United States Institute of Peace
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INTERVIEW #56

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Executive Summary

The interviewee has had several assignments associated with Iraq and the PRTs in Iraq, ranging in duties and mission beginning in 2001 prior to the start of the war and continuing over the subsequent six years. There were no PRTs at that time; there was the Commanders Emergency Reconstruction Program (CERP), which filled a huge problem providing commanders on the ground with resources for small reconstruction projects. It was a great tool as he learned for promoting contact and trust with local leaders.

IRMO (evolving from the Project Management Office (PMO) and then the PCO) was responsible for managing the $12.8 billion infrastructure portion of the $25.2 billion U.S. Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund I and II.

In 2004 the interviewee was assigned to the State Embedded Team (SET) to administer $25 million to gain community support after the counterinsurgency battle with Al Qaeda. The SETs, as precursors to the PRT were driven by military and civilian decision makers in Baghdad wanting information on what was happening in the provinces and CPA interests in promoting law, order and stability in the provinces. Accelerated Iraq Reconstruction Funds (AIRF) from seized Iraq funds (not US funds) amounting to $2.3 billion were being drawn down rapidly without proper procedures as there was no standard way to coordinate with the local communities. To change this, a PCO representative had the provincial authorities publish the solicitation for bids and screen the bids, including the registration and classification of contractors and overseeing of construction. This approach led to the formation in early 2005 of Provincial Reconstruction Development Committees (PRDCs).

Subsequently, the interviewee was in charge of USAID's Local Governance Program (LGP) as a Research Triangle Institute (RTI) employee with staff working for the Regional Reconstruction Teams. One of the most important aspects of the LGP was the production of Provincial Development Strategies, which expressed the will of the Provincial Councils, which were created in all provinces except Dohuk. These strategies with project lists were presented to the Iraqi official as the basis for allocation of funds to the provinces. The LGP staff are members of the PRT with the job of coaching the PRDC through the process of strategy formation and project selection. Implementation is the task of the provincial Director Generals (DGs) with the assistance of PRT specialists. The

LGP had its own mission statement, which was drawn on for the PRT's mission statement.

Having a military commander as a PRT leader would be more effective. Where the PRT worked best with a State Department team leader was when they deferred to the military. The State Department does not have the people to staff PRT leadership positions. USAID personnel need to be beefed up as USAID has the administrative functions for international development – not the State Department. The military's role in PRTs is essential for the security and mobility functions.

The PRTs are more than somewhat effective; they could be made much more efficient. There is too much energy being devoted to internal organizational friction and bureaucratic infighting. Also redundancy in contractor work is abundant. Having a State Department political advisor for the commander is useful, but should not have operational authority.

PRT relationships with Iraqis are mixed. If the PRT is responsive to their needs the community will love them. By providing resources and listening the PRTs are certainly going to get the attention of the local government officials. The local government did not view the LGP as part of the PRT; it was called RTI; it had been there before the PRT.

The measurements of the effectiveness of the PRT are no more than the accomplishments of its constituent members. For the LGP, the accomplishments are getting development strategies drafted and ratified for all 18 provinces and teaching the local governments how to do that and how to be responsive to their needs and incorporating the needs of their constituencies into government planning. In Kurdistan, the LGP developed a master plan for electricity infrastructure, improved municipal infrastructure, prevented outbreaks of cholera, established geographic based information systems, modernized public financial management, advanced human rights for women and carried out an economic development assessment.

PRTs have been helpful in tempering the insurgency through the administration of CERP funds. The chief positive factor has been the awaking councils and giving the Sunni tribal leadership a voice, thereby taking away the tribal support for the insurgency.

Interview

Q: It might be helpful, since you have had several assignments in Iraq, if you could list in order briefly the several assignments you had with dates.

A: Right after 9/11, I reported in to U.S. Central Command as a. It was, of course, some time later, I was involved in the planning for the invasion of Iraq.

I became involved in the reconstruction of Iraq in 2003, when I was sent as a liaison and facilitator in a liaison cell that we established, CENTCOM.

After that assignment, some six months, I returned back to U.S. Central Command for some months and then was detached from there in 2004 to return to Iraq.

Q: What year was this?

A: 2004. I joined them and the office converted over into the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office as part of the U.S. Mission, when the CPA converted over to the U.S. Embassy and the Office of Secretary of Defense withdrew. Paul Bremer passed the baton over to Ambassador Negroponte, so we were preparing for his arrival.

We did not have anything like a PRT in those days, or any of its precursors. In 2004, there was the Commanders Emergency Reconstruction Program (CERP), which allowed commanders down to the battalion, certainly to regimental level, to have budget leeway for projects in the local communities that they encountered. So as we went along, we found that this remedied a huge problem that we had encountered in the NATO commands in the Balkans, where commanders would find problems on the ground and would promise to do something about them, but then soon discovered that notwithstanding their good intentions that had no budget to allocate to any small program, even to dig a well. They could use their troop strength to do things, but they had no money. So they could not acquire equipment; they could not get materials and could not hire labor.

So you could send your carpenters and plumbers and so forth if you had a Seabee (CB) company or if you had an engineer platoon. Whatever they could do, you could do with your operating and management funds, your O&M funding, but there was nothing allocated. The CERP was set up with the direct intention of overcoming that shortfall.

What we learned through the course of that was that when you are in contact with community leaders, whether they are elected or informal leaders, societal leaders and you can respond to their needs you quite naturally develop a positive relationship with their constituency and you gain their cooperation, trust, friendship and support, to a certain extent. It is a natural symbiotic relationship when you can do that. In a post-conflict scenario as we faced in Iraq, with the regime gone and various factions starting to surface, we found this was a great tool.

Now, with the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF) funding, there is another problem. We had some $12.8 billion of construction funds that needed to be managed and then many billions more for non-construction things, supplies and services.

Q: Which funding was this?

A: This was IRRF I and II, the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund. There was IRRF I and II and the second allocation, IRRF II, was $18.4 billion, but IRRF I was substantially less than that, $6.8 billion, something like that and so $25.2 billion had been allocated, but out of that less than $13 billion was for actual hard construction and it was divided into seven sectors. And that was fine enough.

The way it was set up is, the PMO, the Project Management Office, was the initial office overseeing that. That was transmutated into PCO, Project and Contracting Office. Rear Admiral David Nash, retired as the head of the Seabees, was the head of the PMO and he later then was head of the PCO, even though it changed its name, under the Embassy and also simultaneously head of IRMO, the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office.

I recruited one individual with a strong background in economic quantitative analysis to assist in our analysis of political-military strategy and operational options. At any rate, I needed a credential to bolster the office who was an astute politico and knew that he needed some military players on the team. That gives you some background as to why I ended up where I was.

Q: So what did you do?

A: What we ended up doing, really, the main task was to find out what monies had not yet been obligated or committed to contracts, so that they could take monies that would have been committed in the out years beyond that point of mid-2004. Ambassador Negroponte and General Petraeus, had picked up a third star and then was made the head of a new establishment called Multinational Security Transition Command for Iraq, which was the umbrella headquarters organization over the Coalition Military Assistance Training teams, CMATT and a new organization that was formed up in January of 2004 called CPATT, the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team.

The CPATT was born out of the realization that came about at Central Command's headquarters while I was there. While we were watching the Iraqi army and the Iraqi National Guard being formed up, there was no higher unified command looking at the police structure, and it was law and order that was the main issue.

So what we ended up doing was moving $5.3 billion out of mainly electricity and water sectors, the big projects that were going to come on line in late 2004 through 2005 and 2006, into security and justice sectors, security being mainly the army and justice being police and arguably judiciary fell under that, courthouses and that supporting infrastructure, jails and so forth, but also for non-construction items, such as uniforms, weapons, handcuffs, shoes, all the accouterment that police need in addition to the supplies for the military.

So, that job being done, they needed people in the field and so in late 2004, I was dispatched out of IRMO's main office to a major city. We did not know how important this was going to be. We were learning step by step, in a way, to try to coordinate construction and other infrastructure renovation or refurbishment with military operations.

The way they worked it in our city was after the initial counterinsurgency battle (the town had been overrun by al Qaeda operatives). The first battle was to get those guys out of there and then there was a $25 million fund that was set up to bring in lots of community

support in the wake of that battle. There was an Iraqi that was put in charge of that who came with us. I was there with the State Embedded Teams, or SET.

Q: Did you relate to the provincial government?

A: This was the precursor. What we learned from this operation, remember, this is Baghdad learning how to reach out and be connected with the provinces. The backdrop is that at headquarters there was a great frustration with the lack of accurate knowledge about the conditions on the ground in the provinces and the military chain of command was not designed to feed information into OSD's offices; there was no apparatus for that; there was no protocol for it, it was all *ad hoc*. The Office of the Secretary of Defense is not a deployable unit and back in the States there is a chain of command that rises up to the office of the service secretary or to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and that goes over to OSD, from that level, at a very high level.

Now you have that unit deployed. So, quite naturally, everybody follows a standard military chain of command reporting, right up the chain, go up to corps level, corps goes over to what ultimately became the four star command, but at the time, all reports went to the embassy

There was frustration with all of that within the Mission, that they could not reach out to those subordinate commanders and get information directly. So what really was the impetus behind forming these State Embedded Teams and how they morphed into having PRTs was the military and civilian decision makers that were in the U.S. Mission in Baghdad wanting an apparatus that would generate reliable information, would be responsive to their information needs. And they were driven, in turn, to provide information to Washington.

So really this is Washington wants live information, or nearly live information, real time information, of some accuracy about the status of reconstruction in Iraq, for political reasons, perhaps, but certainly because they wanted to have a handle on the information whenever they spoke to the President. The President and Secretary of Defense wanted to be able, whenever they made public statements about things, to have accurate information that would not be refuted later on in the press.

All of that drives thousands of people to reach out into the community. The commanders on the ground wanted stability in their area of responsibility, wherever their area of operations was or their area of interest was, they wanted stability and it was known that if you put people to work, the theory went, that those hands were not idle and were less likely to be a recruiting bed for al Qaeda and al Qaeda was the focus at the time. We did not have a Shiite uprising until some months later. There was a fear that if we did not put people to work….

So all of this was an operational, if not tactical, maneuver of applying reconstruction funds in a responsive way to community needs, real needs on the ground, in order to accomplish that objective of maintaining stability and allowing the community to flourish

and have some semblance of normal life and normal commercial life, certainly, come about, so that people could move about the street freely and go to market and do their thing on a day-to-day basis, particularly in the wake of a successful battle that would rout insurgents, whether they be al Qaeda or criminal elements.

What we encountered was, at that point, former Baathi military officers were colluding with organized criminals, were colluding with al Qaeda. Zawahiri was operating at that point in time and kidnapping people and criminal gangs were kidnapping people and doing all kinds of bad deeds in order to get money from al Qaeda or whomsoever would pay them and the Baathis were motivated to try to take over and they would cooperate with these other elements, because it would destabilize the U.S. military operation and serve their purposes.

So you had an overlap of interests on various insurgent factions that came to bear on the Coalition's interests, which was to provide for law and order and stability. So the money being thrown into community infrastructure was seen as one tool that we could use to counter all of that and undermine the recruiting efforts or co-opting efforts of the insurgents.

Q: How did you organize to do that work?

A: Initially we had *ad hoc* committees. I was a representative in the city mentioned previously. Later others were sent out, also from IRMO, as a liaison from 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. People in Baghdad were loath to go to the field, because they thought it was so dangerous. Ironically, they thought it was much more dangerous in other places like Tikrit than it was in Baghdad, when in fact being a fish in a barrel in Baghdad, having rockets thrown at you every day, was the most dangerous place in Iraq at that point in time. On a per capita basis, people were getting killed in Baghdad, friendlies were getting killed in Baghdad, inside the Green Zone, at a much higher rate than they were in places like Tikrit in those days. Things changed when Mosul turned into a hotbed; the Battle of Fallujah had not yet taken place.

Q: And how did you carry out the projects?

A: There was an engineer colonel that he put at the head of the reconstruction committee. They would meet at least weekly and sometimes twice a week. With a military briefing once a week, at the beginning of the week, "What is the status of everything and what are your plans for the week?"

Q: Within the province?

A: Yes, this operation included the entire province. So they would meet with all of the U.S. guys. They had contractors' meetings as well; they were regularly scheduled, so the contractors, the prime contractors for major efforts that were being funded there, they would come in and brief on the status. And then also you must understand at that time there was PCO field representative up there looking over AIRP, the Accelerated Iraq

Reconstruction Program, which was a pot of money that was taken from seized funds, these are not U.S. funds; it was maybe $2.3, something like that, a couple of billion dollars, could have been as much as six billion.

Q: It was substantial.

A: It was substantial. There were two different pots. There were seized funds and frozen assets. But at any rate, the two pots of money amounted to over six billion combined.

Now that money was being spent pretty quickly and there has been a lot of litigation, some people have gone to prison because they thought they did not have to obey the Federal Acquisition Regulations and they did not follow procedures, did not keep track, and did not keep records and some of them just stole money outright. Down in Hillah, for instance, there was an army lieutenant colonel, who took bribes and is in prison now, to my knowledge.

Q: Your committees, did they involve any Iraqis?

A: Yes. What happened was the establishment of a new model. There was no standard way for doing business and coordinating with the community, so we would draw up the solicitation and hand it over to the Provincial Councils. The Provincial Councils published the solicitation and screened the bids.

So what this did was, it took him out of the bid selection process and put it in the hands of the community. These were elected Provincial Council members and so they liked it because it gave them the semblance, it was a *de facto* budget control, which they had never enjoyed under the Baath regime. It was and remains, constitutionally, the major point of contention internal to the Iraqi government now, which is a lack of budgetary control outside of the federal capital. The Ministry of Finance controls all finances, all allocations. And working with the Ministry of Planning, they are struggling to overcome this, to get block grants out. But even then, there is such control over the spending. So this was the pioneer move that individuals, had set up, so that the Provincial Councils would screen and vet.

Now, what escapes everybody's attention was that all contractors had to be registered and if they had a registration they were rated on a class one through ten as to their capabilities as a construction contractor. I think [two companies] were rated as class one, meaning they were world class construction outfits and they did work for the Ministry of Defense and built many of the buildings that are in the Green Zone today. Most companies fell in the range from five to seven. This is one of the problems that was actually contemplated by the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund Joint Needs Assessment that was released in November 2003 and was the main input as Congress contemplated IRRF I and II.

And that Needs Assessment spoke about the absorptive capacity of the Iraqi economy. Specifically in the construction sector, there were only so many of contractors and so

there were only going to be so many qualified managers and workers, technical workers, for construction. Any economy, at any given snapshot in time, only has so many people working in that field.

When you suddenly take an amount of money that is the same amount as the entire GDP of the country, $20 billion, prior to the invasion and you suddenly put that all into one economic sector, which is construction, you bloat the demand for those goods and services. And so what happened is the construction sector expanded exponentially and suddenly you had a lot of construction contractors who had absolutely no experience in the field who were competing for contracts at various levels. It was just a matter of who was able to bid.

And at first using AIRP and other pots of money, the political pressure behind spending that money was substantial. Washington, particularly the Office of the President, wanted to be able to report in the press that money was being spent on construction, that that money was not merely being committed but projects were being completed. And that pressure ended up having a lot of tactical snafus come about, where projects were signed off as completed but due to lack of mobility, secure mobility, people could not actually go out and inspect the projects that were "completed."

So several U.S representatives wanted to complete their projects, but had limited ability to get outside the wire, so to speak and so came up with this method of using the Provincial Councils and the District Committees to oversee construction projects. They hired a couple of local guys to go out and take photographs of the projects and these people proved themselves not merely to be good interpreters, but also to be reliable with their information. So they became his construction inspectors.

I reported extensively on this method and wrote back to Baghdad about this. While they did not take me completely on my word, IRMO did adopt many of the lessons that had been discovered in the field, when they later came up with what we call PRDCs, which are the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committees that were headed up by the Gulf Region Division of the Army Corps of Engineers, which ultimately subsumed PCO's civilian leadership and took over their mission, *de facto* if not *de jure*.

Q: And how did these morph into a PRT?

A: The PRT is an outgrowth of the PRDC model that we came up with.

Now I wrote a paper or two or more on this topic during that era.

Q: This is all out of the same area, right?

A: Yes, although I did not relocate occasionally, working with the PCO representative out there. I was there in another city in late 2004 in the later stages of the battle for Fallujah. And then I went to other regions where we really matured the ideas.

So it was in early 2005 that we formed up the first Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committees, PRDCs.

Q: These were Iraqi committees?

A: What had happened was, we, all the elements of the PCO, at that point in time and IRMO, which was the Army Corps of Engineers as well as the civilian and military personnel within PCO, formed a joint committee or combined committee, where we encouraged the provincial councils or the governors to form reconstruction committees within their provincial councils and asked the governors if they would appoint a chairman in charge of reconstruction. They did this rather quickly and without much encouragement at all.

Now it was interesting, in Baghdad they felt that we had not done any of this, but, in fact, in certain areas we were pioneers. Baghdad gave us instructions to establish them, apparently because the regional office was reporting that we had not done anything along those lines. But, in fact, we had over several months had reconstruction committees established, and had appointed reconstruction chairmen who worked with those Provincial Council Committees.

What they did was, they asked us for information about the various projects that were underway or planned for their provinces. There was a project list, each province had a pot of money, it was something like $256 million that was allocated and about $175 or $177 million in other areas and a list of projects that was predetermined for that, based upon a Needs Assessment that had been done in the previous year, presumably by the military command there.

The interesting thing about IRRF is it gave a fair amount of detail as to what projects had to be done. There was not a lot of community involvement, certainly not at the grass roots level and this stemmed from the drive for speed, "Get it done now," was the main thing.

So what happened was in Baghdad the only Iraqi government personnel you could talk to were the ministerial personnel. These are neophyte members of the ministries, remember, they are not seasoned technocrats. So they have not been working in their positions for years and those who were incumbents previously under the Baath regime would have known their communities or the status of situations on the ground or would have had the opportunity through their professional advancement to bring knowledge with them from the field.

The neophytes that were there had the best of intentions, perhaps, or arguably, but they had very little familiarity with what was on the ground. In those days, they were appointed largely by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA); they had been grandfathered in. Even though sovereignty had been passed over, the incumbents were those that we had appointed.

So they were trying to do a good job, but they had no familiarity with the work. They had a project list from their files. So this is how we ended up having projects for, for instance, the refurbishment of a fire station that did not exist anymore, because the Baath regime had built a small palace on top of a site that had been a fire station. Or border forts that were to be renovated when, in fact, they now were inside the Iranian border by maybe one or two kilometers. So we occasionally encountered that.

Because those project lists and site lists had not been updated, they were not computerized and nobody had verified them. We were running into some of the bureaucratic inefficiencies that the Baath regime had contended with through their tenure and, at this point in time, we had very little mobility and limited assets to be able to go out and reconnoiter the ground. So, understandably, there were going to be hiccups.

So the PRDCs, then, served to provide information to the reconstruction committees. From that we understood that you had to involve the community. This was the main thing in the spirit of the Joint Needs Assessment to teach the community leadership, the elected leadership, how to administer a reconstruction budget of some kind, which later would lead to a capacity-building exercise in budget execution and budget preparation.

Now, sadly, they did not take up on what we had done, using the Provincial Councils to publish a solicitation or request for proposals or to screen the contractors that bid on a contract. They did not allow that reconstruction committee that kind of quasi-budgetary control, but they did consult with them, at least. So the PRDC was a consultative body, at least.

From this you had, now the SETs, where you have a USAID, a PCO representative, an Army Corps of Engineers representative, if not a team, there might be an IRMO representative there, there might not. And then, of course, the military command is going to have their engineer or engineers and they might have some other players inside. They were all government-funded players.

Then that initial SET later led to a more sophisticated body called the PRT. The PRT was really invented, so to speak, as an administrative body in Afghanistan. Now back at Headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, we had all drawn up papers on "Here is U.S. Central Command's policy on Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan." I had been one of the contributors to that, a couple of years earlier, back in 2002. But once it got out to the field and the Combined Joint Task Force there in Afghanistan got hold of it, they morphed it into something that was more dynamic and reflected what they had encountered on the ground.

Now, understand, then you have NATO introduced into Afghanistan and NATO has something called CMC, which was first used in Bosnia, Civil-Military Cooperation. It is a big deal as an element of doctrine within NATO and it deals with post-conflict reconstruction. It is a very mature doctrine, which I also helped to develop through my civil affairs work in Bosnia and Kosovo. So I was very familiar with it and it was just

interesting that it came back to me and I got visibility on this through the Afghan campaign.

People turned to me and said, "Hey, do you not have a background in this?" And I said, "Yes" and so I would weigh in on these questions as a staff officer, not as a major decision maker but as a staff officer, so that I could inform the process with my experience. They matured this concept; it was much more sophisticated. This is where the PRTs, then, had budget money, for instance; we also used CERP funds in Iraq.

So the PRT, then, after getting its real legs in Afghanistan, came ultimately to Iraq, in late 2005, just after my departure. That is when they really started fielding PRTs. It is now a very mature organization, where you have a lot of not merely government and military personnel but also contractor personnel that are performing various technical roles, people who are experts in public infrastructure, whether it be waterworks or sewage, electric power generation, power transmission.

Really what you ended up with was a kind of miniature PMO, where you have contract personnel and then technical sector specialists. You can sit in a 1200 square foot room and everybody can sit in desks and look at each other and there are all the experts in cubicles around the room, theoretically speaking.

The whole idea was to connect with the community, that was the main thing and from my observation, now, having run things from the USAID side, that idea has been lost on this generation of leadership in Baghdad and in the field. I have just spoken with friends who have worked in PRTs now, working under a USAID-administered contract. The USAID people do not have much clout inside the PRT. It is the State Department leader, who has the final decision authority on things. So we are seeing project proposals that are getting killed or stifled for reasons that are unexplained.

I experienced it in dealing with a couple particular PRTs. A very accomplished economist, formerly with the World Bank for some ten years, stellar credentials, quit because they could not get any of their projects initiated because of the arbitrary refusal of the State Department team leader there to do anything. This individual did not know how to work with the military chain of command to overcome that bureaucratically.

So what we find in the PRTs now is they have become a bureaucratic organ wherein the success of the various implementers inside that depend not upon their connection with the Iraqi community but upon their abilities to influence and function as a bureaucrat, as if they were working in the Pentagon or the State Department here in the United States, i.e. their ability to jockey within meetings or to gain influence or write the key email or get a champion within that command structure to get behind them on this, all of that is what they are up to.

And if they hit a stonewall because somebody does not like someone or somebody does not agree with them, whatever, it does not matter. I received a briefing from a military official who worked in a PRT who came in to brief us when I was working for RTI and I

came in for a leadership conference.) We received a briefing from this gentleman, complete with a slide show on the structural organization of the PRT. The whole briefing, the theme was "Yes, it is really tough working within the PRT and the best advice I can give you is to do this and do that." It was all about how to survive the PRT political structure, the internal politics, absolutely no mention of how to help Iraqis, no contemplation of how to get stuff done on the ground, the most effective way, or even a discussion of "We have spent this much money" or have this many projects done or "Here is the community's response to our efforts." There was no contemplation of it. And when we would ask questions about that, the officer really did not have any familiarity with it.

Q: What brought about this rigid bureaucratic structure of PRTs?

A: They are too big, for one thing. You have too many players and there are multiple agendas competing with one another in that PRT. So you have agencies that are competing for supremacy, or primacy.

You have USAID, for instance, that is ostensibly the only real international development organ of the U.S. government abroad. They have the history, but they do not have a very big budget and they are very leanly staffed. Now there are strengths and weaknesses to that lean structure, namely they will send a small team of a couple of expatriates out to a station; they will set up an office and hire local staff to administer. This is part of their capacity building process.

There are lots of USAID contractors who do work in Africa and other continents that have a lot of emerging economies that emulate that structure, where you will have a country manager and perhaps an assistant and maybe an accountant or some other specialist there, or they bring in technical specialists such as engineers or medical personnel, so forth. *Medeciéns Sans Frontières*, Doctors Without Borders, they go out, for instance, with small staffs and they will hire local staff and train them up to administer the program. John Snow Incorporated does a lot of disease mitigation work for malaria and AIDS in Africa; similarly, you will have one or two expats that go out. The UN Development Program also will go out and set up a home office with anywhere from two to four expatriates, depending on the size of the operation and then they will hire local staff and train them up to operate the program.

Our USAID program had 121 local staff and not more than thirty expatriates working for me and we had a broad program and had a $30 million budget. I was not in a PRT. I was an administrator outside the PRT.

I dealt with a regional reconstruction team, comprised of three provinces. Also I had two RRTs (Regional Reconstruction Teams) under that region. One RRT operates very smoothly and it is all based on the climate of command. They are all on the personality of the leadership and whatever their priorities are and their preferences are. I found USAID's leadership universally to be experienced and positive. Another, however, when I initially arrived there, there were great issues, a very dysfunctional team and my

consultants were so unhappy at the beginning of my tour with USAID. They could not get anything done, according to their own reporting.

Q: Remind me what this program was that you were managing.

A: The Local Governance Program, LGP II, which, even after cutbacks, was about $163 million for fiscal 2008.

Q: This was with RTI?

A: Yes, Research Triangle Institute was my employer and we were a prime contactor to USAID. USAID, is the Cognizant Technical Office (CTO) that oversees the contract from Baghdad. They have field representatives that are out there. They are field advisors and their job is to provide information back to headquarters, including the CTO, to let them know how progress is going on the contract that is being administered out there.

And what we found was that in the Regional Reconstruction Team, they are very leanly staffed, there is a military contingent, but it is a Korean contingent. It is a small military outfit, really and they are not deeply involved in the activities of the PRT. You have one State Department appointee over each province, and they have direct liaison with the Governors and the Provincial Council chairmen.

But we also had direct liaison with those sub-national leaders in the community. They had been there for a long time and were well recognized. So we found that we had a very harmonious relationship, at least I did. And clearly I was not part of the RRT, since my area of responsibility extended beyond that, but I had people who were specialists working inside that RRT.

Q: What were they doing?

A: The most famous one was doing the strategic development plan for the region. For instance, I was able to bring in a specialist who is going to solve the problem of water contamination that they have

Q: Is that specialist working for a PRT?

A: No. They are working for the RRT, under employment with RTI.
Right, then other expat specialists are working on the strategic plan for the electricity sector. We had half a dozen consultants that were working on the PRT and I think fully staffed we would have had six or eight in another province as well. So we did not have a bigger team in the Regional Reconstruction Team, we did not have more consultants there. We had a lawyer who was working on parliamentary process, for instance. An accountant, a CPA, who came from a banking background and he was helping the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Provincial Governments to learn about budget management and budget execution, and he did a fantastic job with that. These were the areas: public works, education, human rights, dealing particularly with women's rights

issues, parliamentary procedure and internal efficiency. These are the technical areas that we work in.

Q: These are in all of the PRTs, or just certain ones?

A: In all the PRTs, USAID/RTI, the Local Governance Program, is the contractor in this work. The mandate is to help with service efficiency. Now one of the most important aspects and the unifying theme of the Local Governance Program was the production of a Provincial Development Strategy, which was a unifying document that expressed the will of the Provincial Councils, in conjunction with their Executive Branch, their Governors, as to what they envisioned for the future of their province on a five year planning horizon.

What happens is the Provincial Development Strategy is submitted to the Ministry of Planning in Baghdad. All the provinces but Dohuk Province produced theirs and presented them in a formal ceremony this year.

So when the Minister of Planning signals then to the Minister of Finance of Iraq that the plans have been turned in and they are sound, the Minister of Finance is authorized then to release a budge allocation, which amounts to a couple of billion dollars, to each province. That money is to be spent on the prioritized list of projects that is incorporated as an appendix to the Provincial Development Strategy.

Q: And the PRT is helping shape that list and implementing it?

A: The PRTs are involved, in the sense, that Local Governance Program personnel are members of the PRT and our job was to coach the Provincial Development Committee of each province through that process, not to tell them what their priorities are, but to teach them how to go about forming the document. In other words, through a series of meetings determining "what is your vision." It is a five step process, the first of which is "What is your vision?" and coming up with a vision statement for the province. And then, from that, "What is your strategy for fulfilling that vision, what are the goals that stem from that strategy, what are the projects that will fulfill those goals and then, from that, what is the implementation plan for those projects?"

They are elected officials, so they are the representatives of the community and that is what gets the voice of the people, through democratic processes, democratic institutions and processes, into the reconstruction effort and this is with their money. It is a beautiful program. It is the most important government assistance program in Iraq and it was the unifying theme for us.

And with that document, then, what happens is any monies that come out through CERP or other sources and certainly through domestic sources, any proposals for work, are screened, then, with the project lists and the priorities in the Provincial Development Strategy and if somebody says, "Hey, we want to build a soccer stadium," we say, "Well, we already have a project planned for that with other monies. If you want to do

something important for the community, here is what the elected officials say is the next most important thing" or, "That is a nice thing, but it is actually very low on our priority list. Here is a high priority item. We would like you to tackle that first, or if you want to come in and do part of it, we will let you do part of it and we will pick up the rest." It is a nice guideline for public works efforts.

Q: And you found these committees worked pretty well together?

A: The PRT was frustrated by the Provincial Development Strategy. There was a misunderstanding among the State Department representatives there. They thought that RTI had invented this document. They actually did not like some of the language in the strategy and they were trying to compel us to change the language. It took us several months to help them understand and to get their superiors in Baghdad to understand that we merely translated a document out of the Arabic; we did not write any of it.

Once that idea got across, I said, "If you want the Provincial Council and the Governor to change their documents, you must ask them. We can go with you and ask on your behalf, or help you ask them directly, if you would like that, but we do not have the authority and we would be in violation of our trust, if not our contract, if we changed any words in there, other than what the interpreters/translators tell us is the *bona fide* translation of that document."

Q: How about helping with the implementation aspects?

A: Implementation will come later. Depending on the funding source and the involvement required, the PRTs have specialists in various areas that provide technical assistance to various departments of the ministries at the local level.

The way the Iraqi government is organized, each ministry has a provincial level and a district level and a municipal level office. The provincial level leadership is called a Director General, the acronym for which is DGs. So the DG then supervises the implementation of the ministerial budget in his technical field. The DG of Electricity oversees any distribution, transmission or power generation facilities inside his province and is responsible for the performance of the public utilities in his province. The DG of Health is similarly responsible for all the hospitals and clinics and medical staff there and is probably a medical doctor himself or herself. And so on. Or there may be an administrator as well, just as in West, you can be a public health manager and not be a medical doctor.

Q: Were you involved in helping them develop contracts and a bidding process and selection of contractors?

A: No, we did not do that. Now the PRTs have people that do that with money that is administered from another element of the PRT, but the Local Governance Program did have actually one component. There was an element where we were providing furniture and fixtures and equipment to Provincial Councils, but it was a program that was initiated

before my arrival and all the documentation was prepared before my arrival as well. I am not intimate with that process first hand. I am only a second hand observer there.

Q: Were you aware that the PRTs had a Mission Statement?

A: They did have a Mission Statement and many of them would actually co-opt the LGP Mission Statement and used it as their own. We found that to be kind of interesting. Or their Mission Statement was almost something from Mark Twain, "History seldom repeats itself but it has a tendency to rhyme." So the PRT Statement was not the LGP Mission Statement, but it had a tendency to rhyme with the LGP Mission Statement, or it used a lot of the same ideas, if not the same words. We were very happy with that. We thought that was just fine,

Q: Were you familiar with any of the other programs in the PRTs?

A: Somewhat. My role was to administer LGP. I came in contact with leaders of other programs. IRG, International Resources Group, had some work going on. IRI, the International Republican Institute, as well as NDI, the National Democratic Institute, they were all out there helping with political party development and things like that. But that was outside of the purview of LGP.

There was not a substantial overlap in programs. Now, one of the main functions that we contemplated in the PRDCs was to eliminate redundancy of projects. Apart from the information transfer role and the facilitation of the spending of money, because, remember, there was the drive to spend money rapidly, but recognizing there was a need for proper oversight, so that it would be spent effectively as well, admitting that it had not been spent so effectively in some cases early on and that there was a moral hazard with that rapid spending that needed to be guarded against. All that was contemplated when the PRDCs expanded out into a PRT. The whole idea was to provide proper stewardship over U.S. allocated funds and all that that entails, including consultation with the local community, proper feedback mechanism, a quality assurance mechanism.

Q: How did you find the leadership arrangement for these PRTs?

A: I found, actually, that having a military commander appointed as the superior would be much more effective.

Q:… than the State Department person?

A: Yes. Those PRTs that worked best where the State Department guy said, "You know what? I am a diplomat. You guys are decisive. You have the resources." and where they would kind of defer to the judgment of the military, as a rule I think they worked better that way.

In the case of the Regional Reconstruction Team, interestingly, there was no tension between the military and the State Department and it worked effectively there, I think,

largely because the State Department just had a trusting relationship with us, with LGP, certainly, they did and did not try to micromanage. In most instances that that is true universally, where the implementer is given a contract and held accountable to that contract through normal reporting mechanisms, but without somebody overstepping their authority to make day-to-day operational or tactical decisions on the part of that implementer.

And this is true, having served in uniform, as well, if you have somebody who is at a higher level of command who, by virtue of having access to information about your operation, wants to start making minute decisions about your operations that affect day-to-day things and either circumvent or obviate your own decision making authority at that lower level, you are going to have problems, because you get somebody who thinks they know better because they are more experienced, perhaps, or senior in rank. But they cannot have the fingertip sensitivity about what is going on on the ground and they may not have had the opportunity to develop a shared vision with you. They do not know where you are going with it, so there is a tendency to second-guess.

And we can only convey so much information in our daily report, admittedly. Reporting is helpful, but it is imperfect. Unless you literally share the mind of the human being that is thinking that plan, you cannot know exactly what it is they are going to do, unless you sit down with that major or that colonel, if you are a general, only unless you sit down and spend two hours with him, having a discussion, over lunch, are you going to really know what it is. You get briefings and you can only garner so much information at a time.

And this is true of business managers. If you look at the most effective business models in a distributed geography, when corporations delegate decision-making authority, along with budget, budgetary and decision-making authority distributed out, that is when you have a successful business model.

Imagine if McDonalds Corporation, with all of the local restaurants that they have and all the peculiarities that are attendant to any given location, any given store, as they refer to it, imagine if the corporate headquarters tried to make minute decisions on the day-to-day business level for any one of those franchises. They would succumb by the weight of unwise decisions, very rapidly. Imagine if Starbucks managers did not have the ability to manage and cater to local tastes and to stock those things that their local clientele wanted, they would soon go under.

Q: But you found that PRTs did not have this kind of orientation?

A: What we were doing is we were wrestling with this. It is not a market, so you do not really have a lot of market signals coming back. But here is an example of what you have. I happened to meet with a regional official who invited us to his hotel room and we sat a couple hours with him and he was eminently frustrated in dealing with the PRT, because State Department guy did not allow my Local Governance Program representatives to have meetings with the Governor. And so we were unable to interface

with him in order to understand what he wanted as his priorities for our technical assistance to his staff. We could meet with his staff, but we could not meet with him. Notwithstanding we had a contractual mandate, this gentleman arbitrarily decided he was not going to let us exercise our contractual mandate, because it was too "politically sensitive."

Now, you find out that the PRT team leader does not have a diplomatic background. So how the State Department appoints somebody who does not have the technical qualifications for their role is beyond me, although I do know that the State Department has a great deal of difficulty. They are a leanly staffed organization, as well, and so you have a mammoth organization to stand up in Iraq. The State Department just does not have the people to throw at it, right?

Q: Are there other issues that you see with the PRT?

A: Overall, we need to look at beefing up the personnel of USAID, the personnel and budget and the whole apparatus of USAID. If the United States wants to get into international development as a truly viral element of national strategy, whether it be national defense or otherwise, if it is going to be an integral part, then you need to look at the institutions that are existing, rather than trying to morph the military into becoming like USAID, which is happening, or trying to get State Department *per se*, State Department proper, to act as it they are USAID, because the institutions attract different people for different reasons.

People join the military in order to be soldiers or marines or airmen or sailors. They do not go in and say, "I want to do international development. I am going to enlist in the army." Nobody does that.

There are people who get into civil affairs as a primary or secondary military specialty, because they learn about it and they say, "This is interesting. I want to get into that." And you need that. So that function is there and I do not have any hypercritical remarks to make on the civil affairs apparatus, although I do think that it is, as with so many military functions, what is happening is, we have resources, okay. I say "we" because I am still in the reserves. The Department of Defense is trained, organized and equipped to move out and go on expeditions. We can deploy. We can bring a lot of resources to bear on a problem faster that any other organization that is an element of the U.S. government, maybe faster than any other organization in the world, for that matter, whether it is commercial or government.

But that comes at a price. The question is, what is our national strategy for these things and how big do you want that apparatus to be and how much of that standing capacity are you going to have.

In terms of the administrative functions of international development, I would like to see USAID mature further, be developed. I am not sure that the State Department is the right home for it, but if it is going to be there, if we are going to accept that as *prima facie* the

right place for it to be, then how do you make USAID more effective. Now USAID tends to take a long-term view of development historically or traditionally. So if we are going to do lots of post-conflict or complex contingency work in reconstruction efforts, well, then that is another question, is USAID the right organization for it or USAID in partnership with a military organization? USAID field representatives tend to work well with the military, I have noticed.

It is when we further complicate it with an umbrella superstructure and reinvent Washington, D.C. that you get the same symptoms of Washington, D.C. You get different departments competing for primacy on the ground, because they report back to somebody in Washington who has to brief the Secretary, who has to brief the President or who has to brief Congress. Everybody wants to have center stage and say, "We are doing this and we have credit for this."

Q: What about USAID's role in the PRTs?

A: My understanding is most often USAID is relegated to a secondary position, if not tertiary, because of State's primacy. And there, again, you come into different backgrounds. In my view it is like having the Coast Guard within Homeland Security. The Department of Homeland Security now has several organizations within it that have to compete within Homeland Security for budget and to justify themselves. So you have the Coast Guard trying to justify their existence within their own department, whereas before they used to advocate more directly for their own budget.

USAID, then, on the ground, tactically, is unable to assert itself with proper authority in administering its own contracts. So you have an agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, responsible for a contract. However, there is somebody who has no responsibility and will not take blame for any decision they make who has primacy over USAID representatives' decisions and controls the information that they send back.

Q: What would you recommend as an alternative?

A: Putting State Department representatives in every PRT is a mistake; it really is. I would recommend that State Department roll itself back into its traditional diplomatic role. I think the Regional Reconstruction Team is a good idea, because you have a regional government there that is, although sub-national, is still important and influential enough that you need, for lack of a better term, a *chargé d'affaires* there who is not of ambassadorial level, but a senior executive who is there making that political liaison. But that political liaison ought to be their principle function, as opposed to making operational and tactical decisions about stuff where they have no competence.

Q: What about the military's role in the PRTs?

A: The military's role in PRTs is essential, on several different levels. One is you have technical expertise that is brought to bear there; it is a cost-effective source of expertise

and labor. You also have the security and mobility function that they perform. For instance, in Iraq, without up-armored companies to tote everybody around, nothing would happen. Without military airlift you are not going to be able to move around in that environment from one place to the next over great distances. You need them. You have to have them in order to function. Otherwise you are going to be spending money on private security teams, five million dollars a year to have a small team there, to tote one or two people around. This just does not make sense. It is not cost-effective.

The question is, do you have a military presence there and if you do, as we do in Iraq and even if you scale that back, there should be some contemplation of maintaining sufficient footprint there to move around these non-military players in the reconstruction effort.

State is neither trained, organized nor equipped to deploy and their personnel are not educated to run an operational situation; State Department guys do diplomacy and pass information back to Washington, mainly, or they administer a program, in some instances. But they administer reconstruction or international development through USAID, so USAID should be the primary decision maker on the contracts that they administer.

Within the PRT I see no place for a State Department operative. I think that there ought to be USAID there because they have a contract to administer. The long and short of it is, if you are not paying the tab for something, I do not know why you have a seat at the table.

Q: Let us back up a bit and get an overview, before we finish up. Do you think the PRTs are an effective concept?

A: Taken in the abstract, yes.

Q: But in reality?

A: There are some hiccups that need to be overcome, some hazards that need to be overcome. I have spoken about some of the basic reorganization that I would recommend.

Q: But are they being effective, somewhat effective, in Iraq?

A: Yes, they are being more than somewhat effective. They could be made much more efficient than they are. There are some dysfunctional aspects. There is far too much energy being devoted overcoming internal organizational friction and bureaucratic infighting in the PRTs. And so that is why I would advocate streamlining the structure, including consideration of the elimination of a State Department representative at provincial level. At the national level it is a good idea to have a State Department representative there, as you already do in any embassy.

Q: What else would you do to streamline them?

A: I would take a look at how many contractors you have coming in to do various things. Where I did see redundancy, there was a firm that was doing, for instance, an infrastructural development strategy a British firm. The problem is they did not consult with the local government, at all. Had they done so, they would have been told that the Local Governance Program was already coaching the Provincial Council and the Governor's office, as the local government, on developing their own strategy. You have two expatriates out there that are working on it, high priced engineers, I would say you have a couple of million dollars you could have spent somewhere else.

Q: They need some better coordination, then?

A: Yes, notwithstanding that you have all of these people that are supposed to eliminate redundancy, redundancy is abundant, with regard to doing this kind of technical assistance work.

Q: Is there anything else you would suggest for streamlining the PRT?

A: Military commanders do well when they have a political advisor with a State Department representative inside what is ostensibly a wartime situation in Iraq, for instance. In an active counterinsurgency, it is nice to have and perhaps useful to have a political advisor for that commander, but that political advisor ought not have operational decision authority. When you give them decision authority, as in they can tell the USAID representative what projects are going to get done and what is not going to get done, I think you have problems there. That is command authority for somebody who has not been educated to that task.

Q: How did you find the PRTs' relationships with the Iraqis? How well do you think the Iraqis understood the PRT function?

A: It is mixed. Most of my contact in Iraq in the past year was with Iraqis and it is mixed as to whether they were relevant or not. For instance, the Provincial Development Strategy had one line in it on page nine that says, "The PRT has not been involved in the production of this provincial development strategy whatsoever" and that PRT got very nervous about that and wanted that line removed. And we explained to them that we have merely translated this out of the Arabic. We do not have the authority to change that.

Now the local government did not view the Local Governance Program, LGP, as part of the PRT. In fact they called us RTI, they did not call us LGP. We had a project brand name recognition problem down there when I arrived and that was because everybody referred to us as RTI. We had been there before the existence of the PRT. RTI had its feet on the ground for LGP I back in late 2003.

Q: That must have caused some problems when the PRT came along, trying to integrate RTI in its work?

A: There would have been that, right. That is an interesting point that you have raised. That is a subtle point: if you are going in on the ground, those initial decisions that you make when you are going into a country, whether it be an invasion or post-disaster assistance, some thought needs to be given to command and control apparatus and the initial actions that you take are always going to have long range ramifications that are unanticipated in many cases.

Q: How do you think the Iraqi community accepted the concept of a PRT?

A: It is mixed. If the PRT is responsive to their needs, then the community will love them. If they are not addressing their needs, they will either not be aware of them altogether, will not care either way, or they will not want to bother with them. It just depends.

But a local government official, a governor or a provincial councilor or a committee member who is dealing with the PRT, if the PRT is listening to them and is bringing resources to bear to solve a problem they consider is important to their constituency, or they are giving them furniture or electronics for them to run their office, then you are certainly going to have their attention. They are terribly pragmatic in these situations. If you are bringing something that is solving a problem for somebody, you will have their attention, there is no problem with that.

Now I have found that the military command respect universally, whether it was in the Balkans or in the Middle East. I found that my uniform commanded respect and attention the minute I walked in the room. There was no problem with that, whether you were a staff sergeant or you are a colonel, you could walk in and a public official would want to talk to you, because you bring resources to bear that influence the situation in his or her jurisdiction. So they want to have their ear. They want you to listen to them. That is the main thing.

If I wanted to change something, I would ensure that the people that are going out into the PRTs understand that they have a mission to accomplish, yes, but one of the functions that they must serve as is to listen to the community, to get a fingertips sensitivity about what that community's needs are and then address those that help you with your mission. But you should ensure that if your mission is reconstruction, as it is in Iraq, it is contributing to the stability and viability of the community, the people to listen to first are the elected representatives or the appointed representatives of that constituency.

Allowing your contractors or your implementers of the various contract vehicles that you have to serve that constituency is conducive to mission effectiveness. Cutting them off from that contact will hamper the effectiveness of your contractor and therefore hamper the effectiveness of the mission.

Q: What do you think the major achievements of the PRTs are, to date?

A: You have to look at the major achievements of the programs that populate that PRT. It is going to vary from one PRT to the next. If you ask me what are the major achievements of Local Governance Program II, LGP II, I could tell you about that. The measurements, therefore, of the effectiveness of a PRT are no more than the accomplishments of its constituent members, whether that is the military administering CERP funds or whether it is LGP or IRG administering USAID funds.

Q: What about your own program? What were the main achievements of your LGP? Pick out two or three of the most significant. You do not need to elaborate, just identify them.

A: Getting development strategies drafted and ratified ultimately for all 18 provinces of Iraq, including Baghdad, and teaching the local government, the provincial governments, how to do that and how to be responsive to their needs and helping them establish an enduring process for incorporating the needs of their constituencies into governmental planning is probably the chief accomplishment of our program.

Q: What about a second one?

A: I would say the master plan for the region's electricity infrastructure and then our efforts to improve the municipal infrastructure, to prevent recurrent outbreaks of cholera; infrastructural based mapping for geographic information systems, did that; modernizing and codifying public financial management practices and procedures for local government; advancing human rights for women in Iraqi society and the economic development assessment that we did for the region. That is my list for us.

Q: That is very substantial. Do you think the PRTs and your work have had any effect on the insurgency situation, tempering it or not?

A: Oh, I do. However, the chief positive factor there has been the awakening councils and bringing the tribal leadership, giving them a voice and making them feel like they had a place in the future of their country. That has been the chief thing to cut the guts out of the insurgency, by taking away the tribal support for that, or their tacit tolerance of the insurgency.

But the PRTs arguably have been very helpful, through the administration of CERP funds that have improved infrastructure, particularly helping with water and sewage and electricity, mainly water and sewage. This was the chief complaint of all women, of all families, in Iraq, was the sewer that was running in the street that was getting their kids sick, or the inability to cleanse themselves and the health problems that stemmed from that.

Q: Is there some major aspect we haven't touched on? You have provided a lot of useful insights. Thank you so much for your time. It has been very worthwhile.

A: I have enjoyed this. I hope it is useful to you.