

## USIP – ADST

### Afghanistan Experience Project

#### Interview #52

#### Executive Summary

The interviewee was the political sector coordinator, and for a period of five months also the Acting Chief, of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group, based at the American Embassy in Kabul, from April, 2004 until September, 2005. He had oversight and coordination responsibility for senior advisors in such areas as health, education, law, and election efforts. In his capacity as Acting Chief, he also had responsibility for the entire program of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group, to include the economic and financial development effort.

The interviewee acknowledges that it is generally considered that the PRTs were a great success in establishing good relations at the tactical level between the Combined Forces Command and the local Afghan community, represented by both government officials and individuals. He has spent considerable time contemplating and working on the concept of how PRTs might evolve as conditions evolve.

In evaluating the security contributions of the PRTs, the interviewee stated that he did not think the PRTs properly had a role in local police training, for several reasons. First, such training should be done according to national standards, on a national level, since it is inefficient for individual PRTs to come up with designs for uniforms, communications, police stations, and training programs. In addition, by U.S. law, the military is not to get involved in police training, and in Afghanistan, another NATO country had the lead in that area.

With regard to funding for development projects, the interviewee compared the experience with OHDACA and CERP funding. OHDACA funding presented the drawback of a very lengthy approval process. While CERP funding was much more agile and versatile, both OHDACA and CERP-funded projects suffered from inadequate communication and coordination between the military and other international and USG development people, notably USAID personnel, as well as with the Afghan government. As a result, on occasion, for example, a school or a clinic would get built where the Afghan government didn't have the people or the money to staff it.

Another lesson learned from the PRT experience was that not every PRT commander had the orientation to do PRT development work, which had as its goal to set the conditions for a private sector-driven development program. Instead, some PRT commanders "got stuck in humanitarian relief mode."

The interviewee carefully dissected the complex relationship between the military and the NGOs. In his view, frictions between them, while not to be minimized, could be successfully

addressed by working and training closely together, so that both sides understood each other and did not have unrealistic expectations of the other's role and capability.

On the subject of public diplomacy, the interviewee decried the insufficient attention and lack of coordination among the U.S. government entities charged with educating the local Afghan community on what the PRTs had done. He lamented the scant public awareness in the U.S. as well, and commented that the military had not capitalized "on the success of the embedded reporter concept to generate local U.S. understanding of what the Guard and Reserve [were] doing." In his view, "local media focusing on what local soldiers are doing will be more inclined to be positive, with resulting public support and recruiting support."

Regarding the future of the PRTs, the interviewee pointed out the need to resolve some issues with our partners who are leading PRTs, in such areas as incorporating U.S. civilian government agencies and bringing development resources to the table. The interviewee strongly believes that a commitment to do some level of development work should be a requirement for leading a PRT, and that the PRT should be a development engine. He further believes that so far we have not utilized the PRT in this way to the fullest extent possible, and that it is possible that entrenched bureaucracies may ultimately "strangle" the PRT initiative. Given that Afghanistan is the world's fourth poorest country, he stressed the need for an ambitious commitment, coupled with a sense of urgency. For many reasons, the issue of sustainability is a preoccupying one; in the long term we need to determine how to transition the PRTs to civilian and host country control. In sum, the interviewee believes that "Afghanistan has given the U.S. several innovative organizations to address the unique problems of the global war on terrorism," among them the PRTs. However, he admits the future of PRTs is uncertain.

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

**Interview #52**

*Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen*  
*Initial interview date: September 27, 2005*  
Copyright 2005 USIP & ADST

*Q: Sir, what was the timeframe that you were in Kabul and what was your specific mission?*

A: I served with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group at the U.S. Embassy from sometime in April of '04 until early September of '05.

*Q: Could you describe what your primary responsibilities were?*

A: I was the political sector coordinator, which meant I had responsibility for oversight and coordination of efforts of senior advisors in the areas of health, education, law, and election efforts. I served as the acting chief of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group for about five months. While I was acting chief, I also had responsibility for the entire effort of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group, which included the economic development side. There was a Treasury representative who worked with the Ministry of Finance and the international financial organizations, a U.S. Geological Service representative who worked with the Mines and Industries, and Aviation and Transportation representatives, and a speechwriter.

*Q: Okay, the political sector coordinator. It sounds as if you had quite a number of people reporting to you. Did that include PRT commanders? How was the PRT related to your work?*

A: I was the military guy assigned to work in the embassy, so I didn't have military people in any kind of a command relationship. Actually, I predated the PRTs back when we had the Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells, CHLCs, pronounced "chicklets." I was deputy commander of the Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command and the JFK Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg. Civil Affairs is conceptually the backbone of the CHLCs and then the PRTs. I've been involved in working on concepts of how PRTs might evolve as conditions evolve. That effort has involved visiting PRTs and coordinating with the planning staffs of CFC-A and ISAF. Some PRTs provided reports on election developments but PRTs generally did not coordinate development projects with the embassy.

*Q: I have learned in doing these interviews that PRTs all had three primary goals, which were promoting governance, providing security, and engaging in reconstruction. I've often asked the commanders if one of those goals in their particular case was primary. In your view, were each of the PRTs going to put emphasis where they thought it was needed, or was one of those three objectives more important than the others?*

A: It changed over time. Under General Eikenberry's tenure as commander of the Combined Forces Command, the primary emphasis for everybody in the military has been security. Early on, the emphasis was not on development so much as it was on humanitarian relief. As the situation stabilized, it moved towards development. The goal of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Group was to encourage a bottom-up, citizen targeted, private sector assisted economic development program. So, because of my position at Fort Bragg and then my interest with the elections, development and civil affairs, I had regular interface with a lot of the PRT personnel. I in-briefed the different USDA, State Department, and USAID representatives to get them oriented to the country and what we were trying to do.

*Q: Tell me a little more about the in-briefing process. Was that a several day long...?*

A: Oh, no, it was more on the nature of an hour orientation each time we got new people in country to go to a PRT.

*Q: Right. That would have been frequent, obviously. In terms of the results that you observed during the 18 months that you were there, what kinds of successes would you point to in any of the fields, but primarily in the area that you were working with, the reconstruction field?*

A: I think it's generally considered by everyone that the PRTs were a great success in establishing good relations at the tactical level between the Combined Forces Command or Task Force 76 and the local Afghan community, whether government or individuals. The structure was such that at least initially there was no direct relationship with Kabul except at the joint coordinating executive level with the ambassador. Over time, when we got the regional commands, the regional commanders started inserting their command guidance in addition and the whole system got more regularized and more bureaucratic, less spontaneous.

*Q: Was that good or bad or both?*

A: That was simply an observation of fact. Probably, it was simply a recognition of the passage of time. When we first started, commanders needed to be able to react quickly to opportunities and challenges on the ground in their sectors, but as the countryside got more mature, the organization, which is to say the PRTs, had to also mature and take more direction from the central area. The Coalition got beyond the immediate band-aid humanitarian challenge and tried to take the organization to a level where more sophisticated development work was being accomplished.

*Q: Had you earlier in your career been involved in some similar kinds of reconstruction activities?*

A: This was my fourth post-conflict reconstruction deployment, although the third one was much more of a political job working with the High Representative in Bosnia.

*Q: I'm sure some of your experience was applicable to this situation in Afghanistan, but were there some highlights that you felt our U.S. experience in previous post-conflict situations was brought to bear and therefore the PRTs benefited from that experience?*

A: Well, I think the most directly applicable prior experience was the CORDS program in Vietnam, but I did not take part in that. That was just a little bit before my time in the Army. I don't think in general the conventional force has done well at learning the lessons of previous deployments as far as reconstruction goes. I think they were much more oriented towards the security piece, and I think that's... At particular points in time, that's a misplaced priority.

*Q: I've heard others allude to the CORDS as well. It also is before my time, but it's a good subject to go back and look at. I'm not sure it was successful.*

A: For the people involved in CORDS, it was generally considered very successful in pacifying the countryside.

*Q: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about the security contributions of the PRTs. Even though that wasn't your principal focus, I imagine you have some views and some opinions based on your experience there. In terms of PRT support for training the local police, how would you evaluate that program in terms of its success?*

A: I may be a little iconoclastic. I don't think the PRTs properly had a role in training local police, certainly not at the beginning and through to this month of September 2005. A lot of the PRTs attempted it. They were trying to react to a lack of capacity on the ground, but we ended up spending an awful lot of money in different provinces with different approaches and not moving the ball very far from a national security standpoint.

*Q: Was that because we didn't have much experience or knowledge about how to go about it?*

A: I don't know what you know about police training programs, but in a country where they have a national police, it really needs to be approached from a national level and that's what they are just now starting to do in Afghanistan. The problem with doing it piecemeal like some of the PRTs did, is they have different standards. So, for instance, a PRT commander would take a guardsman or a reservist who was a policeman in civilian life, determine that they were going to start training local policemen, and they would do that in a vacuum. Then they'd decide that they wanted to buy uniforms, equipment, radios, cars, or whatever it is, to make their little local police detachment more effective. The problem is, you ended up with different uniforms in different parts of the country, radios that were incompatible, police standards that were incompatible. One of the major problems with Afghanistan was, the police were largely illiterate. That creates a whole different challenge in training police in what you're going to identify and accomplish. It really cannot be well done with different standards on a local level. It needs to be done on a national level if you're going to have a national standard. The US had some challenges within our bureaucracy while we sorted out which part of the US government would lead in assisting the lead nation, Germany, with training the police.

*Q: I have heard some say that they felt that the PRT was best suited to its security role and one of the things that they meant by that was training the local police, building police stations, establishing, even building courthouses, jails, and establishing protocols for border checkpoints, things like that. To what extent would you agree or disagree with that statement?*

A: One place where we could have done a better job in Afghanistan is in just those areas. Some observers think some senior leaders failed to take advantage and leverage the experience of the civil affairs community. Some people thought that the way to approach these issues was on the local level. It's very clear that the PRTs have a critical role in security the way you were defining their contributions to security. The PRTs' contribution to security is being out amongst the people and developing relationships with local people so that local people will then support the national government and support the coalition. It is inefficient for individual PRTs to come up with individual designs, non-standard designs, of police stations, training, communications, or other infrastructure projects. I think we missed the mark on that and probably did not spend money as effectively as they could.

*Q: At this point in time, maybe the senior leadership has understood that and is thinking that a more centralized approach is going to be necessary. That reminds me of the funding question that I was going to ask you. Early on, projects were funded with CERP funds and that mechanism had its supporters. At present, the funding of projects has been centralized. I was going to ask you to explain the change and how you think that is working, better or less well?*

A: The first question is whether the PRTs should be involved in training police at all. A predicate to that question is whether PRTs should be spending any given pot of money for doing local police training. PRTs generally had two different pots of military money, two different accounts of money, available to them. One was the OHDACA money and one was CERP money, neither of which, in my judgment, can properly be used for building, training, or equipping police. I think those are improper uses of those funds Congress has given. I'm not sure that Congress is right, but that's not my call. We all have to follow the requirements of the Congress. I think using CERP and OHDACA money for those sorts of security issues is an improper use of money. USAID representatives in the PRTs also had QIP (Quick Impact Project) money available and could access Economic Support Fund money.

*Q: I understand.*

*Looking at the development kinds of projects, the same question could apply. It's sort of a mechanical question perhaps, but I've found a number of people who felt that when the CERP funds were available, they were able to get their development projects going more efficiently. When the funding became a centralized process, those in the PRTs complained that it wasn't as efficient. I imagine there's a counterargument to that.*

A: Let me go back on the security and CERP first. It has been the law for a long time that the U.S. military does not get involved in training police. That goes back to all of the political fallout from some of the dictatorships in Central and South America. It's not new to say the military shouldn't be involved in training police. In Afghanistan, we had another nation that had the lead on training police. You've got to keep those two conditions precedent in mind.

Going to the humanitarian relief followed by reconstruction and development issues, first, I think it's important to remember that there were two pots of money, OHDACA and CERP. Both times you've brought the funding pots up, you've only mentioned CERP. That's because the

OHDACA accounts were centralized at too high a level, effectively at CENTCOM level, so the approval process on an OHDACA project could take months. When I arrived in Afghanistan in April of '04, I visited one of the PRTs and they literally were just getting approval then for some ODACA projects that had been nominated two rotations before them, so it became a totally broken system due to bureaucratic centralization. There is still OHDACA money available and it is still not being spent. Your comment was about how efficiently the money was spent. I think the real standard isn't the efficiency of spending money but the effectiveness of spending money. CERP is a much more agile, versatile resource. It could be accessed very quickly at the local level for a relatively small project, which could have high local impact. Then, at higher levels as you went up the chain of command, greater sums of money could be approved up to about \$300,000 by the time we got to Kabul. You can get a pretty good-sized project done for \$300,000. But we neglected, and the PRTs neglected, to use OHDACA money because the bureaucracy had gotten too complicated. The biggest problem with spending CERP money is inadequate coordination with higher levels of the Afghan government and other US and international development programs. It is literally true that some PRTs built at least one school and at least once clinic that I know of where the government didn't have the people or the money to staff the school or the clinic, so the buildings sat empty. In my view, there was inadequate communication and coordination between the military development folks – CERP and OHDACA at the PRT – and the other development people from the United States government, specifically USAID to tie projects to national development.

*Q: In the cases that you mentioned, what had happened? Someone had recommended building a school without checking to see if there was-*

A: They were responding to the local need where the local governmental official said, "We need a school or we need a clinic at this location" without checking to make sure that the national government, which funds those types of things, could support it. So they built the building, made the local governor perhaps happy, but then when it came time for the national government to send down representatives to occupy the school or the clinic, it didn't happen because the Government of Afghanistan didn't have the personnel or the money. One of the lessons -- which I'm not convinced we've learned yet -- is that not every combat commander has the orientation to do the kinds of work that PRTs do. Some commanders tended to overemphasize what they knew, which is security, and to underemphasize humanitarian relief flowing to reconstruction. If they did anything, they tended to get stuck in the humanitarian relief mode as opposed to going the next step down the road and going to development. They need to have an enterprise driven development program. To do that, you have to set the condition for private sector development. Continually drilling wells in villages doesn't necessarily accomplish that. After you've drilled X number of wells – actually, they pound them; they don't drill them – you've got as much mileage in goodwill as you can get from that. It may make you feel good to drill another 25 wells, but it doesn't necessarily lead to development. Economic development and growth coupled with political stability will ultimately define success. For the kind of economic growth needed, private sector development will be key.

*Q: Is that where the NGOs or USAID or other coalition government assistance organizations come into play?*

A: Well, they should come into play, certainly. If you had a PRT commander who was focused solely on security, the civil affairs teams could not get out and do their work very effectively... For USAID, USDA, or the PRT civil affairs teams to get out, they had to have force protection provided by the ground commander, which is the PRT commander. Everybody over there is a volunteer. . Every civilian over there is a volunteer and all the military have volunteered to be in the military, so everybody understands there is some risk inherent in the deployment. But if we get too risk averse, then one or two incidents can shut down all the development in any given area and adversely affect the accomplishment of the US mission.

*Q: And by becoming too risk averse, you mean the civilian side or the military?*

A: The military as well as the civilian side. USAID and its contractors are very risk averse, as is the military.

*Q: You would recommend a little less risk aversion in order to get the job done?*

A: Yes.

*Q: In terms of the NGOs, we had a number of discussions about them and you alluded to them as well. They have a role to play. Some of the criticism of the PRTs early on at least was that NGOs saw them as complicating their lives. Where they could work, they didn't like having people who looked like combatants doing humanitarian work. They also thought that maybe these PRT folks didn't have the right expertise for the projects they were taking on. Did you experience some of that in the relationship with NGOs? What was your experience in working with them?*

A: I always personally had very good relationships with the NGOs, but that did not blind me to the frictions that others had. The NGOs frequently wanted the security that coalition forces provided without wanting to be in any way identified with the coalition forces. That's a conundrum for which there is no real solution other than continuing to work together and to train together. As far as claims that the PRTs were taking on projects for which they were not trained, I think that would have been obviated if we had given a greater role and a great recognition to the role of civil affairs as opposed to just any U.S. military person getting put in that job. But I would say that many, many, many of the NGOs – workers – are young idealistic folks whose inclination is not in support of the military anyway and who are overseas on their first or second tour, so their experience base really wasn't as broad as it could be to make that kind of a charge. When Doctors without Borders pulled out of Afghanistan, they did so because of security concerns. The security concerns that led to their withdrawal, the incident that led to their withdrawal, was the murder of some of their colleagues, which apparently had absolutely nothing to do with the Government, CFC-A/ISAF or the terrorists. It was apparently a political act, a conflict between local competing authorities. One can address that sort of thing by increasing understanding, by working more closely with the NGOs, having the military folks understand more about how the NGOs work and having the NGOs understand what value the military force can bring to setting the conditions for their success. The bottom line is for the US to attain its political objectives, security and military objectives must be attained. That is the goal of our instruments of power; that is not necessarily the goal of various IOs and NGOs.



*Q: I think you said that the NGOs often had an unrealistic expectation that they would or should be protected by the PRTs?*

A: I did say that. The PRTs' job was not to provide specific security for specific people, but to provide area and community security.

*Q: In terms of funding, one other criticism was that NGOs typically required local financial support for a project and the military financed the project 100%. Do you have a comment on that?*

A: Different NGOs had different ways of operating. For a military-funded project, you're correct. We typically provided 100% of the cost, but that also includes in the analysis of whether to do a project whether it's sustainable by the government. So you wouldn't, for instance, build a school or a factory (like a prosthetic factory in Khost, which is what we did) if the government weren't able to make a commitment that they could operate the factory. The claim that the military pays everything, that's true from an immediate construction point of view. It's not true from an operational point of view. A lot of times, what the local community gives is for the NGOs much more token and psychologically important than it is substantial. I visited one USAID Alternative Livelihood project in Nangarhar where a bridge was being built, a pretty long bridge, and each of the local families that was going to benefit was asked to contribute 20 Afghans to the construction cost of the bridge. That's about 45 cents. It goes nowhere towards paying the cost, but it does imply some emotional commitment from the local people to support the project.

*Q: And I guess it was viewed by the Afghan leadership as significant also even though monetarily it's minimal. In terms of their psychology, it would represent a commitment of some importance.*

A: I guess that's the hope. When you're dealing with people whose income average is \$250 a year...

*Q: 45 cents is significant.*

A: May be significant.

*Q: You were in Kabul and you were in a position as coordinator. Were you able to deal with the NGOs in a way that eventually avoided a duplication of effort or some of the unhelpful overlap that might occur otherwise?*

A: I didn't get that deeply involved in that sort of thing. One of my colleagues was very successful in coordinating with other donors to help work on eliminating overlap or underlap. Specifically, he helped push the creation of the National Program Support Office as well as the creation of the International Boundary Security Zone projects. I realize that's kind of a different issue than what you raised. It seems to me if we do this sort of thing in the future, or as it matures, it might very well be helpful to have an international or at least a U.S. national

coordinator. I think it would be better if we could have an international coordinator of reconstruction and development just to deconflict that sort of thing, to identify gaps and overlaps. I don't think we've moved very far towards that. We really haven't done that very well within the U.S. government. We tend to more get involved in rice bowl disputes.

*Q: That's generally not very productive, I would think.*

A: If you're concerned about making sure your rice bowl is full or gets fuller, it may be productive, but as far as attaining the national goal, it's not very productive.

*Q: I realize that many of the PRTs shifted from U.S. command to-*

A: Other NATO nations.

*Q: I'm wondering if you thought there were any important national differences in how they ran their PRTs. There would be differences, but did they make much difference in the effectiveness of the PRT?*

A: It depends on the nation. From a policy standpoint here in the United States, one thing that we will have to resolve is some sort of uniformity of effort and vision of PRTs. There are some of our NATO colleagues who, for instance, don't want U.S. civilian government agencies in their PRTs.

*Q: the State Department?*

A: The State Department, USAID, USDA. The bigger problem with that is, some of our NATO contributors want to operate PRTs, but they do not have a funding source for development projects in their own areas, in those areas that they control. So when you exclude U.S. government representation and don't bring money yourself, that means the area where you as a NATO ally are controlling doesn't get the development resources. At this point, the U.S. is primarily in the south or the southeast part of the country, which is where the biggest security problem is. But President Karzai is trying to rule an entire country. If we only put development resources where there's insurgency and which is one ethnicity, primarily Pashtun, what does that say to the other provinces and other ethnicities in the country? I think that's a major problem. They tried to address that with PRT terms of reference that were agreed, but still, some NATO allies would agree to take over and operate a PRT with different national caveats and so you get a dissimilarity of PRT effort depending on which country operates which PRT. I was told there was one PRT that was operated by a NATO member where there was an IED on the road in front of the camp. The soldiers from that nation could not do security work and would not clear the IED. They weren't allowed to leave the camp until it was cleared, so CFC had to send some explosive ordinance demolition people up there to clear the IED because their national caveat was that they didn't do things that could lead to casualties from their country.

*Q: These are soldiers.*

A: These are soldiers.

*Q: That's an unusual kind of soldier.*

A: No, it's not the soldiers. It's that the national government doesn't want to have casualties, so they're making policy choices which minimize the chance that they'll have casualties which could cause domestic political problems in the capitals of those countries.

*Q: I can understand that reasoning, but it would seem that you don't need to send soldiers then if the job description doesn't include some of these typically soldierly kinds of dangers. You could send me. I don't know how to clear an IED either, but that would be just as well.*

A: There also has not been a real coherent plan for how the PRTs will evolve over time and form a bridge to transitioning to more and more civilian control. At this point, the PRT is still conceived as primarily a military organization with civilian resources. Over time, it should move to a civilian organization and then a host government organization, in my view.

*Q: Would you say that this evolution of the PRT is something that is in the early planning stages? What kind of a timeline would you imagine the evolution is going to take?*

A: I think a lot of bright people are thinking about it now, including the people at the Institute of Peace. But it seems to me you're going to have to recognize that the standards of security can vary depending on where you are in the country. It seems to me that reality will force one PRT to be more focused, for instance, on security and another PRT to have a very different structure with either a civilian leadership under the State Department representative as opposed to the military representative or even host government representative with security provided by the ANA or ANP. You want to be careful not to set up a PRT as a competitor to the local governor and his or her efforts, but you need to be able to transition the military out of it and go more to the traditional CMOC idea where different development people can get together and coordinate all of their efforts in a secure environment surrounded by cooperation.

*Q: I want to go back to what you were saying earlier about our NATO allies, not to-*

A: That's the whole deal.

*Q: We won't criticize them per se because they have their rationale, but it would seem they would understand some problem to their stance.*

A: Remember, Tip O'Neil said, "All politics are local." While we've had some tremendous success with some of our NATO colleagues (the British, the Canadians, the-)- (end of tape)

-the Canadians. The New Zealanders had brought money as well as soldiers and they had set up PRTs. And they're setting up more PRTs, at least for Canadians, because they've recently taken over Kandahar, for instance. They've done very well. We've also had several of our NATO allies, like I said earlier, who don't want U.S. government representation in their PRT. Of course, that gives us an immediate problem because under U.S. contracting law, you have to have a U.S. contracting officer who's controlling the money if it's military or AID. So, either

we're going to have to change our law and figure out some way to deputize an ally, but that then becomes local politics that are hard for us to explain to Congress that we're letting a foreigner spend U.S. tax dollars. It's a difficult issue, but it seems to me when a nation signs on to take a PRT, they ought to also sign on to take that kind of commitment, requirement, to do some level of development in their area of operations.

*Q: I can see where there are a lot of details that have to be worked out. Every time you add a player to an organization or a structure like that, it's going to create some layers of complexity.*

A: But adding players helps the United States in many ways. It's helped set the condition where we can withdraw U.S. troops.

*Q: I can see where we'd want that, for sure.*

A: But we also need to make sure that they understand what they're committing to do and have the resources to do it.

*Q: You addressed another problem, too, that I thought was worth maybe rounding off. That was, if development projects are undertaken only in the areas where there is greatest insurgency and most difficult conditions, then the message that the peaceful Afghans receive in the other provinces is not maybe the message that we want to deliver?*

A: The same is true with using the PRTs and the counternarcotics or anti-poppy effort and the Alternative Livelihood program. If you supply assistance to communities that are growing poppy, you may have an unintended consequence of encouraging others to grow poppies so that they can then get aid.

*Q: Yes. Fortunately, I guess, we haven't debated that in this PRT study. I know it crops up.*

A: But the PRTs may very well have a role in addressing the poppy problem.

*Q: In the future.*

*That brings us to some summing up questions. You've alluded to the long timeline for PRTs for their future maturation and future incarnation. Is it fair to say that you think there is scope for increasing the number of PRTs? Should there be an increased PRT presence and how long would you recommend they remain in Afghanistan?*

A: Ultimately, the sought after end state would be a PRT per province. That would put a coalition or a NATO/military presence of some size in each province and would provide an engine that could coordinate development programs within provinces. That's where we have not done as well as we could. We haven't really utilized the PRT as a development engine to the fullest extent. Again, the key is bottom up, enterprise driven, private sector assisted, citizen targeted, economic development under fire. As that process moves forward, you would want to bring in more U.S. government agencies or similar agencies in other governments depending on the PRT, at least on an occasional basis. For instance, you wouldn't need an FAA representative

at every PRT, but you might very well want some FAA representatives at the five regional airports as well as some FAA representatives in Kabul. You're going to need USDA in every PRT, or other nations' agricultural people. But we need to do more than just look at improving crops. We need to look at the whole value chain of development. The only way we're going to get the Afghan economy to move forward is to add value to products. If we just go out and plant wheat and give them fertilizer, we create dependence and we collapse the price of wheat because supply and demand takes over. It's not an easy thing to do. But if you went in and worked with the wheat and encouraged somebody to put in a mill with fortified flour so you're lowering the maternal mortality rate and the infant mortality rate, then you're really doing something and you could have like an extension service here for teaching farmers the whole chain and encouraging the entrepreneurs to get into the next step in the chain. It's kind of the extension of the old saw about you give a person a fish, you feed him for one meal; you teach him to fish, you could feed him for life. But if you teach him to farm fish, then you've set him up to take part in the global economic environment. So what we have to do is move through to teaching them how to farm fish.

Q: It sounds as if that's very ambitious.

A: It's the fourth poorest country in the world. If we don't have ambitions coupled with a sense of urgency, you're never going to get there. Hope is not a plan. We have to have a realistic timeline. It has to be ambitious and energetic. We have to create the environment where other people – entrepreneurs – can come in and put the resources to the opportunities to lead the whole country's economy forward. That will probably create some necessity to amend some U.S. laws, as a matter of fact. For instance, there are government rules which limit or which protect one company, for instance, from getting an advantage over another company in contracting. Well, there may need to be an escape valve on that law which allows somebody – the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the two of them in consultation, somebody – the authority to say "For a limited time and in a limited place, we'll suspend that law so that instead of doing what we're doing now where every bottle of water in the country of Afghanistan is imported for CFC-A and NATO/ISAF, we may find that it makes more sense to go out and find an Afghan entrepreneur or so who currently doesn't have the capacity but with some assistance can have the capacity to start their own bottled water plant that has purity standards that meet our criteria. That would save us the cost of transporting the water and give Afghans an opportunity to go to work. We may need to look at relaxing some of the U.S. statutes that protect industry in a normal situation but may be impediments to accomplishment of national goals in a failed or failing state.

Q: In other words, our law says we must drink bottled water.

A: No, our law says we have to treat everybody on a level playing field. There may be times when it's better for the United States to encourage one person or another to step out. One can't contract with you to sell the United States water if one doesn't even have a bottled water plant. One has to have the capacity to meet the US contract before the US can legally give one the contract. But if one's in a failed or a failing state without a contract in hand to show one can market one's water, one can't borrow the capital to set up a bottling plant. So the United States

continues to import water from other countries, and we're paying the air freight every time. Thousands and thousands of bottles of water every day.

Q: I agree with you, there has to be a better solution to that. I'm reminded, too, the general question is, even if we enable an Afghan entrepreneur, which I hope we do, the kind of ambitious objective you've described will require a sustained commitment on our part. Sometimes the U.S. is loathe to undertake a sustained commitment. It would also seem that we would need more than one USDA person, for example, in each PRT, and more than one USAID person.

A: Some of the U.S. cabinet departments have been much more supportive than others. Some of the agencies within the departments have been more supportive than others. At this point, I don't think all of the resources of the United States have been brought to bear on the problem.

Q: All of our AID capabilities, for example. Quite obviously, we have a big AID program in Afghanistan, although only five percent of the AID program is connected with the PRTs, which of course is what we're looking at.

A: Until recently, the AID PRT representative had no standing to direct AID contractors in that province. Kind of a mind boggling deficiency. Everything had to be directed from Kabul. That really doesn't make much sense. If you're the person on the ground and you see a contractor working in your area doing a task for your agency, you ought to have some ability to effect how that contractor does the work. But that was not true until July of '05.

Q: We don't have an AID person here to explain how they're going about their work. I know that in AID's view, the PRT is not a significant component of their Afghanistan program. The development task is almost overwhelming. I don't know if you feel optimistic after your service, that we're at least on the right road. A lot of good things have been done. But as these PRTs mature, would you say we're going to have the commitment to see it through?

A: I think there's a better than even chance that the U.S. bureaucracy will strangle the initiative. That doesn't mean that there aren't those who are fighting the good fight. No bureaucracy really deals with change easily. A lot of the bureaucracies view the PRTs and other initiatives with suspicion. They view them as threatening.

Q: And your own organization, of course, is the Defense Department. Your background is in civil affairs. I don't know to what extent even the Defense Department would like to put the right emphasis on civil affairs.

A: Well, what's right is certainly up to debate. Civil Affairs is primarily an army mission, although the marines have two reserve civil affairs groups. Within the army it is primarily a reserve mission, which to some extent by definition means many active duty people are not fully aware of the capabilities of civil affairs. But we have many reservists who are on their second tour to Afghanistan and that creates a whole additional issue of sustainability of the U.S. effort.

Q: Right. They're more experienced. I'm sure they're a greater asset. But they have to go back to their civilian jobs eventually, or they feel they have to, I imagine. Is that part of the sustainability problem?

A: That's a big part of the sustainability. That's also why we need to figure out how to transition the PRTs to civilian and host nation control over time. PRTs currently have a national police representative at each PRT. But then you need to give some thought to whether we should also have other host government representatives in the PRT or whether you should perhaps co-locate the PRT with the governor's offices. You've got a tension then between security and coordination with the host government.

Q: I've heard that debated on both sides, too. Some people feel that there is not a need for even the lone Afghan government representative who already exists. Others would say their presence is instrumental and provides a lot of value added and maybe should be expanded – what I hear you saying.

A: We have not yet clearly defined or addressed the evolving U.S. policy imperative that PRTs illustrate. We went through a stage where the mantra was “no nation building.” Now we're confronted with the reality that for us to withdraw or reduce the military force, we're going to have to develop the nation. We're reaching that reality without a clear doctrine of how to effect it or even a clear tasking as to who in our bureaucracy is going to effect it. Ambassador Carlos Pasqual is kind of working on it from the State side, but he doesn't have any financial resources.

Q: Which is not a very good prescription for success.

A: That's right. There are lots of people who are trying to work different pieces of it. AID just hired as a deputy or assistant administrator a former reserve civil affairs colonel who has deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. But whether he'll be able to help tweak the AID organization enough to get them focused on it is problematic. Post-conflict development work is very different from going to some underdeveloped country and coming up with a 30-year plan of how you're going to help them meet their food needs down the road. In a post-conflict situation, you have an undefined but relatively small window of time, if not to meet the people's aspirations, at least to give them hope that their aspirations will be met. So, you can't do things in the same timeframe. During the post-conflict phase, the US will need a doctrine that deals with the first two years or five years or whatever you end up deciding is appropriate. Then we, the United States government, would pass it off from DOD or this Carlos Pascual group or the PRT group or whatever to the normal organization where you'd have USAID and DIFID and CEDC and some of those other organizations. But right after conflict, you don't have the ability to do that. You've got to set those conditions for success rather quickly. I might add, we need to be more efficient and effective in how we do that. We're spending a lot of money on overhead that perhaps could be better spent going to the people.

Q: What you say is so true. Of course, it also is parallel to the way we have undertaken, I would say, development in the non-post conflict situation.

A: I don't think we've done it very well.

*Q: We have had our failures. We haven't graduated very many countries from poverty, so we know how difficult it is. Then the war or the post-war situation only makes it more difficult and, as you point out, compresses the timeframe that we have to get things underway.*

*I will leave you the last word if you would like to make a final summary point. We've really covered the issues that I thought we'd want to address, but maybe you have something you'd like to add at this point.*

A: Afghanistan and Iraq... Afghanistan has given the United States several innovative organizations to address the unique problems of the global war on terrorism. Those organizations are the PRTs, the funding mechanisms of CERP (CERP was initiated in Iraq.), the ARG [Afghanistan Reconstruction Group] in Afghanistan - it's very different from the way they're approaching it in Iraq, incidentally - an Interagency Resources group or Cell in Afghanistan, and the Embassy Interagency Planning Group in Afghanistan. All of the innovative programs with the exception of PRT with the CERP funding have encountered major bureaucratic resistance. Even the PRT has encountered some bureaucratic resistance from some traditional ground combat commander personalities. In order for us to succeed in post-hostility development, we need to seek out the innovations that have promise and we need to help them grow and transition to meet the emerging needs of our nation. That's my final shot.

*Q: Well, thank you. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts very candidly. I can tell you're a thoughtful person, with your views the result of lengthy computation on your part. I hope we can include these in the project and they'll be something that the final report should reflect, so I appreciate your spending so much time.*

\*

*We're talking now a little bit about the public affairs efforts in Afghanistan.*

A: My thought on that is, we, the United States, have paid insufficient attention to the whole information war scenario. The embassy is focused with its public affairs officers solely on the traditional roles of public affairs in a capital. The PRTs do their good works, but there's no public affairs effort to educate the local community on what the PRT has done and there is certainly no effort, because of congressional restrictions, to educate the American people on what the PRTs are doing from public support standpoint. That's another area where we have yet to focus the weight and the experience and the synergy of our bureaucracies on the problem. In Kabul, the public affairs officers at the embassy only do traditional PA work. It was a very small office. It's now grown somewhat. But they were only doing the international media and response to local media kind of things. They do a few scholarships like Fulbright Scholars. Of course, we don't have the US Information Service like we used to have, so the Public Affairs folks are putting up these American Corners - kind of libraries here and there. But there is not a concerted effort to tell people what we stand for and what we're doing and why. We don't tie it to the military operations. We don't tie it to USAID operations other than USAID has an opening for each of their projects where AID has their own public affairs people. You wonder what the priority is. Is the priority to educate people about what USAID is doing, what the



ambassador is doing, what some general is doing, or is it what the American people are doing to accomplish the American goal? I don't think we've coordinated that at all. We've paid it insufficient attention. I don't think the military has capitalized on the success of the embedded reporter concept to generate local US understanding of what the Guard and Reserve are doing. In my view, local media focusing on what local soldiers are doing will be more inclined to be positive with resulting public support and recruiting support.

Q: And sadly, that has been our habit for something like that last 25 years. Public Affairs has been a stepchild. When it was independent as USIA, it had its separate money, which was good. Now, it still has its programming funds, but the trend line has been down. So, with relatively few resources, it is not a big player in the scene, certainly compared to the military or AID. That's certainly part of the explanation.

A: But we really have to find a way to take these disparate resources and focus them together. It's ridiculous to have military public affairs guys and gals and AID public affairs guys and gals and embassy public affairs guys and gals and military psyops folks and AID information folks funding radios, and there is no mechanism to pull all of those activities together. Of course, the military also has some information operations people. But there is no way to effectively pull them together under the current structure, so we're not getting the best use of our money, we're not telling our story either overseas or at home. I understand the difference between public affairs and psyops.

Q: That's certainly true. Of course, telling it at home, we confront the ageless difficulty that Americans by and large outside of Washington, DC, are not focused on foreign affairs, so it takes a real catastrophe for them to take notice. The constituency for foreign affairs has been traditionally very small. That's why Congress doesn't feel obliged to vote for significant budgets for exchanges kinds of programs that build over time people who know about us and understand us.

A: But we also have people within the bureaucracy who are self-limiting. For instance, and again, this may be another anomaly of a post-conflict situation where maybe we must need to be able to temporarily suspend some of the normal way of doing business, but we had a Midwestern college where the president was a retired career Foreign Service officer who offered five full scholarships – room, board, tuition, books, lab fees, everything – if the State Department would simply pay the airfare to get the students to and from the college. That was too hard to do. And in a place like Afghanistan or some of the African countries where we've had continuing problems, it may be smart to just greatly increase the scholarship programs. I understand we've got Fulbright and we've got various scholarship programs, but we need more than that. If you get four, five, or eight Fulbright scholars from a country like Afghanistan, that's great, but four, five, or eight people doesn't change a society. We really need to greatly increase that sort of activity. That might be an area where we could ask some of our allies who are reluctant to put people on the ground where they could contribute by having them study in those countries..

Q: I suspect they would be willing to do that.

A: But we really need to train thousands of people in these countries. A limited Truman scholar or a Fulbright scholar or whatever is just not a big enough program to meet the surge need of a country like Afghanistan. I think the scholarship program in Iraq, for instance, wouldn't have to be so big because they have a pretty well educated population.

Q: And they have money to send people abroad for studies.

A: That's right. But Afghanistan is a poor country with a very illiterate population. (end of tape)

*End of interview*