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Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #5

Executive Summary

The subject served in Afghanistan from September 2003 until January 2004. He was a political advisor to the Joint Task Force 180 at Bagram airbase. From this vantage point he was able to observe the workings of the PRTs and to use the information they developed.

The PRTs grew out of the CORDS experience in Vietnam. Changes and modifications were made to meet the Afghan environment. When the subject first arrived in Afghanistan there were four PRTs. The one at Mazar-e Sharif was manned by the British using SAS troops and headed by an experienced colonel. Subject felt that this was the best operation. Another was run by New Zealand forces in Central Afghanistan. The U.S. had two, both headed by lieutenant colonels. The primary task, at the time, was to help the newly appointed Karzai governors run their provinces. These governors had little in the way of support from the central government; they were short of staff, had little transport, communications equipment, or office supplies. Also there was a shortage of money to invest in the provinces. The PRTs helped fill in some of these gaps, often by acting as a liaison with the local U.S. military commanders who had transport, money, communications, and money, or with the UN, USAID or NGOs.

While in Afghanistan subject saw the PRTs expand from four to sixteen. They gave the embassy a window into what was happening in the field.

The effectiveness of the governors ran from good to bad. All were limited in what they could do because of small staffs and lack of governing tools. Much depended on the personality of the governor. Some were appointed for political reasons and were not judged by the Karzai government on their governing but on their political connections.

Subject saw a major problem in the effectiveness of the PRTs because the State, Justice and Agriculture departments could not supply enough officers for the program. Often those recruited served only a short time and were not trained before they arrived. He noted that the Defense Department was running on a wartime basis and was funded as such, but the three civilian departments were not. These departments talked of war but were not given the funds to recruit and train officers as they had been during the Vietnam war. There was no Air America to get our people from one place to another, the PRTs had to rely on the kindness of the Army for transport.

There was tension between some of the NGOs and the PRTs as the NGOs did not have the mobility and protection of the PRTs and often they had an instinctive aversion to the military.

Two problems that were not fully addressed were drugs and the role of women in Afghanistan. These were major cultural and economic issues and the PRTs did have the resources or time to work on them.

Subject felt that the embassy was not well structured to work with the PRTs, it was too traditional in its division into political, economic sections that did not work well with the PRTs.

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

Interview #5

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Can you tell me your connections to Afghanistan?

A: Stu, I went to Afghanistan in early September of 2003 and served there until late January of 2004. I was assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force 180 based at Bagram Airbase, about 40 miles northwest of Kabul, and I was a political advisor to two CJTF-180 commanders, both lieutenant generals.

Q: What was the situation in Bagram?

A: The situation in Bagram in September of 2003 was as follows. We had at that time, approximately 11,500 U.S. military under CJTF-180, and we had approximately 2,000 coalition forces, made up of troops from Romania, from the United Arab Emirates, from France, from Egypt, from South Korea, from Thailand and elsewhere. I think a total of seven or eight coalition allies, totaling 2,000. So we had a total of about 13,500 operating out of Bagram.

Four months before I got there, in May of 2003, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had visited Kabul, and he said, in May of 2003, during his visit to Kabul, that the military campaign in Afghanistan, in doctrinal terms, had now moved from phase three, which was decisive combat, to phase four, which was stability and reconstruction. So in his view, the emphasis henceforth, after May 2003, was to be on promoting stability and reconstruction. That was the lead priority, and the continuing counterinsurgency was the secondary, or reinforcing, priority.

However, on the ground when I arrived in Bagram in early September 2003, the facts on the ground were the combating the insurgency was the primary preoccupation of CJTF-180. They were just, four months after Rumsfeld's pronouncement, in the process of pulling themselves together to make this shift.

The focus of the counterinsurgency was against three groups. The first group was Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, and they are regarded as a strategic foe, because Al Qaeda operating in the eastern, south-eastern border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, was a foe who was not only attacking Afghanistan, but attacking Pakistan, attacking Saudi

Arabia, and they had a strategic aim to hurt the United States. So they were the strategic foe, and they were the best equipped, and they had the most tenacious fighters.

The second foe of the three groups that we were fighting in the counterinsurgency was the Taliban. Again, we were dealing with remnants of the Taliban because the main forces had been thoroughly defeated earlier in '01 and '02. Nevertheless, they still persisted, they were still out there and in some provinces, particularly in places like Helmand and Uruzgan, and Kandahar and Kalak, in southern and southeastern Afghanistan, they were still a serious security problem. Many of their leaders had sought refuge in these very difficult border areas with Pakistan.

The third foe we were fighting was the militia continuant, arms contingent of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who had been a former prime minister of Afghanistan in the civil war that followed the Soviet departure, and he was bitter foe of the United States, and he was based out of a refuge camp near Peshawar, in northern Pakistan. He operated north of Kabul, in Nangahar and Kunar, north and east, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, and also in Kabul proper.

Those were the three groups we were facing. We had a total of 13,500 U.S. and coalition forces operating out of Bagram. We had approximately six or seven different brigades. We had a Special Forces brigade, we had a light infantry brigade from the 10th Mountain Infantry operating out of Kandahar, we had an aviation brigade, we had a medical brigade, we had an engineer brigade, we had a Civil Affairs Brigade. All of these diverse forces were part of this Combined Joint Task Force, supported by about 75 to 80 helicopters, transport helicopters, and Huey attack helicopters, plus we had an A10 Air Force squadron of 18 to 20 planes based at Bagram. This force was focused on the 11 provinces along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and that's where the contacts with these three forces, Al Qaeda, Taliban, and the Hekmatyar forces, which were called HIG, that's where these contacts were. The other two-thirds of the country we had very little U.S. and coalition presence.

Finally, around Kabul, we had the NATO International Security Assistance Force, and they numbered about 5,500. As I mentioned, we had 75 to 80 helicopters for our 13,500 member force, they had 5,500 hundred people and four helicopters. So they had very little mobility. The Canadians, the Brits, the Turks, some French were down there, Poles were down there, some Spanish, Germans were there, and they rotated in and out, but they were a force which was charged with providing security for Kabul proper, and an area in the immediate vicinity of Kabul.

The situation was, that in these 11 provinces along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, from Nangarhar in the northeast all the way down to Helmand and Nimruz in the south, there were constant series of operations going. In the other two-thirds of the country, the west, the center, the north, the issue there was trying to extend the presence of the central government in areas where warlords, militia warlords, left over from the civil war were still exerting primary control. That was the general situation.

Q: We want to concentrate on the...

A: Provincial Reconstruction Teams? Sure.

Q: Had that concept when you got out there been established, and what did it mean?

A: Yes. The short answer is yes, the concept had been established, and this is what it meant. The Provincial Reconstruction Team concept was put together by three lieutenant colonels working out of CJTF, the Combined Joint Task Force up at Bagram, Army colonels, who were looking for a means to help extend central government presence and authority in the countryside, away from these border areas, now that the main Al Qaeda, Taliban and Hekmatyar forces had been defeated and somewhat dispersed. The big issue was extending the presence of the central government, and historically, in Afghanistan, there's always been this tension between the central authority in Kabul and its ability to extend its writ out to the provinces. So these three lieutenant colonels drew up a concept, and it went through various permutations, and if I remember correctly, in June, in the spring of 2003, the concept finally took place as Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Again, these three lieutenant colonels drew on previous Army experience, and one of them was the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support Advisory Teams that we had in Vietnam.

Q: Those were CORDS.

A: The CORDS program. I was very familiar with the concept where we set up Provincial Advisory Teams in each of the 44 Vietnamese provinces, and then also, we had District Advisory Teams at the district level.

Drawing on that concept, and other lessons learned, these three lieutenant colonels and the Combined Joint Task Force 180, put forth this concept. There was a certain amount of bureaucratic wrangling and working it out with the embassy, but in the spring of 2003, the first Provincial Reconstruction Team was set up, I think either in Ghazni or Gardeyz, southeast of Kabul. By the time I got there in September, the number had grown to four.

The basic way they were set up when I arrived there was – you recall the Army Civil Affairs Brigade that I had mentioned that was operating out of Bagram under our Combined Joint Task Force. They manned these four Provincial Advisory Teams, and they consisted roughly of 40 to 60 personnel drawn from our Civil Affairs ranks, and they had usually a platoon of force protection, former artillerymen converted to infantrymen, or infantrymen themselves, who provided protection for these Provincial Advisory Teams. They were set up in compounds in Gardeyz, in Ghazni, in Mazar-e Sharif up north and one other location. Our Herat one came later.

It was an interesting time to be there, because, as I mentioned, even though Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had said that we should be shifting emphasis to stability and reconstruction, the fact of the matter was that in May of '03 and September of '03, the

major effort was still on the counterinsurgency. Part of this is a cultural factor, because the people who are running the 18th Airborne Corps, who was running the Combined Task Force, instinctively want to go out and finish the counterinsurgency job. Now, to the general's credit, he absolutely did recognize the value of the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) and began to push more support towards them. So one of the issues was, frankly, that when you have these four Provincial Reconstruction Teams, manned by Army Civil Affairs personnel, supported with a platoon providing local security, they were a draw on the resources of the rest of the Combined Joint Task Force that was doing the counterinsurgency. As I said, the general had 80 helicopters at his disposal. You cannot move around and be effective in Afghanistan in any large measure, because of the terrain, without helicopters. His maneuver units and Special Forces units, which are in the field conducting the counterinsurgency, constantly needed those helicopters, were asking for them. Well, so did the four PRT commanders. It was a real tug to shift helicopters and other logistic support away from the counterinsurgency, which is the guts of what our military likes to do, and shift it to support these PRTs. That was a constant tension.

Final point. When the general, who did support the PRTs, recognized their importance and began to make the shift to support them better with resources and logistics, when he left in October, another general had come out of Fort Jackson, South Carolina, he'd been a ranger, served in the Grenada operation and he served in Operation Just Cause in Panama. The general immediately looked at the PRT operation, looked at what Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had said in May in Kabul and really, really gave it life. Within several weeks of his arrival the general put together a plan to quadruple the number of the PRTs from four to 16. By the time I left at the end of January I think we were up to 11, and by late spring, early summer of 2004 we were up to 16.

Now, let me hasten to add, we had some foreign support. The British took over the PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, and they staffed it with a hundred people, including – their main force up there were reserve SAS units who had come in from Great Britain ...

Q: SAS?

A: Special Air Service. Legendary. The British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, patrol an area the size of Scotland. They sent their patrols out, for three, four, even five days at a time. The Brits moved up there, and then we brought the New Zealanders. I was there for the turnover of the U.S. PRT in Bamian, in the central part of Afghanistan. We turned those over to the New Zealanders, and they were wonderful, they did a very fine job. When I was there we hosted a visit from the New Zealand prime minister, and their foreign minister came to visit their PRT.

Those were the four PRTs: Mazar-e Sharif, Bamian, Gardeyz, and Ghazni. When the new general came in he decided, "We really got to live up to what the Secretary of Defense asks us to do, and let's shift this thing." He made a huge increase in the resources and the attention and the importance of the PRTs.

Q: Now, first let's talk about the Civil Affairs Brigade.

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Where are they from, what were their experiences, and what was their role?

A: The Civil Affairs Brigade, at the time that I was there, was made up of two components. One was a component from Texas, largely from San Antonio. Many of them were either former or existing policemen. The other contingent was from Minnesota, so you know, this is quite an interesting cultural event, to take two Minnesota battalions, put them with two Texas battalions, make one brigade out of them. A number of these were from the Army Reserve. These were all Army Reserve, and as you may know, in the U.S. army there is only one active Civil Affairs Battalion, and it's based at Fort Bragg. All the rest of the civil affairs capacity in the Army comes from the Reserves.

Q: Any from the National Guard?

A: No, because the decision was made about ten, fifteen years ago, as they divvied things up, to put civil affairs with the Army Reserves, and Special Forces with the National Guard. Now, as a matter of fact, since you bring that up, as part of the new transformation of the U.S. Army and the modulization of its forces, which will include 34 National Guard Brigade Combat Teams, we will be setting up Civil Affairs units in the Guard as well.

Q: At the beginning, you were there when the initial group was in place.

A: When the four groups were in place, yes.

Q: How were they constituted? I mean, obviously some were defense and the others are doing the PRT thing. What were they supposed to be doing?

A: Here's what they were supposed to be doing, and by and large – this was an evolving concept, I mean, keep in mind this was a concept developed by three Army lieutenant colonels on the J5 planning staff in Bagram. So this was an evolving concept, but I think it was the right idea and it has continued to evolve over the year and a half. I know you'll be interviewing other people, you'll see how increasingly sophisticated it has become.

The basic simple idea was this. Much like we were doing in the CORDS program in Vietnam, but somewhat different, first of all, the basic role was to support the role of the governor and his provincial staff in these provincial capital cities, to extend the presence of the central government. The situation was that you had governors. At that time, when I got there, there were 32 provinces in Afghanistan, by the time I left, Karzai had kicked it up to 35.

The quality of the governors in these provinces was very uneven, number one. Number two, they had very few resources, so you'd walk into a governor's office in Gardeyz or Bamian, and he'd be sitting in his office with a chair, a table, maybe a phone, maybe a landline phone, and a dim light bulb. He usually had a police chief, he usually had some agricultural ministry representatives, and a couple of others, but he did not have the resources, the staff, the communication, the transportation, to get outside of his office in the provincial capital and visit his districts and exercise an effective role on behalf of the government. So in effect, the PRT, one of their important roles was to become an enabler for the governor, and to become part of the governor's staff.

We had Jeeps that could do long range patrols, we had medical officers, we had veterinarians. These are all Civil Affairs Reservists. We had policemen and public security, people who ran water plants back home in Texas and Minnesota, and so they became, in fact, part of the provincial staff of the governor.

Number one, security was first and foremost. You remember from Vietnam, in the CORDS days, you can't have local development, and you can't start to build a successful economic and social structure, without security. So first and foremost the PRT was there to help the governor extend local security. Keep in mind, in September '03, when I was there, there was very few, if any, Afghan national police. The security in the area came from militia people, militia warlords, left over from the civil war. State's INL (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) was frantically down in Kabul at this time trying to set up a training center for a national police and to train them, and then, most importantly, after training them, to equip them, but in these outlying provinces, there was very little, if any, national police, so the PRT helped secure, open up secure roads to the outlying districts. That served as a basis to enable – and this is a very other important role of the PRT – to enable the UN agencies and the NGOs to move in to some of these outlying areas. Our guys could secure a road, they could build a bridge, they could fix culverts, so that was very important.

Basically they sat down with the governor and said, "What are your priorities, Governor? What is your plan, and let's look at the resources that you have, your own resources, let's look at the resources we have, and let's see how we can work together to support you," number one. Number two, the relationship with the UN and with the other NGOs and the PRT was very important, and again, the PRT served as a way to bring the UN agencies and the disparate NGOs together to review what resources were being applied to the governor's priorities in the province and in the outlying districts, avoid redundancy, look for reinforcing activities, and try to put together a coherent local security, local development program. Now, our PRT commanders had what are called CERP funds, Commanders and Emergency Response Funds, and this enabled them to – they had the authority, initially when I was there, to, I think, a commander of PRT could sign off on 5,000 or 10,000 on the spot, cash, on the barrel-head. We need to fix that bridge so people can get to that school or whatever, he could give \$10,000 in U.S. to a local contractor to get it done. So he had his own funds.

He also had access to DOD (Department of Defense) ODACA (ph) funds, which are humanitarian funds, which meant using funds beyond these high impact, initial impact, immediate impact funds, to help build rapport with local officials and local community leaders, you had these humanitarian funds which you could spend for larger projects, I think up to \$300,000. So those funds were used.

Later, we also tapped into USAID/ESF (United States Agency for International Development Economic Support Fund) funds, and there was a process where our PRTs, working with USAID, would submit a list of projects to the USAID office in Kabul to get access to ESF funds to promote local development. Now again, these Commanders and Emergency Response Funds, the humanitarian funds from DOD humanitarian office, ODACA, and the USAID/ESF funds, they were spending these, but again, you wanted to do it in a way that complimented and supported what the UN and the other NGOs were doing. So that was very important.

I think a final thing that the PRTs did was to serve as a structure around which we could support the training of the Afghan national army and the Afghan police. Again, when I was there in September of '03, we had, I think, only 7,000 to 8,000 Afghan army folks trained, after nearly two years, and we had a handful of police, but we found that if we assigned an Afghan army platoon or an Afghan police unit in a capital city where the PRT was, that our guys could help and reinforce their role and their presence. Again, that was more synergy and more support for extending the government role. It was really crucial, just like Vietnam, because in many places, it was not that the Taliban or Al Qaeda or Hekmatyar forces were strong, it was that the government was so weak.

So that was the general scope of what the PRTs were doing. Army Civil Affairs guys, they were headed by a lieutenant colonel, each of these four PRTs was headed by a lieutenant colonel or a colonel. We were in the process of getting State Department officers at the O2/O1 level assigned as State representatives on these PRTs. We went out, we got, I think, two or three Department of Agriculture representatives assigned and we tried to get some people from the Department of Justice ISITAP (ph), international police training assigned. They were very calculable commodities, and these Foreign Service officers brought terrific situational awareness, political awareness, in some places cultural awareness, and really were an important force-multiplier for the effectiveness of our PRTs. We worked very closely with the US embassy at that time, the DCM, was an outstanding DCM in this respect, that he immediately grasped the importance of the PRTs, in terms of extending Karzai's and the central government's, presence to the countryside. He scrupulously came up, as we began to open new PRTs, we went from four to 11 during my tenure there, he scrupulously came to the opening of every PRT. I think he might have missed one, but he sent an appropriate representative. He spoke very well at these PRTs and captured the importance of them, and he deserves a lot of credit for putting the embassy fully behind this effort.

Also, every six weeks we called in our PRT commanders for conferences in Bagram, and sometimes in Kabul, to exchange ideas and catch up on best practices that the different PRTs were doing. Again, the DCM in Kabul came to each of these meetings and often

spoke very well and was very supportive. When I was there we finally got an FSO-PRT coordinator assigned to Embassy Kabul, in late 2003, and then he had an administrative assistant assigned to him, because as we were going from four to 11 PRTs during my tenure there, we were getting a half a dozen or so, not every PRT, but half a dozen or so, were having the State officers – some of them were active duty, some of them were retired – assigned to the PRTs and there had to be a means to support them. The PRT coordinator set up in the political section of the embassy in Kabul, helped a lot, as well as did the administrative coordinator.

We needed much more, and I can talk about that later towards the end here, with thoughts and recommendations. It was very important to stay in close touch with the embassy and all these activities, and a major focus of the expansion from four PRTs in September '03 to 16 in July '04 was to get the proper State Department folks assigned to these PRTs as the deputy commanders, like we did in CORDS, in Provincial Advisory Teams. The office of Afghan Reconstruction Affairs in the South Asia Bureau, in the Department, worked extremely hard to recruit State officers for these assignments, again, by the time I left State to go to work as a political advisor to the National Guard in October '04, I think we had State officers assigned to 13 of the 16 PRTs. A great deal of credit goes to the State Reconstruction Office in the South Asia Bureau for beating the bushes.

Naturally, having the experience that you and I had with the CORDS program in Vietnam, and then watching this develop in Afghanistan, I am a very strong believer in this, and the importance of getting qualified State officers out to these teams, because they add so much. Good reporting, good insights, and they help our military commanders understand the big picture.

Q: With this, what was the impression that you were getting about Karzai? I mean, I understand he was pretty much bound to the capital, and didn't get out much. How about these governors? Were we seeing them as strong characters, were they political cronies, what were we seeing with the governors?

A: It was not unlike what you and I experienced in South Vietnam. They were a mixed bag. There were some stars and then there were some mediocres, and then there were some who actually were counter-productive.

Very quickly, about Karzai. My own view is I think we're very fortunate to have someone like Karzai, who was, under the Bonn convention, was an interim president until he was elected last year in his own right. So on the one hand, he's an intelligent, knowledgeable, sensible, pragmatic, of Pashtun heritage – this is important in Afghanistan – and he provides a lot of stability and some leadership to the central government. He was very much Kabul-bound. As you know, we have a \$50 million State Department security detail to keep President Karzai alive. One of the times he left Kabul he went to Kandahar and there was an assassination attempt on him. He went back to Kabul and during my time, he never came out, except for a road dedication in the near vicinity. So my own opinion was, first of all, it's easy as an outsider, to criticize, but I thought he paid a price, because he stayed so close to the capital.

Even within the palace grounds – and I went to several meetings with my commander to meet with Karzai and to talk about problems – even within his palace grounds, inside Kabul, he walked in a bubble, walking from where he lives on the compound to his office, he lives in a bubble, surrounded by heavily armed, SEALs (Sea, Air and Land team), then Army Special Forces, then these Dine Corps guys. I thought that undercut his effectiveness, I thought he should have showed his face to the Afghan people much more, but in the overall scheme of things, I think we're lucky to have someone of his competence and energy and hard work, and he's growing into the job.

When he travels, we fly him in a C-130 from Bagram, from CJTF-180, now called CJTF-76, but we fly him in a C-130, and a second C-130 carries his armored car. When he lands he walks from the C-130, his transport, to where his car is, in the other C-130, climbs in and moves out, because a lot of people want to kill him. You have to remember, this is Afghanistan. It's still dangerous and there are still deep feelings left over from the civil war, and huge political ambitions and a lot of people want to kill Karzai and defeat our effort.

Now, his governors. Let's talk about the good ones, I'll give you two good ones. One, very quickly, was in Kandahar, an engineer, I can't remember his last name, I'm sorry, I'm having a senior moment. The former governor, Shiraz, Karzai pulled out and put in a new one, an engineer, I can't remember right now his last name. But he was outstanding. Of all the people I met, besides Karzai, that I thought could be president of Afghanistan, the gentleman in Kandahar projected that ability. He was outstanding, he was very good, he was far-sighted, he was energetic, he was forceful, and he was extremely supportive of our PRT, very supportive of our CJTF-180. He had the combination, our governor in Kandahar, of vision with practicality. He shared Karzai's vision that this country could actually change, that this was maybe Afghanistan's last chance to get it together after 25 years of savage civil war, and put together a country on a new basis, on the long history of Afghanistan. He had that vision, but he was also practical. He could work at the village level, and he broker compromises between local police chiefs and regional militia leaders, between the intelligence people and the army. He was very good at handling the U.S. and other foreigners.

His problem was that he agreed to do everything to everybody, and he had a very small staff. When we'd visit him, we'd see the bags under his eyes, the pressure – his policemen were getting isolated and killed by the Taliban all the time, and Kandahar is the heartland of the Taliban area. He was under a lot of pressure, overworked, and you could see this build up over the months I was there. He didn't have the staff to properly help him and support him, and he desperately needed it. No surprise.

Another good one was up in Kunar province, and this was a former press secretary to Karzai, and again, his name escapes me, I'm sorry. He still had a California driver's license, he has a home in California. He was from the province, his family in Kunar province, went back a century. His father had been a key figure in the 1964 constitution

in Afghanistan, and so he came from a very respected family. He was also not as good as the governor of Kandahar, but he understood and wanted to carry out Karzai's program.

There were other governors who were actually very counterproductive. Next to Kunar province, Nangarhar province, the governor was vice president of one of these Islamist separatist forces in Pakistan, and he's the governor in Nangarhar province. He was sucking up the Hekmatyar, and Hekmatyar's forces did their R&R in Nangarhar province because of the governor, who by the way would not meet with my commander or myself, because he was anti-American.

Q: Did you have a PRT there?

A: We did not. It's a very dangerous place, very dangerous. We used the U.S. rangers and launched some major operations up there, going after Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his top lieutenants. Extremely rugged, it's in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains. It is a very remote and dangerous place.

In a place like Bamian, the governor was a Hazara. The Hazara is a minority tribe in Pakistan, they're in Afghanistan, they're in the majority in Bamian. He was a thoughtful man and our PRTs got along well with him and he got along well with the UN representatives.

Final example. The governor of Helmand province, who we arrested because we had rock-solid proof that he was Taliban operating in the area, was deeply involved in the drug trade. We arrested him and we arrested his police chief. We wanted to take him to Bagram and put him in the prison there. He was the scion of the dominant tribe in Helmand, our northern Helmand province. It was a situation where Karzai was fully aware that this was a very tainted and corrupt governor, but because he was a scion of the leading tribal family in Helmand province, who support Karzai – this is before the election. Karzai called us and our Special Forces commander down to the palace in Kabul. We laid the evidence out for him. He said, "I know, but I need him." So we had to turn the governor back to him, but he let us keep the police chief. We put the police chief in prison. These are the kinds of practical things that you have to deal with when you deal there.

Karzai was gradually always looking for ways to improve his governorships, but he's constantly balancing ethnic, political, and other forces. I would say, on balance, people were accepting. The governors were accepting, very accepting, of the PRTs, and spreading the governments out in the countryside, but there were some real challenges. Nangarhar, with the Islamist extremist as governor, Helmand with the guy deeply involved in the drug trade, and so forth.

One other thing I forgot to mention, it was very important. We assigned to each of the PRTs a senior ministry of interior representative. We had a PRT Afghan MOI (Minister of Interior), and the deputy minister in the ministry of interior was the PRT coordinator for that minister. We either had MOI colonels or generals assigned to our PRTs. They

were invaluable, and mostly good quality, to help our PRTs link into the MOI representatives in the countryside and with the governor.

Q: Talk a bit about the warlords, as you saw them. Were any of them sort of co-opted and made governors and all, was the whole idea to break up these warlords?

A: It's an interesting situation and it was complex and I'm a student of Afghanistan, I'm a novice. I don't pretend to be an expert, I'd never served there before. So you're trying to understand a very complex situation, but there are a number of key warlords that we came to grips with. Of course, Ismail Khan in Herat; Dostum in Mazar-e Sharif; Akdas (ph), also near Mazar-e Sharif; Doud up in Konduz; Hazrat Ali in Jalalabad. These were legendary figures. These are men who participated in the war against the Soviets, and after the war wound up fighting each other, switching sides like dominos or checkers as the situation evolved.

I left out one of the most important, at that time he was Karzai's defense minister, Fahim, who was the successor to Masoud, the great Panjshiri, the Lion of the North, the great Panjshiri leader. Fahim was, I think his chief of intelligence or his chief of staff, Fahim was Doud's chief of staff, and he was now defense minister. They still control the Panjshiri valley and lots of equipment up there.

All of these folks – Ismail Khan, Dostum, Akhtar, Doud, Fahim, Hazrat Ali – they all were heroes ...

[END TAPE]

A: ...in the local situation, and of course, within the context of Karzai's national priorities. Now, the plan was, number one, the approach was to demobilize their militias and de-arm them, demobilize them, disarm them, but to do that effectively, you had to provide them jobs. In '03 and '04, when I was there, jobs were very scarce in Afghanistan. So you had this conundrum of how are we going to tell someone like Dostum or Akdas to disarm their people when we had no jobs for them? So the Japanese and the UN had the lead on this disarming, demobilizing and job creation for the warlord folks. There was about an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 spread among these half-dozen senior warlords, and it was very slow going, because let's face it, these warlords, in effect, just like mafia dons, or just like political bosses in the U.S., they're supporting lots of people. They're responsible for the welfare of these people and if you don't give them a job when you disarm them, you're not going to be very persuasive, to put it mildly.

Another big thing we had to do was persuade them to divest themselves of their heavy equipment and put it in cantons supervised by the national forces. This is called cantonnement. It was a key part, for example, of the Dayton accords in Bosnia, you might remember, and later in Kosovo, where you get the different parties to give up their heavy weapons and put them in cantonments, and they're supervised by the international third party. So the NATO International Security Assistance Force based in Kabul had the responsibility for getting these warlords to turn in their heavy equipment and then setting

up cantons, big cantonments, where they could be supervised. They had to be supervised by the new Afghan army. Well, at the same time we're trying to do this, take away the heavy weapons from the warlords, we were trying to train an Afghan army. When I got there we had 7,000 or 8,000 Afghan army trained. That wasn't enough to do a lot of things, including set up these cantonments. So we were feverishly increasing the number of Afghans army-trained. By the time I left in end of January '04, we had about 12,000 or 15,000 trained, which now continues to grow.

That was a big obstacle in trying to get these weapons turned in and properly taken care of. Here's an example where the PRTs stepped in the breach. In Mazar-e Sharif, under the remarkable leadership of the British commander up there, abetted by the British ambassador in UK and supported by our commanders in CJTF-180, when Dostum and Akdas clashed, these two warlords, up north around Mazar-e Sharif, the PRT brokered the cease-fire in the shooting battle between these guys and then took the cease-fire beyond that and got the two sides, with the support of Minister Ali Jalali from the Ministry of Interior, who came up and started the heavy weapon cantonment between Dostum and Akdas in the north. The PRT brokered that, the British did a brilliant job, we had an FSO assigned up there, retired FSO, he also, I thought, was very effective.

Then, based on that, ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) started – almost simultaneously, really, ISAF started getting Defense Minister Fahim and the Panjshiris to begin to canton their heavy weapons from the Panjshiri valley on the outskirts of Kabul. That was a process that was ongoing.

I went with my commander, together, with our excellent DCM there – there was an interregnum when Ambassador Finn left in the summer of '03, we didn't get Khalilzad, I don't think, until November '03 – so the DCM was the chargé, if I remember, for four or five months, so we went with him on several occasions to meet with Dostum and Fahim and some of the other warlords to, number one, warn them that we would not tolerate an uprising against Karzai. So it was the chargé, with our senior military commander, myself taking notes, going to see these folks, warning them against any uprising against Karzai, emphasizing to them the importance of cantoning heavy weapons, and then encouraging them to participate in the demobilization-disarmament process.

As part of this process, with Karzai in the background, there was a process to begin to co-opt these people. Now Karzai dangled the vice-presidency before Defense Minister Fahim at one point and got him very interested in going along, and that, I think, was one of the reasons that Fahim participated and agreed to begin the disarmament of the Panjshiris, their heavy weapons, in the Kabul area. They offered Dostum a ministry of mines, at one point, and they dangled that before him. So there was this effort to do this, and in this context let me hasten to add that part of the background here was a kitchen-cabinet situation. It was called, I think, it wasn't the contact group but it was our embassy ambassador, or the chargé, the Canadian ambassador, the British ambassador, and the head of the UN, it was Brahimi and then his successor, Frenchman Jean Arnaud, both very astute – Brahimi's a genius – and then the senior U.S. military commander. These five people were, in effect, Karzai's kitchen cabinet.

They would meet with Karzai any time, night or day, when some event or some crisis happened they would be summoned to the palace, they would meet with him and they would work out a strategy, Canadian and British ambassadors, the U.S. ambassador, the UN senior representative, and the senior U.S. military commander. They worked intimately with Karzai on these issues, such as demobilization, cantonment of heavy weapons, and spreading PRTs, getting out there. A major issue that others will tell you about, a major issue was the jealousy – that’s my perspective – jealousy or concern by NGOs, international NGOs, some American NGOs and some UN elements, that the American PRTs were doing things that they should be doing.

Q: The PRTs were?

A: Yes. Because the American PRTs had security, because we had mobility, because we were well secured, because we had funds, and because we had vets who would go out and immunize a camel herd, or a sheep herd, and because we were very proactive. This caused a certain amount of tension with the some UN representatives and some agencies and the American NGOs. Why we’re doing this? Why we’re doing the kind of work that they thought they should do? So we had a PRT executive committee that met once a month down in Kabul, and we would invite the UN representatives and the NGOs, we hosted it, my commander hosted this meeting at our headquarters, and it was there to bring everybody together and we would invite foreign ambassadors from the different countries who were contributing in a significant way to these programs. We’d invite them and we’d spend an entire day going through all these issues.

It wasn’t until the end of 2003, early 2004 that Jean Arnaud – Brahimi went back after the constitution was adopted and then began to work on Iraq – but Jean Arnaud his deputy finally told us, by the end of 2003, early 2004, that the UN, he thought, and 80 percent of the NGOs he said, now embraced the PRTs. This was a big issue. A big issue, and it always remains a very sensitive issue in the relationship between the PRT commanders and the UN representatives in these provinces and these NGOs. It is a very sensitive one. There were some NGOs who would not come to a PRT meeting in the province, or would not come to our annual executive counsel meeting in Kabul because of their unhappiness, because we were military, because we were too active, because we were too close to the governor, there were a variety of reasons.

We had to pay attention to what they were saying. A huge issue was security, because when our PRT moved about in our Humvees, we placed a lot of emphasis on force protection, so we were well-protected when we moved about. There were several tragic situations where NGO representatives and UN representatives and local Afghan NGO representatives were ambushed and assassinated by Al Qaeda or Taliban or Hekmatyar agents, or militia. The UN and NGOs accused us of not paying enough attention to local security, of being too consolidated in our compounds and not looking after their kind of security concerns. So one of the big discussions that we had, at the monthly PRT meetings in the provinces and in the executive counsel back in Kabul, was agreeing on a common security picture among the provinces where we all were operating in

Afghanistan. Much of the provinces along the border with Pakistan, a good share of the territory of those provinces, were always red, because that's where the remnants of Taliban and Al Qaeda and Hekmatyar were. The other parts, were yellow, blue, or green. The NGOs were defenseless, of course, they had no armored protective vehicles, they had no weapons, they had a lot of times, their intelligence wasn't up to date, so they felt very vulnerable, and we had to bend over backwards to make sure that we paid attention to their security concerns. It's a continuing dialogue.

Q: Of course there's the problem with NGOs, particularly some like Doctors Without Borders and other ones which are sort of virulently anti-militaristic. How do you get protection if you're against militarism?

A: Against the military. "Militarism" is something I don't think democratic countries support. They are anti-military. Of course, as I said, our PRTs are proactive, we're spending money, we're out in the field, we're doing a lot of things, and so it's important, we have to respect – one thing we learned, as you saw in Vietnam – we have to respect and listen to what the NGOs and the UN are saying and find a way to work effectively with them. We can't do our job without them.

Q: In the first place, how was the leadership and the relationships within the PRTs – for some this is the first time these people have been out having to live with agricultural people, the FSOs, and the like. It's a different world for them, too. What were the various issues?

A: There were issues, as you might imagine. Again, I hate keep saying this, but based on our Vietnam experience, there are issues. Getting people to work together is what it boils down to. As we went from four to 11 PRTs – I mean the commanders of the PRTs by and large – and I participated in a constant series of meetings when they came in to the headquarters and I went out and visited them individually. I was impressed with the overall quality of the Civil Affairs lieutenant colonels and colonels who headed up the PRTs. They were not perfect and they had a lot to learn and they made mistakes, but by and large their energy, their earnestness, their intelligence, I thought, was highly commendable, and they quickly became, I thought, well-informed masters of their domain.

That said, they operated within a military framework. Of course force protection is a key issue for them, and there are times when their imagination and their resourcefulness suffered because they were bound by force protection rules. Our FSOs and some of the people from the Department of Agriculture assigned to the PRTs – remember, they were very much in the minority, an FSO or a Department of Agriculture representative, there's two of them, they're living with 60 military officers and soldiers. It's 95 percent to 98 percent Army Civil Affairs military. Our FSOs, quite understandably, chafed against some of the restrictions that the PRT commander would establish for their ability to travel far and wide, and to talk to certain groups of people. From the PRT commander's perspective, he's responsible for the safety of that FSO, active or retired, or the Department of Agriculture, or Department of Justice or INL representative assigned to

his PRT. If they get killed or seriously wounded, he is going to be held responsible by the commander of the CJTF-180 in Bagram and presumably by the embassy. So naturally he will err on the side of being super-safe. That got in the way of some of our energetic and smart FSOs, who wanted to get out there and push the envelope and visit and monitor and interview.

So those kinds of things had to be worked out, and then of course, another issue was sorting through the priorities for development projects. Everybody wanted to build a school, wanted to build a medical clinic, wanted to do a bridge. How did that fit in to the overall thing of what the governor wanted to do, and did everything the governor wanted to do something that was always right, and how did it work with what UN and the other people wanted to do, the NGOs? So, you had to sort through all these things and you had to agree on a certain set of priorities and then, as I mentioned, you have these different funding pots. The emergency response funds, the ESF funds from the USAID, the ODACA humanitarian funds from Department of Defense, so sorting out the priority of the projects, the timing of the projects, and what funding sources they were going to be. That, as you can imagine, was a source of great debate. There were strains and stresses there.

Living conditions. Some of these, like in Ghazni and Gardeyz, I mean, it looked like "beau geste." You're living in mud, a mud hut, and you're living in a mud hut! Mud floors, and when you went to the bathroom you urinated in a tube in the ground. There's a tube, and you urinate through the tube. Sometimes you had water for a shower, and sometimes you didn't. So you can imagine our FSOs and others, out on a long, hot day in the field, and you come in and the food and the life support situation is not always the best. That always causes a strain, too.

Then, of course, the stresses of evaluating what we're doing out there and picking and choosing who we're fighting and who we're supporting and so on and so forth, as you can imagine, there was plenty of room for disagreement, but, on balance – based on when they came in for their 6-weekly meetings, when we did our executive counsel reviews, based on my trips out there with the commander to talk to these people and observe to them – on balance, I think it worked reasonably well. There's always room for improvement.

Q: What about money. You know, when you're given \$10,000, I mean ...

A: This is \$10,000 a pop. You spend \$10,000, you get another.

Q: Yeah, I know that. I'm just saying, this is a great bonanza for anybody who can put together – I'm talking about Afghans – a construction company or something of this nature ...

A: Correct.

Q: And you have people who come in, who aren't that attuned to the culture.

A: Correct. You have to learn fast.

Q: Were we evaluating what we were doing?

A: You do the best you can, the best you can. This was not planned for. We were attacked on September the 11th in 2001, and our first kinetic, armed response was on October the 7th, and then we've sent our forces in there, working with the Northern Alliance, and then we put our task force together in Bagram. There was no inner-agency plan for stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan. I'll come back to that in a minute.

So we're doing this on the fly. And guess what? Who's doing the planning for this? It's our wonderful military colleagues who are doing it. The embassy is trying to revive a smashed building down in Kabul and get themselves together, and put together an embassy structure, but the embassy didn't have the assets to get out into the countryside. The military had the assets. So when you go into a local situation in a provincial city or a district town, if you're a military officer, if you're lucky to have an FSO who will be with you, you've got to sit down and talk to people, and you've got to decide within a couple of days, within a week, who makes this place run. Then you've got to go to work with them. You've got to pick out the mullah, you've got to pick out the reasonable district official or an effective police chief, if one exists, or a good militia leader if one is there. You've got to start making things happen. You want to put people to work. You want to open up roads, you want to build these schools, you want to get the mosque repaired, you want to do all these things. To do that you've got to start to get the money flowing.

Let me tell you, by the time I left the amount of money that a PRT could commit on his own at one pop was \$50,000. A brigade commander could commit \$100,000. To put it in perspective, I think we had – this is for Afghanistan as a whole, for all our commanders, including PRT guys – we had \$23 million in DOD humanitarian funds. I think we had about \$25 million in ESF, and we had \$40 million in Commanders Emergency Response Funds.

Q: I talked to one person, I'm sure you know him, who was in Herat, who was a PRT, and he was saying that they found themselves – the military situation got a somewhat tense there, between warlords, a regular military battalion was brought in. And they had a lot of money, and the battalion commander was spreading money all over the place, with no consultation or coordination with the PRT.

A: That's wrong. He should have coordinated with the PRT, and if our commander at the Combined Joint Task Force in Bagram had been aware of that, he would have instructed him to coordinate with the PRT.

That's one of the risks you run when you're doing stability and reconstruction on the fly. Now, if I could just say a few quick points about this. Number one, steps were taken to try to constantly improve the way we were doing PRT operations and stability and reconstruction. When one lieutenant general succeeded another lieutenant general in late

October 2003, the combatant commander for central command, set up a new command in Kabul. So the lieutenant general was the first U.S. military commander in Afghanistan to move down to Kabul, and he was given a new command, and it was called Combined Forces Command Afghanistan. Although it wasn't formally established until February '04, he actually moved down there in late October, early November.

He set up his office – he had two offices, he had his own compound as the Combined Force Command Afghanistan – but he also set up an office in the embassy, right next to the ambassador, and he did that for a specific purpose, because he understood the importance of pulling together a coherent political-military approach to what we were doing in Afghanistan, now that stability and reconstruction was the decisive effort and the counterinsurgency was the supporting effort. The general spent 80 percent of his time in the embassy, in his office, 10 feet from the ambassador and the DCM. He went to the country team meeting every morning, and he participated in intense deliberations with the ambassador and DCM every day. Then he did things like giving the ambassador a staff of 15 Army and Air Force officers, headed by a full colonel, to be the planning staff for Ambassador Khalilzad, because Khalilzad and the embassy were so thinly staffed. They couldn't keep up. You have to remember they couldn't keep abreast of everything that was going on and perform their functions.

The Mission Performance Plan, the MPP, for the embassy was done by this planning group of 15 military officers that was given to Khalilzad as part of this effort to integrate the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan, including the PRTs, into the embassy operations under the overall policy guidance of the ambassador. At that time, the lieutenant general was the only commanding senior U.S. military officer to be co-located in an embassy with an ambassador. So that was his vision, and he used that to work very closely with Khalilzad, and the DCM, to make these PRTs work more effectively, and to make them more sensitive to these situations, and to deal with the kind of problem like one of your guys talked about in Herat.

Now, it was a constant battle to get these PRTs sufficiently staffed with qualified FSOs. Again, I have to tell you candidly that the general was always continually disappointed that we didn't have FSOs flocking to Kabul to take on these challenging assignments, and to join this effort. He was pulling Civil Affairs units from all over the United States to staff these PRTs, to go from four to 16, at 16 people apiece, and getting in new lieutenant colonels and colonels. The general was ransacking the U.S. Army reserve to get these PRTs out there, and he could not understand why the Department of State didn't have one, two, three FSOs ready to roll to serve on each of these PRTs. We talked about this at great length.

Q: Were you able to sound out – what were your impressions with why?

A: OK, well, here's my impression why. Again, based on our experience in Vietnam, the basic issue was the President of the United States declared that we were a nation at war, fighting the War on Terrorism. DOD was at war. The U.S. Army was at war. But I have to tell you, the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture, the Department

of Justice, many parts of it, were not at war. They were not mobilized like our army and like our DOD military is mobilized. They were not expeditionary. They were not flexible to provide the kind of instant support to meet these evolving situations that the military was going through to address. This is a fundamental issue, that there was a huge imbalance between our defense establishment, fully committed to the war, and on a wartime mentality, in a wartime frame, and our civilian agencies were not.

Part of this, I think, is Presidential leadership, because when the President says we're a nation at war, and he gives vast resources to the Department of Defense, but he does not turn to OMB (Office of Management and Budget) and tell OMB to plus up State, Justice, Agriculture, USAID, and others who are in the stability and reconstruction effort, he doesn't plus them up, so they have to take it out of hide. So as you know from your own experience, bureaucratically, while the top of an agency may intellectually agree, "Yes, Mr. President, we are at war," but institutionally in that agency, if they're not plussed up, and they have to take personnel, and time, and resources out of their own hide, and they're not going to get paid for it, it doesn't happen. Good example, you remember, for the CORDS program, in Vietnam – you know, I think the department applied 300 FSO positions, 300 to 400 FSO positions, to help staff the MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) advisory effort, including the 44 country teams and the 44 Provincial Advisory Teams and the almost 400 District Advisory Teams, and support staff at the four regional headquarters at MACV and Saigon. 300 to 400 FSO positions against that, and they set up the Vietnam training center. So, because this was a wartime approach, and the Vietnam training center, again, you remember – in my own case, I went to study Vietnamese language for a year, culture and history, not only with State Department officers, but with the military officers participating with me in the CORDS program. So when I got off the airplane in Tan San Nhut, in Saigon, in Vietnam, I had a year of language training and history and culture of Vietnam under my belt and I was going to work in a Provincial or a District Advisory Team with military officers that I had served in a training center with. That is a commitment, and that is not what is happening, either in Afghanistan and Iraq. I just got back from a trip to Iraq last week, and we visited four National Guard units up there and I can tell you, they're blind. They're supposed to have 16 Category 2 interpreters, for example, in one of the brigade headquarters, they had two. So our forces are over there doing cordon and search operations in villages and small towns in Iraq, they don't have political advisors, they don't have sufficient interpreters, and they're getting hammered.

If we were serious about Afghanistan and Iraq, we would mobilize the State Department behind this effort. We would have an Afghanistan-Iraq training center. We would send our FSOs, who are going out to work in PRTs, who are going out to work in government teams in Iraq, to study Farsi and Dari and Pashtun, and Arabic for a year, get that culture and historical background, and serve with the Army Civil Affairs, and other officers who will be in advisory capacities with them. That is where you get traction, and that is where you have tremendous effect in a stability and reconstruction environment.

Remember, when you're doing stability and reconstruction in these situations, violence is always there. Sometimes it's in your face, sometimes it's down the block. It is always

there, so you have to be properly prepared and equipped to operate effectively, and cultural and linguistic awareness is absolutely pivotal.

So the lieutenant general and his predecessor could not understand why State Department officers assigned to Afghanistan didn't speak Pashtun, didn't speak Dari. There were some, there was a handful – and by the way, I can say almost without exception, the State Department officers I met in the embassy and the ones that served in the PRTs were remarkably people, and they did terrific jobs. But only a handful of them, like myself, knew Afghanistan or could speak the language. This is critical.

Q: You mention aid money. Now, aid is renowned for taking four to five years to – usually they plan something now, and the administration changes and priority changes before they can commit money. What was your impression of aid at that time, as responding to the PRT needs?

A: I want to say favorable. Favorable in this respect, that individually, the aid director at the time, I worked with two of them, both extremely hardworking and energetic, number one. Number two, and some of the USAID representatives, in addition to the State representative, and the Department of Agriculture representative we had with our expanding PRTs, we also had a couple of USAID representatives, particularly the one down in Kandahar. They were just as outstanding as our FSOs. They were just as much seized with the program, but they found themselves enmeshed in this impenetrable maze of Congressionally-imposed restrictions on USAID and USAID procedures in the processing of these contracts and getting it done. I think you've got to respect the fact that USAID has spent a tremendous amount of money over 40 or 50 years, and they have their ways of doing things, they've also been burned very badly by the Congress, but the quality of the USAID people that I encountered I thought was first-rate. Everybody wanted to cut through the red tape and get it done, but it was a real challenge, and that is why when you contrast DOD's Commander Emergency Response Funds with USAID/ESF or even with DOD ODACA humanitarian funds, there's no comparison in terms of ability of spending it. That's why that battalion commander you referred to in Herat had the bucks, because the DOD command authorities understand how important it is in this situation to have these funds available. So far and away, the Commander Emergency Response Funds, the CERF funds, were the coin of the realm in getting the kind of immediate, high impact that you want.

Now, if we had a political advisor, a State Department political advisor, assigned to a brigade commander, who, by the time I left, could commit \$100,000 at a pop, your chances that he's going to spend it in an effective way, your chances that he will do it in co-ordinance with the PRT, is greatly enhanced, because a good political advisor would be very sensitive to that. Again, not only couldn't we get FSOs to do the work in PRTs, it was extremely difficult to get FSOs to serve as political advisors in Afghanistan.

Q: You were retired by this time or not?

A: Well, by the time I was in Afghanistan, I was a rehired annuitant. One other quick question on ESF, let me say, a plus for USAID, because I want to present as objective a picture as possible. When I was still on active duty I had the privilege of serving as a political advisor with S4 in Tuzla, in northeast Bosnia, and we worked very closely, the U.S. commander of the Multinational Brigade in northeast Bosnia, which was a real tough place under the Dayton Accords. My commander and I had an intimate working relationship with the USAID representative in the headquarters town where we were in that area, Tuzla. Over the two or three years after the Dayton Accord got kicked off, our U.S. military commanders in Tuzla and the USAID representative there had worked out some really good procedures for getting ESF funds expended as fast as humanly possible. It wasn't perfect, there were still problems, but I want to tell you, by the time I got there in '99 – and USAID and the military had been working on this for 3-plus years – by the time I got there in '99, it was a pretty impressive program. USAID/ESF funds were used to build roads, to build bridges, to string electricity in some of the most difficult mine-strewn and still-contested areas between the Serbs and the Bosnians, and I was very impressed, so I want to give them credit for that.

When you get it done in an organized way and it's properly set up, this works. When you're doing it on the fly, you can appreciate the difference.

Q: A couple of things, before we wind this up. With the PRTs, how did we deal with two problems that are sort of endemic in Afghanistan. One is the role of women, the other is drugs.

A: I don't have a lot to offer on that, Stu, because those weren't two issues that, in my capacity as political advisor, working with the generals and the PRTs, that I spent much time on.

First of all, on women, in the rural areas and the provinces that we were working, from a military counterinsurgency standpoint they were almost invisible. I went into dozens of villages along the border, because I was working a lot of border issues in this trap or tight (ph) commission, trying to get cross-border cooperation between our forces, Pakistanis and Afghans, and the women were invisible. You never saw them. They were kept hidden. These were extremely conservative Pashtuns, Waziris (ph), Helmands and others. So we didn't see them.

Outside of Kabul, you didn't see a lot of women. They were starting to emerge, I heard references to them in the PRT commanders meetings, and everybody was sensitive to the fact why to do more, but they only really emerged when the delegates to the constitutional convention that assembled in Kabul in mid-December of '03, and then particularly later in the fall of September '04, with the elections. For the constitutional convention and for the elections, the women surfaced, but they were few and far between in the provinces, but other FSOs who served with PRTs would probably be much better informed on that than I am.

On drugs, the issue for us was that we did not go after drugs as a military mission.

Q: You're talking about poppies?

A: Poppies. Our military mission was to defeat the remnants of the insurgency and create a safe and secure environment so that this stability and reconstruction process could evolve. If we encountered a drug-lord or a drug laboratory, or drug transports, or poppy fields in the course of our regular military operation, then we could take appropriate action, report to the minister of interior, and do what was the sensible thing to do. That happened once in a while, but our military felt that we were trained to do the really hard job of running the borders, down the valleys, over the mountain peaks, chasing bad guys. That was our job, and we were thinly spread. It was enormously challenging terrain, and we couldn't be diverted from that main task without running undue risk.

Q: Was there a sense that, while you were doing this, and you don't have to comment on this, that Afghanistan could have been, you might say, a better place today, if we had committed more troops there and had not diverted so much to Iraq?

A: That's a hard question.

Q: People talk. That's not your analysis, but was there a sense there among the Americans serving in Afghanistan, that we shortchanged the Afghan operation?

A: Well, first of all, I'm not a military expert, number one, you need to know that. I have had a lot of experience working as a political advisor in these political-military situations, so I offer you these comments from that perspective.

One of the big issues in Afghanistan, of course, you have to keep in mind, I would suggest, is first of all, the way we fought the war. There was the attacks on September the 11th, we moved in in October and November, and there was a debate, as I understand it, and much of this is based on Washington Post reporter Bob Woodard's excellent books on Bush at war, and Plan of attack. The account he gives of the National Security Council meetings was, there was a debate. Should we go into Afghanistan with significant U.S. forces? Two problems, number one, General Franks, U.S. Central Command Commander, didn't have a plan for Afghanistan. There was no extant military plan for Afghanistan like we had with Korea, like we have for Taiwan, like we have for a number of other places, Iran, Iraq, etc. There was no plan for Afghanistan, so we had to construct a plan.

Number two, the essential approach that was used was to work with the Northern Alliance and other militia elements in Afghanistan that were opposed to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. This was based on the CIA's (Central Intelligence Agency) allegiance and network of contact that they had made with these Northern Alliance forces under Massoud and others. So we fought the war in Afghanistan that caused the collapse of the Taliban.

We fought this war in Afghanistan. The course of action that President Bush endorsed and chose was to fight this war through the Northern Alliance. So we used an estimated 350 to 450 Special Forces soldiers and about 250 to 300 CIA paramilitary with the Northern Alliance. That's how we defeated the Taliban. So after that happened, then we began to introduce forces in larger numbers into the situation, into Afghanistan. So we had 12,000 to 14,000 up at Bagram and then we had the 5,500 NATO ISAF force down in Kabul.

Because we fought the war with the locals taking the lead, there was always a point of view, then, on the war cabinet, and in the national security establishment, that we didn't want to turn Afghanistan over into a large-scale U.S. military occupation. By the time I left in late January '04, our coalition and U.S. forces in Kabul had been plussed up to about 18,000 to 20,000 under General Abizaid's direction, on a major effort to try to get bin Laden. And as you may know, we have increased the NATO forces, particularly for the elections there in September '04, from about 5,000 to almost 9,000. By the winter of '04 we had close to 30,000 foreign troops in there, U.S. and NATO. Everybody's very sensitive to local sensibilities and how much is enough.

My own feeling is – at the same time, let me hasten to add, it's important to keep in mind, we're feverishly training the Afghan military to take over these tasks, and in this counterinsurgency situation, where we are now, it's the local forces, which know the situation better, who are going to help establish local security, the military with properly trained Afghan national police and border security police. So, at the end of the day, I think we have enough U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The key thing is, are they the right kind of forces? Do they have the proper capabilities? Do they have the proper support, number one. Number two, how are we investing in training in the Afghan national army? When I was there we were training two to three battalions at a time. Now we're training six Afghan battalions at a time, making a huge push to get it up to 50,000 by June 2006.

Because of the way the war was fought, primarily relying on letting the Afghans take the lead through the Northern Alliance, and because we're sensitive to local concerns and because the major thrust is to train the Afghan national army, and because we have NATO in there and U.S. and coalition forces, I think we have enough. I don't think having more forces in there would have made a lot of difference, but what we could have done is had a better balance of forces, had a more robust civil affairs presence ...

[END TAPE]

Q: This is tape two, side one.

A: So, I was saying so that we would have, under a proper configuration, it's not so much larger numbers of U.S. forces, but better distributed and better capable forces, so that as we moved more fully into a stability and reconstruction, or phase four in army doctrine, scenario, that we reduce the number of combat forces and we have more intelligence, we have more civil affairs, we have more engineers, and that we have more PRTs.

The general endorsed this vision and talked about it constantly, and as I mentioned, I think there's 16 U.S. PRTs now, and I think 5 NATO PRTs, for a total of 21, and his vision is to have 35 PRTs, one for each Afghan province. We're at 21 or 22 now, here we are, 2005. We should have had 21 or 22 PRTs at the end of 2002 or 2003. That should be the focus. It's all about getting the governance of the Afghan government spread to the countryside, getting trained Afghan police and Afghan military, and getting trained teachers and doctors and Afghan ministry of health representatives out in the provinces, and giving them the opportunity to develop their local economy. We're not going to do it. They're going to do it. It's proper employment of the right kind of our forces to reinforce that Afghan dynamic that is the key.

Q: Well, I think this will end it, at this point.

A: I got one more, just a few quick comments to make on the PRTs. I just want to wind up by again, reemphasizing, we need to mobilize the Department of State and the other civilian agencies so they are committed to the Afghan and Iraq challenge in a more flexible, expeditionary and responsive manner. I feel like the Vietnam training center of Vietnam days is on possible thing to look at, number one.

Number two, terrific people from State are participating in the PRTs and the embassy has done a lot to improve them, but you know, I felt that, if I can humbly suggest, you need a much stronger PRT section in the embassy. In these situations, our embassy, when you put an embassy in a place like Afghanistan, we do what we are trained to do. So we set up an economic section, a political section, a consular section, and administrative, and a PAO (Public Affairs Office) and so forth.

But in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, this is not a normal diplomatic situation. So you've got to set up an embassy structure that makes sense. In Afghanistan, the PRT section should be twice as big as the political or the economic section, and it should be properly staffed and supported. We've got, as I said, about 16 or 17 U.S. PRTs now, and we've got at least, close to a dozen FSOs out there, but the staff support back in the embassy is still very thin, number one. The way the reporting cables from our officers out in the provinces are processed offers room for improvement. Nobody's perfect, you've worked in consulates, working in countries with major embassies and it's not unsimilar, but for so long our PRT FSOs couldn't get their reports down to the embassy in a timely manner, processed through the embassy hierarchy, and back to Washington in the DOD and the other places where they could be useful. Speed of information is critical, you've got to spend a lot more time to focus on getting the good information garnered by our FSOs in the countryside with the PRTs, and distributed in an effective manner internally in Afghanistan, and back here in the Beltway in Washington.

Right away, another key area is dedicated air support for the PRTs. In a place like Afghanistan, like Vietnam, these places are far-flung. You remember, what did we have in Vietnam? We had Air America. That's how we kept our Provincial Advisory Teams fully staffed and supported and so forth, but in Afghanistan, which is incredibly more

rugged and more dispersed than Vietnam, there was no dedicated air support for the PRTs. You had to borrow helicopters from the counterinsurgency effort in Bagram, from CJTF-180. So you need to have dedicated air support, you need to have a dedicated communications support so you can communicate both cipher and nipper (ph), and you need to have a really robust PRT office either in the embassy or like, MACV, transferred to the Combined Forces Command Afghanistan headquarters, about five minutes from the embassy, where you have the military compound, and they can work in the military compound, still maintain close liaison with the embassy, where you've got the kind of communication, 24/7 communication that you need to make this kind of thing work.

Another key thing is lessons learned. I had the privilege in participating in this interview with you, you're trying capture lessons learned. The PRT office in the embassy, or in the military headquarters in Kabul, should be capturing best practices of what the PRTs and what our FSOs, who are by and large doing a fabulous job out there, capture these practices and then share them with the new FSO coming in, and by the way, if you have a training center, you can integrate these new lessons into the curriculum and so, like we experienced in the Vietnam training center, each class got deeper and deeper, and hopefully smarter and smarter, best on tactic techniques, procedures, new angles, experiences and so forth. That's a very important part of the process that I think needs a lot more attention.

Fundamentally, let me conclude by saying I dearly wish that our beloved Department of State and our director of personnel, and I know how strapped they are, and how under-funded and under-resourced they are, I know how hard they're working, but I honestly believe that they've got to find a way to get to either OMB or the White House, to get the resources they need to address the FSO-supported PRTs in both Afghanistan and the government teams in Iraq, in a really serious systematic way. These are tremendous opportunities for our young officers, to have a lifetime of experience, participate in an historic situation, and contribute so much to our stability and reconstruction efforts that are pivotal. What we're doing in Afghanistan and Iraq is transforming military victory into strategic success. If you don't do stability and reconstruction right, the military victory will be imperiled or will be lost. The PRTs in Afghanistan play a pivotal role here, and the role of the FSOs are critical. We need to take it in a much more serious, systematic, and institutionalized way. It'll pay huge dividends.

It also applies to political advisors. We ought to have political advisors at the brigade level in Afghanistan and in Iraq, to be that force multiplier and help our forces with their cultural, linguistic and political awareness at the local levels. Again, the Department needs to transform itself like DOD is transforming itself, to meet the new challenges. Let me humbly suggest that they Department should transform itself, to develop a corps of people who can do these kinds of tasks, as political advisors, or PRTs, or government representatives in these two countries.

There's going to be more situations like this. We've got to do it better. Thank you, Stu, for that commercial.

[END INTERVIEW]