

United States Institute of Peace  
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Iraq PRT Experience Project

**INTERVIEW #9**

Interviewed by: Marilyn Greene  
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**Executive Summary**

Subject was assigned from the Department of Agriculture to work as an AID adviser on building governance, to an Italian-led PRT near Nasiriyah.

He volunteered to go to Iraq because his experience with a PRT in Afghanistan had been so rewarding. However, the Iraq experience was disappointing. Expectations were excessively high. Management of the PRT in Iraq was unlike that in Afghanistan, where members had more authority and could exercise more initiative. "I did not have that control in Iraq at all."

Personality clashes were an additional challenge in Iraq. The personalities in this PRT did not work well together.

The role of PRT members is to be generalists, to work with parties involved and with contractors. But in this case, the contractors did not have any connection with the PRT or with the AID or State Department people. They justified this by saying it was a security issue. Instead of dealing with the PRT, the contractor dealt only with headquarters in Baghdad. This should change. The PRT should have control over funding and decision making and working directly with the contractors, and the contractors need to be held accountable to the PRT.

The structure was not designed properly. Although there was no formal organizational chart, the way it generally worked was that there would be the PRT team leader, the deputy and then down to the project areas – water, agriculture, provincial government, and so on. The AID people were sidelined, rather than up in line with the deputy director position, as they should be. The AID person should be designated as project director, with control over NCT people because they are the ones with the expertise for this.

Selection of team leaders should be done carefully. An effective team leader is a good manager, and has the personality to get people working together. A "we" person, not an "I" person. Someone who can coordinate technical skills in a group of people, and get different groups working together.

Political officers should not be put in positions where they are directing development work. This is not appropriate, and they are not trained for it. Yet that is what has happened.

It is important to have staff meetings, where team members can speak frankly about their problems and issues. This did not happen within this situation.

There was “stove piping,” with AID shuttered out of decisionmaking. This is unwise, and should be remedied, as AID can provide valuable advice and counsel on how best to leverage resources.

The PRT’s interaction with NGOs was limited because of security risk. But what relationships there were, were positive.

The public affairs program here was excellent. It initiated programs building governance, and talked about agriculture programs, school programs and micro-finance programs. Stories about all of these things were put out in news articles and over the wire for Iraqi audiences. The focus was always on the achievements of Iraqis – not on American or Italian assistance.

The Corps of Engineers worked admirably. “The biggest contributor to development down there for water and everything else in our area as well as the other parts of Iraq is the Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers’ office was actually located at the FOB and we had a direct relationship with them and they were quite good to work with.”

Governance issues were paramount. “RTI had a real focus on building governance. There was a real priority placed on that. And of course, USAID was a direct funder of that. But there was a lot of focus put on governance, building capacity. That was probably the top priority of anything that was actually done at our PRT, and probably at all the other PRTs.”

Do not make promises unless you are certain you can carry them out. “We have to be sure that when we promise something, we deliver it and if we cannot, never bring up the fact that you are even considering until you know you’ve got the money.” Making unfulfillable promises was in part a function of inexperience: “The biggest issue we ever had was lack of experience of people out in the field. No matter what you do, though, is you never promise anything.”

The provincial reconstruction development committee was not effective, in part because training for the job was insufficient.

A fundamental and urgent priority must be to promote self-sufficiency and self-initiative among the Iraqis themselves. Empowerment should be the goal.

One of the most successful aspects of this PRT effort was in the area of governance training. “We were moving forward on a strategic plan. On funding, how to fund projects, where to fund them in the province, how government officials need to work together, budgeting and so forth, bidding, how to negotiate with Baghdad to get more funding...”

Another area of success was in developing micro-credit loans; and a third was in agriculture, specifically the date-watering program, which helped boost production, and thus sales.

Building schools and developing governance knowledge were also major achievements.

The PRTs are the best platform available to deliver services and meet the objectives that the US has established for reconstruction in Iraq. The PRT's have been mostly successful, although management and coordination need more attention, so that the teams can work together more effectively.

The PRT's are indeed effective vehicles for improving governance, promoting economic development, utilizing American military and civilian resources, and strengthening counter-insurgency.

He would go back to Iraq, but only on condition that his best abilities were employed. More attention is needed in matching people's abilities to the Iraqi needs.

Lessons learned:

1. It must be determined what role USAID is going to play on the PRT with regard to the State Department's role. Manager, or technical adviser? That should be made clear.
2. Prepare families. The team member should be ready to spend a year in Iraq, and this should be established before departure.
3. Training. This should occur before the PRT "gets planted."
4. Make sure the PRT has control over contractors, and that contractors understand they are accountable to the PRT.

### **Interview**

*Q: Let's start placing the PRT that you were associated with, and describing your relationship with it.*

A: Well, I was actually assigned from the Department of Agriculture, Foreign Ag Service to USAID. It was actually done through a PAS (Participating Agency Service) agreement. I was assigned to USAID for one year and it was actually June of 2006 until July of 2007.

I was actually assigned as a USAID PRT adviser to Foreign Operating Base, Field Operating Base. It is down by Nasiriyah

*Q: Your PRT was American led?*

A: It was not. It was Italian.

*Q: How many members did it have?*

A: The team leader was actually Italian and then we had a deputy who was actually State Department and then under that we had the USAID representative who was me, and then we had a State Department field officer. While I was there we actually had either four or five Italians who were assigned there and their respective jobs were either agriculture or governance. They had an engineer there but there was a total of five Italian advisers there in addition to the team

leader and then they also had one administrative assistant. So it was about seven people off and on. It varied from time to time.

*Q: Plus the Americans?*

A: Plus the Americans.

*Q: And how many Americans were there?*

A: We also had the governance program there through USAID and I had three people assigned to me that were actually expats, whose responsibility was to go ahead and work with the local governments. Actually, they were assigned at the PRT to work directly with the governments and with the ministries down in at the province down in Nasiriyah. So we had three expats plus myself, and also we had a security office, with a State Department security officer. Oh, we also had another Department of State person there and he was called the provincial project manager. We had the deputy director and that is it. That encompassed our team of Americans there.

*Q: And you were with the agriculture service, is that right?*

A: No, I was not. I was assigned to USAID to handle all their programs. I was assigned from USDA because of my rural development experience but my assignment was to really focus on either working with the provincial government to build governance capacity and that would include work in agriculture and non-agriculture programs.

*Q: And your background is at USDA?*

A: Well, at the Department of Agriculture, but in fact I am a banker. My banking is actually credit. That's what we do, that's the capacity I am in. I am actually a branch chief now over a loan and grant program, a micro-credit loan and grant program for USDA. That program is probably around 150 or 200 million dollar program for the U.S.

*Q: How did you happen to be sent? Did you volunteer?*

A: I volunteered for the assignment.

*Q: Why did you want to go?*

A: I volunteered because the year before that I was assigned to Afghanistan with USAID under the same agreement, and I was a regional adviser in Northern Afghanistan in '04. There is a total of nine PRTs and we had 12 provinces and I actually worked as a regional development adviser for USAID for the northern and western Afghanistan for development.

*Q: The Afghanistan PRTs were quite different, were they not than the Iraqis?*

A: They were certainly administered differently, yes. I had a very positive experience there. My experience was so positive there that at the time, when I came home for about seven months, I

thought it would be good to go to Iraq and do one more assignment, which I did. But yes, there is a night and day difference. At least in the time I was actually in Afghanistan to now, I am not sure what changes they have made, but in fact, I suggested they look at the Afghan model to go ahead and improve delivery of services of the PRTs.

*Q: Were you disappointed after being in Afghanistan?*

A: Yes, I was. Absolutely.

*Q: Do you want to talk about that a little bit?*

A: My expectations were much higher than they should have been and they were higher there because of my experience in Afghanistan. I had a good PRT manager there that basically would delegate the authority out to us as regional advisers to work with our PRT field officers and granted, I was in a little bit different capacity there. I had more control over the programs and the development in the provinces. The USAID rep at that time technically, though, was considered the expert and could direct the State Department person which really did not have a position outside of being a political officer. We controlled the development that occurred in the provinces. The State Department person would do their political stuff. I am not saying we are perfect when I say we. It is a partnership because I had very good field officers working with me. We had control of where we were going in development with the provincial government. I did not have that control in Iraq at all.

*Q: Who was in charge there?*

A: Again, my situation would probably be a little different from some of the others because I was in a PRT, and it was an Italian PRT so our capacity was obviously, to work as a team, to work with the Italians.

*Q: And the team leader was Italian?*

A: He was Italian but the deputy was State Department. She was actually located elsewhere. She was in another province and the team leader there was actually State Department and an American-run PRT would typically have a lieutenant colonel be the deputy. In a coalition PRT you have whatever country, whatever coalition country, that's running the PRT be the team leader and then you have a State Department representative being the deputy.

We lost control because USAID was not able to go ahead and take the lead on doing development. We were minimized. We were limited to being technical advisers to provide information, you know, as a technical person and not as an experienced adviser who understands not only the provincial government but who would also understand agriculture and all the other programs, and who would understand what direction we need to go and negotiate in order to put programs together while leveraging all our resources. These resources could include: military funding, USAID funding, State Department funding, and Iraqi funding. They did not do a good job at least in my province. Now I can't say that is everywhere. At least in my province I could not coordinate.

Our team leader had problems delegating. Again, it was not only with me. It wasn't about the State Department people we had there then at the time I was there. This person put up a wall between us and the Italians.

*Q: This was the State Department person, not the Italian leader?*

A: Well, the Italian leader put a wall up between the team leader and the team leader seemed to have selfish interests in mind.

*Q: What was the team leader's background? An Italian civilian? Or military?*

A: the team leader was more a paramedic before that and was evidently part of an NGO up in Baghdad before being assigned to this task. This person is still there and succeeded in putting up a wall up in front of our deputy director. They did not see eye to eye or get along and what resulted was we had a real separation of personalities and Americans. And because of that we couldn't advance. I think we could have done a lot better job of advancing our programs if we would have had better cooperation.

Now, you could say that it is personality driven and that is true. However, though, even with the current situation, we have two people now replaced me down in my province. They are having some of the same problems so it wasn't only about me.

*Q: In some places in an American-run PRT there were issues between civilians and military. In yours, you had State Department, military and Italian as well.*

A: We did, and we had those differences as well.

*Q: So you had a very complex internal relationship.*

A: Well, yes we did. In fact, that's what I am saying. Was I happy with the assignment? For me as a person, it was an experience. To follow up on being dissatisfied: If I had gone there without knowing what happened in Afghanistan, it wouldn't have bothered me. I do realize that Iraq is different. It has different kinetics and we got shot at a lot more, I mean mortared. We did get rocketed some and so you know, the dynamics are different than what I dealt with in northern and western Afghanistan. That is true. However, the personalities though can still make a difference in whatever situation you are in. Those personalities did not work well. There was not a meshing of personalities to get things done.

*Q: Talk about the difference in the role and mission of your PRT as compared to maybe others in Iraq and even the difference in mission between the PRTs in Iraq and in Afghanistan.*

A: That's a good question. The role of the PRT, at least the way I interpreted the role as a PRT representative was to be more of a generalist; to go ahead and coordinate and work with all the factions in the PRT. We should work with all the advisers to take our programs and work with

our contractors in the field and also to coordinate with the Italian programs and the Civil Affairs Team programs and use our expats, who were there to help us build governance.

The contractors we had down in our area did not have any connection with the PRT or with me or with the State Department person. They came down there and did their own programs. They had Iraqis on staff and their justification usually was that ‘because of security’ and ‘because of subjecting the Iraqis to being targeted,’ we should not be dealing with you at the PRT.

*Q: OK. Which contract is this? Is this RTI?*

A: No, RTI was fine because I had them embedded directly into the PRT and I actually kind of supervised them, so that was OK. The contract I am talking about is the existing contractor for agriculture which I think is IMMUS. There was USAID that was in the north and there was Mercy Corps in the south and west and the contractor with whom I did not have a good relationship.

*Q: What was their job?*

A: One of the contractors we had was to go ahead and do agricultural development. That is one of the contractors. We also had another contractor who was working on election issues and putting money out into the provinces for training and so forth. We had two different contractors down there. The agriculture contractors they got rid of because they just weren’t delivering. They have now issued a new contract.

So we have a new contractor who supposedly did not deliver because they would not come out and work with the PRTs-- they said because of security issues-- they wouldn’t deal with us directly, meaning we had contractors that dealt with Baghdad and would not deal directly with the PRT advisers. They need to change that so there’s more control at the PRT level and I think that is the one big point that we have to have here. In Afghanistan we had direct control. The monies were issued actually through IOM (International Organization of Migration). IOM and via our field reps, we would work directly with the development whether it be courthouses, agriculture or building governance. We had direct control over the funding source and we had direct control over the money for our provinces. We did not have that, though, in Iraq.

*Q: So it was control over the funding not the execution?*

A: Control over funding and decision making and working directly with the contractors and the contractors knowing they had to be held accountable and that accountability would be to us.

*Q: “Us” being the PRT?*

A: The PRT.

*Q: Could you talk a little bit about the PRT’s relationship with the provincial affairs office or the national coordinating team?*

A: OK. The National Coordinating Team (NCT) had a direct relationship with the provincial project manager. At the time, though, they had a 20 million dollar budget for a local province. What we would find though is the person that was in that position had direct funding and had control over the money from NCT. They would be able to assign the money and this means: “we had funding,” “we have control.” Money gives you control and knowing that you have some money, whatever the amount, it gives you leverage. Well, the adviser they had there had leverage from NCT down to the PRT manager who was our team leader.

What would happen is that USAID, because we had the contractors out there whom we had no control over, they pretty much did whatever they wanted to do. We had no control over where the project developments were going to occur, we didn’t have control of where they were going to go, what they were going to do or we had no control with NCT to go ahead and coordinate how we could use that 20 million dollars and leverage USAID’s money to go ahead and do the agriculture development, canals or whatever. What happened was because of that and because of personalities, people developed direct relationships with the team leader, circumventing the deputy team leader who was actually his boss, and did whatever they damn well pleased.

*Q: What is the PTM?*

A: It is the Provincial project. And they are assigned to NCT. They had direct control and they did whatever they damn well pleased with projects because they had direct funding and could go to the table. I could not bring the contractors in to sit down with the provincial reconstruction team or with the ministries. Our position was that we wanted the Iraqis to put up more of their funding and we leveraged it with some contributions.

Well, it was totally contrary to that. What happened was NCT says, “PTM, spend all your money to do whatever you need to do, but spend it. Civil Affairs Team, we need to do projects and we need to do quick-impact projects.” So what did they do? We went to the table. Everything focused around them. USAID was mitigated and we did not have direct relationships with the contractor to be at the table to leverage all of our resources. All that I would ask that we do is we all engage at the same table.

There will be a controlling interest and you are going to get overruled sometimes on what we need to do, but there has to be a project development team established somewhere with coordination and where everyone has input. Based on whatever the outcome would be that seems to be to the best interests of all parties concerned and that is what gets voted in. We didn’t have any of that.

*Q: Wasn’t the National Coordinating Team supposed to be a project development team?*

A: it was supposed to be. You need to realize that the personality of the person we had to deal with there did not like to put us against the team leader. This is different now. This is not everywhere.

*Q: OK, so it is specific to this Italian run PRT.*



A: I am not so sure. I think you have the same issues, some of the same issues when you've got a PRT in that I think the money got focused on whatever they can do there on their own just to spend the money, but it was not coordinated with any of the USAID representatives who were actually at the PRTs.

*Q: Go on to the organization, the chain of command, civilian and military and the internal organization of the PRT. How did you fit into that?*

A: Well, technically though we had no real organizational chart, it would be the PRT team leader, the deputy and then it would flow down to the project areas where there would be water or agriculture or provincial governments. Then what they would usually do is take AID, put AID all the way down to the right hand corner at the bottom. We suggested that what they should do is put us up in line with the deputy director position as the project's manager, with control over the NCT people. Usually the people they had assigned with development experience had a lot more experience than either the provincial project managers assigned to the NCT or obviously, the State Department person, who is more of a political person. So the structure was not designed properly.

*Q: The next question is about the effectiveness of the PRT leadership and management structure. What changes would you recommend?*

A: OK, again, it looks like I am biased toward USAID and I am not. I am biased in the sense that we need to look at positions. As far as the coalition PRT is concerned, again, I understand we don't seem to have much control. They need to be in control as a team leader and of course, I think that comes down to a selection of a team leader. I think they need to do a better job of selecting team leaders, if they can conceivably do it. I mean they have to have the personality. They have to have management experience and enjoy running doing such a thing because the person who was there had no management experience whatsoever.

*Q: Could you describe the ideal team leader? What attributes would that person have?*

A: The ideal team leader obviously is a people person who understands how to create partnerships within the PRTs and that means it is not an "I" person. It means it is a "we" person and what they would do is although they may not understand development, they do understand how to coordinate a group of people in an office that has all the requisite technical skills and is able to go ahead and work with a number of different groups and get buy in on engagement.

*Q: All right, a leader in other words.*

A: You need a leader and we do not, I think, honestly, in most of the PRTs, we do not technically either have what I call a team leader or a good manager that is in that position to be able to coordinate what is needed to make the PRT very effective.

*Q: Did you encounter agency "stove piping"? Did agency representatives coordinate and integrate programs?*

A: There was stove piping all the way down the line. I hate to do this but I will be honest with you. State Department folks are political people. They are not managers. I realize that some become DCMs at embassies. Some of them have skills to be an acting ambassador. But remember what they are: they are political folks looking at whatever's going on in a country, and they pass political information through cables back to Washington. Now, the State Department has pretty much taken over the leadership role, not only in the political agenda but also in the development agenda.

What we are doing is we are taking political officers and putting them in a development position when they have no understanding of development. What we have is we have stove piping where the State Department is doing one thing, USAID is doing the other thing; NCT basically took an issue and overrode USAID. They overrode the deputy and the mission director most the time. They had their own agenda and their agenda basically was to spend the PPM money, I mean the NCT money and that they really had no management ability or understanding of how to coordinate all the resources. And that's the biggest issue we have: stove piping from the standpoint that we actually had one program down there for 20 million dollars. They mitigated USAID's programs and then say we are not doing anything.

*Q: Can you describe the relationship and interaction of members of the PRT staff? Did the PRT itself function effectively?*

A: The relationship with the technical advisers and the RTI folks, that relationship generally was good. In our situation in the coalition PRT, obviously the team leader, the Italian team leader is really the boss over the Italian adviser and so if he/she has an agenda or he/she has an agenda that is contrary to leveraging resources in a PRT, their focus is going to be to take care of their advisers and they are going to exclude the Americans.

In our case that is what happened. We got excluded and so what we would do is we would go develop programs and then the team leader would get upset and we could never come to terms on what is acceptable and what wasn't acceptable. So how do we get along? The local advisers as a general rule would get along very well because we lived together, we ate together and as a general rule, that's quite good. Where we run into trouble is management stove piping us. They got in the way. And that comes back to having a manager who understands that while you have disagreements, what you need to do, even though you may have an agenda with your country, is to be able to sit down at staff meetings and bring people together. We need to have staff meetings to work out all the issues and talk about them. If we brought up issues that were sensitive, our team leader would back down and walk out of the meeting and then eventually stopped all the meetings.

*Q: What about the relationship with the brigade combat team? Is that something you had experience with?*

A: Yes. The brigade team was pretty good to work with. My experiences in Afghanistan were excellent. Actually, in Afghanistan we had a commander who really worked at being the team leader of the PRT. We were resource people assigned to the senior military person, who is usually a lieutenant colonel, if it was an American PRT.

The lieutenant colonel took the approach that (a) in State we took the lead in development, with AID taking the major lead. And they would take our advice. We would hook up all of our advisers, provide advice to them and also leverage their resources to whatever resources we had, and we would sit at the table right next to the lieutenant colonel.

I don't care about where you sit in the room. I could care less about that. But what this will tell you is where we actually fit into the whole management team. The lieutenant colonel would put the AID person right next to him and the State Department person next to me, and then he would take his advisers and so forth and put them next to State Department, saying that the AID person's knowledge with money and background in development actually has more leverage.

Well, what happened in Iraq was contrary to that. We had a civilian military team at the State level that hooked up with the NCT team which was the PPM that had 20 million dollars. I did not have direct control over any funding so what the Civil Affairs Team would do is say, "OK, we'll take our civil affairs money, we will tie it in with the NCT money and we will make the PRT manager happy and we will exclude AID because they did not have anything to come up with. All they could do is provide advice; but they could not step up with any money."

Now, people will tell you that you should be able to provide technical advice and that should be worth a million dollars. Well, I can agree with that. But you still need to be sure that when AID goes to the table, we can show them the resources that will be going into these projects and how we should leverage them. If you don't have control over your contractors in the field, and all you can do is provide all your expertise, it doesn't carry any weight at all. So what happened was we stovepiped the Civil Affairs Team with the NCT team, with the PRT manager and the Italian advisers and we were totally excluded. We were excluded from meetings and everything else.

*Q: What about security? Was your location fairly secure?*

A: It was. That was not an issue. We went out on a regular basis when we had seats available with the brigade team or with the Civil Affairs Team.

*Q: You had to live with the regulation of at least of four vehicles would travel together?*

A: They recently put together the private security team which I think is Triple Canopy they were going to use for us to go out in the field. But we did not have to depend on the military to go out with us.

*Q: Oh, that was a big thing then, wasn't it?*

A: That was a big thing. It was something that was going to come into play after I left. It was very critical in us getting out to the field though and always having them at our beck and call when we wanted to get out and do it.

*Q: Only because it was Italian-run or were these rules going to change for all of the PRTs?*

A: They were changing for all PRTs. What we wanted to do was go to these private contractors and once the State Department security officer got a contract out for these teams, they would bring in vehicles.

*Q: Can we go on to external relations, the PRT's relationship with the international groups in the area and the NGOs?*

A: Very good. The relationships were generally good. We were limited in NGOs. They said that we had over 200. However, of those 200, there were probably only two or three that were actually functioning because of so-called security issues.

*Q: Did you do any joint projects with NGOs?*

A: Yes. NCT did some joint projects, and the Italians did some. They had projects dealing with dates but again, it was more Italian focused. We worked with them but again, that came through our contractors that we had and the contractors in turn would work with local NGOs. They typically would not provide updates on what was really going on because of security issues. So we were somewhat out of the loop on really what was going on but the answer is a broad yes. Our support of NGOs, because of security issues, was limited but whatever relationship we had was positive.

*Q: OK, and what about the interaction with Iraqis?*

A: We always dealt with pretty high level officials. We would deal with the ministries. They would come on to the PRT. We had regular meetings with the Iraqis. We would meet at the base. We didn't do much in specific towns. The military did not feel comfortable and we didn't feel comfortable either having our soldiers stand out in the street while we were going to an official building to talk about governance and possibly exposing our soldiers to risk. So we would have the meetings at the PRT at the FOB and we would bring in the ministries, the agriculture, the engineers and our typical meeting of maybe once a month and there would probably be 20 or so Iraqis sitting at the table along with our PRT people to talk about project development.

*Q: They didn't mind coming to the base?*

A: Well, as a general rule, no. I have to say that the security, the military security folks, continued to amend their security requirements in order to bring the Iraqis in. What they finally did, they finally came up with a system for identifying participants. The process improved and no, they did not object to coming in.

*Q: They didn't mind being seen there?*

A: Well, you know, there's going to be some. I can't say it was 100 percent, but you know, they kept coming back and they didn't seem to have a problem.

*Q: What about your public affairs program? Was there one of those attached to your PRT?*

A: There was. There was a State Department person, and he did a really good job in trying to get information out as much as he possibly could.

*Q: What kinds of initiatives did he take to do that?*

A: Well, they carried out initiatives about building governance and our relationships with the PRTs and they talked about agriculture programs and they talked about school programs. They talked about micro-finance programs and they tried to get that out in news articles and tried to get it out over the wire for the Iraqis and so forth.

*Q: It sounds like he did do a good job. And did he make it a point of making it clear that it was an Iraqi program, not American?*

A: Our focus was always Iraqi driven. It was never American or Italian driven, never. And our troops did the same thing. Now, the biggest contributor to development down there for water and everything else in our area as well as the other parts of Iraq, is the Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers' office was actually located at the FOB and we had a direct relationship with them and they were quite good to work with.

*Q: Did you focus much on the PRT goals of working to bolster moderates, and providing an economic component to the counter-insurgency effort?*

A: Our deputy director did work with the PRT manager, to whatever degree he could, and we did actually have teams set up to build governance. We had an agriculture task force, we had a governance task force, we had a legal task force to bring in Iraqis to try to improve things on insurgency, on how we could do development in the areas that had the insurgency, to actually have a buy-in.

*Q: Could you talk about the PRT activities related to promoting democracy?*

A: Well, democracy for Iraq is certainly different from what we see here. But one thing the Iraqis did see is an opportunity to have freedom to go ahead and run their government. They had never seen that before, nor had that opportunity. It was always run by Baghdad and Saddam's group and so what we really dealt with is the tendency to notch up the ministries and the people within the government. That's where RTI came in and that's why we had all these people embedded with the different ministries, why we worked out strategic plans.

A: There were mixed views about that in our area but RTI had a real focus on building governance. There was a real priority placed on that. And of course, USAID was a direct funder of that. But there was a lot of focus put on governance-building capacity. That was probably the top priority of anything that was actually done at our PRT, and probably at all the other PRTs.

*Q: And was that appropriate?*

A: Very appropriate. In fact, what we need to do is we need to continue to focus on that. And we need to be sure that we put the right people in there to go ahead and move it to the next step where the Iraqis are spending their money, taking control, understanding how to work with the ministries in Baghdad and using their funding for project development.

And we should use only a small amount of funds for buy-ins, and have the Iraqis use their own funding. We provide the help to ensure that they can go ahead and be successful and feel as though they are accomplishing something.

*Q: What about RTI International? Did you have some contact with them?*

A: All the time. We actually had three people under my supervision to a certain degree.

They all are expats and at least two of the three were from provincial areas. They were Iraqis who were expats. and who had a direct engagement with the tribes. Their families are still in the area and so what they could do is coordinate our efforts getting out to the field.

*Q: So they were very valuable to you.*

A: Totally. Absolutely.

*Q: Can you tell me about your PRT's activities related to economic reconstruction?*

A: This is me and that's why you need to get a different view from some other folks. Because I did not have a lot of control over what was going on with our contractors. Certainly we had micro-finance offices set up in different provinces. The micro-finance offices were set up to provide financing for small businesses, typically women run, typically in tribes that had formed cooperatives where they would actually do carpets or do canning or other things.

*Q: Very practical things.*

A: A very practical thing that we should actually have enhanced. Of course, me being a banker and also being focused on micro-credit, one of my major initiatives was to try and get them to enhance that further.

Regarding development, there was a lot of money that the Corps of Engineers put into water systems in the different communities. Provincial areas had major projects that the Corps was involved in at a high cost. But you can see the difference in water quality. I could go out to visit tribes, and we had clean water, so there was certainly some progress made on working the water systems. Economically, they were focused on water and they were focused some on solid waste. They set up dumps and so forth. I am not sure how successful they were on that. We focused a lot on the irrigation canals and focused on trying to build cooperatives for production of crops and setting up markets. But the major drive, was to really work with the Iraqis at the government level to get them to go ahead and build government capacity. All these other projects that came from the Civil Affairs Teams, came from NCT. These were actually projects used as leverage to help us build the capacity within the government.

*Q: It was sort of an incentive.*

A: We all know that you have to have some sort of tidbit that you offer to achieve buy-in. That could be irrigation canals, that could be generators, that could be schools we built.

*Q: That reminds me of some comments that some others have made about making promises for things like that and not following through. Was that an issue?*

A: Yes, it was. And I think that we have to restrict our comments a little bit on that. The Iraqis are not like the Afghans, though I don't want to be critical because these are different groups. The Afghans were a softer people. When you sit at the table, if you even suggest that you might be doing a project, they assumed the project was going to happen, even though you would tell them many times that we can't promise we are going to do this.

*Q: They didn't hear that part.*

A: The Iraqis were actually worse than that. They were harsher people and you could say no multiple times and they would still assume that we were going to do it, so I think when we speak to them we have to couch our comments. Some of that, though, was not actually the issue with the PRT leaders or the advisers. I think delivery of services may have not happened because we had some people out there make promises and money didn't come in so that's not good. Or because of security issues we couldn't get out to do it. That's another issue we didn't have any control over. I do agree that we have to be sure that when we promise something, we deliver it, and if we cannot, never bring up the fact that you are even considering it until you know you've got the money.

*Q: Very good advice.*

A: I think that is the biggest issue we ever had was lack of experienced people out in the field. No matter what else you do, though, you never promise anything. They are perhaps going to assume that you are going to do a project but you make it very clear to them right up front that the only way that this is going to happen is that you Iraqis need to step up and put some of your money into this and we will probably have a better chance of funding this if you put up most of the money. We didn't do that though, we didn't do it that way.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the provincial reconstruction development committee?*

A: I did. I started out having it. That is the committee I was talking about that would usually meet once a month.

*Q: And how would you evaluate their performance?*

A: Not real effective because I don't think we have done a real good job training. We went to Dubai to train the governance people how to work with the committee. Normally, what would happen at the table is your ministries and staff would sit at the table with the NCT sitting at the

head with the Civil Affairs Team. Usually, AID would not be at the table. This is me now, this is not the other PRTs because I know it is not like this in other areas. What would happen is you would have the Iraqis say, "I want an eight million dollar hospital" and the NCT guy would say, "Well, I have 20 million dollars". And an Iraqi would come up and say, "I need an eight million dollar hospital". But you'd never tell the Iraqis how much money you had. You should never do that. What you would do is, you train them to go ahead and look at strategic planning and get them to understand how we can leverage resources and get the Iraqis to start using their money.

*Q: Generally, you are advocating empowering the Iraqis to do it for themselves.*

A: To do it totally. Absolutely. And that is the next step we need to go to. I am very proud of the effort. I am happy I went over there. I was disappointed with what I accomplished. But as you can see in talking to me, there are a lot of reasons for that. It may be me, my personality. If it is, fine. I still think we need to look at the management structure and then when we go to reconstruction, when we set up committees, we need to have a team leader or a person in control who can have everyone on the same team and leveraging resources. What would happen if the Civil Affairs Team says, "I've got 5 million dollars I will throw into the hat". John with NCT says, "I've got 5 million dollars I would throw in." USAID, what are you going to do? I can't tell you because I don't know what the contract is going to be and then I'd say, "Why don't you guys have the Iraqis step up and do 95 per cent of it? We leverage the balance of the resources." The response would be: well, we can't do that because if we do that, we won't get this project done. That is the mentality. I think that mentality is all changing. At least I hope it is.

*Q: Good. On to the next issue; the idea of the rule of law officer and work. How did the PRT work with the Iraqi police and courts?*

A: The way that was designed at our PRT, we had the Brits, the Australians and we had the Romanians. We had also, as I mentioned, the Italians, so we were quite a mix at our Field Operating Base. As a general comment, the relationship with the local police commissioner was very good. He used to come on to the PRT quite often to have meetings with our Civil Affairs Team, with our PRT team leader and also our deputy director. Our rule of law person in this case was actually an Italian. We would have all them at the table. I thought that relationship was good.

*Q: Talk about the agricultural adviser.*

A: We did not have an agricultural adviser except me and I could be one. I consider myself a generalist and if I would see that we had issues, we could always call on the USDA with 110,000 people within the organization. We could always call up on the web and get a technical person engaged to give counsel. However, having said that, we also had a USDA or an agriculture person from Italy who was a young man who was very aggressive and very good to work with. He provided a lot of good advice and did a good job. I will give him a gold star for what he did.

*Q: What about your cultural advisers?*



A: We had a BBA and the BBA got run out of town because of the PRT manager. The BBA guy had a lot of intel and more information on the politics of different tribal groups in our area. The PRT manager did not like him because of the manager's existing direct relationship with the governor. The governor had different views from the BBA and was a little bit of a bandit. And our BBA observed that there were some issues there with corruption and so forth. The PRT Manager took offense to that and actually got him run off. He was from Minnesota, but born in Iraq and now a U.S. citizen. He was actually connected with the Civil Affairs Team with army. He was wearing an army uniform but the view that he passed onto our State Department guy was contrary to what the PRT team leader wanted to hear and this got the guy removed and we lost him.

*Q: What would you say are the major achievements of your PRT while you were there? You said you were a little disappointed; but maybe you could quantify that somehow and say what the pluses and the minuses were.*

A: Well, I think our most successful program is actually with the governance team there, the RTI building governance. Out of that we actually were moving forward on a strategic plan: on funding, how to fund projects, where to fund them in the province, how government officials need to work together, budgeting and so forth, bidding, how to negotiate with Baghdad to get more funding, so I think from the RTI perspective, I think that was probably very successful.

*Q: By Baghdad do you mean the PRT command or the Iraqi command?*

A: Well, actually what I am thinking about when I say Baghdad are the governor and the respective ministries and the government there, convincing the prime minister to go ahead and give monies to their province.

*Q: Anything else?*

A: From a micro-credit perspective, I think USAID could do a lot more. I don't remember the numbers now from my province but the micro-credit program was actually for security and seemed to be successful. They actually wanted to advance that to do a lot more micro-credit loans. I think the other place we were successful, well, two places: one, was in agriculture and in marketing. We spent some time on dates working with the Italians and we spent time on agriculture canals, cleaning out canals and placing generators to pump water into areas to make them fertile and help provide water for their crops and we worked with marketing. That was work as a PRT initiative.

*Q: Dates?*

A: The fruit, yes. There was a lot of research that had been done on that through our contractors and through the Italians. There was some work on how to process dates and how to work marketing that was in the beginning phases when I left. So I think that's good.

Also, because of the Civil Affairs Team and because of USAID being involved, there were a lot of schools that were constructed in our area so you could say education was advanced. I think

the last thing would be building governance. I think we really made progress on the Iraqis starting to understand how to run their own government.

*Q: Wonderful, OK. Would you say that in general that PRTs are accomplishing their mission?*

A: I would say the PRTs are the best platform that we have to go ahead and deliver services and meet our objectives from our president. The answer is yes to that.

Having said that, what we need to do is we need to continue to improve how we do that at the PRT level and how to improve management and coordination there to make it a much more coherent unit where we can do a lot better job working together.

*Q: I'm going to give you four things here and you can tell me whether the PRTs are ideally an effective vehicle for one, improving governance, two, promoting economic development three, utilizing American military and civilian resources and four, counterinsurgency.*

A: The answer is yes to all four.

*Q: OK, very good. Training, looking back at your experience, did your training prepare you to serve in this PRT?*

A: The honest truth is if I would have known then what I know now... This is because of my age. I am in my fifties and I have been in development for years and have worked in Russia, spent time in Africa, and as I said, spent a year and a half in Afghanistan. I think I have development experience with my 28 years with the Department of Agriculture. I am not saying that I am perfect, because I'm not. I can always learn. Was I prepared for what I really ran into in Iraq? The answer is no.

*Q: You knew your stuff but the situation was new.*

A: If I had an adviser call me up and if I would explain to him or her what I have explained to you, would that adviser probably go to that PRT? The answer is no. That person, based on their talents, could be utilized more effectively at other PRTs.

*Q: I understand. Would you go back?*

A: Yes. I would like to go back. That said, if I had people tell me the truth about what I was going to do, I would not have accepted that original assignment.

*Q: Right, OK.*

A: But would I go back now knowing what I know? I would, though it would be under conditions that we would have to talk about to be sure my skills were linked or hooked up properly for that particular PRT.

*Q: Would it matter who was in charge, whether it was coalition member? You don't care.*

A: I don't particularly care. What we need to be able to do is be sure that the person who is going to be working with that PRT commander and their team needs to have a chance to talk through issues before they even get to the PRT.

*Q: In terms of lessons learned, are there four or five lessons that you could point to that stand out in your mind? When you are setting up a brand new PRT somewhere in Iraq, what would you take from your past experience to apply to setting up the new one?*

A: Number one is USAID has got to determine where their position is within development with the State Department now. The idea is that AID is slowly being moved over to the State Department. There has to be a determination what role are we actually going to be playing at these PRTs. Are we going to be playing the role of technical adviser and not manager of reconstruction? Are we going to be aligned at the same level as a program development adviser where we can have direct influence over management? That is the one lesson learned.

Number two, and I think they are doing it now, is we need to prepare families. We need to be sure that spouses or partners are prepared. Ideally, the single person is the best person to be over in that environment for a year at least.

Number three would be to ensure through the State Department and AID that we have this post or this pre-training, I think they are doing it now where everyone sits around the table and they talk and they get experienced people in there and they talk through all the issues about what to expect. I had more issues with Iraq with family than I could ever envision.

*Q: Your own family or other people?*

A: My family. Now I have helped several other families out and saved some situations where they either went or they talked it through so they could understand what they were going to deal with. That's very critical.

*Q: Did your family go with you?*

A: No, they did not. They cannot.

The thing is though State Department or AID, they take care of you every 2 months or 63 days. You can go on travel, you can come here, you can go to other countries and they treat us quite well. On our R&R breaks, they treated us well. All people need is to have an answer to the question: are you really in danger as a general rule? The answer is no. In fact, you are probably safer over there than you are in DC. But that's me talking.

I think the third thing is training. I think they're doing this now. We need to do a better job training, not only with the coalition. What could be in the coalition? We need to ensure that the coalition people that will participate should be at these training sessions that we're having with the Civil Affairs Team and with the civilians and that we all have a chance to integrate

somewhere along the way before we get planted in that PRT and before we are supposed to directly engage in development.

And I think the last thing is that we have to be sure that we have control over our contractors in the field and they need to be sure that they understand that they have to be responsible to the PRT and with the PRT and not go around the PRT.

*Q: All right. You have been fantastic.*

A: Well, I hope it helps.

*Q: Very much and I want to thank you again.*

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