

USIP – ADST

Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #39

Executive Summary

The subject of this interview is a British national, arrived in Afghanistan in February 2004, and he works with the European Commission's Director General for Humanitarian Assistance (ECHO), which is the emergency response arm of the European Commission. He worked occasionally with PRTs and was knowledgeable about their activities, although he had never served on one. He said that PRTs were devised in 2002 in response to great humanitarian needs, and their responsibility has evolved to include extending the authority of the central government into the provinces and to bringing security to the countryside. He felt that there was a great deal of duplication and tension between the efforts of PRTs of diverse nationalities and international NGOs, many of which had been operating in Afghanistan for a decade and more. Although coordination has improved between PRTs and NGOs, it is still not adequate.

The subject highlighted that the British and the Americans and their allies have from the beginning fielded combat troops into the country and inserted them into PRTs, which was resented by the NGOs and often by the local population. He said it is not clear to villagers whether a PRT is there to conduct a military operation or to talk development issues. He thought that individual colleagues at the American Embassy were willing to admit also that PRTs were a poor tool for doing aid and development work, but each nation that has a PRT defines its role somewhat differently, and there is little coordination of efforts. He said there now was a phasing out of PRTs under direct coalition control and a phasing in of PRTs under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), mandated by the UN and approved by the Bonn process. He was skeptical that this would be a positive development, as central coordination still would be lacking, and some PRTs would still get their orders from capitals.

The interviewee said that he was aware of frustration at the higher levels of the Afghan government in Kabul concerning the ability to direct the activities of PRTs, which work closely with provincial governors and in effect contribute to their autonomy. He suggested that this contravened the main goal of the PRT program, which is to strengthen the role of the central government. He said an exception to this problem happened last winter, when in response to flooding there was good coordination between the UN, the PRTs, and the Afghan government at all levels.

The subject commented that the PRTs generally must work with local Afghan warlords, who are often also the local governors, and the PRTs can hardly censure those they must work with. He did not think the Afghan National Army had been given any responsibility to work with PRTs. He said that PRTs were designed to cover up the fact that the West was not prepared to invest sufficient security resources in Afghanistan to stabilize the country. He suggested that soldiers should have security responsibilities, and NGOs should have development responsibilities.

The subject said that PRTs should concentrate their efforts also on building institutions such as a national police and the justice system, rather than digging wells and building schools. He did not think PRTs were working to advance human rights, including women's rights, nor did

they play a role in the constitutional Loya Jirga, the presidential elections last year, or the upcoming September parliamentary elections.

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

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Q: First of all, how long have you been in Afghanistan?

A: I arrived in Afghanistan in February of last year. I'm coming up to about 18 months now.

Q: I see. Eighteen months. That's February 2004. Let me just go through some of these questions. The first one is, describe the location, history, physical structure, size, staffing, and bureaucratic organization represented in the PRT. Obviously, you can't hit all of those points, but in general, what has been your experience with the PRTs?

A: I haven't actually worked with a PRT. I have not served with a PRT. I think you originally contacted (colleagues) in the Swiss Development Cooperation Office. Because we co chair a humanitarian advocacy group with them and because (name) wasn't able to be present today or at this period in order to answer your questions, he kind of fielded it to me.

Q: But you have worked a great deal with the PRTs. The purpose of the entire study in the end is to get a picture of how the PRTs ultimately can work better and people can be trained better. If you think you can refer to that, let's proceed.

A: Maybe I should just fill you in on my background then just so we're clear about who's who. I'm working for the European Commission's Director General for Humanitarian Assistance [ECHO]. Essentially, we are the emergency response arm of the European Commission. We're kept separate from the normal European Commission delegations which deal with development funding in order that there is no question that political priorities either of the European Union or any of its member states can influence the way in which humanitarian needs are assessed or delivery is made in order to be able to safeguard the basic fundamental operating principles of humanitarian assistance (impartiality, neutrality, and so on and so forth). My status here is essentially representing an organization which is a donor organization to international non-governmental organizations with headquarters in Europe who are implementing emergency and relief programs in Afghanistan. So, in that context, clearly, the PRTs are a part of the operating context that we work within. What the PRTs do does have an impact and a relevance to the activities of other organizations.

Q: If you would like to go through some of these questions and give your impressions of PRTs and how they affect your responsibilities and those of the European Commission, I think that could be useful.

A: Okay. I think what's important is to bear in mind that the complex here has changed and evolved since 2002 when the PRTs were initially set up. As I've just said, I wasn't here in 2002. I only came in early 2004. But even since early 2004, the situation has evolved. So, one of the characteristics of the humanitarian situation and indeed the aid and development situation here is that we are going through a period of great change, of great transition, and of great fluidity. Structures are being invented, or at least they were back in 2002, invented very much on the hoof, and have evolved and changed quite significantly since then, sometimes in a kind of planned and programmed way, sometimes really quite chaotically. The organization I'm working for has been working in Afghanistan since 1992, so we have a long track record here of operating with international NGOs on the kind of emergency and humanitarian fronts, going back a long way before any of the post-2002 commitment and interest from the West and western donors. So, in 2002, we were really building on the knowledge of the country that we had developed over those years and the experience of key personnel that we had here. In 2002, the emphasis was on humanitarian aid. There had been huge population movements. The war was just finishing. The situation was very much one of emergency and of humanitarian assistance.

What we have now come to is a much more developmental complex where humanitarian assistance in many ways is marginal to those kinds of central development themes which are being rolled out by a variety of different actors, increasingly including the Afghan government. So, the PRTs were invented as a response to the situation that they found themselves in in 2002, which was one of humanitarian crisis and humanitarian need. Reading through the literature and talking to people who were present around that time, back in 2002, PRTs were very much hitting the ground running. They were a response that was thought up by the international community to a series of problems, but the main issue that the PRTs were set up to deal with are still the main issues that justify the existence of PRTs today. Those are very much to do with extending the authority of central government out into the provinces and bringing security.

One of the criticisms that was raised very early on was that the way in which a lot of the PRTs were operating was that they sought to try and enhance the security environment through what I think in other contexts has been called "hearts and minds operations." There was a great deal of duplication which was unplanned and uncoordinated with international NGOs who in many cases had been in operation in Afghanistan for well over a decade, with, for example, clinics being set up by PRTs 500 meters or a kilometer from a clinic, operating according to cost recovery principles that had been developed over many years, run by an international NGO. That kind of duplication and the lack of any planning and the lack of any real forum in which to raise issues, raise concerns, raise problems, and get them dealt with in an open and transparent way led very quickly to the emergence of quite high levels of tension between the PRTs and the NGOs and the more traditional humanitarian actors here. In many ways, that still hasn't gone away. There's a lot less operational duplication of what PRTs are doing. But I think in some way it's still true to say that there isn't a central forum here at the Kabul level, or indeed a very well developed forum out at the different provincial levels which would encourage the operational coordination that we would like to see in order to avoid duplication and in order to make sure that efforts are enhanced.

The other issue which became clear very early on was that this is a context in which the coalition - the Brits and the Americans and their allies – have been fielding combat troops into the country, in many cases where those combat troops are not appreciated by the local population, and organizations/NGOs who had been working in those areas for many years and in some cases decades were concerned about being too closely identified with this sudden new aspect to international engagement in Afghanistan, which was the military aspect. The PRTs right from the outset contributed to the confusion. Although some members of PRTs are civilians, some of them are clearly in uniform. Even when the civilians go out, very often, particularly with the American PRTs, they are obliged to take uniformed protection teams with them in order to assure their security. So, they are perceived by the local population as being an extension of military units. That debate, that concern, continues. It goes right from, for example, the use of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service to carry armed soldiers, which I think a lot of humanitarian organizations, particularly ours, had a problem with, right through to the presence of small groups of people going into villages in uniform. It's not clear to the villagers whether these people are conducting a military operation or whether they may be going in to discuss with the elders the sitting of a well or a clinic or a school that they might be thinking of building.

Q: Let me ask, for verification, are the civilian members of PRTs generally in uniform when they move in the villages?

A: No, the civilians are not. But in most cases, certainly with the American PRTs and I think with some of the other PRTs, the civilians when they travel are obliged to be accompanied by armed soldiers in uniform. So, the view is of a military convoy moving around the countryside with one or two people who are not in uniform, but the great majority of them are in uniform.

Q: So, from the villagers' perspective, whether the individual civilian PRT members are in uniform or not hardly matters, because there are uniforms all around them.

A: Indeed, yes. *How about the relationship and the interaction of the PRT with American and allied embassies? Do you have any thoughts on that?*

A: Not a great deal. I have been present at one meeting when some issues regarding the way the PRTs operate and their kind of added value were raised with the outgoing American ambassador, Khalilzad, back towards the end of last year. The concerns were some of the issues I've touched upon earlier and some others. What I found quite interesting was, the group of people from the embassy were prepared to admit that basically PRTs were a poor tool for doing aid and development work and they acknowledged that there were quite significant and quite serious shortcomings with operational aid aspects of what PRTs did and the way that they did it. Unfortunately, despite quite an interesting and engaged conversation for a couple of hours, nothing has really changed. I won't name countries here, but certainly with a number of the European countries, there are problems with the whole relationship with the PRTs here. The decision to field a PRT is always taken in a distant capital somewhere. It's usually taken at a senior political level and involves consultation with the military authorities of that country and the foreign affairs ministry or foreign affairs section, whoever deals with policy on the foreign affairs level. The problem is that the foreign affairs ministries are not always the ministries involved in dispersing overseas aid. Britain is a very good example of this. We have a

Department for International Development, which is a ministry in its own right. The problem arises that the political decision is made to create a PRT and deploy a PRT. There is then a discussion about whether or not that PRT is going to become the channel for at least part of the aid and development funding that a particular nation state wishes to dedicate to Afghanistan. We have seen a multiplicity of different approaches to that. The Dutch, for example, do put some of their money in through PRTs. The Canadians have taken a very strong stance that the Canadian PRTs will not be financed using money that is earmarked from the Canadian development pot through CEDA. The Americans have actually developed a specific funding mechanism called CERPs, which is the Commander's Emergency Response Program. It's a pot of money that can be accessed by military field commanders in order to do what is regarded as humanitarian work here – i.e., building schools, building clinics, digging wells, and so on. There's been all sorts of different approaches taken. The fact that there are so many different approaches and combinations of approach is one of the factors that complicates the coordination between the PRTs and the other actors because there is no standard formula.

Q: I did not realize that there were diverse nationalities that had PRTs in the field. Do some of them in addition to the Americans go out with armed convoys, or is it only the Americans that are out there with the armed forces?

A: I think that varies. I don't have an authoritative picture on the policy for all of the states involved. I do know that the Americans move systematically with armed forces. I believe that the Germans up in Kandoz almost certainly would take soldiers with them if they were going very far from the center of Kandoz. The Dutch also move systematically with an armed protection team of one sort or another. The British PRTs are mostly military, so they're mostly in uniform anyway. They actually do things slightly differently from the Americans and others. I think again a variety of approaches are taken. Some countries, like the States, impose – every time you go, you will go with a military contingent. In other cases, it depends on where people are going and what the perceived threat level might be in those areas.

Q: Is there an adequate central coordination of where these groups are placed? Are they stumbling over each other out there in the field?

A: I don't know if people are stumbling over one another quite so much out in the field. Have you heard of the ISAF Force A's takeover of PRTs? ISAF is the International Security Assistance Force. Basically here you have two groups of military, ISAF and the coalition. ISAF is the multinational force which was mandated through the UN and approved by the Bonn process which provides security for Kabul and the immediate surroundings of Kabul. The coalition forces, the Brits, the Americans, those who are here to be engaged in what is described as the "War on Terror," operate from bases in Kandahar and Bagram and around the country. What we have at the moment is a phasing out of PRTs under direct coalition control and a phasing in of PRTs under an ISAF umbrella. We're entering phase three. Imagine Afghanistan divided north-south by a line and east-west by a line. Essentially the top right corner is number one. The top left corner is number two. The bottom left is number three. And the bottom right is number four. The PRTs now in sectors one and two without exception are under the ISAF umbrella. We are in a transitional phase in sector three, which includes Kandahar and Helmand and some of the more troubled provinces. The theory is that that will roll through to sector four,

although the most difficult provinces to operate in are mostly in sector four: Paktia, Paktia Khowst, I think Zabol falls into that sector as well. So, whether or not ultimately that will be possible is still debatable. But that's certainly the plan.

Q: Do you think that the prospect of phasing in ISAF umbrella authority is a positive development?

A: I think it's difficult to say at this stage. Each member state will still retain the right to outline the operational conditions under which it is deploying its PRT. So, you will not find that all PRTs all become equal. The American PRTs, even if they are under an ISAF umbrella, will still operate according to the operational conditions which the American chain of command requires that PRT to operate under in order to feel that they are discharging their obligation toward the safety of the personnel. In that sense, there will still be different approaches taken by the different member states

Coming back to your earlier question about the central coordination, out at the province level, what we have is clear identification of PRTs with different provinces. For example, there is a German PRT in Bagram. It's a British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, in Jowzjan, in Balkh. It's a New Zealand PRT operating in Bamian. I believe it's a Latvian PRT now with strong American support in Khor (PH) province or Baktrise (PH), I'm not sure. So you can put a flag on each of the provinces.

Q: And only one flag, is that right? Is there only one nationality per province?

A: Yes, I'm pretty sure there is. I know, for example, that the PRT in Kandahar certainly until recently was advised by a Dutchman called Mathias Tut (PH), who was actually deployed through DIFID, the British international aid mechanism. So that was a kind of DIFID deployment within an American PRT. Quite how common that is, I'm not sure. Certainly DIFID had tried to deploy a number of civilian advisors with PRTs over in other PRTs that the Americans controlled, particularly in sector four, in Paktia, and those kinds of areas that have been particularly difficult to operate in. I'm not sure what the logic behind that sort of secondment is to be honest.

Q: I'm going to move on to some other parts. Of course, some of these questions are specific enough to PRTs that you might not be able to comment, but I do want to try to go through them. Just to finish for a moment the relationships here, what is your impression of PRT interaction with the Afghan ministries, the Afghan warlords and local officials, and the Afghan security forces, including police, NGOs, and local citizens?

A: That's a very big one. It varies a lot. There is a good standard answer to that. One of the concerns, certainly at the Kabul level, one of the concerns that ministers and people within the Afghan government will express to you privately is regarding the degree of information they're getting and opportunity to direct and coordinate the activities of PRTs that they're getting here in Kabul. What tends to happen is that the PRTs work very closely with the provincial governors. In some places, I suspect that operates in contravention of one of the PRTs main *raison d'être*, which is to strengthen the role of central government. By working so closely with the provincial

government, actually what they're doing is strengthening the hand of those provincial governors, many of whom want to retain as much independence from Kabul as they possibly can. There is a dynamic there, which is worth exploring, which I'm certainly no expert on. Ministers and people within government do express privately significant frustration and reservations at their inability to be able to in any really sensible, meaningful way to interface with what the PRTs are doing. The one exception to that has been the recent emergency work that the PRTs have become involved in. We had a very severe winter this year in Afghanistan and that has given rise to more than normal localized flooding in many of the outlying provinces. The UN has set up a joint operations center using quite a lot of material and equipment that was originally there for the elections and which will be used again for the elections in September. But it's proved to be quite a good point. The military structures and the PRTs particularly have managed to interface with that. So, when there has been a need to mobilize our assets in order to be able to move with these supplies into an area hit, that coordination has happened quite well. Government has been reasonably well involved in that whole coordination mechanism through UNAMA and JOC. The ministry that has had a most active role is the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development under the leadership of Hamid Khatinar (PH), who is one of the more competent ministers in government. So that has worked quite well.

I had a guy from ISAF in the office this morning and the topic we were discussing was the kind of post-emergency rehabilitation where it becomes a lot less easy to see who should have responsibility or who has the capacity to deal with some of the post-emergency needs, people who have had houses destroyed by flooding, who have lost agricultural land and crops and so on. Who needs to do something to help these people? There, ISAF and the PRTs are struggling to come up with much of a coherent answer.

Q: I see. Are you able to comment also on the relationship between PRTs and the Afghan warlords?

A: There isn't a single easy answer to that. The British PRT working up in Balkh, out of Mazar-e Sharif, has developed a reasonably good reputation amongst the aid community. One of the reasons it's done that is because their main activities has been to do basically mediating between the two major warlords up there - I'm going back last year before Dostam joined the government, so this is Dostam and Mohammad Atta, but also some of the more minor commanders - and trying to limit the opportunities for armed aggression between those two groups and between the people peripheral to those two groups. There is a certain amount of grudging respect for the success they've achieved, although significant military patches between those two last year nonetheless. I think in other areas it's more difficult to comment. Quite often, the local commanders are the local governors. In a sense, the PRTs, given that they work very closely with local governors, are not in a position to actually censure the people that they're working and collaborating with. To what degree they actually-by their presence- manage to influence the behavior of those people is a moot point. Again, it's bound to vary from one province to another. But certainly if you're talking about carving the game down, trying to deal with security issues, I think people would recognize that the British PRT model has had probably more success than any other. But you must remember that each area of Afghanistan has its own particular specific dynamic and an approach which might work in one area is not necessarily

automatically [going to work in another area]. What the British did in Balkh maybe nobody could have done in Kandahar, for example, so be cautious about extending that.

Q: Let me ask a couple of questions on security. If you aren't able, then we'll move on quickly. Do you know whether PRTs rely on Afghan forces for protection in some cases?

A: No, I don't think so. The ANA [Afghan National Army] is taking a higher profile now in some of the ongoing clashes that we're hearing about, but I would be surprised if a coalition or ISAF forces are giving them responsibility for the protection of their own civilian or indeed military units in that way. I can't answer authoritatively, but I don't think so.

Q: For those PRTs that move around with a large military contingent, how could security have been enhanced in order to make the PRT more effective? In other words, to work on the civilian and developmental issues that they wish to pursue with the military less obvious but then still provide the level of security that's necessary? How could that dilemma be resolved?

A: I'm not sure it's an easy one to resolve. One of the problems is that – if you contrast what's going on in Iraq and the level of troop commitment to Iraq to what's happened in Afghanistan and the way things have been handled here, the conclusion is that in a sense the PRTs were designed to cover up the fact that actually the West was not prepared to invest sufficient security resources here to actually stabilize the security situation in the areas that they knew were going to be the most difficult. Back in 2002, the insurgency was a lot weaker than it is now. We've seen that develop. So, the very fact of developing the PRTs as a kind of non-aggressive solution to the security problem meant that by definition you were relegating the security problem to a different order of importance. I think that's one of the strands that still runs through the relationship between PRTs and the NGOs here. The NGOs would actually like to see coalition soldiers present in sufficient numbers to do a better job of security to allow those actors with the competence and the experience to get on and do the aid and development work. The idea of soldiers doing aid and development work seems to be very much a missed opportunity. Why get people whose training and focus is by definition security building schools and digging wells? It seems counterintuitive.

Q: Is the Afghan government ever represented within a PRT?

A: No, not to my knowledge.

Q: Do you know whether PRTs ever organized local councils or did they assist in conducting elections? In other words, did they otherwise help promote democracy?

A: No, they're not involved in that kind of work as far as I know. They're not. Different PRTs have engaged differently with the security issue to the extent that the more security you have, the more possibilities for people to express their democratic rights. Indirectly, they're addressing that. The idea of some PRTs to concentrate more effort and time on building institutions like the Afghan national police, concentrate on trying to do what they can to reinforce the justice system, I would argue that those are appropriate areas for the PRTs to get involved with, whereas building schools and clinics is not. But schools and clinics are a lot easier to build, and so we are

seeing a great deal of concrete rather than much progress on the underlying fundamentals which make up the security environment as most Afghans would understand that.

Q: Do you know whether there are PRTs that work on human rights or advance women's rights?

A: No, not as far as I know. At most there will be a referral of human rights abuse cases which are brought to them back to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission here in Kabul, but I'm supposing and extrapolating.

Q: Can you also describe in general the role of PRTs in Afghanistan's major political events such as the emergency and the constitutional loyal jirgas and the presidential election?

A: As far as I know, they played no role at all in the constitutional loya jirga. They were still being developed when that constitutional loya jirga was happening, so I don't think they played a particular role there. They didn't play a role with the elections. The elections were handled by election observers and monitors. That was quite clearly a strategic decision that was taken. What we did hear here in Kabul was that there was a lot of time and attention being paid by ISAF and the coalition to the security environment in which those elections were taking place. Whether or not that included any activity of the PRTs, I don't know, but it sounds to me something that would have been more a job for the intelligence services of the military rather than PRTs, to be honest.

Q: This pattern that you've described of really not participating in these political events is holding true for the upcoming September 18th elections as well?

A: That's correct.

Q: Let me move on. You've already indicated that you don't think PRT activities and actually building schools might be the best use of their resources. Can you describe a little bit more what PRT activities you know about related to economic reconstruction and development? You mentioned school building, for example.

A: I don't think many of them are related to economic reconstruction and development. That's part of the problem.

Q: Most of them are involved in developing institutions to the extent they can?

A: Yes, that's true, although by the time the buildings go up, there are often questions about the quality of what's been put up and so on. The kinds of things that the PRTs do along the hearts and minds line are very much as I was saying: digging wells... I've seen no costing to inform me whether or not a PRT is a cost effective mechanism for delivering clean water to people. The problem is that there is a whole area to even emergency work, but particularly when you start talking about development work, which requires you to understand the context in which you're operating, which requires you to have a certain background to be able to interface effectively with communities in order to be able to deliver goods and services, but particularly services,

which are going to be used by the majority of the population. Agencies have been working in Afghanistan for over 25 years developing those relationships with communities, dealing with communities, and negotiating their way into the position where they can try and make sure that the benefits they're bringing are distributed as evenly as possible throughout those communities or target the more vulnerable within them. So probably somebody without that background going into a remote, rural village and sitting down with the shura, who are always the more powerful male individuals of that village, and discussing with them where they want a well dug is not always likely to lead to the best results from the point of view of the women, who end up carrying the water. It's those kinds of aspects, it's those kinds of deeper reflection before doing something which I think a lot of people would criticize the PRTs for lacking. This is why DFID and others have tried to embed their own technical experts who do have a development background who do actually think about these things in order to try and make sure that those greater mistakes are not made. But certainly, there are still anecdotal stories coming out of schools which were built a year or two ago which are lovely buildings but which have got no books, no benches, no teachers – they're simply not operational. So, it's all very well to offer to build a school in a particular village, but there really isn't much point if there aren't any teachers or if there's no salary for the teachers or if there are no school materials and so on. That can only really effectively be dealt with by making sure that there is at least a provincial coordination of where the aid is going and preferably a central coordination if we're talking about basic public services like schools and clinics, which seem to have taken up quite a lot of the resources the PRTs have gone through.

Q: I can imagine there must be some tension between NGOs and PRTs.

A: There is. I think one of the continuing problems is, there isn't really a forum where one can go and say, "Look, this approach is not really working. Perhaps if you do it a little bit differently, do it that way instead or let us do this bit and you do that bit." There isn't really a conflict resolution mechanism here. There is a PRT steering committee, but the PRT steering committee is made up of the representatives of troop contributing nations, so clearly NGOs are not represented on that. Even talking to a number of the troop contributing nations' representatives who sit on this PRT, the impression I get is that this is really a military bulldozer for basically seeking wider legitimacy for what the PRTs are going to go ahead and do anyway whether anybody likes it or not.

Q: I believe some PRTs were organized by the U.S. and handed over then to other countries. Do you know how this was arranged?

A: I don't, to be honest.

Q: You don't know about the process of transferring control?

A: I know it happened, but I don't know what the process is.

Q: That's all right because we have other questions to move on to. Several PRTs are co-located with U.S. police training centers. Do you know anything about the relationship between these two activities? In other words, describe the PRTs' level of engagement.

A: I think it's been recognized that building up the capacity of the Afghan police to do a better and less corrupt job is an important one. There has been some progress for the development of the Afghan National Army. That's beginning to move into the forefront in some of the conflict areas.. But there's a growing realization that the police service here is just appalling. This is an area of security provision which is not particularly controversial in which the PRTs are thought to have a comparative advantage with what they have to offer. So I certainly hope we will see more collaboration between PRTs and Afghan national police in the future. It's a valid area for a mechanism like the PRT to engage.

Q: To the extent that you know about this, can you describe PRT involvement with Afghan courts and prisons? Are local courts and prisons functioning?

A: No, local courts and prisons don't function. The justice system here is bad. It's chaotic. It's factionalized. The Italians, slightly bizarrely perhaps, are taking the lead on judicial reform here in Afghanistan. I think there's a general sense that nothing really very much is happening. I certainly hope that one of the options for PRTs is building prisons, building court houses, and getting more involved in the kind of infrastructure of justice, but I've not heard any suggestion that they're going to get involved in the sort of software elements of justice: capacity building, training, that kind of thing.

Q: How about PRT involvement with informal or traditional justice systems? Has there been any of that to your knowledge?

A: To the extent the PRTs try, for example, like the British PRT that I've mentioned already, and involve themselves in local conflict resolution (or conflict avoidance is more the strategy), those are negotiations which by definition take in the local warlords, but they also require engagement with local traditional structures. Many of those traditional structures have been corrupted and subverted by the civil war, but the structures themselves still exist to some extent and one can't operate around them. One has to acknowledge that they're there and that they do play a role. In that sense, where PRTs are involved in conflict resolution or in trying to avoid conflict breaking out, that's a sine qua non of that particular activity.

Q: We're getting toward the end of my tape, but I do have a few more questions. Then we're going to be wrapping up. I think we can anticipate your answer here, but do you think the PRTs are accomplishing their mission?

A: No, I don't. I think they're not.. I don't think they're doing the job in terms of security. They've evolved as a mechanism to enhance security. What we've seen in most areas is, the security is going backwards rather than forwards. In that sense, it's very difficult to claim that they have enhanced security. In terms of aid and development, I don't know whether they do any needs assessment. I don't think they do any kind of impact assessment. The development work they do I think everybody generally agrees they do badly.

Q: My tape is almost over. If you'd like to have a couple of more sentences, what might be an alternative to the PRTs? Should we adopt another approach to accomplish the objectives?

A: If you're serious about security, then, yes, but you do need to be prepared to commit the security resources required to do the job. I think the problem is that we are now set on a course and it's very difficult to call back. We can't wind back history and go back to the euphoria of 2002 and 2003 with the benefit of hindsight. So, I think what needs to happen is that one needs to adapt the PRT mechanism that's already in place to try and add value in those areas where it does have a comparative advantage over all other actors in the country, and try and make sure that it keeps on track with its central goal. The problem is, it's very easy to get sidetracked by going out and [doing development work] and that's a lot easier than doing the security work. So, there tends to be a kind of problem of mission drift, if you like.

Q: I know your (mobile phone) battery is going out. I just wanted to say that your comments have been very comprehensive and very helpful. Thanks for participating.

[END INTERVIEW]