

United States Institute of Peace  
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**INTERVIEW #58**

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**Executive Summary**

The interviewee was in Iraq from 2007 to 2008, and was located at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) as a member of the PRT. The interviewee was a member of the PRT's Governance Team and an Iraq Provincial Action Officer (IPAO). The security situation deteriorated from fighting on the outskirts of the city to rocket attacks in the city.

The PRT team was split into two locations: about forty people on the FOB and eight or nine living in the Government Center. There was a "hard line" at the Center with a U.S. Army platoon between the PRT and Iraqi sides. Being located at the Center facilitated frequent and informal meetings with senior Iraqi officials.

The PRT was divided into five teams: Economics Team (subsequently an Agriculture Team was split from this team), an Infrastructure Team, a Governance Team, a Medical Affairs Team, a Rule of Law Team and a Department of State (DOS) Public Diplomacy Officer (PDO). The Rule of Law team was split into a Criminal Law Team and a Civil Law Team as a result of jurisdictional differences among the principal players. The Governance Team lived and worked at the Governance Center. The PRT Team Leader was a State Department Foreign Service Officer as were the interviewee, the PDO and another FSO on the Governance Team. The Deputy Team Leader was a military officer. The military Movement Support Units changed three times in the year complicating relationships, particularly because the military were unaware of what the PRT was trying to do.

The PRT had a very broad Mission Statement: help the Provincial Government function and provide services. There were no mission statements for the individual teams; people were writing their own scripts.

The Provincial Government was split three ways: the Legislative (the Provincial Council), the Ministerial (the Director Generals appointed by Baghdad), and the Executive (the Governor, Deputy Governor, three Assistants). The Governance Team's job, with some success, was to get these branches working in their assigned areas and get the Council's sixteen committees meeting and linked to the Ministerial and Executive officials. Persuading these officials and committees to meet took a lot of talk and coaxing. The committees that are run by women— women's issues, education, displaced

people—are constantly getting together. A women’s “caucus” was put together and 17 women were sent to a Baghdad conference on women’s issues. Some of the committees and groups continue to meet on their own. On push-back from the Iraqis and officials, there was some from the men, but none from the women.

The PRT had State Department Quick Reaction Funds (QRF) with hazy rules on their use. Subsequently, their use was tightened up; later the amounts diminished in availability. There were different views on what the funds were to be used for: infrastructure and a belief in solid results; non-bricks and mortar projects like a multi-cultural wedding or children’s education; these latter was not approved by the leadership as not building something which really hurt us in the long run.

The impact of the Governance Team: the Governor became less dependent; the executives became more confident, operating processes were tightened up, but there is nothing the interviewee saw that could not be undone in three bad weeks.

An Economic Team member tried to work with a government owned electrical plant, which employed a large number of Iraqis, but its location outside of town limited access owing to security and movement limitations. Another tried to promote solar power; others were doing their own thing and not getting involved. The Agriculture Team was busy with beekeeping and date spraying, but in the long term the interviewee believed they could not solve anything. Rule of Law team had lots frictions over areas of responsibility. According to the interviewee, it got nowhere; the courts are not functioning, and it was a big non-starter. A Medical Team member lit the public health world on fire and did a lot of great work.

On relationships, there were some problems of relations with the military, but because of a military background the interviewee did not have any issues. There was a need for respect between the military and civilians.

On overall achievements, the interviewee saw no durable improvement. It is not the right environment for development as the conflict continues and what is built up is subsequently destroyed.

Lessons: the PRT was not prepared for the lack of DOS support; there is a need for a GSO-type (General Services Office) of support. You need to go in with a package that says clearly what is expected on each side on who has what roles in terms of support and making thing happen. There should be a Mission Statement that covers from top to bottom: what is the US doing, what is the Embassy doing, what is the PRT doing, what is the individual team doing and what are you doing.

### **Interview**

*Q: When were you in Iraq?*

A: I arrived in Iraq in 2007 and I left in 2008.

*Q: And where were you located?*

A: I was assigned to a PRT on a Forward Operating Base (FOB).

*Q: What was the security situation at that time?*

A: As I arrived there we were winding down a major kinetic operation.

*Q: What does that mean?*

A: Major fighting was just winding down in that area. The military unit there had just finished a major campaign. While I was there they held another major campaign in that area and then as I left, they were commencing yet another kinetic operation, fighting, right in the same area, because we kept losing control over the province.

*Q: How did this security situation evolve, as far as your situation?*

A: I would say during the time I was there things became worse. The first six months, the fighting and the action type things were confined to the sort of outskirts, outside of the larger cities, not near the FOB area or anywhere where people were living, U.S. military or State folks. But then as time went by, up until early spring, we started getting attacks right in the city, right near where we lived. We started getting rocketed there much more frequently than we had prior to that. During the time I was there, it became worse.

*Q: And were you able to get out?*

A: Our team was split into two locations. One was on the FOB, that was about forty people and there were eight or nine of us who lived inside the Governance Center. It is actually the same office building that the Iraqi government worked out of. I lived with that team. So we were frequently able to cross over after normal business hours were done and the Governance Center had closed for the evening. We had a hard line in between our side and their side and we could walk over and meet with the high level Iraqi officials and handle engagement that way.

*Q: What is a hard line?*

A: The hard line is a reinforced line between the U.S. side and the Iraqi side. So we had about a platoon, maybe a reinforced platoon, of troops on our side and we would just cross over and go to the Iraqi side. The hard line just divides us from them; that is all.

*Q: Tell me about the organization of the PRT.*

A: Our PRT is a regular PRT, not an EPRT. We were divided into five teams when I arrived there. We had an Economics team, which later added a separate Agricultural

team, an Infrastructure team, a Governance team, a Medical affairs team. So that is how we were set up.

*Q: Did you have a rule of law team?*

A: Rule of Law, yes. And eventually we split into two Rule of Law teams. We split into Criminal Rule of Law and Civil Rule of Law, purely because the principal players on the Rule of Law were at the point of physically fighting with each other. So the way to settle this was to just put them in slightly different lanes, leave one with the criminal and one with the civil things. And even then they were still routinely into it over who was in whose jurisdiction.

So we had these huge teams. Now the entire Governance team lived out at the Governance Center, engaging daily. And what we had was the other team members, the Agriculture team, Economics team, whatever team, those guys would travel out from the FOB. It is about a six or seven mile trip; they would travel out in convoy several times a week and come out and have engagements in the Governance Center, or occasionally we had field trips outside, to other places. That is how they were set up.

Each team had a team leader or a section leader and then we had also one overall team leader and a deputy on the FOB.

*Q: The team leader was State Department?*

A: Yes, of the total of 49 people, we only had four State Department officers. The team leader was one. I was on the Governance team. There was a Public Diplomacy officer, and there was one other person on the Governance team. So there were actually two State Department officers on the Governance team at any given time.

*Q: Was there a military deputy?*

A: The deputy was a military officer, normally a colonel. When I left there was a colonel. Prior to that it had been a lieutenant colonel.

And we changed units, in the year I was there, three times.

*Q: What do you mean by 'changed' units?*

A: The unit that was providing support to us, movement support and logistic support, changed three separate times. That was a big challenge. You have one static team leader, we had two throughout the year I was there, but to have the military deputy that you are supposed to be interfacing with, pack up and leave and a new officer come in and then you have to reestablish everything all from scratch. This was partly because the military personnel are largely unaware of what it is we are doing. At least from my perspective, we did not really have a very clear, mission statement.

*Q: I was going to ask you, is there a mission statement for the PRT?*

A: We had a very broad one: “Help the Province start functioning again, help the government get up to speed and be able to provide services to its citizens” and things like that, a very broad mission statement. But then, at the next level down, the Governance team, what are your solid goals? “This is what I want you to do on the Governance team” or “This is what I need the Economics team to provide for me;” we did not have that. A lot of people were writing their own script as they went.

*Q: Anything else about the organizational arrangement?*

A: When you have somebody come in, when you have somebody show up on the team to do a particular job, we would have people slated to come in and say, “This person is coming and he is going to be on the Economic team, because he has signed up to take that job on the Economic team.” So the supervisor or the team leader or then section leader is going to start thinking, “I think we want to have this person work with the agricultural unit and see what they can do about getting some chicken farms functioning,” anything like that. The person shows up and says, “For years I used to run a chamber of commerce in my small town in America. I am the master of all chamber of commerce things.”

“Okay, well, I have this chicken project I need you to work on.” Then, within a couple of weeks, we would have a chamber of commerce project come up. Now, we do not have any businesses to speak of. Our businesses in town largely consisted of kids with little donkey carts selling gasoline off the back, but this one person, in particular, in that type of situation is committed to “We are going to have a chamber of commerce. That is what is really going to turn things around.”

And then if you do not have a solid plan, an overarching plan and strategy, which says: “Okay, first, no we do not need this. Just turn this off.” Just taking positive control over the situation and keeping it on the same track. But instead, many people started writing their own scripts.

*Q: Is the problem trying to get a fit between the skills of the people who came and the situation and what you needed?*

A: Yes, so you get one person whose whole career has been based on solar power, and he is going to try and sell the Iraqis on, “You need more solar power here. You are swimming in gasoline and oil, but you need more solar power.” The Iraqi people are likely to say, “This U.S. government representative, he is telling me that we should do this.” It ends up sending very mixed message, because we rotate people very rapidly, as well.

*Q: Let us talk about some of the different program areas. You worked on governance. What you were trying to do?*

A: We had a couple major things we attempted to do. I was a reporting officer, I was an IPAO, Iraq Provincial Action Officer, which is a position that should be really only given to State Department people, because a civilian coming from the outside generally has no idea what a State Department cable looks like or what State wants to hear and the frustrations of it would really overwhelm them trying to deal with that situation.

Some of the things we tried to do on the Governance team was keep the top Iraqi officials engaged and above board, working above the table, not working under the table, on various projects and with various long term goals, ideas and plans.

One of the things I noticed when I arrived was that if the U.S. side was interested in a particular topic then suddenly every Iraqi official was interested and wanted to be involved. Their work was not split up. There was no division of labor between any of them.

At our suggestion, “What do you think of this farming idea, this water idea,” whatever, whoever the principal was would say, “That is going to be my number one priority from here on out” and drop what he was doing and attempt to focus on that. And then, in order to keep some of the spotlight on them, they end up stepping all over each other. In the meantime, all of the other numerous areas they are all responsible for fall to pieces.

So we split up the executive part of the government. Then, there is the ministerial portion of the government, which are Directors General, who are appointed by Baghdad to work at the provincial level and then there is the Provincial Council. So we have this split: the legislative, the ministerial and the executive. The goal that we set early on, when I first arrived there, we put a civilian rather than military as the lead of the Governance team because we had a huge change over,. Then, we suddenly filled up the Governance team and had just moved into the Governance Center. The idea was to get these branches of government working in their own particular way on the specific areas that they need to be working on and not crossing lines.

So that would be setting up, for example, the Director General of oil and petroleum products to meet with one Assistant Governor who has been given that portfolio by the Governor and the Provincial Council Committee that is responsible for fuel or energy services or petroleum or whatever it happened to be. There are about 16 committees and the idea was to get those committees energized and meeting and then to make sure that they were linked, solidly linked with the Director General and their executive side counterpart.

What we had in the past was an arrangement where if you went to meet the Provincial Council, you could talk to them and say, “We need to work on this particular problem.” They would say, “We have tried, but the Director General of Education will not work with us,” so then we need to schedule another meeting to get with him; then he will say, “Well, the Assistant Governor, who is in charge of this area, is not talking to me about this.”

The idea was to get everybody at the same table, so they could quit pointing fingers at each other and try and solve problems. We did make some big progress on that. By the time I left, nine of 16 committees were meeting regularly. We appointed a U.S. liaison officer to each one. Generally, if it was the oil, we would have somebody who was working in that area, or smart on petroleum stuff, or on education, whatever it happened to be, intervene. They basically came to the point where they could meet and not necessarily have to have us there to force everybody to the table.

That was one thing I consider to be fairly successful. We had a new Governance team leader come in, who looked at the situation and say; “Three different groups of people have this in their portfolio. Who takes action? How do things move?” The team leader came up with a very organized plan that really worked.

*Q: Who developed the structure of the government?*

A: Their own structure is what exists within their constitution. But the idea of getting everybody to sit down together to talk was alien to them, as they say, “I work for Baghdad. The executive of this province means nothing to me.” They have their own little fighting going on.

Yes, their system exists. It has never been tied together.

*Q: So you were able to accomplish that?*

A: Yes, in nine of 16 committees, starting from zero. In summer of 2007 they could not normally get a quorum to meet in the Provincial Council. So we went from no quorum to regular Provincial Council meetings and then all of these offshoots of that, which were really effective in getting at least some things done.

*Q: How do you go about doing this? How do you persuade them, or what was the incentive for them to get together?*

A: I would say the number one thing we had to do was talk a lot. Being at the Governance Center made a huge difference, because we could invite the Provincial Council members, in small groups, over to see us in the evening. If they wanted to come during the daytime or if they wanted to come to meet the rest of our team, movement constraints and security problems made it so they were not there very often for very long, couple hours here, couple hours there. The meeting spaces are very limited.

On the other hand, if I say, “Can you come to the Governance Center at six p.m. this evening, we could sit down over on that side, the building is almost deserted, there is reasonable security and we could sit down, have some tea, coffee, whatever and talk at great length.” With the help of a really excellent interpreter — we had one of them — we convinced them that the reason why we are five years into this and you have made so little progress is because everybody keeps insisting that we have to do it your way, we have to do it my way. Nobody is willing to give in, even a little bit. Somebody has to give

in to get any sort of progress done. Can you be the first person to give in? Can you just show up at a meeting, please? And just coax them into it.

Shaming them, something like that, does not work. It just required telling them, “You are not going to get anywhere and there is no purpose in us talking at all anymore unless you start showing up for these things.”

*Q: And you were doing this with each of the different components?*

A: Personally, I was responsible for the overall connection at the Provincial Council level Committees to the Directors General and then to make sure that they had appropriate liaisons. The idea was that I was just in the middle of it and would call the liaison on our side and say: “You know you are in charge of the energy team. When was the last time you talked to the Energy Committee at the Provincial Council?” They would say, “They have never met. They refuse to get together” for whatever reason. I said, “Okay, be here Wednesday.” And then I would call the Director General. In some cases, the Governor helped, because the Governor could be used as leverage. When people refused to meet, I could have the Governor call all the parties and say, “You must be here!” It did not always work, but it worked sometimes.

So that was my job. Then once that started happening, we did the reporting every week with the SITREP (Situation Report). I would be following up, making sure that, “You had a meeting on Tuesday with the Education Committee. How did that go?” “Here is what I wrote up for the weekly report” or “They did not show up, nobody showed up,” for whatever reason, in which case I would have to make a phone call and figure out what had become disconnected between the folks.

*Q: Do you think in this process they began to get into the habit of getting together and coordinating?*

A: They were close. For a few teams, it was actually starting to happen routinely. This is a systemic problem. The teams that are very big and exciting are teams that deal with infrastructure, business, things like that; teams where money will pass through their hands and they will have an opportunity to dole out some money. Those teams sometimes had a greater success ratio of meeting, simply because I suspect especially the Provincial Council officials probably had some percentage coming to them.

The teams that met regularly and continue to meet regularly, from what I hear, are the teams that are on the total non-focused side, not exciting, which are women’s issues. The women’s issues group is one of the most frequently held meetings, where they are constantly getting together. Internally Displaced People (IDP) and education also collaborate. The key point for all three of those committees is they are all entirely run by women.

We actually put together a woman’s caucus or bloc, maybe, for lack of a better word. We helped put together a conference where they wanted to have women come and address

their specific issues. They were going to have some senior leadership from Baghdad come out who were women, the Minister for Displaced Persons Affairs, things like that. And our military command at the regimental level had determined that it was not going to work for the women of our province, so they never even forwarded the suggestion down to us. I learned about it through a colleague and talked to the women and said, “Would you be interested in airing some of your issues, talking about some of these things at a conference with other women?”

They jumped at the opportunity. We ended up taking 17 women, including some senior civil servants, Provincial Council members and a member of the press with us. We had the largest delegation to fly in, actually, to this conference. Our group of women actually crossed all the party and sect lines.

The idea was to try and convince them, as a bloc of people voting not as Sunni, not as Shi’a, but as women, their bloc is actually more powerful than some of the groups that we have within the Provincial Council and that they could use that leverage. We tried to work through that. I am not sure that they grasped it or if they were willing ever to vote against their party. For them, sometimes it was easier to just not show up for a vote, rather than vote against their party. But that was one of the things that was more successful.

So there are definitely some groups that continued to meet and, apparently, from what I read, continue to meet today.

*Q: Did you find a resentment of your trying to push them and cajole them; how did they receive that kind of involvement?*

A: I come with a different background into this. I am a former military, an intelligence officer. I spent my entire military career, almost, working in the East Asia area. So, in particular, with the women’s groups, I worked very hard to convince them, using Korea as an example. Korea is a country that was beaten down, almost destroyed and then rebuilt. Rebuilt from scratch and men went out and did some work, but the women kept it all held together and that women have a lot of power within the house that maybe they do not show, telling them that, “If you are willing to exercise a bit more of this power and a bit more of this behind the scenes leverage, you can accomplish a lot, because it is not just the men.”

Before I left, my replacement showed up, which I prepped all of my contacts for and, of course, I prepped my replacement. We talked in detail about what was going to be our strategy, because it was very easy to make a handoff to somebody who was keeping with the same party line. It actually made things that much more comfortable, because now there were no more men in the room. It was just women talking about women’s things and things that women could do and it just took their comfort level definitely to a new level that they had not had before, just because they were all women. So that really worked out in the long run.

The only time I had any pushback from anybody was when I pushed some high level Iraqi officials. We had a long talk about projects and funding projects and things like that and I said, “Okay, I know what your budget is. I know where your budget line items are. I know that we are paying for so many different things that you are going to have money left over. Why can you not cover this project or that project? Why are you not giving up some of your money, because I cannot pay for all these projects anymore? You need to start stepping up and paying for some things.”

It was a realistic issue, at that point, because these were projects that were outside of any funding that we had. There are certain things that we can do, certain things we cannot do. And I told them, “This is a really valuable project. I would love to be able to do it. I cannot. I am legally prohibited. This would be great for you to jump in.”

And they would come back with, “Back in 2005 the team leader who was here promised us that we were going to get a bridge.” They have a whole bag of excuses going back and they have some pre-Saddam excuses, they have so many excuses for why they cannot do something today: “The other province is really corrupt and the governor’s corrupt.” Basically never taking any responsibility for anything.

That was just with men. I never had a problem with the women. The men occasionally pushed back, but it was always push back and then insert their own excuse.

*Q: But you did have resources to use as an incentive?*

A: We had some. When I arrived there, the Quick Reaction Fund (QRF) was just going into place. When that was set up, the rules were very hazy and not really clear to people. So a lot of QRF projects, in the very beginning, went out the door with very little oversight.

The next reaction to that was a reining in of a program, where we said, “Whoa, whoa, whoa. Stop! Let us review some of these things more carefully. Let us not do any projects for a little while. Let us hold off.”

When we first started doing projects like that, where the team leader can sign off for, say \$25,000, some people brought in multiple projects a day, saying, “Here is a project my contact gave me. It is going to be a farm for baby chicks.”

“Okay, well, who owns it?” “He owns it.” “No, I cannot do this for him, as a person. This has to be a cooperative. This has to be some sort of agricultural organization.” The next day he is back with a piece of paper that says he is the president of this agricultural organization. And then the paper moves forward, because at that point there was no centralized oversight. The people that we had as the QRF managers — a program that did not exist before — are not part of State Department or part of the army. So their liability for this money is extraordinarily limited. As long as the paperwork is done and the i’s are dotted and the t’s are crossed and they made a payment to whoever, everything

is done. There was no follow-up, there was no, "Let us go look at this chicken farm and see if it is actually there."

And later on we did get a very good manager, who came in after two had been fired and he said, "No. no, no. What are we doing? We need to get out there; we need to go look at these places. We need to go see them." We had engineers on our staff, who were Iraqi nationals, to travel to these sites and take a look. The site where we were supposed to have, say, a farm full of chicks is an open field.

So we were able to really tighten things up a lot. So we did have some resources, but they diminished a lot while we were there. We had a very different view of what these particular funds were supposed to be doing. It was kind of interesting. We had some people on teams that were heavy teams, like the infrastructure team would be an example, where they are supposed to be building things: water tanks, fuel systems, heavy stuff. They claimed to be very, very committed to the government policy and understand what was going on. There were no State Department people on that team. They were all 31-61s, State temporary hires. But then they would approach things from a totally fiscally conservative point of view and say, "I do not want to pay for this. You should pay for this, Mr. Ali" or whoever happened to be on the Iraqi side. They would do their best to try and minimize the amount of money that is going out the door, whereas the policy that we had was that it did not matter exactly how much we were spending, as long as we did it by the book and it was going towards the long term goal of reconstructing things. These guys were attempting to nickel and dime the Iraqis on everything.

Frequently some of these projects are built in a pyramid fashion. This particular project needs to be completed and then we can go to the next project and this goes on top of it and the next thing requires the bottom two things be in place before it goes. You can pull the rug right out from underneath one of those and put us back a huge amount of time and the amount of money that we spent prepping for these projects before somebody pulls the rug out from underneath them. It was really stunning for me. I was very amazed at that.

Then, the other thing is: there is a belief in very solid results, "I need you to build a house. I need you to build a building. I need you build a store or a plant of some sort. Bricks and mortar need to be involved." Some of the projects that we were looking at were not like that.

I can give you an example there. A multicultural wedding, Sunni, Shi'a, Kurds, people who have been displaced from their homes and are living in a sort of camp-type area need to have their wedding. Until they have announced their marriage and had a party, they are not allowed to actually live together. They are separated from their families because they are in the displaced person status. So you get a project where for ten thousand bucks you can marry a dozen couples. And it is huge. It is going to be on TV. It is going to be an interfaith ceremony, with different Imams there. It is going to be covered by the local news to show. Then you get the guy with approval authority, who says, "Where is the lasting impact of this? You need a building. You need bricks. You need mortar." It is

those particular types of programs which, when they get shot down, really hurt us in the long run.

Another area where you do not have bricks and mortar is, of course, the educational side. The way that you either impress kids or turn them off, at you forever is another area where we constantly short changed people. “I do not want to do this, because we are just going to pump some stuff into a program at a school and it is all going to disappear.” Everywhere we pump stuff in, it disappeared, really, realistically. But if you could impact the kids, you could impact younger people, you can show something that is a positive thing on the news; that is a much more valuable result.

For bricks and mortar projects, we never go out and cut the ribbon. The Iraqi officials go out and cut the ribbon, although they did not pay for anything. But he was the one who said, “I want to go out and cut the ribbon,” because the elections were coming up; the different assistants and deputy were all the ones who wanted to get some of the credit for it.

*Q: But there were soft projects, not bricks and mortar, that you were promoting, is that right?*

A: Definitely. I had a woman come to me who seemed very credible. She was trying to set up a place for amputees to sew, like an On-the-Job Center. It is going to require not just machines but also fabricated tables and chairs and a work environment that is unique for those people who are going to be in there. That is a great idea. For \$25,000, I could take this house, where I already verified that the deed belonged to her father and she lives with her father. This had been a big problem for us, we were ripped off on some sewing centers in different provinces, where people would come in, put in a sewing center and then the person who actually owned the property would come back and say, “Your lease is up, move” and these people have nowhere to move the sewing machines to; they would just leave it and everything disappears.

I set up a checklist for people who were trying to do projects, where you would check: Who owns the house? What is the relationship of the person pitching the project to the person who owns the house? Since you can confirm all that using their identity documents; I did it that way.

Yes, definitely I tried to pitch some things that were totally non-brick and mortar, because I had seen so many brick and mortar projects fall apart, get stolen or not be completed for one reason or another.

*Q: Did the Provincial Council have funding from the central government?*

A: The only thing that the Governor’s office or the Provincial Council ever talked about the central government was complaining that they could not get anything from them. They complained routinely. We had a huge banking crisis while I was there, to the point where the reserves in the state bank, if everybody showed up to cash all the checks that

were out at any one time, there would be no money left in the bank, there was no liquidity. We were trying to get money, actual physical cash, delivered from Baghdad to the banks within our province and we could not get it done. Very honestly, we were totally disconnected from reality on this, because we were talking to the bank manager, who works for the government as a bank manager and they tell him, "Come get a hundred billion dinar" or whatever the number happens to be, "We are going to send a truck down with a hundred billion." Truck shows up and the receipt is only for half that amount. He is just stuck. He signs for it and puts the money away, but it runs out really quickly. In the meantime, we are calling the Treasury attaché, saying, "Okay, there was money supposed to be shipped on Tuesday. Our man does not have the money, or he has it, but it is only half of what he was promised. What can you do with the Ministry of Finance?" And they come back and say, "Okay, where was the money originating from? Was this the shipment from England, or was this the shipment that was here in the central vault?"

My banker in Diyala does not know if this money was printed in my back yard. Nobody knows that, right? All he knows is what they tell him. That is the whole thing about their bureaucracy: there is no sense of being able to reach up to the next level above you and demand support or the resources, like we can do in the U.S. government. It is totally a matter of just waiting for them to give it to you and if they do not give it to you, oh, well, maybe they will give it to me next time.

Then on our side, to be wrapped around this question of whether it is money that is being flown in on a certain day or something. That is totally something that our banker at the lower level does not track. Some provinces do not have an issue with it, but everybody handles it differently. I heard that in one province, money is routinely sent out in helicopters in containers. The PRT have trucks; they look like ice cream trucks, armored ice cream trucks, guarded by the Iraqi Army.

During the shipment, soldiers crawl in the back, tear open the bags and steal money and they are still in the convoy. There are there when the convoy arrives and they recount the money and say, "Okay, who stole it?" And these guys all stand there looking at each other. "Okay, everybody is going to jail until we figure out who stole it." It is just stunning to see that kind of thing happen.

*Q: Did the Provincial Council have any role in allocating funds and deciding on priorities of projects?*

A: Within their system it seems like they are supposed to, but there are a couple of hoops we jumped through while I was there, where we went from high officials deciding and pushing it down to suddenly the mid-level officials are involved. Then the high officials also gave money away to the low level governments and said, "We need you to also plan some of these projects."

So the complaints I received towards the end dealing with people on that particular subject was when the government became involved. What they ended up doing was going

in such detail, they were coming up with estimates on some of these projects and then submitting them. High level Iraqi officials were not double-checking, because if they threw anything back and said, “This is not a suitable project” or “the price is wrong on this project” then these people would say, “See, you are taking away our rights. It is our project, to do as we wish.”

They would, unfortunately, come up with these projects where they would come up with a total lowball number that no contractor would bid on, because it was too low. So what we end up with is huge portions of the budget that go unallocated. Nobody is going to bid on it, even when they put it out for bid again, unless those numbers are adjusted.

Part of the problem, from what contractors told me, when I had discussions with them, towards the end was that, “We understand that things cannot be the way it was in 2004 and 2005. We are not going to do a \$55,000 project for \$5,000 anymore. We would have to go out of pocket to complete these projects. They are written in such a lowball manner there is no way that we could actually complete a project for what they have set as the ceiling on the price.”

*Q: This is the Provincial Council?*

A: The Provincial Council and the lower level, governments, and part of the problem is they are all amateurs. Some of them are actually realistically going out and attempting to do this themselves and other ones are tossing it to family members who later bid for the same projects. There is no real win-win situation. They definitely have the responsibility for it, but they have no master plan. They do not have anything set in their mind.

So one small neighborhood might be desperate to fix a stretch of road that goes through their area, but the neighborhood to the east or to the west of them might also have a segment of that road might and not be doing anything with it. So they are paying the extra cost for a company to come out and work on that one stretch of road whereas, economy of scale, if the company came out and did the entire road at one time we might get a better deal.

And yet no one seemed to have a master plan, either.

*Q: Was there any attempt to get the Council to develop a master plan?*

A: Anytime we met with people from the central government, the discussion always centered on the idea that once things calm down then we can do something. That was what the constant discussion was. When those officials came out, they came out and stayed for an hour or two hours and flew back. People were very uncomfortable coming out to our province and spending any time there at all.

*Q: What were some of the other things you were trying to do as the Governance team?*

A: The Governance team had Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) on the team and the team leader was a civilian. Prior to that, a high level Iraqi official had always had the Deputy Team Leader as his primary interlocutor. Frequently, it was going to be the Deputy Commander of the Brigade, or somebody who had been the Deputy Commander of the Brigade prior to this, so somebody who knew intimately what kind of support was available and how to leverage any support we needed from the military side. So the Iraqi official had grown over time to be extraordinarily dependent on having this American officer with him: not going home at night unless the American officer provided him a convoy; not going to the meeting in Baghdad unless we provided a helicopter.

We established a process of weaning him away from that and pushing various concepts. For example, bid openings now are done during the day. The time is announced, it is public with the press and cameras are there. This is huge, because when we arrived there the bid openings were being done at night by Iraqi officials and we found, I do not know what they were doing with all that White-Out on their desks and why the documents had all those changes on them, but there was a lot of evidence of these officials were rigging bids, passing them to family members, things like that. There is a provision in the Iraqi constitution that says, "No elected person can touch a bid," not allowed to touch it and yet their standard there was to get together at night and go over these bids; they were just dividing them up among themselves.

We approached them and said, "This is the transparency part. This is the part where, we cannot realistically prosecute anybody, but there has been some irregularity in the past. We are going to move forward from here and starting now, this is what we are going to do: you are going to open these binds publicly and we are going to list them and do the process just the way we are supposed to, the way it is outlined in your law, Iraqi law."

Sometimes you get an official saying, "I am quitting. I am resigning right now." They are not resigning because we questioned their reputation. That never came up. They are resigning because we are cutting him off financially.

Those sorts of things were the things we worked on. "How does this look? Is this really what you want to be seen talking about right now?"

Some of the things were very practical. When there is a bombing, we talked to the public officials and say, "From a public diplomacy, or public relations point of view you definitely need to go to the site, visit the families, visit the hospital. If policemen were blown up while they were training, go visit the policemen, go visit the police chief, but do not run out there right now. You have to wait half an hour, you have to wait an hour." This is very practical stuff that from our side everybody should know, but they would either not go at all, or rush right out there immediately after something had happened, because sometimes these were walking distance. If it was a couple of kilometers away, then they would say, "I will go in a couple of days."

There is a very serious drought in that area right now. Nobody can come up with a solution. How are we supposed to solve it? I think it is going to be solved by a

coordinated combination of different solutions. We have to have another province open up more water, we have to talk about this, we have to talk about that. But an Iraqi official said, “We are going to have a task force and we are going to have meetings. I am going to be in charge.”

“Hold on, man. You cannot be in charge of everything all the time and when you are in charge, you tend to just talk for hours. Why not turn this over to a lower official and have them report to you? If it is an emergency, treat it like it is an emergency. If it is a really serious issue, treat it like it is a really serious issue. If you just say, ‘We are going to form a committee and start having meetings,’ then it is the same as everything else.”

We were helping them to prioritize. They do not do email. They sometimes have a very up and down type of behavior. Some have survived many assassination attempts, three while I was there. Some behavior was kind of erratic at times and sometimes one official would immediately say, “Yes, you know, you are right. Hold on a minute,” and would get on the phone and call another official and say, “Get over to my office!” and pass the task to them, saying, “You are in charge of this. I want you to handle it. Just let me know what is going on.” There was genuinely a big concern about whether there would be any follow through. Sometimes there was no follow through from above and then two weeks later would be a call down out of nowhere and say, “Okay, where are we at?”

*Q: How do you calculate the impact of the Governance team on the Iraqi government there?*

A: We made some high level officials a bit less dependent over time. The government as a whole, I think the executives became more confident, more competent, about handling things on their own, as we talked them through these various things. Even the concept of an agenda and taking notes was not happening when we arrive there, so we definitely tightened up some things.

In terms of the big picture, the overall functionality and durability of their government systems and the individuals in it, we just kept it running for a bit longer, because they are in such a tenuous position, they are not loved by the central government at all and there is just so many things going wrong up there. After I left, things became much worse, including a shooting inside the building where we used to live. The Iraqi Army came in and shot a staff member in the hallway, the same hallway where we sat around and drank tea, waiting for our appointments. Why was the Iraqi Army in the building? Who knows?

There is nothing that I saw over the last year that could not be undone in three bad weeks, in terms of any kind of progress.

*Q: Do you think some of it stuck?*

A: No, I do not think so. There might be some impact with the women forming their group. We actually ran workshops for the women, where we talked about the concept of developing a process: here is my idea, here is what I would like to do, building some sort

of power there and moving forward with it, maybe giving in a little bit in order to get something that you needed on a project Then we actually had them getting up in front of our small group of women and giving presentations, which is definitely very new for them and they felt great about it. They might have gained some personal skills out of it. They might have learned some things. I heard more than once, “Our term is about to end. I wish that you had been here when our term started, because we walked in as freshman legislators, did not know anything and have just kind of fumbled our way through this. Now we are all about to leave.”

The training that is run by some USAID subcontractors, things like that, that type of training would be really spectacular, but it was always considered to be too dangerous to do in our province. High level officials refuse almost every time to let anybody leave the province to go through training.

*Q: What was the Economic team trying to do?*

A: It is a hell of a question. The Economic team was all over the map. We have one person who is working towards creating the Chamber of Commerce. We have another person who is detailed specifically to work on electrical industries, which is a huge factory; it was a major source of employment back in Saddam’s era. It was like a government owned plant for making all sorts of electronic items. Some were family type consumer electronics and some were actually more high tech, optic fiber, things like that. The plant had four thousand people on the payroll, but maybe, I want to say, 1,500 come to work. Everybody gets paid. This plant is out in the boondocks, far away from where we worked. The key thing that everybody who has worked on that particular project has said is that, “I need to live there. If I could live at that plant, if I could work with the director of that plant every single day, we could get somewhere, we could have that place up and running. But if I just can go out for 45 minutes a couple times a week or once a week, we are going to be stuck in this same loop of non-success.” And that is where they still are with that.

The person who is trying to do it right now is a brilliant businessman. He is doing his time as a 31-61 purely as just a public service, because he has read so much about things not working right and he was probably thinking, “I could probably make that happen.” But he is getting frustrated by the constraints within the system, the movement constraints, the security constraints, and things like that.

People get fired in Iraq, but nobody leaves Iraq. So if you get fired from, say, somewhere in the Embassy, the Special Inspector General’s office, you just pop up on a PRT.

*Q: You are talking about Americans?*

A: Americans, yes, you get fired from one PRT, you show up at another. They just move people around. It would be far too difficult, because you have no leverage. There is no report card on a 31-61; there are no promotions involved, there is no nothing. So if you just want to sit in your room and check your email for a year, there are people who can do

that. If you have your own personal agenda and want to do other things, want to learn how to play the piano and you brought a keyboard with you, you can do that. It is all a function of whether or not your team leader is strong enough to say, "Where the hell is that person and what have they been working on?"

My first team leader was very good, excellent. My next team leader after that was totally oblivious, because he was missing in action, too. If you only have one staff meeting a week and you are the team leader, it might be good to show up. If you get too busy typing in your room on the computer to show up for a meeting, it certainly tells me as a team member that next week I probably do not need to show up; it is not a problem; nobody is going to harass me if I am not involved in this.

So the Economic team was very limited, in terms of their overall impact, because they had either constraints in the case of the factory, where they just could not spend the time out there. In other cases they were out, off the reservation, doing their own thing; attempting to sell solar power to Iraqi people is one issue that is still brought up frequently on the team.

*Q: Were they involved in infrastructure projects?*

A: There were very unclear lines, really, because when you think about the economic side, you think about business development, things like that. I did not see any businesses being developed at all.

One subset of the Economic team was the Agriculture team; they spent money left and right. They were our most frequent fliers for these QRF projects, because generally in the agriculture world you can spend a little bit of money and actually purchase a lot of stuff, some larger bang for the buck in those cases. But what was the durability of those projects? I do not know. One thing I do know is that the people who were involved with them were all the same people over and over again, on the Iraqi side. They were all the same dudes showing up. The beekeeper Iraqi is also part of the fig date association and is also the helicopter pilot for spraying the dates, getting paid for that, too. Just on and on, sort of a cycle there of big money tied in.

We had a person who was arrested by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), held prisoner by the CPA for a while and finally released and then he was put off limits to us: do not deal with this person again. Then we had a team leader change and an agriculture team member change and this person was right back in the middle of it. You could tell them, "Hey, we are not supposed to be dealing with them, because of this." They say, "I do not know anything about that, but he is the president of some agricultural association, so we have to talk to him."

We had people who were actually implicated in payoffs to different groups for doing violent activities who were actually part of some of these other things, too, like agricultural committees.

*Q: You think any agricultural work was accomplished?*

A: No, I do not. We had the date spraying done every year, but the Iraqis complained and said it did not do enough, it was too little, too late every time. But in terms of long term, we could not solve anything.

One of the problems is, when you have a drought going on, whose lane does that fall into? We have an infrastructure person looking at the canals and the waterways, things like that. We have the agriculture people just complaining about it. Where they are all dependent on these huge growths of dates and as you drive over them you can see there is a line of that are drying out, where they are dying. I think that that is not anything that we could impact in a favorable way, even if we were totally soaked with resources, I do not know any way that we could impact that. But they would constantly ask us for different things to solve their problems, for example, with the drought and we just do not have it. The technology is not there.

“Let us dig a canal and reroute the Tigris River.”

“Okay, I will get on that, but it will take a little while.” And that is not really our job. That is more of an Iraqi government job. They are talking about doing a feasibility study. That is not going to help with the drought this year.

Another example of agriculture and business development, economic type issues, would be slaughterhouses. Somebody came to us and said, “We do not have enough slaughterhouses, they are not clean, they are not up to standard, they need to be fixed up, because people will buy their chickens out at the side of the road if we have these nice facilities.” So we start pumping money into a project like that and the Iraqi government comes and shuts them down and says, “We’re not selling chickens like this anymore. We are not slaughtering chickens like this anymore. We have a centralized thing that we are doing.” And you cannot play games with this. You have to be very serious and straightforward with it and follow the rules, but the problem is on our side we did not know what the rules were. We have no idea. We had no idea that the Iraqi government had set up these sorts of tables for us to negotiate. We had nothing.

That is a real problem, a huge problem. You think about the resources that we can drop into a project, and then have it just swept right out from underneath us. That happened more than once, because even their own people do not even know what is going on with the central government.

*Q: There is a lack of communication between provinces and the central government.*

A: All this information is typed in memos that have been signed and stamped by somebody, going back and forth by fax machine, not the most reliable way to get information moved around.

*Q: Did you try to facilitate any kind of communication?*

A: In many cases we were the go between, they would ask us, “Could you please contact my ministry and tell my ministry that I need this” or I need that.

“Who do I call in your ministry?” It becomes very difficult situation. If you do not want us to be occupiers and in charge of everything, then they come to us and say, “Please call my boss in Baghdad and tell him that he must provide me this or that.” That is really very awkward for us, but it happened more than a few times. That whole banking business was an example of that, where we had to intervene with their national level folks to get something done down at our level. And that was more than once.

*Q: What about the Rule of Law team? What were they trying to do?*

A: Excellent question. I watched Rule of Law for the whole time I was there. We had two teams, like I said. One became the criminal team and the other one became the civil team.

What we ended up with and reading the reports each week, this kind of bears it out, the Rule of Law team for criminal stuff went out every week and took trips to different parts of the Province, went to jail and checked on the condition of prisoners. Then they talked to the judges at those places, or they talked to the senior judge of the Province, who, according to the people I dealt with on a day to day basis, was also the most corrupt person in the province and they would talk to him and get assurances that things were going to be better or “I am going to work on this” or “I will be fixing that pretty soon.” And that was it, week after week after week the same stuff: “This jail is terribly overcrowded, there are 338 prisoners, there are no holding facilities for women.”

When the Iraqi Army arrests a woman, well, actually, they cannot arrest a woman. They can hold her for a little while outside of their facility, like in the street or something and talk to her, but they have no facility to take a woman to. The problem was identified. We have these female suicide vest bombings going on, but nothing was fixed.

Our team in particular was very broken because sometimes people would come and talk and ask about, ‘I am interested in rebuilding this building’ or ‘I would like to do this project’ or ‘I have this NGO I would like to introduce you to,’ it is not necessarily a legal thing, but to have to justify to the Rule of Law team why I am meeting somebody who happens to work in the legal field each time I meet them really kind of rubbed me the wrong way. Why was that going on?

Later on we had some issues within the team. We had a situation where the bodyguard team of an Iraqi official was involved in a shooting and ended up killing a couple people and actually wounded a local hire civilian who worked for me, who just happened to be on the street and lived in that neighborhood. We were discussing this, as this might affect the election, this official is thinking of running for higher office but it depends on whether or not there would be an indictment. Then the Rule of Law person just explodes, in a crowded room of people and says, “Why do I not know about this?”

Why would you know about this? This is an unindicted case at this point. Do you need a report on every allegation of criminal activity within the province? You are going to be a really busy guy if that happens.

That person was kind of a control freak and was never able to leverage any help out of Baghdad, although I heard great things about Baghdad from other Rule of Law people in other provinces, other PRTs. Our person in particular was never able to get anything and that is based on personality.

*Q: But there were other members of the Rule of Law team that were accomplishing things?*

A: It was very small and they lived in fear of this one particular individual. We did have another person show up late in my tenure who was assigned to the Rule of Law team and immediately started to argue with the team leader that was already in place. They were split up: one was made civil, one was made criminal.

We ended up getting into a huge blowup with the Rule of Law/Civil Law person because of territoriality and a failure of team leadership to grab onto something and say, "This is the way this is going to be." We had a situation where a senior member of the Iraqi government in the province was about to be indicted for something. The judge had already called him and said, "I know about your indictment. I have looked at it. The case is totally fabricated and made up, but per our law, you must appear before me. That is the way it is. You have to appear before me for me to dismiss these charges. So how are we going to do this, because if you come to my courthouse, the courthouse is going to get blown up, or somebody is going to shoot you or me or both of us," because it is a very controversial case, a very controversial individual.

The senior Iraqi official present this to our civil Rule of Law team member. The civil Rule of Law team member takes it to the primary Team Leader: "This is what he is asked for. He asks me to handle his case administratively, make a space on a FOB to conduct a safe trial and then get him out of there." We have done this numerous times in Iraq, where we provide a venue for somebody to do something.

So the Team Leader says, "Absolutely, 100 per cent, I want you to work on this. The other person is not on it. It is just you." Because he sensed immediately there would be some territoriality issues. "And use the staff, use your office staff, as needed to support you on this," there had been issues over staff as well in the Rule of Law office.

So the next morning the criminal Rule of Law person is down at the Governance Center, in the senior Iraqi government official's office, telling him, "No, you cannot have a trial on a FOB. You have to go surrender yourself to the police and they will hold you until your trial," which is like a death sentence for somebody in his particular position, the only Sunni elected official in the province. And the key is, he was briefed by the Team Leader and told, "I am giving this to the other person to handle. Just leave it alone." And

he walked right in and took charge of it and then the Team Leader never jumped back in and said, “Whoa, whoa. I told you to leave it alone.”

So this case, for that particular government official, went back and forth and back and forth and their life is on the line. A high level Iraqi police official for the province is like a two star general equivalent, stole this case file, in order to try and delay the case from going forward, just went and took it. After that abuse was brought to light, the individual was removed. He did a lot of other things, too, but he was removed just a few weeks ago from his position. He was definitely abusing his power and he would have been the one to try and kill this senior government figure.

So, yes, the Rule of Law team got precisely nowhere. Nothing has improved. The courts are not functioning. The courts are not open.

The local police building is right next to our building, where I lived, so I would go over there because that was one of the only other places we could go to, we could actually walk there without a guard and we would walk over there and sit with officers and talk, have tea, sometimes eat dinner. We gained very close high level contacts.

During one visit a person walks in who says, “I was just tortured,” and takes off his shirt, shows you his body where he has all these marks and stuff. “What happened?”

“Well, there were some problems in my neighborhood so I went to the police to complain and the police did this.”

And these were all things that we surfaced, we brought these forward and documented them. “Well, you did not take a deposition from the person.”

“I am not trying to file a case. I am trying to tell you there is a problem. I am not here to get a deposition or anything like that, but you need to know when people go to the cops, if they are of the wrong sect, living in the wrong neighborhood, a neighborhood that maybe they should have moved out of long ago, they are just going to get beaten, if they are lucky and this is definitely not building confidence in the system.”

Yes, I found Rule of Law to be a big nonstarter.

*Q: Are there other areas that this team was working on?*

A: Not really. There are some small things with Internally Displaced People. The person who was handling civil affairs was looking at trying to figure out and help smooth their claims process, so that they could get compensated for their houses. It seemed like some people from some neighborhoods received their money right away, other people from other neighborhoods did not get anything ever. And then we also had the government attempting to evict people on their own, not on direction from the national government, but on direction from the local military, local police, saying, “We really want that facility back. Go kick those people out.”

*Q: Were there other program areas you PRT worked on?*

A: That was pretty much it. We had a medical team. While I was there we had an army officer, a nurse practitioner, who ran the military part of our medical team. That was the whole medical team, although they did an outstanding job. They were all over the place: visiting the hospitals and the clinics. They helped them work up a very practical, workable curriculum for nursing students, because there are no nursing schools in the province, so to get some people some basic skills to be not quite nurse practitioners but at least able to do some things. They did a lot of things.

The Iraqi official in charge of health, who actually had been rated consistently as one of the best officials that we had: very active, very outgoing, spoke English very well. You get a “B” if you start off speaking English well. The military always rates you a little higher, just starting on that. Unfortunately that person turned out to be an al Qaeda supporter, big time and was running an aid station for al Qaeda guys in his house, apparently. This was the one that we were trusting and working with.

So then we went through this little gap period there where we had no Iraqi official for health at all. There was a number of people who were being advanced by different groups within the province. The Kurds had their nominee, the Sunnis had their nominee and the Shi’a had their nominee. In the meantime, they were all sharing power in a sort of *de facto*, stand-in way.

Then on our side, we had an elderly gentleman come in who was a surgeon. It turned out later that apparently he had had his license revoked; something he had neglected to mention during the 31-61 vetting process.

We had a Master of Public Health who really lit the public health world on fire, even though it was just two people at the time. They are all over the place: meeting people, putting solid plans into place and also, connecting NGOs to agencies of the Iraqi government that need help.

*Q: On relationships, how would you describe the PRT’s relationships with the Iraqi people?*

A: The PRT’s relationship is, in large part, only with official people. We do not have much contact, really, outside of these official circles. We are to some extent approachable. Living in that building and being over on their side, I had a lot of opportunities. It is your government building, right, so if you have an issue as a private citizen this is a building you go to, because you want to talk to somebody. So we ran into a lot of people who had just met their representative or somebody like that and came away unsatisfied with what they had heard, who looked to us for a second opinion.

“I need a well, really bad. They told me they are not going to dig a well in my neighborhood for at least three more months until they get to my area, but I need one

now. Can you guys do it?” Things like that. Unfortunately, we frequently had to say no and that does not ever help build a relationship.

We tried hard. We listened and I had more than a few stressful times where at the Provincial Council, where somebody would come and say, “I need to talk to an American, because I have this problem.” So they would call us and say, “Up to you if you want to talk to her or not. What do you say?”

It is invariably somebody has been kidnapped in the family, this is what I know about the case, or that they have been arrested by the Americans. And sometimes we were able to go back into the U.S. side of the building, talk to somebody, send some emails and get an answer back and say, “Yes, he is being held at this prison.” I am surprised that they were not able to find that on their own, because many other people do.

In other cases, they say; “He was definitely taken by the Americans” and then I say, “We do not have him.” What do you tell somebody in that situation? But we listened all the way through, we did our best, we made a good faith effort to try and follow through with peoples’ problems and issues at the one on one level with people, because that is where we can connect with people more.

We did engage with the Iraqi press. We had some media representatives who lived and worked in that building. We did our very best to reach out to them, because those guys, again, are people that, depending on how they film us and how they frame us on TV really can make a difference. It was worth our time and effort to spend a little bit more time with those guys.

*Q: How were your relationships with the military?*

A: No problems at all for me, but I would say that we definitely have problems. My first team leader, spectacular, great American, good leader and knew military business and knew what military people do and how they work and was able to earn their respect and respect them back.

My team leader that I had before I left does not trust military people, does not particularly like military people and has no respect for their background or education and I can give you a fine example of this: we had a situation where people from one sect came in and said that they had been bullied in a meeting by a U.S. Army officer who had come in and forced them to vote on something and had really bullied them and pushed them around to make them do something.

This is a group of guys who are not particularly well respected on our side, but they are in there talking with my team leader and my team leader says, “Okay, let me look into this. I am going to have to talk to the military and find out what happened.” Then, after they leave, he sits and talks to several former military officers, myself included, about how this officer probably went in there using the class that he took in seventh or eighth grade in civics and pushed these guys around, “That is what these military guys always do.

They do not know what they are doing. They do not know what they are talking about. They do not know how to handle a post-conflict society.”

My jaw was starting to hurt, because I was trying really hard not to say anything, all of us were. I am a Foreign Service Officer now, but I do not have some preconceived notions about anybody else’s field or where they work or anything like that. You need to observe them and learn what they know. I do not know where he got his playbook about what the military is like or how they are educated, but he was very, very wrong.

If you start it at the team leader level that really kind of sets it up. There was some people on the team who did remarkably well with the military, people who had never worked with the military before and just fell in love with the environment and were really able to do well. We did occasionally have people who went overboard and thought that if you are an FSO grade three, then that means you are the same as a major. On the seating chart you get to sit with the majors and the lieutenant commanders. I do not think it means you are a major, but there were people who were very confused about that and started wanting some sort false respect for themselves.

That is a routine issue out there, too, where every contactor’s given the arbitrary rank of GS-15 for a year. That is what their rank is while they are out there, they are all GS-15. And then you have the full time Foreign Service Officers who do this for a living and we are stuck with our regular, permanent rank. And then we have the military officers, who are doing this and trying to stay alive and they are getting the very short end of the stick on everything.

When we had new trailers brought in where we lived, it was a food fight. It was out of control, because everybody wanted his/her own trailer with a bathroom inside it, which was a huge thing. Then I am out at the Governance Center, two career FSOs sharing a room for a year, a very small room and then we came back to the FOB, we had a two man trailer with a bathroom about seventy or eighty feet away, but because of space limitations at one point they had three of us living in the trailer. There are only two beds. We could never all come back to the FOB at the same time. We were finally able to force the issue because we all came back at the same time one time and said, “Okay, you have to give us one more bed somewhere else.”

Some individuals definitely had issues including some of the Iraqi people, the military, our military, Iraqi-Americans, Iraqi-Canadians, people like that, sometimes felt a little pushed around by the military, but having military background myself I did not have any issues whatsoever.

*Q: Are there any areas we have not touched on?*

A: I do not think so.

*Q: How would you assess the overall achievements of the PRT?*

A: I did not see any durable improvement. I did not see anything that could not be totally erased, in terms of progress, within, say, three weeks, really. It is unfortunate, but that is the impression I have. It is just so many things that were built like sandcastles.

*Q: You have any particular reason why you thought that?*

A: We are dealing with post-conflict reconstruction, but we are in the middle of a conflict, still. We are rebuilding things that just became blown up that had been rebuilt prior to this. We are not in the right environment to be doing the work we need to be doing at this point. That area needs to be pacified before we start spending money and trying to build things.

Even the Iraqi people have lost interest. That is why so many people are stealing money off the top, because it would be great to have a new school here or a fountain in the middle of the intersection, but it is going to get blown up again, anyway. So I might as well stack a couple of bricks up here and pocket the rest of the money, because they have lost a lot of confidence in the situation and they are afraid that it is not going to get any better.

*Q: Are there any major lessons that you've learned?*

A: One thing that the team was incredibly not prepared for and did not have any operations cell to speak of, the State Department equivalent of a GSO, out there to handle our support needs. The army has all their support needs built into their unit organizations and when you are not part of a military organization you are not getting that support. So the military provides support to us and handles all of our life support needs: there is a dining facility and there is a laundry and they gave me a room and that is it. But when you need some other things taken care of, we were not able to get that kind of support. The army would say, "We do not do that."

Like, for example, computers. We need some computers. That is from the Embassy. Talk to the Embassy and they say, "We do not have any. Maybe you can get some from the army."

Now supposedly there is an regional GSO (General Services Officer) assigned from the Embassy to cover these different regions. There might be. I was there a year. I never heard from them, never saw them out where we live. I paid a cook to build a desk for my room, because the army did not have furniture for us.

So the lesson is you need to go in with a package, not a piece of paper that says, "Army will provide everything" or "DOD will provide everything for State people," because "everything" is very broad and it does not cover everything, really. You need to go in there with a package in advance that says clearly in each situation what is expected on each side.

Also a Mission Statement, a clear Mission Statement, because the Mission Statement has to cover everything: what is the United States doing, what is the Embassy doing, what is the PRT team doing, what is your individual team doing and what are you doing. All of those things.

It is very hard for me to convince the Iraqis to write a good statement like that if I do not have a statement like that for myself. So we need a strong Mission Statement that is very clear and precise. We need a package going in that clearly defines who has what roles in terms of support and making things happen. Those would be two very, very strong lessons.

And probably the last thing: reconstruction happens after you are done fighting. If you are still in a kinetic phase, where people are still shooting at each other routinely, not once in a while. When you have major, large-scale military action going on, this is not the time to be out building chicken farms and water fountains, building water fountains during a drought, which is something people were working on, because it would employ local artisans.

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