to utilize their company commanders and their platoon leaders actually go out there and hire locals in their area. They got to know them and to develop and foster the relationships and that probably had a much larger impact on the counter-insurgency. But for the E-PRT, I think it was the partnership with local governments where they really came into play.

Q: Were you impressed with the training that was given to the PRT members?

A: PRT members? That's one thing I'd probably suggest needs to be changed a little bit. I know they went to the COINS Academy which was located outside of Baghdad. The counter-insurgency program that they set up was like a five-day course on one of the FOBs.

All personnel key leaders, when they come into the country, military personnel when they come, they go to this COINS (Counter-Insurgency Simulation) academy and basically it teaches you about culture, about different types of operations the military does, how to fight the counter-insurgency, and psychological operations, civil affairs operations.

E-PRT members did receive that COINS training, which is an outstanding thing, but I think more training is needed. It goes back to bringing the team members together prior to leaving the United States. When military forces deploy, we deploy as a unit and have to go through different exercises – MRE, (Military Readiness Exercises) at the National Training Center. We go through a lot of unit-level training, many months. I think that if they were to bring the E-PRT members together when they know they have a group that's going to be going over to replace, bring them together as a team and do some kind of training up. Maybe even with military forces when they're going through these MRExes. So maybe have their rotations based off military rotations so if they're partnered with us when we're going through some of the training and if they can't do it as team members, maybe bring different team members in so they work with us while we're at home station exercises or even at the NTC.

I know it's asking a lot, but it would definitely foster that relationship and that military department of state relationship where they understand how we operate and how they operate, too, and it would definitely bring the partnership closer together a lot faster. That's one thing I would definitely suggest: Culture. Cultural training is something that we did receive at the COINS Academy, but I think that they would greatly benefit from more training. Military too. We are trying to promote that when we go. If we could do more culture training prior to going over there it would benefit them greatly.

Arabic. If they spoke Arabic. If they were able to understand a little bit or speak just a little bit like, 'Hello,' or, 'How're you doing today?' That would benefit them a lot, too. Just training prior to leaving and getting over there would benefit them a lot.

Q: What are some of the lessons learned from your experience?

A: As the military, we have a lot to learn as far as the how we work with the Department of State and the PRT and E-PRT. We're not fully aware of what they do. I can go out right now and ask members of my brigade, 'What do the PRTs do when you are over there?' and they probably have no idea because they were at different levels, they didn't understand it. They do not understand how to tap into the PRT or the E-PRT or the resources that were available, most of it through our brigade headquarters. They came through, the civil affairs shop, and if they needed things they requested through us. Those who did work with the PRT probably saw the benefits of actually them being on the ground.

Q: Right.

A: So I think that more training for the military side is needed so that we can understand what they can and can't do. Maybe a capability brief as far as what the E-PRT can do for military members.

I had no idea what E-PRT was when I hit the ground. We were never taught or trained or had any idea what they brought to the fight. So that's what the military needs to learn. Maybe senior leaders know, but I would say probably commanders, captains and above have no idea. So, that a lessons learned for us.

Q: What about the future utilization of PRTs? Do you think that it's a good idea, should we keep going with forming these up and sending these over?

A: I think it's an outstanding idea. I think that it's critical because military forces must draw down, we have to. We can't remain there at all times. I think in a way it's a transition, you reach a point where it's predominantly military, you got a small piece that Department of State, I categorize E-PRT as Department of State, maybe using that loosely, because it's made up of many DOD personnel working there under contract with Department of State. That's initially how it works. But as things progress, that side needs to grow. As military forces draw down, the Department of State piece needs to be larger. I think it is very critical for the E-PRT to be present as military forces depart and the

security situation is stable enough for them to be there with very minimal security forces present.

They can continue to foster those local governments, those provincial governments, and even the state governments themselves. Very critical for that piece there, because without that mentorship you run the risk of those governments running astray and going down the wrong path again. Yes, doing the wrong things. You've got a lot of corruption that takes place. Corruption happens. It occurs. There is just stuff under the table. corruption is... how I say that...it happens, it occurs, there is just stuff under the table. But you cannot progress your state by doing these things that are illegal. You need to uphold the standards.

And by having the PRTs present it guides them and mentors them and allows them to develop into a society that gets more civilized. It's very, very critical. I think no matter what we're talking about, if it's Afghanistan, if it's Iraq, you can go to even Bosnia possibly, that it's critical there. There are a lot a lot of different places the E-PRTs can be plugged into, I think it's an outstanding idea, and outstanding program, but I think it definitely needs to be adapted. Personally, I want to see it continue.

Q: *Thank you very much.*

#