

USIP –ADST  
Afghan Experience Project  
Interview #1  
Executive Summary

The interviewee is a Farsi speaker and retired FSO who has had prior Afghan experience, including working with refugees during the period the Taliban was fighting to take over the country in 1995. He returned to Kabul in 2002 as chief of the political section, although retired, for seven months. He returned in 2003 and worked at the U.S. civil affairs mission in Herat for 6 months. He came back later in 2003 to Afghanistan working for the Asia Foundation.

He worked on a PRT for approximately three months in late 2004 in Herat. The American presence was minimal when he got there. Security was excellent and the local warlord, Ismael Khan, was using revenues he siphoned from customs houses into development projects. Shortly after subject arrived in Herat, Khan was ousted in a brief battle by forces loyal to Kabul and with the threat of unrest U.S. forces were increased in the area. Our subject suggested to Khan that he make peace with the Kabul government, and he did, perhaps in part on the advice of subject.

The Herat PRT had about one hundred American uniformed troops with three civilians, State, AID, Agriculture. Subject was the political advisor to the civil affairs staff, a reserve unit from Minnesota. But much of their work was soon taken over or undercut by the U.S. military task force commander brought in in response to the ouster of Khan. According to subject, the task force commander in the region saw himself as the political expert. He had money and supported projects he felt were worth and sought no advice from the PRT on how to spend it.

Subject noted that the American ambassador in Kabul did not have control over the various aspects of American presence in Afghanistan – the U.S. military and the another key USG agency had their own agendas. Subject felt that the U.S. military did not work well as a team; it had too many layers of command. While subject was in Herat, these problems were not solved.

Subject was impressed with the Army's civil affairs team. These reservists had useful civilian backgrounds and had worked elsewhere, as in Bosnia, but, unfortunately, they were disregarded by more senior levels of command.

The PRT during subject's three months stay was heavily concerned with preparing for the upcoming election, which came off well. Subject noted the growing sophistication of the electorate in the Herat area, many of whom had access to TV, cell phones, and the internet.

NGOs had been burned out during the fight over the governorship when subject arrived and had not returned before he left.

Large numbers of girls were gaining access to education and the literacy rate gradually rose. Men ran the country but subject felt that women would eventually gain a greater voice. He described the huge gap between the wealthy and poor in Herat and elsewhere in the country. Few among the wealthy felt any responsibility to aid the poor despite their avowed adherence to Islam.

Subject, who had run two consulates, noted that the PRT system had very shallow roots in the community and had little outreach or connection to Afghans who were not at the highest levels of regional government.

Drugs returned to Herat in 2004 after the ouster of Ismael Khan – which may have been why he was ousted. The security situation remained good during subject's time at the PRT. The Taliban had little support in the area.

When subject left the PRT, it was taken over by an Italian contingent, although two U.S. bases were built in the area.

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

**Interview #1**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy  
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*Q: Today is March 22, 2005. The Subject of this interview is a retired FSO, a Farsi speaker with previous Afghanistan experience. This interview is being done on behalf of the United States Institute for Peace as part of the Afghan Experience Project. It is focused on the role of provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs. The Subject served in Herat.*

*This is another iteration of your experience in that area of the woods. How long were you there and where were you located?*

A: I can give you a brief recapitulation of my experience in Afghanistan. The first time I went to Afghanistan was in 1971. I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran at the time. I went for a one week vacation. I returned to Afghanistan the next time in, I think, 1995 when I was working with the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration as an office director and I went up to inspect a refugee camp near Jalalabad. At the time, the Taliban were fighting to get control of the city of Kabul. I only spent one day there. It was basically an orientation because I was responsible for funding for Afghan refugee projects. After the events of 9/11, I was contacted by the Department and asked if I would consider returning to Afghanistan (or going to Afghanistan) to work in the about-to-be-opened embassy. I agreed. In January 2002, I went and served as chief of the Political Section for seven months. I was also in charge of the Consular Section and by default in charge of the Economic Section at the same time. The consular officer who finally came in arrived, I believe, in July. I was in charge from January until July of Consular along with Political. I returned to Afghanistan in 2003. I spent

six months at the Civil Affairs Mission in Herat. It was not yet at that point an official PRT. It was a Civil Affairs mission under the U.S. Army.

*Q: We have an account of your time there.*

A: I returned to Afghanistan again later that same year working privately with the Asia Foundation as their political officer. They wanted me there for just 90 days to serve with them during the constitutional Loya Jirga. They wanted somebody with political experience to give them advice and information about their own programs and their future programming in Afghanistan.

I left Afghanistan in late January/early February of 2004 and returned in approximately the first week or so of September that same year. I remained until November, about two and a half or three months in Afghanistan the second time that year. I went to Afghanistan to what was now an official PRT in the city of Herat with responsibilities for western Afghanistan. I went there specifically to fill a gap between the departure of (interviewee #14) and the arrival of (interviewee #22). There was going to be a two or three- month gap and the Department wanted it covered because that gap also spanned the time of the presidential election in Afghanistan. That was the last time I was in Afghanistan.

*Q: We did the first part of Herat, but when you went back to Herat with the State Department... Let's cover the time you were there when you came back. How was your Farsi/Afghani?*

A: My Farsi is fluent and if you'd like, I'd be happy to do the whole interview in Farsi. Give the job to a translator.

*Q: What were you doing? What was the situation in Herat?*

A: The situation in Herat had changed incredibly between the time that I departed there in 2003 and arrived back in 2004. I might add, by the way, that I visited Herat while I was with the Asia Foundation in, I think, late January of 2004. I visited just for a few days to introduce the head of the Asia Foundation to local officials in Herat. I also visited the PRT at that point.

The situation was this: when I departed Herat and the Civil Affairs Mission in late 2003, we had a very limited number of American military personnel in western Afghanistan, a very, very small number. We had the people at the Civil Affairs Mission, about 20 American soldiers and personnel, one civilian (that was me). We had some other teams that would come and go in the area, but that was the extent of it. It had really dropped down to the most insignificant number of American personnel in the entirety of western Afghanistan.

*Q: Was there any particular reason for this?*

A: A couple of reasons. Security was excellent in the area in general. There was a feeling that Herat province and those provinces of western Afghanistan had plenty of money because Ismael Khan, who was the local warlord and also the governor of Herat, was siphoning a great deal of money from customs revenues and putting it into projects in the city and in the province. But there was a feeling that there was a lot of money for development already there from local sources and a feeling that we should not perhaps make Ismael Khan seem bigger and more important by giving lots of additional money. We were doing projects, but nothing on a grand scale. Schools, some roads, things of that sort.

The times changed. During the course of the next eight or nine months, Kabul decided that Ismael Khan had to leave. They wanted him out of his position. He had become far too independent. I believe there was a feeling that, if he remained in power as governor during the presidential election, it would have a decided anti-Karzai impact on the election results. The city of Herat had 10% of the

popular vote for the presidential election. There was a huge number of people who had registered, the city and the province of Herat, and 10% of the vote could have swung it drastically in another direction if Ismael Khan were in charge of the overall voting procedures out there.

During the course of 2004, there was a minor uprising in the town of Shindand led by Amamullah Khan, who was an old opponent of Ismael Khan. Amamullah Khan was a very nationalist Pashtun. He and Ismael Khan had been enemies for as long as anyone could remember. Ismael Khan's family, his brothers, other family members, lived in Shindand, which was more or less under the influence and quasi-control of Amamullah Khan. Ismael Khan was also originally from Shindand. He's not from Herat.

*Q: Where is Shindand in relation to Herat?*

A: Shindand is approximately a three hour drive to the south. It's close to the Iranian border as well. Indeed, there was a border crossing not too far from Shindand. Shindand and the Zerokut area below Shindand, a 15-20 minute drive from the town, were... Well, Zerokut was considered no-man's land because it was controlled by Amamullah Khan. At any rate, trouble broke out. There was a minor uprising. Amamullah Khan seized the town of Shindand, which was officially at least under the rule of Ismael Khan as governor of the province. He seized Shindand. A fair number of people were killed. There were lots of injuries. Ismael Khan's soldiers or his troops fought Amamullah Khan's troops. There was, of course, a great deal of suspicion that Amamullah Khan was getting support from Kabul to do this from various of the ministers in Kabul, part of the central government in Kabul, to weaken Ismael Khan. I don't have the chronology exactly in my head now because I wasn't there at the time, but more or less at the same time, Ismael Khan's son and other family members of his were involved in a shootout in the city of Herat with a member of the local army, a self-styled general who was in charge of one of the army corps, who was based in

Herat. I'm not sure how the trouble started, although there had been enmity between Ismael Khan and this particular general for a very long time. The result, however, was that Ismael Khan's son was killed along with other people in front of the general's house by the general's forces. The general had to escape the city. He traveled north to Badghis province, where his brother was a high ranking police official. They joined in the attacks against Ismael Khan's forces from south and north. In other words, from Badghis province, you had this family and their forces, people loyal to them, fighting with Ismael Khan's people. In the south, you had Amamullah Khan coming up towards Herat with his people. There was even a feeling – I'm not sure why, but there was a very strong feeling inside the city of Herat that the city might actually be taken by these forces, the combination of the two. There was almost panic in the city and certainly a bit of suppressed panic among the American forces that were in the area.

As a result of all of this, American forces went into Herat province in large numbers. Amamullah Khan was summoned or brought to Kabul. The former Soviet air force base of Shindand was occupied by American forces. Approximately 1,000 American troops were assigned to the area. A PRT was established down in Herat to the south, where there had not been a PRT before. An American force was put down there. An American PRT staff was put down there. We ended up with a task force in the area of approximately 1,000 Americans. Early in my tenure in Herat for those three months (from September until November of 2004), a western regional command was established, the American western regional command, under the authority of an American colonel. The headquarters were also Herat. So, between the time that I left in 2003 and approximately a year later, 2004, the American presence went up from 20 or so to well over 1,000.

*Q: Was there the suspicion or a rule or a fact that the United States, the Americans, were involved in this attempt to get Ismael Khan out? Very obviously, Karzai was our boy.*

A: I'd say there was a very strong feeling among the population in the city of Herat that that's the case. Not only the Americans, but also there was a strong feeling that UNAMA, the United Nations organization that is in Afghanistan, UNAMA, the UN in general, and the Americans had conspired against Ismael Khan.

*Q: When you got there in September of 2004, where was Ismael Khan?*

A: Ismael Khan was still ostensibly governor. He believed and he had announced to the people that he would be governor until after the election and that at that time he would go to Kabul. In a speech in a local mosque, he said that going to Kabul and becoming a minister is not a step down from being governor. He assumed that he would be there through the election. I got there and about two days later, Karzai suddenly announced that Ismael Khan was no longer the governor and he was sending a new governor to the city of Herat. The new governor arrived and large scale rioting broke out in the city in opposition to the new governor and in support of Ismael Khan. When I say "large scale," I'd say the chances are excellent that it was orchestrated by the friends and follows of Ismael Khan. It was not exactly a popular uprising with hundreds of thousands of people, but it was a substantial body of demonstrators who proceeded to burn out and gut several United Nations buildings. They fought. There was a fair amount of bloodshed. A number of people were wounded. I believe people were killed (Afghans). Certainly they felt no compunction about attacking UN buildings, the UN guard force, or American soldiers in American uniform. So, two days after my arrival, we had a whole day of buildings burning and fighting in the streets that lasted for much of the day.

*Q: I think we might finish this Ismael Khan part and then we'll come back to the PRT. How did this play out while you were there?*



A: I watched the rioting going on. Remember that I'd just been there for about two days, so I didn't really know the military staff yet. They didn't know me. My predecessor was still there kind of sitting in place and not wanting to leave. After looking at the situation, I went to the commander and suggested that we simply go down and talk to Ismael Khan directly. Now, the new governor was in the city somewhere being protected by American soldiers. I convinced the military commander of the PRT that we should simply go down, see Ismael Khan, and try to get him to stop the rioting. I called the embassy, told them I wanted to do this. I got permission from the embassy. I called an Afghan friend who had a private car and who was also very close to Ismael Khan, asked him to arrange with Ismael Khan to see if he would see us. He did that. He came and picked us up in a private car. The commander and I went to town and sat in Ismael Khan's house during the fighting for about an hour and a half. The commander basically gave me carte blanche to tell Ismael Khan anything I wanted to. I did the whole thing in Farsi directly with him. We did not take a translator. Ismael Khan and I go back a ways. I, of course, had met with him innumerable times in my preceding time in Herat. What I told him was, it was not a good idea to let the rioting continue. He was very angry. He felt betrayed by Karzai. He felt betrayed by everybody. If he had not directly orchestrated the rioting, he certainly had given it his blessing. He told me that Karzai had promised him he could stay on as governor until the elections were over. In fact, during the hour and a half that we were there, he spoke to Karzai three times by phone and Karzai promised him on the phone that he would recall the new governor that day. In the middle of all this, I was sitting there with the PRT commander, and I asked Ismael Khan if he had ever heard of Jalal Bayar, a former Turkish president. He said, "No." I told him the story of Bayar. Jalal Bayar had been president of Turkey at the time that Adnan Menderes was prime minister. There was a military coup. This was back in the late '50s. Jalal Bayar and the entire cabinet were put in prison. They were all sentenced to death – Menderes, the president, a number of other cabinet members. Bayar was so old and so ill that he kept having heart attacks in prison. It looked like it would be impossible to hang him because he

was basically in a coma. So, the military, just before they were going to hang all the others, gave his comatose body back to his family and said, "Take him and let him die at home." He was going to die. Thirty years later, when he was 105 years old, the richest man in Turkey, the head of a political party, and the grand old man of Turkish politics, he finally died. I told Ismael Khan this story. Now, Ismael Khan and I are the same age (58/59). I looked at him and said, "You know lots of other people like Jalal Bayar. You were in prison yourself. You didn't know if you'd be alive the next day. I was in prison. I never knew if I was going to be alive the next day. But you and I are sitting here having tea together right now. Yes, you are governor. You were governor before. You lost it. You came back to being governor. Nobody knows what will happen. When I look at you, I see somebody who could very, very easily be the president of Afghanistan in the next election five years from now. People will look at today and how you react to the destruction of Herat and that will have an impact on your chances for the presidency five years later. Why don't you stop the rioting?" And he did.

Now, by the way, he is a member of the cabinet and doing quite well.

When I say he stopped the rioting, he was also on the phone with Karzai, I was there telling him this, reminding him of common sense and things of that sort, and political reality. Other people were calling him. All of this together – I'm not claiming I stopped the rioting by a long shot – it was a combination of factors. Karzai... came in at the end of the conversation... He had been called out again for another phone call and he said, "Karzai has just told me he's pulling out the new governor right now and I will be governor until after the election." Fine, fine.

What happened was that the rioting stopped. The new governor went back to the airport and apparently there were subsequent phone calls because the new governor returned to the city and stayed on as the new governor.

*Q: What happened to Ismael Khan?*

A: He went into a state of being very pissed for a very long time. Ismael Khan is a grand old potentate sort of guy who likes drama. He sat on his estate in the center of the city of Herat for the next three months and received huge crowds of visitors. He had no official position. Karzai publicly announced that he had offered him a ministerial position. But we also had the elections coming up and the elections – it wasn't clear who was going to be president. So Ismael Khan bided his time and kept receiving large throngs, crowds of people, newspaper reporters, friends. I went there several times to see him, just to be polite – because he is a grand old man of Afghan politics – and to brief him along with the commander as to the status of projects he had been involved in. What our politics were were to keep on good terms with him because he is a player and will be a player again. So we continued to do that. Every time I went, there was a very large crowd, sometimes hundreds of people, standing there, kissing his hand, saying goodbye to him, saying hello to him. Of course, it's quite possible that he directed our visits at the times that he knew there would be large numbers of people there. He is a grand orchestrator and director of drama.

*Q: With these promises of Karzai back and forth, how Afghan is that?*

A: Not only Afghan; it's the history of politics throughout the known world for all of known time. Anyone who wants to be the American president probably promises high posts to half the world.

*Q: But this one was rather immediate.*

A: It was very Afghan. It was also very pragmatic. What Ismael Khan's final take on it was: you can't trust Karzai. He's something like, "He's a good man, but he's very weak and he can't make decisions and you can't trust his decisions because he always changes them."

*Q: Let's go back to the PRT. When you arrived there, what was the structure of the PRT that you came to? Was it different from other PRTs?*

A: I don't know about other PRTs because Herat's the only PRT that I was ever actually physically at. I was at others before they became PRTs, or in other cities and towns. The original structure was this: we had civil affairs trained military plus force protection trained military, almost all of them reservists, by chance, from the state of Minnesota this time around. Approximately 100 Americans in uniform. Perhaps eight or nine translators, a kitchen staff, a maintenance staff, and a local guard force of Afghans who had originally been mujahedin or mujahedin-tied (They weren't linked to the mujahedin, although many of them were too young to have ever fought in anyone's war). Two or three of them had indeed fought with Ismael Khan. They had been part of his guard force back when he was fighting in the mountains. They were the commanders of our local guard force. The physical plant was something like this: the U.S. Army people had rented a whole string of attached houses, houses built for seven brothers that were attached to one another, a large compound along with it, a couple of other houses on the outskirts of this. So we had one house where the civil affairs people who did projects (a State Department officer, the AID officer, and also the Department of Agriculture attaché – we had three American civilians there who were housed or had offices). The soldiers all lived in the seven combined houses. It was a large compound and a very busy compound. Lots of visitors, lots of people coming and going. A lot of visitors from the U.S. military, a lot of visitors from the embassy. We had the ambassador come down once. We had General Abizaid come on a visit once. We had various other generals and colonels and this and that come through, stay overnight or stay a day or two or three. We had military officials from other NATO countries come and visit as well. The British there, for example, Canadians there, others like that. The theory was that the civil affairs people were the ones who would go out and about, design projects, look at projects, and help coordinate NGO [non-governmental organizations] and Army

projects. The State Department person had an input in this. The Agricultural person, of course, had an input and was very much sought after by local authorities because he was really a trained veterinarian and a very good one. And the AID person, who arrived about a week before I left, was starting to get her feet on the ground and to get involved with the NGOs and act as liaison between the NGO-military and other money. All of that, by the way, is now moot because we have turned the Herat PRT over to the Italians and the Italians are now in charge of it.

*Q: Let's talk about the American time there. What did you see as your mission there during the time you were there?*

A: My mission was to carefully watch the new governor. The new governor was sitting in his office in the governor's designated house while Ismael Khan sat a few blocks away. It made the new governor very uneasy that this grand old bear was sitting within biting range. It was politically delicate, to put it mildly. A lot of heads of office were Ismael Khan appointees and they weren't being changed very quickly. The head of Radio Television was changed the day after the new governor had arrived because he had refused to broadcast information about the new governor arriving, so he was out of office immediately. But everybody else stayed on. Ismael Khan has and had a great many contacts in the old cabinet. So even though he was out of office, the latest official word was that he had been offered a cabinet post and could take it whenever he wanted it. He had very close friends in the cabinet, old contacts from the days of the wars against the Soviets. It was a delicate matter. It's a bit like the President of the United States changing and the former President moves into Blair House.

*Q: And they're not on good terms.*

A: And they're not on good terms, exactly. So it was an interesting time.

We also had the presidential elections. The campaign was going on. It was very fast – not furious, but it was a very energetic campaign. All the candidates, with the exception of Karzai, came to Herat. They had political rallies. There were constant parades and sort of political demonstrations in the streets. People of Herat took up political campaigning with great gusto.

*Q: Why didn't Karzai come?*

A: Karzai rarely goes anywhere outside the palace as far as I know. Other people came to represent him, but he did not come himself.

*Q: What was your role in the PRT?*

A: My role in the PRT was to be adviser to the commander of the PRT, to advise the civil affairs staff on political implications of their projects, to generally maintain liaison between the commander and his top staff and the local government. Now, all of this got complicated because, while the commander of the PRT was ostensibly in charge of relations with provincial governors and the provincial governments within his general area - and at that point it was down to three provinces, the provinces of Badghis, of Gore, and of Herat province – we also had a task force, Task Force Saber, which was in western Afghanistan and in theory and in fact, the commander of the task force outranked the commander of the PRT. The commander of the task force was very action oriented and believed strongly that he was a political expert.

*Q: This task force was not essentially what I would call a military one. I mean, they weren't going out and shooting at people.*

A: They were charged with general security responsibilities and specifically with helping the collection of weapons, helping to disarm military police who had what were considered illegal weapons. They were very, very activist. The task force

commander was specifically very activist. All day long every day - he almost never slept - he was out and about whether or not he knew what he was doing.

*Q: Was he regular Army?*

A: He was regular Army, yes.

*Q: Did he have the equivalent of civil affairs?*

A: No, he did not. He had no political advisers whatsoever because, like many other American colonels, he knew all the truth that he thought he was supposed to know. He did not need or ask for advice, especially if it were coming from somebody who knew anything about the area.

*Q: Obviously we're not talking about a happy relationship here.*

A: It was a personally pleasant relationship because he and I got along on a personal level. We also had huge screaming fights about what he was doing politically. I should say, by the way, at the outset, he was a very fine man and he was killed not a week after I left Afghanistan.

*Q: How did that happen?*

A: The plane that he was in leaving Chagcharan going to Bamiyan went down and he and everyone on board were killed.

*Q: Were you working at cross purposes?*

A: No, he saw no reason to have anything to do with the civilian component of the PRT. He had a great deal of money to spend on projects. He did not want the advice or the assistance of anyone who was trained in civil affairs missions to

help him spend his money wisely or logically. He would simply select projects that he liked and demand that they be pushed through. In general, much of what he tried to select and push through did not receive clearance eventually at the highest levels in Kabul. He very often would try to spend money unwisely and was not particularly interested in followup or financial accountability.

*Q: I would think that this would have come to the... Was there somebody in Kabul or something who was trying to coordinate this thing and said, "We've got a problem here. Let's get everybody with the program?"*

A: I don't think in the history of our being in Afghanistan, there has ever been a time when everybody has been with the program. It's a very strange situation where we have an ambassador who is not in charge of the country as far as the United States is concerned.

*Q: How do you mean?*

A: This is still an area of combat. It's a war zone. And so the military commander has charge of all of the military trips and assets there. The military commander, whoever he might be, has the planes, he had the cars, he has the vehicles, he has the tanks, he has the men, he has a great deal of the money. The ambassador is in charge of the embassy and the civilian component but not any of the civilian component that is related to the war effort. The Central Intelligence Agency is not, as far as I know, under the ambassador's direction there either. It's been more of a triumvirate than your traditional country where an ambassador is in charge of the American presence.

*Q: What about the general commanding our troops there? Was his authority exercised to bring everybody together with the program or was the program not focused?*



A: I'm not sure. There is a point at which the military become very tightlipped and even the ones you know best, with whom you're working every day, decide they're not going to say anything. There was a fair amount of incompatibility and discord between members of the military staff with each other. It was complicated further by the fact that the Western Regional Command was established and yet another layer of military officialdom came into Herat with an extra 50-60 people on a staff. Now, that was someone who had greater responsibility, who was in charge of the task force then and also the PRT, also the PRT in Herat. That was another layer. All of these relationships were being worked out when I was there. I would say it was a situation that was very much in flux. I was able to establish good relations with the commander of the PRT, with the commander of the task force, and also with the commander of the Western Regional Command. That does not mean that they always listened to me.

*Q: Let's talk a bit about the PRT and the civil affairs unit coming from Minnesota. How did the training of a civil affairs unit, a reserve unit, translate from Minnesota to Herat?*

A: Some of the guys had civil affairs experience from other countries. They were in the Reserves. They had done civil affairs before. They were used to the concepts of financial responsibility, accountability, looking at projects, putting them into a political context, putting them into a greater context – some of them. Certainly the head of the PRT was very much in that mode. His deputy was very much in that mode. They knew their jobs. They could also be overruled by the task force commander and later when he arrived by the Western Regional Command commander. There was a mixture of ages, everything from 19 up through late 30s/early 40s, in the PRT, and so you had people with significant life experience, significant experience in fields that related to PRT work, whether it was police work or education or whatever. And there were also people for whom this was the first time out of Minnesota and indeed maybe the first time they had

had a real job since high school. That's as it should be. There was a large spread of age and experience. I think, all in all, the PRT was pretty good. It was a good staff of people. There were people there involved in police training, people there involved in training the military. We had a whole new military command come into the Afghan army while I was there. When Ismael Khan left, so did many of his commanders and a new general was sent in and others were sent in to take over the military there. So, everything was in flux. "Static" was not a word I could apply to any day I was there.

*Q: While you were there, what were the... PRT was relatively small, as these tend to be. What were they accomplishing while you were there, or finishing up accomplishing during the period you were there?*

A: During that period of three months, accomplishments I would say were fairly slow. Two days after I got there, we had the political upheaval. Much of the efforts for the next month or two were involved in keeping a lid on the city, making sure there were no other problems, and keeping the lid on so that we could have an election. That was extremely important. The PRT personnel worked closely, especially our soldiers, with the election people to help maintain security, all the logistics of getting ballot boxes and patrolling areas, setting up the counting center, things like that. We had that going on. We had a fair amount, a lot of handholding for the new Afghan army people who had been assigned to Herat and were not particularly welcomed by the people of Herat. We had other problems... When the new governor arrived in Herat, he was brought in from the airport by members of the American task force and they proceeded to basically camp out with him that night in the central government guest house, a lovely ceremonial building on the top of a mountain overlooking the city, and then they occupied the government guest house right below that one. When I say "occupied it," I mean occupied it. It took about two months before they finally left despite the fact that I and everyone else (the UN and others, even ISAF in Kabul) were saying, "Get out of there. It's the government guest house. It's the most visible

place in the city. We shouldn't have a large group of armed American soldiers standing around the new governor. It makes it look like he is our puppet."

*Q: Why didn't this translate into "Get him out of there?"*

A: Because the task force commander saw it as his duty to basically stand next to the new governor and to be there constantly and to show up for all meals or as many meals as he could at the governor's house invited or not, and to basically hang around the new governor constantly. It made it very difficult to have a realistic or real political relationship with the new governor since this American colonel, a lieutenant colonel, who was in charge of the task force basically seized access to him and controlled it. He had the resources to do that. And the new governor, of course, did not know yet whom he could trust for his own security in the city and so he accepted the American presence around him. It got to be funny because eventually it was so overdone that the ministry of foreign affairs (Afghans) who were in Herat started to complain to me bitterly about the presence of this American armed force around the new governor and its activities in the city.

*Q: What caused them to leave?*

A: The arrival of the western regional commander and his being there and seeing close up how impolitic this was. And I think the new governor also... The new governor started making noises about, "Okay, guys, I can handle this. Thank you, guys. You're still here, guys? I can handle this." It took a while. And also lots of complaints and jokes in the city.

*Q: Was there a political elite not just with Ismael Khan but otherwise who were rather normal leaders of the city and could you have contact with them? Did they understand what was happening or were they making a different interpretation?*

A: The whole time that I was there, it was leading up to the presidential election. Ismael Khan was sitting on his estate. The new governor was there trying to take over, trying to act like a governor. And so the wise Afghans were sort of standing back to see what would happen because they weren't sure yet that Ismael Khan would not come back as governor a week later or the next day. Shrewd Afghans have to look a little bit carefully at the president's decision making style and they could never be sure that he wouldn't turn around and put Ismael Khan back in power or give him back the office- [END SIDE]

*Q: -Afghans were taking this whole process quite seriously. If a president was elected, something would happen. In other words, this was not, "Okay, here in Herat we'll take care of ourselves and what happens in Kabul really doesn't pertain?"*

A: Afghanistan has changed tremendously since I got there in January of 2002. Herat has changed tremendously. It's a process that is not flowing. It's rushing onwards. This is having an impact on the way Afghans look at politics. We are no longer in the political days of the '60s or '70s or the time of the mujahedin wars. We are really in Afghanistan in many ways in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People look at their leaders, at other politicians, in different ways now. In the past, no Afghan leader had to worry about the press or publicity. There wasn't any. Now, if you're sitting in Herat, you can turn on your television, get 250 or so different channels on satellite TV, and watch your political leaders on CNN and other places. You can make decisions about them. You can get people talking about them who are not Afghans and you listen to this. If you are sitting in Herat, you can now pick up your telephone and quickly direct dial the United States or most other countries of the world. The telephone system is now all throughout Herat province.

*Q: When you were there before, it was the other side of the moon.*

A: It was very chancy. Yes, exactly. Let me give you an example of how things have changed in Herat because this impacts on the way that people look at politics and the way they look at the world around them. I went to Herat for the first time with a civil affairs mission in 2003. While I was there for those six months, one of my visitors was a university professor, a deputy of one of the faculties at the University of Herat. When he was in my office, he looked at my computer terminal and he said, "What is that? Is that a computer?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Oh, you know, I've heard the word so many times, but I've never actually seen one. Can I look at it?" I took him over to my desk and showed it to him. Then he said, "What does a computer do? I really have no idea." This is a professor who had never been out of Herat. I showed him and explained about e-mail. This was before the city was tied to the Internet, by the way. We had a special connection, a satellite connection. Then I said, "Okay, Professor, I'll give you another example as far as your own work, academic research, is concerned (He was a professor of literature). Give me the name of a Persian poet." He gave me the name of Rumi, one of the more famous of the Afghan Persian poets. Actually, he's an Afghan. I did a Google word search. I just typed in "RUMI" and it came up with 250,000 hits. I just pushed a button and started to download poetry written by Rumi, English side by side with the original Persian, and handed it to him. I said, "This is what a computer does." Fine. That was the year 2003. A university professor with a doctorate.

About a month ago, I received e-mails from the young, only quasi-literate guy who still is one of the janitors in the PRT. He has his own computer and sends e-mails. This is how Afghanistan changed in one year. The university is totally hooked up. Anyone who wants one has computers. There are Internet cafes all over the city. So, anybody who wants to in Herat (I say Herat because that's where I was) can now access the Internet and can call anybody in the world and receive calls from anybody in the world and watch television and see anywhere in the world, turn on the radio if people still use radio, and get anywhere in the world. And they're also traveling.

*Q: When you asked somebody, "Where are you," would they begin to say, "We're Afghans, but Heratis?"*

A: I've asked that question of Afghan friends here in the United States. If you're an Afghan outside of Afghanistan, you're an Afghan. If you're an Afghan inside of Afghanistan, you're from Herat or Kandahar or Balk or wherever. Basically, by saying the name of the city, you're announcing your ethnic background, too. And Afghans can tell because of the way you look and the way you dress.

*Q: Were non-governmental organizations working in your area?*

A: What happened was this: within two days after I got there because of all the trouble, most of them left. Some of the non-governmental organizations were attacked. IOM [International Office of Migration] was burned out. It was heavily supported by USAID. In fact, USAID uses it as their implementing partner in Herat province. Their building was burned out, gutted. Most of the NGOs, at least the ones that we knew about, left the city. Many of the UN people left the city and they did not come back for a long time. The election people came back, but others... The UNAMA headquarters was burned out, totally gutted. So they had no offices to come back to. And their guest house had been gutted, so they had no place to stay. They came back slowly. In the time that I was there, several people I knew who were NGOs had not yet returned even though three months had passed. Are they back now? I believe they're all back now. But this is now when I'm here.

*Q: With the election... Elections to me are a pretty complicated thing. I served two times as an election monitor in Bosnia. The interest wasn't in having elections for Tito and all that.*

A: Yes.

*Q: But the point being that they were trained in sort of the election process, not how it came about. I went through training and I didn't know how you run a good election.*

A: Sure.

*Q: Did you get involved in the training and implementation of the election?*

A: I did not get involved in the training and implementation. That was all way, way, way down the tracks by the time I arrived back. I arrived there just a month or so before the election was going to be held. We had a couple of organizations... The United Nations, UNAMA, was heavily involved. They worked very closely with an organization called Global Risk Security, which was a partner with the Asia Foundation. They had been instrumental in running the Loya Jirga, the logistics of it, that I was involved with the year before. They were very heavily involved in every city, every provincial town, for managing the logistics of the election. Now, training of Afghans to oversee the elections, training of police, training of everything, police, military for security, all this was way down the pike by the time I got there. My job was to get to know some of the top people, to talk to them, to make sure that I knew it was happening, and also to observe the elections physically the day they were taking place. But all the roles had been filled when I got there. And they did a very good job. The elections went off, at least in western Afghanistan, with no violence, a heavy turnout. I visited in and around Herat about 10 different polling areas, everything from inside the main mosque of the city out to small villages. I did this without any real security. I convinced the PRT that it would be better if I did not show up with armed security. I took a soldier in civilian clothes and me and we had a driver and we went out like that. It worked out beautifully. Everywhere we went, we were greeted hospitably by the election overseers. No one, including us, until we actually set out knew exactly where we were going to go. I had a long list of

possible places to visit, or at least the locations, and we chose them at random. But everywhere that I went, I saw people voting, doing the ballots, and doing it... I'd say they embraced the concept of bureaucracy very nicely. They're very proud of this and they should be. They did a damned good job.

*Q: Had there been anything approaching this before?*

A: Not in anyone's living memory. I think the Soviets might have had one or two elections, but nothing like this.

*Q: Had things been done by this sort of tribal parliament with Loya Jirga?*

A: There had been loya jurgas in the past. It's a time honored Afghan tradition. But not under the light of modern publicity. Who would have gone to observe a loya jurga 50 years ago. Nobody cared outside of Afghanistan. They were family run, tribal run, clan run groups. But now what we have are loya jurga proceedings and election proceedings going on real time and you can turn on CNN here and watch them real time. And you have everyone coming out and being interviewed real time. So things are happening on our screens here and on the screens in Paris, London, Tokyo, Germany, etc. at the same time they're happening in Kabul or in the smaller towns there. And there was extremely extensive coverage of the elections. Reporters were all over the place visiting the election sites. UN observers, PRT people, lots of other NGOs. Everybody was out and about watching this.

*Q: How did the election come out in your area, the ten percent of the voters?*

A: Heavily pro-Karzai.

*Q: Why that? Was Ismael Khan...*



A: He was pro-Kanuni, who was the minister of education and a former Panjiri freedom fighter. Kanuni was not particularly appealing as a candidate to a lot of people. He could have been a very good candidate. He messed it up for himself. He didn't run a real campaign. He had sort of messed up or did not take advantage of the assets that he had as the minister of education and rarely showed up apparently at the ministry of education while he was minister. An intelligent person who has no feel for the common touch whatsoever.

*Q: How did education play out where you were?*

A: During the election, Herat was one of the very few cities in the country that had... Well, it was a mixed blessing. We had graffiti on every wall of every building in the city. House walls, building walls, mosque walls, everything was covered with graffiti. It was pro and anti graffiti. It was all election oriented. "Up with Karzai!" "Up with Kanuni!" "We're voting for this or that person." "Vote for this party, vote for this candidate." "Down with Karzai!" "Down with this person!" The city became a mess. I say it's a mixed blessing because Herat was, I think, the only city that had graffiti, but that's because Herat is the only city that's literate. I looked at the graffiti and thought, "Yeah, they got it." We know have high school guys and girls out there with spray cans. Great. This is the best possible sign that this city has a real future. They're not a bunch of sheep. They are really out there. They're interested, involved. And the graffiti, a lot of it was in foreign languages – English graffiti, great.

*Q: How about the gender issue there, not just the elections, but in education and social life?*

A: In Herat province, I've forgotten the exact percentage, but I think it's about 40 or 45% of all the students in Herat province are female. There are a huge number of girls going to school in Herat province. This was always encouraged by Ismael Khan. He encouraged us to build schools for girls. He encouraged other things

for girls. And girls go to school there in huge numbers. Does this mean they go without veils on? No. They go either with burkha on or the Iranian style chador, which leaves the face open. But they do go to school. If you stand on any street in the city when schools are starting to open up for the day or closing for the day, you can be surrounded by hordes of young girls going either to school or back home.

*Q: How was this translating into, okay, you educate them, but then what do you do with them?*

A: It's a bit early, but I think the trend is definitely there. I don't know the statistics for this year. The statistics for 2003 were something like this: there were 400,000 students in Herat province altogether throughout the province. Of that, about 100,000 were in grade one. 100,000 were in grade two. The other 200,000 were spread from grades three through 12. I think the statistics for grade one for this year are probably also very, very high. This is a reflection of refugees coming back, but also the fact that young girls are going to school in huge numbers now, and they never did before. They weren't allowed to before. So there aren't that many girls in the upper classes unless they happened to have studied in Iran or Pakistan.

Now, what's going to happen to them? Well, I don't know exactly when the ratio will tip the balance of literate versus illiterate. We've had all sorts of statistics about Afghanistan, it's 10% literate, 90% illiterate. I don't know what the real statistics are. It's certainly something like that. But this as the years go by, within a couple of years, these statistics will start to tip the balance into literacy. When you have a large number of educated women who've gone all the way through diploma, then you're going to have to answer that question. It's not answerable yet. I would assume that if developments go on the way they are, I would assume that within several years, there should be no great problem with a

large number of women entering the workforce, not just weaving carpets but going into offices and ministries.

*Q: Is there a reflection of Iran, where women have a major role... I mean, women are a big factor.*

A: Definitely. In Iran, there's a woman vice president, for example. Well, Afghanistan-

*Q: She's one of the ladies who went after you, wasn't she? Wasn't she one of the students who took over our embassy in 1979?*

A: I'm not going to get into scatology in this interview.

*Q: Your friend.*

A: Yes, my friend and colleague. I should have claimed she was my friend. That would have really done her in. Anyway, right now, with the newest announcements about cabinet posts and governors posts, there is one female governor. The woman who was formerly Minister of Women's Affairs is now the governor of Bamiyan province. Bamiyan is considered one of the more advanced provinces. The women there are far more liberated than in many parts of the country, Hazara women. There is again a woman who is in the Ministry of Women's Affairs. There might be one other, too, but I'm not sure. There are certainly women in higher positions there now. As time goes on, this will happen. Let me give you an anecdote about women in Afghanistan. About two weeks ago, I had a guest for tea, visitors from Afghanistan. A woman and a young niece of hers were visiting. They were visiting the woman's son and also her daughter-in-law, too. I had been hosted by them many times in Afghanistan without ever seeing them. I saw the men of the family in their house in Kabul. Now they were in the United States. The woman's son brought them to my house for tea and it

was fine. They were all in western clothes with their hair uncovered. And we had a normal conversation. During the course of the conversation, the woman gave a spirited defense of the use of hijab, of the burkha, of the veil, in Afghanistan, saying it was necessary there. About two weeks after this visit, the son called me up to thank me and we were chatting about their visit and their reaction to the United States. He said, "Well, don't forget, when my mother was young, she wore a miniskirt. In her bridal picture, she's dressed in very, very sort of modern western clothing. The times changed. She changed with the times." Now, does this mean we're totally going to see a pendulum swing and Afghanistan is going to become the Paris of South Asia now. But I think eventually things will change there.

*Q: How about the class structure? Was there a problem of a group that is benefiting very much by what is happening in terms of construction there or whatever?*

A: Absolutely.

*Q: Is there a serious gap or not?*

A: There is a huge gap. Let me give you an example. Next to the PRT in Herat, there was a private Afghan businessman who was building a new house. The new house was estimated to cost one million American dollars. It had an indoor swimming pool. There were houses like this going up in lots of areas of Herat. Houses like this go up in Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and certainly in Kabul. I've seen houses in Kabul that I could never hope to own that were being built at hundreds of thousands or at a million or so. There are whole neighborhoods going up like this. Now, is the money coming from daily labor? No. Are they using mortgages to pay for this? No, they're using cash. It's a combination of perhaps cash they made in other places, but more likely cash they're getting from smuggling or from drugs.

*Q: Before we move to drugs, you were there only a relatively short time, but how was this playing out in Herat?*

A: In Herat, there is construction going on everywhere, a combination of city construction, construction of a new university, construction of buildings and private homes. Some of the construction, including some of the city construction or the provincial construction or office buildings, is luxurious. Certainly many of the new homes that are under construction fit the designation of luxury homes in the truest sense. Huge walled compounds, marble towers, stained glass, the whole bit. Does this mean that the wealth is spreading? No. Now, Herat happens to have a pretty high degree of employment, much of it because of the construction. But how much money comes to people who were disenfranchised before is another question. I think there are a lot of families with no breadwinners who are right on the edge, a great many families. And certainly if you leave Herat and drive 10 minutes, you can be back in the times of Genghis Khan. You might have a mud house with a television antenna, but drive another 10 minutes and you won't have that. You'll just have the mud house.

*Q: And no electricity.*

A: There's no electricity. Televisions are used without electricity there attached to car batteries. In fact, a car battery salesman is a prominent feature of any marketplace in the city.

*Q: The PRT, when we were looking at this, were we looking beyond Herat and looking for the poor villagers trying to do something?*

A: Yes.

*Q: I would think that would be where you'd-*

A: Yes. We had gotten away from construction inside of Herat and more and more projects were outside in smaller towns. That's one of the reasons that the PRT concept is spreading, that we established a PRT in Herat, because the Herat, where there had not been a PRT, was going to concentrate on projects in Herat province. The new PRT that I'm going to in Chaghcharan in Ghowr will concentrate on the Ghowr province. You can't rebuild an entire country that's been devastated in the course of one, two, or 10 years. All you can do is start it.

*Q: You've been back a number of times and you've seen other countries and all that. Did you feel that PRTs were useful in giving what amounts to a kick-start to rebuilding, or was this something that kind of made the Americans feel good but probably wouldn't have any lasting effect?*

A: That is a very sensitive question. I would like to think that it was kick-start, but in actuality, much of it is kick-start only for the contractors and the people who are getting money for the contracts for the buildings. Granted, we were putting up buildings where students could then go and sit. That's fine. Many students will go and sit in these buildings. Yes, we've dug a lot of wells. But in general, a lot of what the PRTs were doing could be done fairly easily by the people of the area.

*Q: If people need water, they can dig their own wells.*

A: Exactly. And, if you dig your own well, you're more likely to appreciate it and take better care of it. Now, having said that, the larger projects, the real development projects, the roads, the highways, that will kick-start a lot of the economy. Bringing electricity to the country will kick-start economy and business. You can't run a factory by tying a couple of wires to a car battery, but if you have a dedicated electric supply, a power supply, then, yes, you can run a factory. So, much of what we want to accomplish there depends really on getting

major physical development projects done, not the little schools, not the little wells, not the little thing of passing out of blankets and emergency food. Also, when I say the Afghans can do this themselves, the guy in the house next to PRT who was spending a million dollars to build it (This was truly a humongous house), could just as easily have dropped 40-50,000 and built a neighborhood school instead of doing an indoor swimming pool for his house. Afghans don't do this. He and others like him simply allow the gringos to do it.

*Q: What about Islamic charity? How was this working? I mean, it's one of the seven pillars.*

A: [Laughter] It's one of the seven pillars. That's why I laugh. It's an example of some of the greatest hypocrisy in Islam. Every year, a couple of million people go on the Hajj, go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Many, many thousands go from Afghanistan. According to Islam, before you go on this pilgrimage, you are supposed to be certain that no one in your family needs money, that your neighbors, your friends, everyone around you, is prosperous enough to allow you to do this. Thousands of Afghans go on the pilgrimage and spend many millions of dollars in Mecca buying souvenirs and these same people would never think of spending one riyal to construct a school for the kids in the village or in their own neighborhood. They would never think of doing anything for the local hospital. They contribute to the mosque, yeah, so there are lots of mosques with beautiful tile work. But they are highly unlikely to do anything that involves social welfare, at least in a real sense.

*Q: The mullahs or the religious side, were they a positive factor in doing charitable work and that sort of thing?*

A: In general, I'd say yes. They were involved in schools, certainly in the schools for teaching the Koran and teaching Islam. They certainly talked a great deal about the benefits of education, including education for women. In general,

yes, I would say. But does your average rich Afghani, and there are many of them, contribute money to improve the area, to build schools, to help with a new road, to help with a playground, or to help with something of that sort? The answer as far as I could see is decidedly no. Now, they'll spend money for a new Mercedes Benz, a new SUV, more gold bracelets for the wife, vacations to Europe, prostitutes in Dubai, but that money does not go to charities back home. I have a jaundiced view of Afghan Islam.

*Q: I was wondering whether there was any effort on the PRT to break this pattern, to appeal to the better senses of the wealthy to do... Or was it just, "We did what we thought we should do?"*

A: There is a strange thing about the PRTs. When I was consul in a couple of cities (Tabriz, for example, in Iran, or in Krakow, in Poland), the consulates had very good relationships with a wide spectrum of people in those cities, certainly with the local officials, but also with the local elite, the intelligentsia, the richer people of the city - it went up and down like that - the merchants in the city, because there were longstanding relationships there to build on. The PRTs as far as I could see do not have that. We are a foreign presence grafted onto Afghan soil but not into Afghanistan's society.

What that means is this: In the city of Herat, the soldiers with the PRT, especially the top level, the diplomat or whoever is assigned there, will know the governor and will know the heads of various offices. You'll know the heads of the schools. You'll know various military and police officials. But the monied class of Afghans have no reason to be interested in or to go to a PRT. They do not extend invitations. I would say that most PRT people have no idea who the local elite really are. They'll know the mayor, but they won't know who bankrolls the mayor. They'll know the head of this or the head of that, but they won't know the people who live in the really big houses behind the closed walls and who pull the strings. They'll know the governor, but they're not going to know the governor's



family. In fact, you are not going to know the families of any of your contacts unless it's truly an unusual situation. Local contractors will invite you to dinner in a restaurant. Local officials will take you out to a garden outside the city occasionally. But you don't have the easy sort of cultural and social relationship that consular people do in consulates around the world.

*Q: My experience in Vietnam was that historical perspective came after you finished a six-month tour doing something. Was this true there? I mean, short spans...*

A: We had short spans of instant expertise. The military, God bless them, are great. They have a can-do attitude that is usually not found in the State Department. "Yes, I can do this. Yes, Sir." And they rush in with a thin veneer of expertise. I have yet to meet anyone in the military, in the officer ranks there, who spoke the language of the country or who had even heard of the country really much before 2001. Now, because they get glad-handed by Afghan warlords and others and some merchants who want to sell carpets and some people who want their money, they think that they know the society. It's quite amusing sometimes to sit back and just watch.

Now, in the future, we might produce people who do know this. But is there anyone in the military at all in Afghanistan who could match your standard Peace Corps volunteer for knowing the country? No, absolutely not, and there never will be. The military are set aside and keep themselves apart by the fact that they are carrying weapons and wearing uniforms.

*Q: What about drugs in your area? What was the situation where you were?*

A: Drugs have expanded to really cover much of Afghanistan. The first time that I was in Herat province in 2003, we would ask villagers whether or not there were drugs in the area. We would look at the fields. We never saw anything that

resembled an opium field or an opium poppy field. We went to villages all over the province. When we would ask the villagers, they would laugh and say, "We don't dare do it. Ismael Khan would kill us." Ismael Khan was, at least in public, extraordinarily anti-drug. Fine. I have heard a strong... There is a strong belief in many people that part of the reason for his ouster from being governor of Herat province involved his refusal to let the drug lords in. Certainly the minister, the cabinet member, who was most anti- Ismael Khan, and who encouraged Amamullah Khan to attack him, was considered to be one of the bigger drug lords in the country. The general who killed Ismael Khan's son, or whose men killed Ismael Khan's son, was reputed to be a major drug lord along with his brother, who then tried to attack Ismael Khan's people from the north. Was this a drug war really with Ismael Khan as the good guy? I don't know. But a lot of people believe that. Now, I was hearing that opium poppy production had spread into Herat province. As Ismael Khan started to lose his grip, people started to plant. I have walked through poppy fields in Herat province for the first time in 2004. Granted, there were poppy fields near Shindand that were under the control of Ismael Khan's chief rival, Amamullah Khan. Is the drug problem spreading to that province? Possibly. But the drug problem seems to be spreading throughout the country with lots of people making excuses for it.

*Q: Just very briefly, what had been the history of Herat Soviet Taliban-wise? I want to talk to you about the security situation.*

A: The Soviets took Herat and Herat had an uprising against them eventually. A great number, many, many thousands of people, in Herat were killed by the Soviets. The Soviets bombed almost indiscriminately the area around Herat. There was a lot of destruction. I've seen villages that were laid waste and I've been told by people there this was done by the Soviets. They also targeted religious leaders in the city, went after them. That having been said, the mujahedin were originally welcomed into Herat when the Soviets left. Ismael Khan, who had been an anti-Soviet fighter, became the mujahid governor of

Herat. I'm trying to think of the dates and right now I couldn't give you the dates. He was governor when the Taliban started to fight against the mujahedin. He was driven out. He was eventually captured by the Taliban, put into prison in Kandahar. He escaped prison with the help of friends who bribed people, went to Iran. Now, the Taliban in Herat... To the best of my knowledge, the bureaucracy in Herat province did not change much whether it was under the Soviets, the mujahedin, or the Taliban. I would say that the length of the beards changed. Bureaucracies are bureaucracies. Herat is a very cultured, very literate city with perhaps a larger bureaucracy than many other cities in the country. There was a complicated school system, a nascent university, other things there, a lot of city services. The bureaucracy did not change a great deal. Ismael Khan and the top people left. Various top people would always leave, but the rank and file, I think, stayed more or less the same. They trimmed their beards or let their beards grow.

*Q: Did you feel much about the Taliban rule?*

A: No, actually, I didn't. People never talked about it. Girls were back in school, fine. I've even heard that there were unofficial schools opened all over Herat at the time of the Taliban. Certainly it was easy to get from Herat into Iran and families would go there for the bad times or send their children there, their wives and kids there. It wasn't that hard to get to. It was an easy bus ride. I do not recall anyone talking about Taliban executions of people in Herat. Herat is, of course, basically a Tajik city. It's not a Pashtun city. Ismael Khan always claimed that the Taliban leaders, the officials who had done so much damage in Herat, had escaped to Shindand and that Amamullah Khan and everyone around him was a member of the Taliban. I'm never sure where Pashtun ends and Taliban begins. I can't comment on that.

*Q: During the time we're discussing, when you were in Herat, what was the security situation?*

A: The security situation, except for the day or two of rioting, was basically excellent. I once again convinced the military that I was adult enough to be allowed to wander around by myself. I did this sometimes. I would go down to the bazaar myself. The last day that I was there, I took my successor, interviewee #22, the new political advisor. We hired a private car, a taxi. We spent the entire day wandering around the city. I wanted to make sure that he realized he could do this, too. We just wandered. We went to various shrines and various historic sites and to the bazaar and shops and other places. We ate out, etc. I just wanted to show him that you don't need a full contingent of soldiers around you. I was never uneasy on the streets of Herat, never.

*Q: If I recall, in our last conversation about your first time in Herat, you were saying that it was hard to get out of the country because you had to go sort of in a convoy. What was the situation this time?*

A: They still went out in convoys. If I were going outside the city, I would go out officially like that, with a convoy, because I didn't want to get my soldiers into trouble either. In fact, the gentleman's agreement I had with the soldiers was this: I have the ability to wander around by myself. I can take care of myself. I will not screw you. I know that you're responsible for me and that you can lose your rank or you can have a lot of trouble if anything happens to me. If ever I think something might possibly be happening, if ever I'm going somewhere really official, I will make sure that you're with me. [END TAPE]

*Q: This is Tape 2, Side 1, today's date is March 22, 2005.*

*Were there attacks on convoys? Was there Taliban? Were there bandits? What was the situation in your area?*

A: In my area, the security situation was still quite good at least during the three months that I was there except for the very first week. I understand that after I

left there were attacks there, there had been people killed there, especially down near Shindand, but this did not happen when I was there. We had tension because the American military were very heavily involved in the disarmament process and collecting weapons. There were a lot of people who were unhappy about this. But in general, there were no significant security problems that I was aware of.

*Q: Did you feel that there was a Taliban presence? I'm speaking more as a religious/cultural/whatever you want to call it, a very strong conservative let's-go-back-to-the-13<sup>th</sup>-century type thing in the area?*

A: In the area of Herat city, not at all. No way. It's funny, the people who were accused most heavily of being members of the Taliban by Ismael Khan were Amamullah Khan and his family and his followers down in Shindand. During the Loya Jirga, I had been working with the Asia Foundation at the Loya Jirga ostensibly as a member of the UN team up there doing political work. While I was there, I had gotten to meet the representative to the Loya Jirga from Shindand, who was a very pleasant guy. We got along famously. He and I were in the same room with ex-president Rabbani for about two weeks. I did a lot of talking with him, etc. When I went down to Shindand to visit it officially with the soldiers about two weeks before I left Herat and I was introduced to Amamullah Khan's brother and other members of his top staff, there was my good friend from the Loya Jirga, who was delighted to see me. I found him pleasant, easy to deal with, intelligent, ostensibly pro-Western, and he was one of the people being accused by Ismael Khan of being one of the local Taliban leaders. People use the word "Taliban" the way so many countries used the word "communist" or "fascist," sometimes possibly because it's true, but just as often because they want something from us and they have to produce the boogymen. I don't know anymore what a member of the Taliban is. I used to though.

*Q: But anyway, was there the equivalent of bearded guys, hard men, sitting around obviously unhappy with things?*

A: Not that I saw. Every Afghan of a certain age has a beard.

*Q: There is an attitude.*

A: I never saw that. All of the times that I went out to villages, including before when I was in Afghanistan and on this trip, when I was walking around the bazaar, when I would sit with merchants, when I would go off to even Pashtun villages, I was never treated with anything but friendliness and hospitality. Were there a group of scowling people who were sitting there plotting to push women back behind the walls and send the gringos away with their tails between their legs? Possibly, but I sure didn't see them. But I was in western Afghanistan and not in the southeast.

*Q: I understand. What about the schools? Were there equivalent to madrases which were teaching "Kill the infidel and go to Heaven" and that sort of thing?*

A: There are religious schools in the city of Herat. The first time that I was there, I visited all of them. There is one religious school run by the government. In fact, it was heavily supported by Ismael Khan, staffed by clergy, and it's the government high school to train potential young mullahs. It's the equivalent of a seminary. There were also two non-government religious schools in the city of Herat, one run by the Shiites and their center, supported by Iran, and another Sunni one supported by the Blue Mosque. I visited all of them and again from the heads to the teachers to the students, was only greeted with friendliness.

*Q: What about the rule of law there? Police, judges, the system?*

A: I'll quote something that an Afghan friend of mine said when we were talking about the constitution. He said, "Michael, we don't need another constitution for Afghanistan. We've had lots of constitutions. We've had lots of laws. What we

don't have here is respect for the law." Every Afghan considers himself an exception to the law. Certainly the American military consider themselves exceptions to Afghanistan's law. Yes, there is a new constitution. Yes, there is a body of law, and yet anybody of a certain social position thinks he is immune to it. I don't think it would ever occur to Ismael Khan or President Karzai or any member of the cabinet that he, too, is subject to the law. And law, by the way... There is something that we have to remember about Afghanistan. Most law in Afghanistan is religious law and that is the law that touches all normal social aspects of your life: your divorce, your marriage, your inheritance, your property ownership, the way you treat other people. This is in the religious realm. It has nothing to do with civilian law courts in the Afghan tradition.

*Q: What happened if there were what we would consider transgressors (robbers...)?*

A: The prisons were filled with people like that. I went to the prison in Herat. I inspected it once. It seemed to be quite a pleasant place actually. It was very clean. The head of the prison did not know I was coming until the day that I actually showed up. I called him up that morning and asked if I could come and he said, "Sure." I was quite impressed by it. We, the PRT, just before I got there had done a project at the women's prison of putting in a brand new kitchen and a brand new bathing area for the women. Because I had just arrived, I was invited to the opening. It was extremely – certainly the best part of the prison. In fact, the warden of the women's prison told us that the women now went and would sit in the bathing area because it was the cleanest, warmest place to sit. Women's prisons there, of course, also serve as a refuge for women who have run away from their families. There are no women's assistance centers other than those, other than the prisons. But do Afghans break the law? Yes. Do they go to jail? Yes. If you're very rich, powerful, are you likely to go to jail? Probably not. You can bribe your way out or simply have the police walk away because you're too powerful for them to do anything to.

*Q: You were saying that everybody's connected to TV. During this period of time you were there, were our travails in Iraq? I mean, they must have been aware of it. How was it playing?*

A: Afghanistan is a funny place. Karzai came out in support of our policies in Iraq at one point. That's fine. The Afghans generally don't care much what happens to Arabs. In all of my meetings and all of my talks with Afghans, and this was born out by other diplomats, too, no Afghan ever seemed to give a damn about the Palestinians. It just was not part of their world and they didn't care. It could be a racial thing. It could just be the fact that Afghans had so many problems of their own they didn't care. But they really seemed to be unaffected and distant from anything that the world was doing in the Arab areas. It wasn't really a factor.

*Q: Did you feel the effects of Pakistan and tribal unrest?*

A: Not in Herat. That would have been down in the south and southeast of the country, but not in Herat at all. Herat is more involved with what is happening in Iran and sort of western-looking.

*Q: Did you get any feedback about the Iranian way of setting up a government with a grand ayatollah sitting... sort of a religious council at the top?*

A: The Council of the Jurisprudent or the Rule of the Jurisprudent. No. The Afghans weren't interested in that. That's a Shiite, I want to say almost aberration. It's a belief that you find in Shiite theology and only in one part of it. It certainly had no resonance in the Sunni majority of Afghanistan, nothing at all of that sort.

*Q: Is there anything you think we should cover?*



A: Just the whole concept of the PRT is changing. Herat is now being run by the Italians. The Western Regional Command I understand is slowly leaving it and going down to Shindand. We are, according to the press, establishing two permanent military bases in western Afghanistan – not PRTs but military bases – one being down in Shindand, another up near Gorian [phonetic], both on the Iranian border. I don't know how that's going to play out. But the PRT presence for the American military has changed, evolved, so that now in western Afghanistan we have a presence in Herat at the PRT and that's it.

*Q: Do you see this fading out concern... Do you see a role for the PRTs?*

A: I see a role for the PRTs. I'd like to see something a bit more permanent from each country, but it's very difficult because soldiers are only assigned there for eight months and they are not language or area trained, and also perhaps conditions are such that AID can simply do this or other organizations like that. It would be interesting to divide the country up, give ECO part of it and AID part of it and other major organizations cities or towns. Can we rebuild the entire country? No. We're not going to leave it looking like Rosslyn, Virginia. It never will be that. But we can do some significant infrastructure and then let the Afghans start to handle it. They're going to have to. No country in the world can long rely on the sort of generosity of other countries. When you get down to it, Afghanistan is not that significant a country.

*Q: To end here, you might mention what the future holds for you.*

A: Today is Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A week from today I leave the United States to go to Vilnius, Lithuania, to do briefings and meet with the Lithuanians who will be going with me to a new PRT we're establishing in Chaghcharan in Gore province. Gore province was the one province, and Chaghcharan specifically, the city, that were never conquered by the Soviets or the Taliban. They always remained in

independent Afghan hands, one reason being the extreme remoteness of the province and the town. To go overland from Chaghcharan from Herat, which is theoretically one of the nearest cities, you have to spend about a week and your chances of getting there without having your vehicle break down are zero. We always lost vehicles, had broken chassis or something or other on the – it's not even a road – on the path to Chaghcharan. It's even farther to go to Kabul. Someday there may be a real road with asphalt that goes up there, but even if that happens, it is so impassible in the winter because of mountain passes that for four or five months, you can't get there because of snow and for another two or three months, you can't get there because there are no bridges crossing any of the streams and the melting snow keeps you from getting there.

*Q: The question occurs to me, why the hell are you going there?*

A: Because it's there and I can get back and forth by helicopter and I saw it a couple of months ago and thought it was absolutely beautiful.

*Q: Well, it may be beautiful, but as an exercise?*

A: Because Gore province is almost untouched by development. Lots of people up there. It's the one that gets hit the hardest by harsh weather, by other problems. The international community wants the people of Gore to believe that they are indeed part of a new Afghanistan. The Lithuanians are taking it on. It's the first example of one of the former Eastern Bloc countries taking on a PRT. We want them to succeed. They asked for some assistance. They're getting me and somebody from AID to assist them. We'll see what we can do with it. Gore province is, by the way... Did you ever read "The Man Who Would Be King?"

*Q: Oh, yes. I saw the movie not to long ago, too.*

A: Okay. Kipling based the story on the life of a real American, not a Brit, who went from Philadelphia in the 1800s to Gore province and set himself up as a potentate there. So, I'm following in a fellow Pennsylvanian's footsteps.

*Q: Okay. I think this is a good place to stop.*

A: Okay.

*End of interview*