

USIP - ADST  
Afghanistan Experience Project

**Interview #28**

**Executive Summary**

**When, where and position**

•The interviewee has been based in Kabul as a coordinator with the UN Mission to Afghanistan from April 2002 to the present (with a brief assignment in Iraq in 2003 and work in the tribal areas near Kandahar). This UN position provides an excellent overview of the PRTs throughout the country and the role of various central organizations in Kabul.

**Local situation**

- A very difficult post-conflict situation; everything to be reconstructed.
- Politically, major disturbances all over the country; a bit of a state of anarchy throughout the country. Only Kabul had a bit of the basic institutions, and for the rest we had to basically start from scratch.
- The major structure to guide the reconstruction in a political sense has been put in place and that is good. I think the problem is that this political reconstruction at the macro level doesn't connect with the people in many areas.
- Security has deteriorated in between the time the Taliban were defeated and the time I arrived; it is worse than when I came.

**The PRTs**

- There are about 21 PRTs; the numbers are a bit fluid.
- The PRTs are a construct of civil and military elements put together; to serve as a platform for the delivery of reconstruction and provide a presence at the provincial level; also, to provide a certain degree of security. PRTs are basically focusing on rapid intervention projects: things that facilitate the relationship with the people, things that allow them to help on the provincial structures.
- The expansion of ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] is counter-clockwise. Going from Northeast, Northwest, Southwest and Southeast. The northern part is already covered by different countries of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] Coalition ISAF; and you have PRTs led by Germany, the Netherlands, England, Norway; and, in the south, we have mostly American PRTs led by Coalition forces; and we have some within the Coalition that are going to be under the flag of Canada, like the case we have in Kandahar and others and now another PRT in Bamian that is led by the New Zealand forces.

- The PRT projects are well identified. They are being strategically located to provide a kick-start to the economy. One of the problems is that they have never been widespread enough to ensure that there is a tangible effect.
- In 2003 and 2004, there was a lack of coordination between the construction projects by the PRTs and those that were implemented by the rest of the agencies. That is something that has been corrected now, but when it happened it led to a lot of duplication and that was a problem.
- Main issues: PRTs are a concept in the making; they were something that has been implemented recently in Afghanistan so there was a lot of correction in terms of what the targets and the objectives were.
- In the beginning we've had problems with the PRTs in terms of coordination with all the reconstruction and development actors. There was not 100% degree of communication; on the part of humanitarians there was a feeling that the military should not be involved in any level of reconstruction; in the military, it was the feeling that their way of doing things was more precise and more efficient. So we had a mismatch of trying to understand what was the comparative advantage and what was the best way to deal with things using their best skills. That has evolved because people in the PRTs have realized that unless you concentrate on their area of expertise, they are also endangering their own exit strategy and that is changing.

### **Extending the role of the central government**

- Short-term the PRTs do facilitate the presence of the government, because you do have the representatives in the different areas, you can provide certain support.
- But at the same time, long-term, I am very concerned about the effect of the PRTs, because as PRTs do good work in an area, they tend to become or be perceived as the real center of governance.
- PRTs do good work on fast-tracking the presence of the government, but it doesn't render that presence sustainable.
- The PRTs need to be more proactive in terms of intervening, but, at the same time, in a way in which they do not become the main ingredient in these intervention. They have to do it in a way that they ensure that the governor or local authority that belongs to Afghanistan is seen and perceived by the people as the main actor.
- We are trying to establish what's called a Provincial Development Committee, that is a concept that emerged 2004. It is some sort of an equivalent mini-government implemented at the provincial level.
- Provincial level staffing: That's one of the problems, we're still having trouble filling an entire government at the principal level in Kabul, imagine the kind of difficulties we're going to have when we try to reproduce the same effect in 34 provinces. There is a great lack of capacity.

- It is my feeling that we're going to be talking PRTs for the next ten years; they might take on a different shape as Afghanistan evolves; we might have PRTs that are more developmentally oriented, more USAID [United States Agency for International Development] oriented, but at least the minimum is ten years.

### **NGOS**

- The good NGOs have knowledge of the country that no one else has at this point. They have the understanding of the cultural details. At the same time, most of them are based on a strong sense of a humanitarian approach to things. PRTs respond to a national policy, to something that contains its own element of political direction. That, from the point of view of an NGO that is focused on the humanitarian principles, is not a direction that they welcome.

### **Coordination role**

- I'm in charge of maintaining the communication lines between the PRTs, the military forces and the NGOs, that's one thing I do. I'm also working on behalf of the DSIG, the Deputy of Special Representative of UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] on building institutions for management and coordination with the military. It is clear now for the UN that the military will be a component of reconstruction effort in the future. It is better to ensure that we have institutions that deal with this than just letting it be an ad hoc approach to things. Ambiguity is never good.
- These are institutions that will be there for the reconstruction effort. For example, we have the NGO/civil-military coordination group that is used to ventilate problems and deal with differences. We also see the PRT working group, which is the working group level where we decide on issues related to how to manage PRTs and how to help PRTs integrate into the reconstruction effort; and we also deal with PRTs and the Steering Committee, which is where the ambassadors and the commanders make key decisions to lead the PRTs.
- The coordinating institutions involve ambassadors as well as the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Reconstruction and Rural Development. They are included in the PRT working group and the same thing with the NGOs. It is open to the NGOs that are Afghan and international, and the PRT working group is chaired by the Ministry of Interior with presence from the other two ministries and MRRD and the Minister of Finance. So they are international and national.

### **Current issues**

- The reconstruction projects have been able to achieve very significant successes, but the political direction given to the reconstruction effort doesn't make it sustainable.
- The military use civil-military affairs as one of the tools for their own mission. Putting the best, capable actors in terms of resources and human personnel in the

civil-military operations is where it is going to guarantee success for this. I don't think the priorities lead to that. So on the civil-military side of reconstruction, for example, we just find people that are not qualified to understand the complexities of reconstruction effort.

- A new tendency is to depend on contractors in different types of work, including provision of security. These contractors by the nature of their own existence do not relate to principles like humanitarian principles as an NGO or an agency like the UN, or in nation states, they have less accountability for their work.

### **Police training**

- The plans for implementing police reform: there is no coordination between what the PRTs are trying to do and what the Germans are doing and sometimes you find two sorts of training programs focusing on the same group of people. That's not very effective.

### **Court, legal systems and democratic practices**

- A major problem of coordination between the PRT and the central government. The court system is under the responsibility of the Italian government and, at the same time, PRTs decide to implement something similar in their own region. Sometimes they overlap; sometimes they actually conflict.
- Instituting democratic practices and processes: several programs have been instituted by US contractors; the parliamentary structure is being put in place by the French. At the level of civil society, the agencies such as NDI, National Democratic Institute, are particularly visible in developing these practices. Also you have the UN with democratic development; all these fall under the responsibility of the national government with the assistance of the UN system.

### **PRT funding and development committees**

- The PRTs have three major sources of funding: One, is called the CERF (Commanders Emergency Reconstruction Fund); two, funds that have been allocated by the key development agencies; three, in most of the PRTs, a little fund for the military to expend on civil-military actions.
- PRTs are an acting part of the PRT development committee of the provincial development committee. But there is no such a thing as a provincial development committee within the PRT.
- The provincial development structure is a concept in the making. There is no such a thing as a sheer blue print on how the provincial development structures are going to take shape. I don't think there is going to be a clear sense on where the funding is going to come from. Different countries see the provincial development structure as the backbone or the exit strategy in terms of the PRT. If you don't have provincial development; if you don't have provincial government, you're going to have a hard time getting out of the PRT. So all the countries are all pushing and

certainly very keen on ensuring that the provincial level is going to be a proper structure.

- At this point, the base is at two levels, one is the technical side, determining what is the provincial government structure we're going to have. Number two there is a debate between ministries in terms of who is going to be the leading ministry in funding and implementing the structures of the provincial governments. Naturally, you would think that it would be the Ministry of Interior, but, at the same time, the MRRD, the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development has a keen interest in ensuring and maintaining a leading role.

### **Evolution of the PRTs**

- Three models:

1. Usually most of the PRTs were started by the American forces and, then the first ones of the PRTs under the Coalition and the ISAF PRTs; eventually the ISAF PRT is handed over to the Afghan government;
2. The second model is the PRTs established by American forces are passed on to ISAF PRTs and then it dissipates;
3. The third is in the areas where there's not going to be transferability to ISAF. They're talking about two types, one a transfer straight to the government—the American PRT straight to the government, or two, you transfer to some sort of strange mixing of Afghan forces with some development elements. Potentially, it could be like ending up having USAID development reps co-located with Afghan forces with development in certain areas.

- My impression is that whether you transfer straight to the Afghan government or you keep it in ISAF hands or whatever; where ever you have a PRT, you're likely to maintain it for the next ten to 15 years. They need to have the PRT to make sure to have peace there for a long time; but, at the same time, they'd be destroying the potential leading role of the Afghan government in that regard. It's a very difficult compromise to achieve here.

### **UN training program**

- One of the things that I do as my job as UN coordinator is to help ISAF on training prior to deployment.
- The next ISAF is ISAF eight; the National Rapid Deployment Corp of Italy is going to take over from ISAF seven in the month of August 2005.
- You have the rotations every six months. There are different degrees of efficiency in terms of NATO armies; they're all trained to do their best and we give them the help we can. Turn over is fairly rapid, six months or so. That is a problem.

### **Governance**

- If governance is the notion of building up accountability, democracy, responsibility and all these things, I think we tend to overlook the fact that all these

processes, no matter how well developed they are, are not sustainable unless the citizens take ownership of it. And in the case of the PRTs and the presence of the American army, the factors that lead to being involved in Afghanistan, related to the war on terror, are also pushing us to forget, or at least take short cuts in terms of what institutionality is all about.

### **Lessons**

- One, the most important one is communications flow has to be established as the main priority: a good and proper structure for the management of information.
- Two, you have to ensure that there is transparency and accountability.
- Three, you have to determine what you want to achieve first. You want to reconstruct the structures of the country? Or do you want to ensure the country is capable of taking care of itself?

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

**Interview #28**

*Interviewed by: W. Haven North*  
*Initial interview date: June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005*  
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(Note: \*\* are located where the taped record of this long-distance mobile phone conversation is not clear.)

*Q: When did you arrive in Afghanistan?*

A: I arrived in Afghanistan in April of 2002. In the second half of 2003, I went to work in Iraq, but by the end of the year I returned to Afghanistan.

*Q: Where are you based now?*

A: At the beginning, I was based out in the tribal areas working in between Khanabad, Peshawa and Kandahar, working on media projects. Then I moved to Kabul to work on a media project related to the Loya Jirga — the first Loya Jirga. That was then. Now I am working as the civilian-military coordination officer for the UN Mission of Afghanistan.

*Q: Were you working with the PRTs?*

A: Yes, that's one of main areas of my involvement. I'm basically the person who serves as a bridge between the UN development and the UN reconstruction side and the two forces: ISAF and Coalition. So the PRTs are one of the key areas I have to deal with.

*Q: Let's come back to that in a minute. When you arrived there, how would you describe the situation, the economic, security, political situation?*

A: Basically, in terms of reconstruction there is a lot to do. It was a very difficult post-conflict situation; the country had gone through a major civil war. There are already two generations that only knew war. So everything there was to be reconstructed. Politically, there have been major disturbances all over the country, and it was a bit of a state of anarchy throughout the country. Only Kabul had a bit of the basic institutions, and for the rest we had to basically start from scratch.

*Q: What about security?*

A: We had an assessment of my colleagues, who were working there before the war, during the time of the Taliban. They say that security has deteriorated major in between the time the

Taliban's were defeated and the time I arrived. The Taliban's were very bad in many areas, but they were certainly essentially in control of—I wouldn't say security—but, at least, lack of extensive criminality throughout the country. By the time I came, things were falling apart; and there was the beginning again of “we've been attacked” and some things like that.

*Q: How is it now compared to when you first came?*

A: I think it is worse. It doesn't mean that it's worse because we're not doing the job well. I think in the pursuit of the war against terror and trying to deter the different groups and, at the same time, eliminating the Taliban, we have created a gap and that gap is being filled by different criminal groups and different people.

*Q: So you're saying it is worse than when you came?*

A: Yes, Yes, certainly. By any standard that is the case.

*Q: What about the political situation?*

A: At the macro level of the institutions, I can see that they had made a lot of progress. The whole implementation of the \*\* agreement; I think is pretty much a success. The major structure to guide the reconstruction in a political sense has been put in place and that is good. I think the problem is that this political reconstruction at the macro level doesn't connect with the people in many areas. You have the constitution, soon will have a parliament, and you have a president, but that doesn't have the transparency (with the citizenry institutions.\*\*) And that is the problem.

*Q: Let's talk about the PRTs. What do you understand to be the mission of the PRTs?*

A: I've been in contact for a lot of the situations with the PRTs on all sides here.

*Q: What are they supposed to accomplish, the PRTs?*

A: The PRTs are a construct of civil and military elements put together; a plan to serve as a platform for the delivery of reconstruction and provide a presence at the provincial level; also, to provide a certain degree of security. That being said, PRTs are also a very flexible concept for each country; that means that the PRTs of each country is something that will be modified to fit national policies, so PRTs are a bit of a one-time charge that hasn't taken so that you show your depending on implementation, PRTs... \*

*Q: What kind of projects are the PRTs carrying out?*

A: Yes, it depends on the PRTs, and in terms of the output of the PRTs, you have local projects, you have more on emphasis on security. In the case of the American PRTs located in the south, focusing on delivering, to a certain degree,\*\*, lots of reconstruction, lots of interventions to facilitate the relationship with the people while facilitating the task of protecting the PRT itself, and helping within the military structure.\*\*



I'm saying, PRTs are basically focusing on rapid intervention projects: things that facilitate the relationship with the people, things that allow them to help on the provincial structures; sometimes a bridge, sometimes a well, sometimes helping with the construction of a school. All these projects, most of them, in the case of American PRTs are implemented through a special fund that has been allocated to the PRT commander and, in some cases, they also carry out the types of projects with funds provided by the U.S.A.

*Q: How many are there, do you know, off hand?*

A: At this point the numbers are a little fluid, but there are about 21 PRTs.

*Q: And they are led by different countries?*

A: Yes, as you see the expansion of ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] means it is counter-clockwise. Going from Northeast, Northwest, Southwest and Southeast. The northern part is already covered by different countries of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] coalition ISAF; and you have PRTs led by Germany, the Netherlands, England, Norway; and, in the south, we have mostly American PRTs led by Coalition forces; and we have some within the Coalition that are going to be under the flag of Canada, like the case we have in Kandahar and others and now another PRT in Bamian that is led by the New Zealand forces.

*Q: Did you work in one or two PRTs directly or just visit?*

A: I've been monitoring the work of the PRTs, and I visit them regularly, and I also know very well the situation of the PRTs, particular the one in Kandahar, because when I was there in 2002 I saw how the country was evolving, and I basically worked with the (SigiMoris PH) which was the present service of the co-consular of the PRT.\*\*

*Q: Did you get out to the rural areas in Kandahar?*

A: Yes, I know the entire south quite well; I have been in every single province. Because of my work, I've been involved in different rapid implementation projects, developed by IOM [International Organization for Migration] with the UN in the province.

*Q: So your work was mainly monitoring; you weren't actually implementing the projects, right?*

A: No I was working ... Right now I monitor because my work for the military. But in the past I worked implementing projects as part of my work as a UN officer implementing projects.

*Q: What projects were you implementing, personally?*

A: Basically things such as the construction of bridges, agriculture, major irrigation projects in the river of Helmand, which is in the northern province of Kandahar. I worked in school reconstruction and the refurbishment of health facilities in Lashkar Gar and also in the development of media facilities in Kandahar, in Zabol and then the province of Nimruz.

*Q: Are you an engineer; is that your background or what is your background?*

A: My background is I'm basically someone who has been working for the UN for about seven years. I have a degree in political science, a degree in law, and I have a degree in economics.

*Q: So it was a general management program?*

A: Yeah, it was general management.

*Q: How did you feel these projects were working, as you implemented them?*

A: The projects are well identified. They are being strategically located to provide a kick-start to the economy and things like that. One of the problems is that they have never been widespread enough to ensure that there is a tangible effect. You have projects here and there. But there has never been enough to say that you were going to achieve a major effect. However, they'll tell you when a project have been implemented, you can see a change. You can see the project has had an effect on the community. Irrigation in the Lashkar Gar area has been an improvement. Therefore, you see more of the agriculture production over there; and you see also that they are using the health facilities, that is good.

*Q: Where are the PRTs being most effective, which part of the country?*

A: We're mixing two things here. I'm talking about different projects, not necessarily saying that all of these projects are totally linked, nor correlated to the PRTs. Some of these projects have been implemented by other agencies. Now, if we're talking about PRTs, PRT related projects; I accept that they are 100% linked to the provision of security. Some of the projects that are being implemented in terms of reconstruction by the PRT, particularly in 2003 and 2004, there was a lack of coordination between the construction projects by the PRTs and those that were implemented by the rest of the agencies. That is something that has been corrected now, but when it happened it led to a lot of duplication and that was a problem.

*Q: What are the main issues that you address now in dealing with the PRTs?*

A: PRTs are a concept in the making; they were something that has been implemented recently in Afghanistan so there was a lot of correction in terms of what the targets and what the objectives were. In the beginning we've had problems with the PRTs in terms of coordination with all the reconstruction and development actors. There was not 100% degree of communication; on the part of humanitarians there was a feeling that the military should not be involved in any level of reconstruction; in the military, it was the feeling that their way of doing things was more precise and more efficient. So we had a mismatch of trying to understand what was the comparative advantage and what was the best way to deal with things using their best skills. That has evolved because people in the PRTs have realized that unless you concentrate on their area of expertise, they are also endangering their own exit strategy and that is changing. So now there is more of the desire on the part of the PRTs to support those agencies that specialize in reconstruction and to facilitate their work and then PRTs try to concentrate on the position of security. That is something that you called the "extra strategy" and we can see the change,

because there is more of a desire to coordinate and to share responsibility in a more constructive manner.

*Q: Within each province, you're saying?*

A: Yes, as a matter of general policy. The problem is not that present with ISAF PRTs, because they respond to different policies and in terms of the Coalition; things have been improving in that respect.

*Q: Where did this concept of the PRT come from, do you know?*

A: Well, in my own understanding of the concept, it goes back to counter-insurgency notions back even to the point of the British counter-insurgency in Malaysia and in South-East Asia. The concept has been evolving and has been used in Vietnam; there was also some variance of this concept has also been implemented in places such as Central America, in Columbia; you had civil-military units that tried to provide a degree of reconstruction in the Balkans. The concept of such civil-military actions implemented for the security of a nation, of a state, as a strategy even your implementation of an old idea that is happening in Afghanistan.

*Q: I understand that different countries have different ways of carrying out these PRTs, "different models" in the way these countries approach it, is that right?*

A: Yes, each country makes the PRT a different thing according to their needs and their desire to invest in somewhat more focus on the development side, some of them focus on force protection. It depends. It depends on politics; it depends on the circumstances. The PRT in the north cannot be the same as the PRT in the south, because you have more a problem in terms of security in the south, and, therefore, you have to provide more resources on the force protection side.

*Q: So it is mainly dependent on the local situation not on the style of the country providing assistance?*

A: It depends on both; it depends on the country and it depends on the situation.

*Q: What are the differences in between the countries in their approach?*

A: For example, if you compare the German PRT with a U.S. PRT, the German PRT is extremely heavy on the support side; they extend a lot of resources and personnel on trying to provide support activities; they do not allow the military to have any control or any sort of say on any activities related to development, they have civilians from the Department of Development and Department of Foreign Affairs to help their control on what the projects are; and they basically separate the civilian and military aspects of the PRT. You have more of the standard model of leader, providing protection to people who are doing development.

In the case of an American PRT, you actually get military officers evolved, implementing, identifying and managing projects. Projects that are doing reconstruction. These are two different models.

*Q: I gather that there is some difference in the style of the military in going out to the community. Some are very heavy in their equipment and protection and others are much lighter, is that right?*

A: Yes, that is, you can compare for example, again, the British PRT with an American PRT. U.S. regulations in the Army imply that the soldiers have to be heavily protected; they have to wear their helmets, and they have to go in their Humvees. But you see the patrols of the advanced teams of the British, they have a lighter of a threatening presence; they don't carry helmets; they are more approachable in many ways. Whether that is good about it is not up for me to judge, but I can certainly describe it because that is what I see.

*Q: Right. How about one of the interests to what extend the central government is getting extended out to the provincial areas as a result of the PRTs. Is the central government getting more and more of a role out in the country?*

A: Short-term the PRTs do facilitate the presence of the government, because you do have the representatives in the different areas, you can provide certain support. For example in disaster response, sometimes the PRT commander is the person that is the only available resource to support the governor on dealing with a flood or a situation like that. But at the same time, long-term, I am very concerned about the effect of the PRTs, because as PRTs do good work on the area, so at least they seem to be active, they tend to become or be perceived as the real center of governance. So the governor or whatever structures you have in the province, they tend to be regulated to a second role. That itself is a problem because the day the PRTs have to leave, they won't be able to do it just because it has become essential and that's one thing the PRTs need to avoid. All in all, I feel that PRTs do good work on fast-tracking the presence of the government, but it doesn't render that presence sustainable.

*Q: What needs to be done to make the transition?*

A: The PRTs need to be more proactive in terms of intervening but at the same time, really in away in which they do not become the main ingredient in these intervention. They have to do it in a way that they ensure that the governor or whatever local authority that belongs to Afghanistan is seen and perceived by the people as the main actor.

*Q: Right.*

A: You see the military, at this point, they don't have the comparative advantage in terms of defining what is the proper intervention. I'm not saying they will know how in the future, but as of today that's not there yet. Therefore, in those circumstances when the military commander in the PRT decides to get involved in building a bridge, it might be a good thing in his eyes, but long term it might be something that make the governor look bad or not as good as a PRT commander. People see that and it has an effect on the long-term strategy of the PRT.

*Q: Anything being done to strengthen the provincial government?*

A: At this point of the discussion and the analysis between government, ministries, we are trying to establish what's called a Provincial Development Committee, that is a concept that emerged 2004. It is some sort of an equivalent mini-government implemented at the provincial level. It is going to take a different shape depending on the nature of the province, but the point is that at this stage this remains more of a concept. It is a good concept, but it is no more than a concept, there is no real implementation yet.

*Q: It is supposed to be a Afghanistan group?*

A: Yes, Yes, Yes. It is supposed to be a structure within the State.

*Q: And this is supposed to be in each province under the governor?*

A: Yes, that's correct.

*Q: What about the capacity of the staffing at each of these provinces, are the governors there ...*

A: That's one of the problems. That's one of the problems, we're still having trouble trying to fill an entire government at the principal level in Kabul, imagine the kind of difficulties we're going to have when we try to reproduce the same effect in 34 provinces. There is a great lack of capacity, but we very well may get started.

*Q: So the phase out of the PRTs, is something that is a long way off or what?*

A: It is my feeling that we're going to be talking PRTs for the next ten years. I will not say that PRTs might take on a different shape as Afghanistan evolve a little bit; we might have PRTs that are more developmental oriented, more USAID [United States Agency for International Development] oriented, but at least the minimum is ten years.

*Q: Were you there during the elections?*

A: Yes, I've been there, elections, pre-elections.

*Q: How did it go?*

A: They have been a mild success. It was \*\* to have been more problematic and, to a certain degree, the main task was achieved.

*Q: In another area there have been comments about the NGOs [Non-Government Organizations] and a question of their relationship with PRTs and their difficulties and so on. How do you see the NGO work proceeding?*

A: NGOs, because their work have a very interesting relationship with Afghanistan. They were there before everybody else. Also, by ... I mean I'm just going to concentrate on the good NGOs, because you also have bad ones and all sorts of things. The good NGOs have knowledge of the country that no one else has at this point. They have the understanding of the cultural details. At the same time, most of them are based on a strong sense of a humanitarian approach to things. It is clear, I mean we cannot deny, that although the net result is good with the PRTs, PRTs do respond to a national policy and PRTs respond to something that contains its own element of political direction. That from the point of view of an NGO that is focused on the humanitarian principles, it is not a direction that they welcome. It is not an evolution that they are very happy with.

*Q: What is your role now in Kabul? What other work do you do and coordinate?*

A: I'm in charge of maintaining the communication lines between the PRTs, the military forces and the NGOs, that's one thing I do. I'm also working on behalf of the DSIG, the Deputy of Special Representative of UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] on building institutions for management and coordination with the military. It is clear now for the UN that the military will be a component of reconstruction effort in the future. It is better to ensure that we have institutions that deal with this than just letting it be on the ad hoc approach to things. Ambiguity is never good. Three, I'm also in charge of managing the relationship and facilitating the relationship at a national level between military and NGOs. Basically, the civil-military interface, all the factors that need to deal with the military, from the development and the humanitarian side, and I stand to help and assist and facilitate the relationship. Everything that is conflict resolution, the confliction, etcetera, etcetera.

*Q: You said something about building an institution; you mean Afghanistan institutions or UN institutions?*

A: No, building coordinating institutions. These are institutions that will be there for the reconstruction effort. For example, we have the NGO/civil-military coordination group that is used to ventilate problems and deal with differences. We also see the PRT working group, which is the working group level where we decide on issues related to how to manage PRTs and how to help PRTs integrate into the reconstruction effort; and we also deal with PRTs and the Steering Committee, which is where the ambassadors and the commanders make key decisions to lead the PRTs.

*Q: But these are institutions among the foreign community not the Afghan government?*

A: No, that's not true. The institutions are involved on both sides: ambassadors as well as the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Reconstruction and Rural Development. They are included in the PRT working group and the same thing with the NGOs. It is open to the NGOs that are Afghan and international, and the PRT working group is chaired by the Ministry of Interior with presence from the other two ministries and MRRD and the Minister of Finance. So they are international and national.

*Q: So they're joint coordination and operations, is that right?*

A: Yes, that is what Afghanistan has achieved to a certain degree, yes, to a large extent.

*Q: What is the major issue you are facing now?*

A: The major issue we're facing now is: one of them we get the feeling that the reconstruction projects have been able to achieve very significant successes, but the political direction given to the reconstruction effort doesn't make it sustainable. For example, we have achieved a lot on the election institutions and things like that, but there are certain economic problems that doesn't compare. It might be that the situation could get worse or could prove not stable, and, if that is the case, we might be working on something that is going to take us to the point of where we started. That is the main concern; we might lose it.

*Q. What other issues come to mind?*

A: The second one is, to a certain degree I have to say, that the military use civil-military affairs as one of the tools for their own ~~for their~~ mission. I don't think they realize that civil-military cooperation is the key factor in the post-conflict situation. It's not about having artillery or having soldiers or having equipment. Putting the best, capable actors in terms of resources and human personnel in the civil-military operations is where it is going to guarantee success for this. I don't think the priorities lead to that. So on the civil-military side of reconstruction, for example, we just find people that are not qualified to understand the complexities of reconstruction effort. I mean they're well intentions and they really work hard—but they don't have the skills. People go to Harvard to learn how to do government; and they go and study hard for many years before they can actually call themselves "experts" on reconstruction and government administration. We think they take the short cut and put people on a six months thing to do the same in a complex situation such as Afghanistan. I don't think that's proper; and I don't think it's a good solution.

*Q: Are there other issues that you're faced with?*

A: No, those are the two main ones at this point. I believe reconstruction is coming along. Yes, one important thing I would like to mention is a new tendency to depend on contractors in different types of work, including provision of security. These contractors by the nature of their own existence do not relate to principles like humanitarian principles as an NGO or an agency like the UN, or in nation states, they have less accountability for the work \*\*which is not the same and they need to be effective from the contractor's point of view, but it is not good in the long run. We have problems addressing issues such as abuse of the para-military on the streets. There is not a real clear channel of who to complain to and what to do about it.

*A: One other subject is the question of the role of training police and introducing rule of law in the provinces. The role of the PRTs in developing a police force and court systems and things like that. What can you tell me about that?*

A: From my perspective when I used to coordinate with the PRTs in that regard is basically that the plans for implementing things of police reform and all these issues are coordinated with those plans that have been put in place by the country or the national interest that is in charge of that. In the case of the police, for example, the German government has undertaken responsibility in implementing most of the plan, in terms of police reform, police academy bringing in training and things like that. At the same time, the PRTs have engaged what I would call a parallel system. It works, and it is a welcome effort, but there is no coordination between what they are trying to do and what the Germans are doing and sometimes you find two sort of training programs focusing on the same group of people. That's not very effective sometimes.

*Q: Within the same province?*

A: Within the same province, within the same area of activity of the PRT, there is no real coordination, because the chain of the command of the PRT does not connect with the people who are managing the police reform on the German side. One is the program implemented by the embassy; the other one is implemented through the army. You don't necessarily have liaison officers that connect, that communicate or share their plans. That is something that is being corrected right now; some sort of working group that manage police reform, but you can still see that at the end of the day those concerns and those programs that have been put in place through the PRT are not 100% within the same plans of what the Germans are doing.

*Q: Is that the same in the other provinces, sort of a standard pattern of ...*

A: It is quite a standard, yes. It is something that has been corrected lately that when I say "lately" I'm referring to this year in the last quarter, also 2003 until the end of 2003 we had that as well.

*Q: When you say it's being corrected, who does the correcting or how does that get done?*

A: The different countries get together; there's some pressure from UNAMA and pressure from different agencies to say that this is not necessarily the most effective way of using our resources. At one point, people agree to just set up a working group and start sharing information. UNAMA has a police advisor; this police advisor is basically someone who is supposed to advise not only UNAMA but also the government in terms of how to do certain training programs that are supposed to be implemented. He is someone who is specifically located to say, you know guys, you are not coordinating well on this; there's something to be done about it.

*Q: What about setting up court systems and other legal systems in the provinces?*

A: The court system that is something that is under the responsibility of the Italian government. Italian government has the leading responsibility in terms of justice sector reform: courts, lawyers, judges, etcetera, etcetera. I think it is okay to say that it is more or less the same situation. The Italians are doing some programs, and at the same time, PRTs decide to implement something similar in their own region. Sometimes they overlap; sometimes they actually conflict. You see the mixing of training programs on judges and court systems and management of the



court that are coming from different contractors in the U.S.; and you see something very different; they even advocate different styles, different practices coming through the Europeans.

*Q: So there's a major problem of coordination between the PRT and the central government?*

A: I would say it is coordination and also having the ability to let go on the side of ... You see, those who are managing the PRTs would like to have results within a certain framework. I would say they're in a bit of a rush. Those who are managing the programs on the Italian side have more of a long-term strategy. The two are not 100% compatible; and so some of them, those in PRTs, like to fast track it, and that is what leads to the coordination problems.

*Q: What about the broader area of instituting democratic practices and processes; how is that getting done or who is doing that?*

A: In that regard, you have several programs that have been instituted by contractors of U.S.A; you also have a major effort right now in terms of everything that's related to the parliamentary structure is being put in place by the French. You have major training of parliamentarians and things like that. At the level of civil society, the agencies such as NDI, National Democratic Institute, are particularly visible in developing these practices. Also you have the UN with democratic development. And, in the case of the development of democratic practices, it is a less tangible environment; it is a less tangible area. Therefore, there's no such thing as a precise benchmark that you want to achieve in this circumstance, but there is a level of rush and level of competition.

*Q: Is there any central body that's trying to oversee this process?*

A: To a certain degree, all these fall under the responsibility of, one, the national government with the assistance of the UN system. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mrs. Amir Haat, who is also the Resident Coordinator (and the one who oversees most of the development and most of the reconstruction) has been leading the responsibility in terms of coordination. She is the one who is supposed to ensure that all the different actors are functioning together and that is basically one of the key roles of the UN mission in Afghanistan.

*Q: In another area the whole question of the funding of the PRTs, where does the funding come from, how do they manage allocation of resources?*

A: My understanding of the PRTs will have three major sources of funding. One, is called the CERF (Commanders Emergency Reconstruction Fund), which is commander special allocated funds, basically the discerning of priorities by the commander; he has certain funds that he can engage in setting up a bridge, building schools and things like that. You also have funds that have been allocated by the key development agency. In most of the cases, you will have a USAID rep in that PRT advising how to spend money. Depending on the PRTs, for example, the British PRTs you also have a DFID (U.K. Department for International Development), which is the U.S. equivalent in the British system of development. In most of the PRTs, you will have a little fund for the military to expend on, whatever you call civil-military actions. Then, you will

have a development advisor that is supposed to manage or direct the bulk of the fund that has been put in the hands of that PRT. Depending on the country, the Germans don't allow any sort of military control on their funds; the Americans, basically, the PRT commander has the last say on how the funds are being implemented. You have different combinations.

*Q: I heard somebody say there is a development committee in the PRT; is that standard or is that a unique thing?*

A: Are we talking about the provincial development committee in the province or in the PRT?

*Q: In the PRT.*

A: No, I think what we're talking about is PRTs are an acting part of the PRT development committee of the provincial development committee. But there is not such a thing as a provincial development committee within the PRT.

*Q: How about the funding for the provincial governments themselves? I get some stories indicating that they don't have any resources to work with, or very little.*

A: Yes, for starters, the provincial development structure is a concept in the making. There is not such a thing as a sheer blue print on how the provincial development structures are going to take shape. There are ideas and there are ideas being discussed, and until we have a final blue print, I don't think there are going to be a clear sense on where the funding is going to come from. Different countries see provincial development structure as the backbone or the exit strategy in terms of the PRT. If you don't have provincial development; if you don't have provincial government, you're going to have a hard time getting out the PRT. So all the countries are all pushing and certainly very keen on ensuring that the provincial level is going to be a proper structure. They have expressed their interest, but so far there is no such a thing as a final of commune, because there is no such thing as a fine blue print. At this point the base is at two levels, one is the technical side, determining what is going to happen, what the provincial government structure we're going to have. Number two there is a debate between ministries in terms of who is going to be the leading ministry in funding and implementing the structures of the provincial governments. Naturally, you would think that it would be the Ministry of Interior, but, at the same time, the MRRD, the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development has a keen interest in ensuring and maintaining a leading role. In terms of ministries, the one that has the best presence on the ground is the MRRD. The one that has the best capability is the MRRD, the Ministry of Rural Development and Reconstruction. The one that has the responsibility is the MoI (Ministry of Interior). The one that has the mandate in terms of general relations with the PRT is the MoI. It is not clear yet which one is going to be the leading ministry on the implementation of provincial government structures; it should be the MoI, but as in the provincial development committee you also have a main component of development so some people argue for the MRRD. It used to be as well, that the Ministry of Finance had a keen interest in the same thing, control the money, control the resources and control the relationship between the province and the center. It is three ministries; they're still debating and the debate turns into a bit of a struggle and it has not been allocated yet.

*Q: As you look at the PRTs, what kind of evolution do you see? I gather they're going into some sort of a transition period where they are shifting the central authority over to the PRTs?*

A: Yes, it depends on where the PRTs are. You'll have three models. Usually most of the PRTs were started by the American forces and, then the first ones of the PRTs under the Coalition and the ISAF PRTs and eventually the ISAF PRT is handed over to the Afghan government. The second model is the PRTs established by American forces are passed on ISAF PRTs and then it dissipates. There is no longer a need for a PRT, because you have a government of Afghanistan at the provincial level that can fully take care of the needs of the province. The third element is in the areas where there's not going to be transferability to ISAF. They're talking about two types of things, one is you transfer straight to the government—the American PRT straight to the government, or you transfer to some sort of strange mixing of Afghan forces with some development elements. Potentially, it could be like ending up having USAID development reps co-located with Afghan forces with development in certain areas. This is somehow influenced by the fact that different European countries are keen on—not keen—are less disinclined to operate a PRT in the north or the west of the country, but in the south, where you have most of the Taliban's and most of the situation in terms of counter insurgencies; those are areas where no body is rushing to open up a PRT.

So I was saying, you're always going to find someone who is ready to take over the Herat PRT, the Mazar PRT or the Kunduz PRT, but I really don't see any European countries trying to take all the Gardez PRT. That is a bit of a hot potato in the hands of the Coalition. At one point, they wanted to leave very good troops in the PRT commitment. So what's going to happen? You have to come up with a PRT model to ensure that there is some sort of stability. That is what I'm saying that, at one point, they might consider just transferring the American Coalition PRT on to something in the hands of the government or a mixture of consultants in development with Afghan forces or I don't know, something else.

*Q: Do you see any situation where the outside military groups sort of fade away and local Afghan military and police handle that with the provincial governance and then the reconstruction carries on, is that a ... ?*

A: In a five years framework, maybe. In one year or two years? No. You won't have enough resources and, if you train good troops to be able to take over PRTs, you might need those good troops for something else that would be more pressing than being stuck in a PRT.

*Q: So you don't see any situation where the provincial government sort of takes over from the PRT?*

A: My impression is that whether you transfer straight to the Afghan government or you keep it in ISAF hands or whatever; where ever you have a PRT, you're likely to maintain it for the next ten to 15 years.

*Q: That would still be a problem to get the provincial government to take more authority and responsibility, right?*

A: Oh yes, because they need to have the PRT make sure to have peace there for a long time; but, at the same time, they'd be destroying the potential leading role of the Afghan government in that regard. It's a very difficult compromise to achieve here.

*Q: You said you were at some sort of a training program now?*

A: Right now, yes. One of the things that I do as my job as UN coordinator is that I help ISAF on training previous to deployment. So I come here and I explain how things are being done in Afghanistan and the current situation and I play in different roles. You know, in the military exercises you basically train by doing. They are just going through a process by which they train on being in the headquarters of Afghanistan and facing different situations. Things such as development and reconstruction that concerns me, and, therefore, I'm here helping them on that.

*Q: Who are you training?*

A: The next ISAF. ISAF eight, which is the National Rapid Deployment Corp of Italy, who is going to take over from ISAF seven in the month of August 2005.

*Q: This is a whole international group?*

A: Yes, Yes, they're headquarters ISAF; Italian troops and the other international NATO troops.

*Q: You're training at the headquarters level, not the PRT level?*

A: No, I think it's interesting you mentioned that. That's one of the things I'm proposing that this training that we have. These training facilities and these training programs for redeployment to Afghanistan should also be implemented at the levels of the PRT. One of the things with the PRTs is that being such a diverse model, it creates problems with control, management and coordination. It would be good, even if the countries do not agree to have the same model, at least, they should all train through the same process, and they are all exposed to the same factors, and, therefore, you get to achieve a certain degree of commonality in their conclusions. That's the proposal.

*Q: To whom does that proposal go?*

A: It's going to headquarters NATO. We've got some support from the Norwegians, who are the host nation here (in Norway), and the Norwegian ambassador was very keen on putting that through as well.

*Q: The group you are training now, is this to replace a group that's still there in Afghanistan there now?*

A: Yes.

*Q: How are they different from the ones that are there now?*

A: You have the rotations every six months; the Turkish, the National Rapid Deployment Corps of the Turkish army, leads the ones who are currently in place. There are different degrees of efficiency in terms of NATO armies; they're all trained to do their best and we give them the help we can.

*Q: People turn over fairly rapidly then, every six months or so?*

A: Yes, that is a problem. I end up arguing the same points every six months.

*Q: Is there any other topic that we haven't touched on?*

A: One thing is governance. I just want to leave it there as a point that should be addressed at one point. If governance is the notion of building up accountability, democracy, responsibility and all these things, I think we tend to overlook the fact that all these processes, no matter how well developed they are, are not sustainable unless the citizens take ownership of it. And in the case of the PRTs and the presence of the American army, the factors that lead to being involved in Afghanistan, related to the war on terror, are also pushing us to forget, or at least take short cuts in terms of what institutionality is all about. There have been issues such as accountability and the transparency of an action because of human rights, which is something that has nothing been given proper attention. You have PRTs worrying a lot about democracy, you have PRTs worrying about reconstruction and justice and the court system, but when it comes to dealing with PRTs on accountability and showing by example, that is something that hasn't been done in a proper way. Human rights are an on going issue and for the forces that are supposed to be doing this in the name of democracy, they could have done a better job at ensuring that you preach by example. Democracy, human rights goes together, and in the case of Afghanistan we tend to say that democracy first, human rights later.

*Q: Do you think that the presence of the military tends to counter the effort to get people involved, responsible, and in human rights appreciated?*

A: That and also, for example, if you get a place in the U.S. where you get the National Guard to take over just for a certain time, and it doesn't mean that people can appropriate their constitutional rights, right?

*Q: Right.*

A: Well, the same model should somehow apply in Afghanistan. I understand that you're in a military operation that you really have to really ensure you go out and get the bad guys. That even going up to bad guys, there are ways to doing it. I, in humanitarian affairs, have seen many instances where the issues of human rights are not being properly addressed and that in itself creates and undermines in a certain degree how sustainable the process is going to be in a long time.

*Q: At this point, wrap up, what would you say were the three to five major lessons or things that you think people ought to understand about how to go about this business in these countries?*

A: One, the most important one is communications flow has to be established as the main priority: a good and proper structure for the management of information. We are in a very difficult business of mixing military and civilians for the purposes for the reconstruction in the country; that's very good but that implies that you need to establish ways that you could respond to both institutions. Now, how are you going to share information?

Two, you have to ensure that there is transparency and accountability. It is not because you can call everything classified on the military side, but then we no longer have any sort of way of telling the commanders that what you told me last week, you didn't believe it this week, you know? It's not military secrecy; it's not a good way to close down or close the courts on some things that you have to do.

The third element is you have to achieve, you have to determine what you want to achieve first. You want to reconstruct the structures of the country? Or do you want to ensure the country is capable of taking care of itself? If it is the first, then you certainly concentrate on setting up projects and doing a lot of consulting and doing it well and you have fantastic institutions. But it is the second which is the one that allows you to get out of the place faster; you're never going to get the best court system, you might actually have well trained lawyers and lawyers that behave in a democratic manner. So the first one you can show it off; the second one is difficult to measure, but it is the second one that allows you to have a sustainable reconstruction effort. It doesn't look good in an election campaign, but that's the one that's going to prevent having American soldiers back in the same place in ten years time.

*Q: That covers your three lessons, is that it?*

A: Yes, those will be my three lessons. Alright, fantastic. It's been very good to talk to you.

*Q: I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you.*