

## USIP – ADST

### Afghanistan Experience Project

#### Interview #4

#### Executive Summary

The mission of the Bamyan PRT, which is under New Zealand command, is to support stability and security for the province, support the national government's authority, support the establishment of democratic institutions, and build or maintain key infrastructure. The interviewee noted that the recent elections in Afghanistan were very successfully, peacefully carried out in a festive atmosphere in Bamyan province, and that the PRT had made a major contribution to stability there, including by giving assurances to the international community that it would extend its security umbrella to them, and would also protect their property if need be during this period. Other important PRT contributions include training for the police, with an emphasis on the humane treatment of prisoners. As the State Dept. rep, the interviewee brought political expertise which was helpful to her military counterparts, who expressed their appreciation for her perspectives. The interviewee's credibility in this regard was enhanced because she had spent a year at the U.S. Naval War College studying counterinsurgencies, counterterrorism, constitutional law, as well as military strategy, operations, and culture.

The interviewee praised the effectiveness of the New Zealand military in running the PRT. She opined that they were so effective because they have a tradition of interaction and integration with civilian organizations which is far greater than in the U.S.. She said: The Kiwis do not "draw the same kind of broad, sweeping distinctions between the military and civilians that I think some members of the U.S. Armed Forces do." In addition, she found that the NGOs and UN agencies in the area were working harmoniously with the PRT in doing assistance work.

Lessons learned: Interviewee suggested that the State Department could be more effective if it provided its representative with some additional resources: i.e. its own interpreters, transport, and program funds, rather than having to rely on others. In her view, the U.S. is trying to accomplish its goals in Afghanistan "on the cheap," which is a mistake. She also spoke of the importance of having "courtesy level" language training in Dari, training which she did not have.

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

**Interview #4**

*Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen*  
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*Q: First, if you could give us a description of your location (Bamyan) and something of the organization, the bureaucratic structure and staffing, of your provincial reconstruction team.*

A: Okay. The Bamyan Provincial Reconstruction Team or Bamyan PRT is located in a region of Afghanistan called the Central Highlands. The Bamyan provincial population is about 300,000 people. The population of the provincial capital, Bamyan town, is about 20,000 people. The PRT was started in early 2002 by U.S. forces after the fall of the Taliban. It was taken over by the New Zealand defense forces in December 2003. The initial New Zealand commitment was for two years, from September 2003 until September 2005, but the government of New Zealand in early 2005 announced that it would extend its commitment for an additional year until September 2006.

*Q: Great.*

A: The Royal New Zealand military is a three service defense force and there are representatives from the Royal New Zealand Navy, Royal New Zealand Army, and Royal New Zealand Air Force. The Army predominates but there are people from the other two services. So far, the command of the PRT has alternated between the Air Force and the Army. There are also U.S. Army personnel at the PRT including a communications unit and a small civil affairs team that has ranged in size from just one officer to an officer and a pay agent who can either be a junior officer or a relatively senior civilian. There's also representation from civilian agencies, from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] and also the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA]. In addition, there is one person from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development [DFID] and there is also an Afghanistan government Ministry of Interior representative who has been posted to the PRT. There are also locally hired interpreters, locally hired cook staff, maintenance staff, and until recently the Afghan Militia Forces [AMF] provided perimeter security and guard services at the PRT. Because the unit that was providing those services has been disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated [DDRd], those services have now been taken over by the Afghan national police.

*Q: I didn't try to sum up all of those in terms of numbers, but roughly, you have a contingent of about how many individuals on your team?*

A: Roughly about 160 people.

*Q: And you are the only Department of State rep or are there some others that work with you?*

A: It's just one from the Department of State.

*Q: Now, the mission of your team in general, could you describe that? And then what your own role in particular is.*

A: Yes, I can. I should have done this before, but there is a formal mission that I don't have committed to memory. The mission of the PRT, to paraphrase it, is to support the stability and security for Bamyan province, which should in turn support the national government and the expansion of the economy as well as of a democratic system of government. Eventually Afghanistan will be able to run itself. So, we're trying to do ourselves out of a job by helping Afghanistan at the provincial level get its feet under itself and work on its own.

The strategy for accomplishing that - and both the military and the civilian elements of the PRT all work towards the same strategy - is based on what we'd call five pillars. The first pillar is security sector reform. That includes the normal people that you'd expect like police and the military, but also we use that to include the judicial sector, prosecutor's office, at some point the defense office, and the court system. The second pillar is contributing to good governance and government capacity building, to encourage government officials who are doing a good job and to do what we can to inform the center of what's happening with those government officials who are not doing such a good job, be it because they're not very competent or because they're actually corrupt. The third pillar is to build or contribute to maintaining key infrastructure - roads, bridges, things like that, wells, irrigation systems. Those are the top three focuses for the PRT's resources. There's security, good governance, and infrastructure. Eventually, when there's a stronger civilian component and/or the first three pillars are more solidified, we expect that we can put a little more energy into the final two pillars, which are education and enabling the economy. Bamyan's literacy rate is only about half the national average. The national average for Afghanistan is about 34% literacy. Bamyan's is estimated at only 17% and of those 17% the vast majority are men. Women's literacy would probably be, I don't know, one percent or maybe even less.

*Q: I get the picture. It's really a very ambitious agenda that you have with these five pillars or even just with the first three which you said you emphasize at the moment. That's still a considerable amount of work to do. And your own role in these areas? Could you describe that?*

A: Sure. Well, for the first six months that I was at the PRT – I began in August 2004 – I was both the State Department representative as well as the acting USAID field officer. So, I focused more on the USAID field officer role and worked with our implementing partners to make sure that their projects were able to go smoothly to keep track of how construction was going and where it was possible and, when projects were completed, putting together an opening ceremony to mark their opening and the teamwork that went into that, and also informing Kabul of what was going on with the projects in some of the national programs. In my State Department role it was more reporting on what was going on, especially for the presidential elections, talking to various officials about their roles and what their jobs were, and also – and I think this is probably State’s main contribution to the government capacity building – working with the government and with the rest of the international community on coordination bodies. There are three layers of coordination bodies that the PRT, UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan], and the provincial government worked on so that everybody could be in the loop about what projects and programs were going on, what the needs were, and to not be surprised either in stepping on each other’s toes or duplicating efforts or leaving gaps. The top level, sort of strategic level, is called the Provincial Task Force. That’s chaired by the provincial governor. The next level down, there’s a Regional Security Task Force as well as the Provincial Assistance Coordination Group. As the name implies, the security group includes issues such as the criminal justice system. The Assistance Coordination Group is anything relating to development or assistance, including humanitarian assistance in cases of disaster relief. And then down at the working level coordination level, under the Regional Security Task Force, there’s also a Joint Security Group where the people who are really hands on doing arrests and investigations are involved. At the working level on the assistance side, there are sector working groups. The PRT is involved at all three of those levels. As the State Department representative, I’m actively involved in the Provincial Task Force, which is at the strategic policy level, as well as in the Joint Security Group because there are political implications in resolving conflicts between the police force and the outgoing Afghan militia forces and we can foresee that eventually working the Afghan national army into the mix is going to be another issue.

*Q: I’m imagining there are a great many entities that you need to interact with on a daily basis and you’ve just mentioned some of these. In addition, what are some of the other important entities that you have had to work closely with?*

A: Well, Bamyan has a fairly sizeable assistance community. On the UN side, we’ve got UNAMA, as I mentioned earlier, the UN High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], UN Habitat, which administers part of the National Stability Program that’s funded in large part by USAID. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization [UNFAO] as well as the World Food Programme [WFP] are both there. And the UN Office for Project Services [UNOPS], who are an implementing partner for USAID, as well as the Office for Immigration and

Migration [IOM], who are another implementing partner, a UN affiliate. UNICEF to a lesser degree.

*Q: And then NGOs, are there some of those working in your province as well?*

A: Yes. The main NGOs that we've worked with are the Agha Khan Development Network [AKDN], Solidarité, which is a French NGO. Those are the two main NGOs that we work with. There are also some local NGOs, but because I don't have program or project funds through State and USAID works with implementing partners that are selected at the Kabul level, those are about the only NGOs I work with on a regular basis. CHF is another American-based NGO that's active outside of Bamyan center that USAID uses as an implementing partner, but we haven't had a whole lot of contact with them except for when they've had some projects get into trouble and they needed a little intervention.

*Q: CHF stands for?*

A: I can't remember what that stands for.

*Q: Okay. But it's a U.S. NGO.*

A: Yes.

*Q: You mentioned that when you were wearing your USAID hat, you were keeping track of a lot of different projects. What were some of the kinds of development projects you were working on or arranging opening ceremonies for?*

A: Well, there were a number of bridges. There's a bridging program that's been going on. There were four bridges built in the Gandak area of the province last summer and fall by UNOPS and we did a single ceremony to celebrate the opening of all four of the bridges. USAID has also through its national programs built some medical clinics and some schools out in the district. It has also instituted a district centers road project. That's started in Bamyan town itself. I don't know if it has started in the other provincial centers. I know that it hasn't started in the ones in Kamart (phonetic) and Saygon (phonetic).

*Q: Okay. On my list of questions, one of the items was interaction with Afghan warlords and local officials. I don't know to what degree that applies in your province. Maybe you could speak to that a little bit.*

A: Well, sometimes the Afghan warlords are now local officials. There are a number of provincial officials who are former commanders or were the children of commanders or former commanders. And so sometimes they're one in the same. I'd say the PRT works very well, both the civilian side and the military side, with the provincial and district officials. The patrol teams get down into even more local level with the municipal officials, with elders, with town leaders

and village leaders and folks like that as well. I'd say we work on a daily basis with the police, with the AMF, and with provincial level officials. With the district level officials and lower, it depends in part on the weather and whether we can move around. For about four or five months out of the year, about a quarter or a third of the province is completely inaccessible. From basically December through February and March, there have been two districts, Punjan (phonetic) and Wores (phonetic), where we've not been able to go at all, and a third district that is just becoming accessible but it's still axle deep in mud on most of its main roads. So, we've had a quiet period in the winter.

*Q: Right, I see. It's inaccessible for weather reasons as opposed to inaccessible for security, which was the next point I wanted to address. How would you describe the security concerns that you need to be aware of on a daily basis? What threats do you work under? What kind of protection do you have?*

A: Yes, for the most part, Bamyan is probably one of the safest places in Afghanistan as far as security threats go. The PRT has not come under any sort of attack, although some PRTs have had rocket attacks on a weekly or in some cases even daily basis. The PRT in Bamyan hasn't had any at all. We have had no IED [improvised explosive device] attacks whether remote controlled or just sort of booby traps. There is a lot of unexploded ordnance (UXO) around. There are lots of mines around. While we haven't had any casualties, even wounded people, at the PRT as a result of that, that is a pretty constant threat. Just in the short time that I've been there, there have been three people in the province who have been either maimed or killed by coming into contact with mines or UXO. So, that's a pretty constant threat.

Through the winter, the climatic conditions were more of a threat than anything else. We had one patrol team get stranded. It took almost two weeks before we could get them out of there. They ended up being "helo-ed" out. They had to leave behind their vehicles.

*Q: This was in a mountain snowstorm? Where were they stranded?*

A: Yes, they were stuck initially due to a storm, but then it was just because of the aftermath of the storm, there was so much snow on the ground that the passes were closed and the roads were impassible. Bamyan town itself is at about 8,000 feet. The Punjan (ph) and Wores (ph) districts go up to 12, 14, 16,000 feet. So, at those altitudes, once winter sets in, it really sets in hard.

*Q: So, typically, there isn't much movement from one village to the next, I guess. That's what you were describing earlier. In terms of making your rounds, you really wouldn't be able to do that very well.*

A: Right. We were pretty hunkered down. Now, we did have an incident – and as far as I know, this is the first attack that we've had on any PRT personnel –

three nights ago, a local civilian employee of DFID was traveling at night on his way back from vacation and shots were fired at his vehicle. From the way that it sounded, they initially stopped when a bullet struck the vehicle. When they stopped, they were then struck by several bullets from multiple directions and decided then that it was an ambush and not a robbery and they drove out of the situation. Luckily, there were some injuries from broken glass when the windows shattered, but nobody was actually hit by a bullet who was in the car. When I left Bamyan, while the police and the PRT were working from the assumption that it wasn't a simple robbery, that it was an actual intentional ambush or attack, they still hadn't come up with a motive. They didn't know whether it was a case of mistaken identity or whether somebody knew that it was somebody associated with the PRT and they wanted specifically to strike the PRT. That's still up in the air.

*Q: Well, that's worrisome, I imagine.*

A: Yes.

*Q: And you said the individual was from DFID?*

A: Yes. As I mentioned earlier, it's the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. It's England's equivalent of USAID.

*Q: Well, I hope that's an isolated incident rather than a new pattern emerging.*

A: Well, we hope so, too, although there have been news reports that Al-Qaeda and anti-Coalition forces were planning on stepping up their activities when weather permitted. Throughout the country over this past weekend, there were a number of IED attacks and rocket attacks and things like that. So, it may not have been isolated, but like I said, there isn't the sense yet of what the motive was. But the police and the PRT were cooperating to investigate.

*Q: Yes.*

A: Other than that, when the weather's good, we have had excellent freedom of movement within Bamyan province. The October 2004 presidential elections were probably the most tense period since I've been here, but as a result of the generally stable situation in Bamyan and in my opinion the PRT's active rules of engagement and assurances to the international community that the PRT would extend its security umbrella to them, both their international staff and their local staff, as well as to their property to ensure that if anything did happen, they would be secure, none of the international community pulled out for the elections. I know that in some provinces, people were either called back to Kabul or confined to their compounds on election day. But the PRT was out in a supportive role to support the local security agencies. I personally was able to go out with an

interpreter and a couple of guards and go to polling centers and talk to people who were voting and to election officials and it was a really terrific experience.

*Q: Okay, so you were observing the elections right in your own province-*

A: Yes.

*Q: And apparently they were peaceful in Bamyan?*

A: Yes, very successful. Bamyan had one of the highest voter participation rates of registered voters both for men and for women.

*Q: Wow, that's impressive. What we read here, there were some telling photos of the Afghan elections and individual voters were singled out, I think, by our President: the first woman to vote for example. So it was impressive to get these news accounts, but it didn't provide a very complete picture as you would have had being on the ground.*

A: They were terrific. It was a festival. It was a very festive atmosphere. People were very excited to be participating.

*Q: And the elections were over just one day?*

A: Yes, that's right.

*Q: And you mentioned that women turned out. How did that work? You mentioned they're not highly literate. Literacy presumably was not a requirement. But do you think they needed to be persuaded by family members? How was the sentiment among women for participating in this first time event?*

A: I don't think they had to be persuaded by family members. I do think the majority population of Bamyan province is an ethnic group called the Hazara. They have a distinctly Asian look to them that sort of sets them apart from other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. They have had a history of fairly intense and brutal discrimination against them. I suspect that as a result of that the Hazara leaders realized that if they didn't have women voting, they were throwing away half of their vote and that they more than, say, the ethnic Pashtun, who have had a history of real overrepresentation in national politics, really did believe that if they didn't have women voting they would be left out, that that was one way for them to boost their numbers and their clout in the elections.

*Q: In terms of the loya jirga, did the PRT have a role in helping support that as well?*

A: I don't know. The Emergency and Constitutional Loya Jirgas were both before I got there. I just don't know what role the PRT might have had.



*Q: While we're talking about democracy and other aspects of building local governance, do you personally or in the PRT have some involvement with other forms of local representational government councils? Are there programs to promote human rights? Is that something that you're involved in? Or women's rights in general?*

A: Yes. In addition to the coordination bodies that I described before, the PRT also participates in what the human rights organizations call thematic working groups. There's one that has to deal with judicial rights and human rights violations. It is headed by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. There's participation from UNAMA, from UNHCR, and a few others whose names escape me right now. And so we did participate in those thematic working groups so that we can keep track of what sorts of violations might be going on, what sorts of activities might be taking place. The PRT, in particular DFID, the British aid organization, has also sponsored human rights training for the police, for the judiciary, and for prosecutors. DFID's also working with UNAMA and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission to put on some training for the people who are running the prisons, for the wardens and for the guards, so that they will work towards compliance with the UN minimum standards for prisoners. Some of the training that the PRT provides directly to the police includes the humane treatment of people in custody, non-violent and non-injurious methods of bringing people under arrest, of doing both personal searches as well as vehicle searches and residence searches, and also in the safe channeling of weapons, which doesn't necessarily sound like it contributes to human rights but the police forces basically get no training whatsoever from the central government or from the Afghan national police institution. So, the PRT patrol units, the teams that go out, have provided some basic paramilitary skills. The PRT is also hosting temporarily the regional police training center, which is funded by State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. It's operated by Dyncorp. Dyncorp has three police instructors who live in the PRT. They work in a portion of the PRT compound where the temporary training facility is, and they, too, include human rights and ethnical treatment of the population in their training courses.

*Q: What kind of local police existed before the Taliban was ousted and the international presence became what it is more or less now? There perhaps were some forms of local policing, but I imagine what you're trying to do is start almost from scratch to build a very different kind of local police force.*

A: Yes. Well, you know, basically, the professionals who remain with the police force, the people who have seniority and have had formal training for the most part were trained by the Soviets and then, of course, under the Mujahidin. And then, under the Taliban, people who had associated with the Russians or the Soviets were discredited and were basically punished for having been involved with them at all. So, there are a few people who have had training, but that

training is at a minimum 15 years old and there's just been a downward slide since then. It was as afflicted by warlordism as anyplace else was before the Taliban came even, and then after the Taliban came. The Taliban were particularly brutal with the Hazara because they are for the most part Shia Muslims, which the Taliban apparently saw as being even worse than heretics or worse than non-believers because they were heretics.

*Q: Yes, I see. That's a sensitive issue.*

A: Yes.

*Q: Overall in Afghanistan the percentage of Shia versus Sunni is about what? Do you know?*

A: I could really only guess. I'm going to guess it's around 80% Sunni, 20% Shia, but I don't know that for sure. That would be something to look up. I'm sure there are statistics somewhere. I'm not a very reliable source on that.

*Q: Well, it's just a parenthesis anyway. Back to the local police, the PRT has through Dyncorps contractors and so on definitely been involved then in training the police?*

A: Yes.

*Q: It doesn't sound like you've been too much involved in that project, but am I wrong there?*

A: I haven't had a personal role in that.

*Q: In terms of courts, you mentioned prisons and some efforts to train the guards in humane treatment of prisoners. What about the courts in your province? Are they functioning and along what lines do we have some contribution to the development of a different legal system?*

A: Well, I don't know if it needs to be a different system, but it definitely needs development. The courts and the prosecutors and the representatives from the Ministry of Justice are in some of the worst public facilities that I've seen. The governor's office and the police station are nothing to be really excited and happy about, but the courthouse, such as it is (and that really overstates it and makes it sound grander than it is) and the prosecutor's office and the Ministry of Justice offices have two or three rooms. The court room is a single small room. They're all heated with wood stoves or coal when they can get a hold of the fuel to burn. And they are just in incredibly shabby condition.

*Q: And were the judges appointed, based on their family ties or their loyalty to someone as opposed to their professional training and achievement?*

A: Yes, very few of them have any real formal legal training. That's true for all of them. Either they were selected by locals as people of wisdom or they have some religious training, but none of the officials that I've spoken with have talked about graduating from a law school as we think of it in the United States, although some of them do have a university education. I do believe that they're literate, at least the ones at the provincial level.

*Q: Well, that's good. Literate in which language.*

A: Dari, the local variant of Farsi.

*Q: Okay, their local language. And so they would not have studied necessarily even in Kabul, much less abroad.*

A: Oh, no, they could well have spoken Dari in Kabul. Dari has been the language of learned Afghans for years.

*Q: Do we have some programs that the PRT is running for education of legal professionals?*

A: Yes. Again, they sponsor a training program for the judiciary and for the prosecutors and have worked with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission as well as with the chief justice to put that together.

*Q: So that's an achievement.*

A: Salaries are a huge issue really throughout officialdom. The police officers (I'm not talking just regular rank and file walking the beat policemen) only make about \$40 a month. The chief justice makes \$45 a month. The prosecutor makes about \$42 a month. And so the potential for corruption, for purchasing judgments, for getting people to either look the other way or crack down on somebody based on political ties and bribery, there's just such a high risk for that when you're paying people less than they can afford to feed their family on. Even though they're making something like four times the average per capita income, it's still just too little.

*Q: Right, and doesn't provide any incentive to be honest.*

A: Right. And Bamyan is so rural and is perceived, especially in Kabul, as being so backward that it's very difficult to lure people out to jobs in the district anyway. Bamyan center itself is seen as being peaceful and beautiful and a relatively attractive part of Bamyan to go to. But the districts, because of the inaccessibility that I mentioned earlier and because they really just are out in the boonies, the prosecutor in particular has mentioned that he's got two districts

where he can't find anybody with the salaries that he can pay to go out to the districts and be prosecutors.

*Q: I can imagine that would have been a problem perennially.*

A: Yes.

*Q: Without war, without Taliban, still, no one wants to go to the most backward part of what is already a fairly underdeveloped country in the Third World.*

A: Yes. I mean, we have enough problems even in the United States with all sorts of incentive programs getting professionals to go out to rural areas. What counts as a rural area in America is so much farther along than what is a rural area here that it's difficult to make the comparison.

*Q: I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal. So I'm able to imagine what life is like and it's not what most people would strive for materially. There might be lots of other compensations, but material comfort would not be one of them.*

A: Right.

*Q: Did you have some special background that equipped you to deal with the rigors physically, culturally, intellectually of a place like Bamyan? Had you been prepared for that?*

A: Yes, I think intellectually I actually was better prepared than a lot of people were. I had the great advantage of spending a year at the U.S. Naval War College. So, between being able to focus my papers on counterinsurgencies and counterterrorism and also being able to focus my electives on things like constitutional law and area studies, I wouldn't have been prepared for working in this part of the world, especially working with the PRT, had I not been able to use that year to familiarize myself with military history and strategy and operations.

*Q: Yes, I can see where that would be really crucial.*

A: Yes. I feel very fortunate. I was familiar with New Zealanders. I think that's one of the reasons I was selected to come to Bamyan. I honestly wasn't sure how I was going to cope with living someplace this remote and living in a military camp, but it's been okay. I'm glad that I'm here. I think I've been reasonably productive. I've really enjoyed it.

*Q: To pick up on some of the description that you're making of the military atmosphere: of course, the military is an integral part of the PRT. How is this interaction? Who is in charge of the PRT? Obviously, you understand their culture, but in terms of goals, does it manage to get sorted out in terms of civilian goals and military goals?*

A: Yes, I think it does. I do think that the Kiwis are particularly well suited to this sort of a conflict. They have embraced as a nation and as a national military small wars as their core mission. They are no longer training or equipping or thinking that they are going to be involved in something like World War II. They do not see themselves as being the major players in a major theater war. What they do focus on now is peacekeeping and peace enforcement and counterinsurgency sorts of missions. I think because that has been their overall sort of national military strategy, they look for ways to contribute what they can as a small but very professional force. Because they are such a small military, they have a lot of interaction with civilian organizations even back home, my impression is that they just don't draw the same kind of broad sweeping distinctions between the military and civilians that I think some members of the U.S. armed forces do.

*Q: That's an interesting point. And that's in part because of how they define their military culture?*

A: Yes, in part because of how they define their military culture, but also in part because of the fact that they only have a military of about 5,000 people.

*Q: Altogether?*

A: Yes. And so that means that they don't live on huge bases away from the rest of the community. They go to work at the bases and they may be temporarily housed in a barracks, but for the most part they are living out among the rest of the community. They're shopping in regular supermarkets. They're sending their kids to regular schools. Whether they're public or private, they're not military run. I do think that makes a difference in the culture.

*Q: 5,000 total.*

A: Yes.

*Q: I have, I think, really just a couple questions to try to sum up what you've been telling. You've been very systematic and very organized in presenting the realities of the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The team was established in 2002 initially?*

A: Yes, it would have been 2002, by the Americans, yes.

*Q: Right. So, we're talking about an organization that has been in existence for less than three years, which is a short time for the ambitious goals that you have. That said, what do you like to point to as the greatest achievement of your PRT so far?*

A: Well, I'd say the success of the presidential elections, which was due to a number of factors, but the fact that the international community stuck around, that we had such a high rate of voter turnout, and just a lot of Afghans that we spoke to on election day, every one of them thanked me for the U.S. government and the PRT being out there and attributed the security of the province to the PRT's presence. I'd say that's probably the top achievement.

*Q: Yes, and that's a big one.*

A: Yes.

*Q: I'm going to guess that province had never had elections of this sort before.*

A: Yes. The whole country had not had elections of this sort before, so, yes, it was huge.

*Q: Absolutely. And that touches a little bit on the attitude of the people. When you're able to go out and visit and talk to them, what do you sense is their reaction to U.S. and international presence?*

A: Generally very positive. It's something that you notice when you leave Kabul and leave the Bagram area and head towards Bamyan. In Kabul and around Bagram – and I've heard places in the south, but I know for a fact around Kabul and Bagram – people, if they notice at all, sort of scowl. You don't get a friendly sense of people's attitudes. But when driving around Bamyan province and in Bamyan town, people wave at PRT vehicles when they go by, and for the most part, the Kiwis wave back. It really is a good fit, I think, for this particular defense force and that particular area. It's really very good.

And I think another significant achievement is the fact that the NGOs and the UN agencies in the area do work with the PRT. There are a few of them who as a matter of principle will not go to the PRT, but there is nobody who refuses to work with us or at least speak and coordinate with us. I think that is also a very good sign. Reportedly, there is more animosity between the rest of the international community, especially the traditional assistance community and the PRTs in some other areas. The PRT in Bamyan has really good working relationships with the experts in development.

*Q: Do you think that's a consequence of personalities or style or the New Zealand way of doing things?*

A: I think it's some of both. There have been three different groups of Kiwis who've come through, who've rotated through the PRT since I've been there. Each group has had a large percentage – I can't say if it's a majority because they're so young – but nearly all of the officers have served in places other than Afghanistan before they got there. Whether it was in the Solomon Islands, Papua

New Guinea, East Timor, the Balkans, Somalia, they've been in conflict zones before and they have a very good sense already of how to work with the local population and make a good impression so that they're not there as a matter of force but they're there because they're welcomed for the services that they provide to the people. The Kiwis do, I think, a really good job of keeping that in the front of their minds for all of their personnel. And it makes a difference in their approach.

*Q: Okay, I can imagine that. Now, I don't know how many PRTs there are in Afghanistan, but...*

A: I think we're approaching 20.

*Q: Okay. How many of those are under U.S. leadership?*

A: It's in the neighborhood of 13 or 14 under Coalition leadership, with New Zealand being the only non-U.S. PRT in the coalition. Then the other PRTs are ISAF [International Security Assistance Force, NATO supplied forces that are in under a UN mandate]. ISAF currently operate three or four PRTs, but they are expanding. In fact, I think it was just this week that the U.S. is handing PRT Herat over to the Italians.

*Q: Is there kind of a blueprint, a PRT manual, that describes the structure and the kinds of activities and how to go about running one of these teams?*

A: No, not really. There is a group in Kabul called the PRT Executive Steering Committee that is trying to sort of bring together the lessons learned and come up with guidance for the PRTs, but I don't know how much of an impact that has on the ground, on what people are actually doing out in the field. But, no, there is not a cookbook that says, "This is a PRT and this is how you do it." I think that the two main factors that go into it are the environment in which the PRT is situated and the nationality of the forces running the PRT. The rules of engagement and their national policies are going to have a huge impact on what they will and will not do when they're running a PRT.

*Q: Yes. Can you think of any examples of, say, an American PRT and something they did that you don't think would have occurred in your PRT or vice versa?*

A: Well, I can't think of an American one. I can think of a German one. There was an incident in late 2004 in Faizabad where a rumor regarding an NGO having molested an Afghan woman caught on and led to demonstrations in the streets. Then that eventually led to crowds breaking into the NGO compound and some other international compound. There was looting and vandalism and some local staff were beaten up. A German PRT patrol was going by and people from the international community or the assistance community flagged it down to ask for help and they basically refused to help. They returned to their PRT and they

locked the gate. They provided no assistance to protect the personnel or property of the assistance community outside of their own walls. It was only when some local staff of either an NGO or an IGR – I can't remember which – went to the PRT and asked for medical assistance that they let somebody inside their gates for treatment. So, the word about the incident and the PRT's non-responsiveness to it spread through the international community like wildfire, as you can imagine.

*Q: Right.*

A: Shortly after that, our commander and I were talking about it and he said he wished there was something he could do because he really didn't want the assistance community to leave Bamyán in the lead-up to the elections. So, we talked for quite a while. We talked about the sorts of messages he'd want to send and what the rules of engagement [ROEs] of the PRT were. Based on our conversation and ROEs, I drafted a statement for him to read at a coordination meeting. The assistance community was really happy with the message. They were all writing furiously as he read his remarks. After the meeting, he decided to write it into a formal memo that he then had distributed to everybody in the assistance community in Bamyán. People whose offices I visited later at NGOs or at UN agencies posted that memo and it said specifically that the PRT would extend protection to the staff, both local and international, as well as the property of the assistance community.

*Q: Yes, that's a big success, too, I think, in terms of managing public relations and actually offering something very important to other NGOs.*

A: Yes. So, I think that was. One of the complaints of the traditional assistance community is that PRTs should stick to security and that by branching out into assistance work, they're detracting from what they should be doing and they're meddling in other people's business. I really do think that it makes a difference to the assistance community in Bamyán that the PRT is doing both, that it is providing security and it does extend that security protection to them, and in addition to that it's doing assistance work and it's doing as much as it can to coordinate that assistance work, and I think it really does make a difference.

*Q: I think that's one of the big issues that they want to look at in terms of lessons learned and how the PRT might serve as a model in other countries, other situations. The fine balance between what civilian organizations typically do and what the military typically does is something that's important to look at. It sounds as if in your situation there is not only a good working relationship but this balance apparently...*

A: Yes, I think there is. I do wish that the Department of State provided more than just one person. I think that we'd be more effective if we had our own interpreters, our own transportation, and some programming funds to be able to bring to the table. The commanders that we've had up there have said that they



really do appreciate having a political adviser, somebody who does this for a living, and that that's the first thing we think of rather than something we try to just put around the fringes of military activity. But I do think we'd be more effective as an organization if we provided more support to our officers in the field.

*Q: Now, is that a function at all of finite resources? One thinks that a lot of money is going to Iraq and some of the programs that are being attempted there are similar to the kinds that you would want to do in Afghanistan. Has it been an issue of, "Well, we don't have any more resources for Afghanistan because they're all going to Iraq?"*

A: I'm not sure. I know that everything I've read suggests that Afghanistan is being done on the cheap, and I think that really is a shame. But I can't say that it's because of Iraq that it's happening.

*Q: Yes. I'm sympathetic. I'm thinking, well, many people would say, looking at U.S. assistance policy over the last 25 years, they've tried to do that on the cheap and that's our standard operating procedure, sadly, because doing the right kind of assistance in the right way would pay great dividends.*

A: Well, it's a political effort out here. I don't think of it as an assistance effort. It's not development for development's sake. It's development and assistance to achieve a specific political purpose and we're giving that short shrift.

*Q: Yes.*

A: Certainly you could make an argument that it would have been better to intervene before the Taliban ever got a foothold, but be that as it may, now that we're here, I do think we should be giving it enough resources to do it well and I'm not sure that's happening.

*Q: I see, and you're therefore dependent on the other partners in the PRT, which are military partners, I guess, for the interpreters and the transport.*

A: And civilian partners. Actually, the DFID member who's there has been very generous with his staff and with his vehicle as well.

*Q: So it would be something as simple as your own vehicle.*

A: Yes.

*Q: And your own interpreter.*

A: Yes. I was unable to attend what I considered a key political rally during the lead-up to the presidential elections because the PRT didn't have a spare vehicle

to give to me. They suggested, and I agreed with them, that it would not have been safe for me to walk half of a mile to a political rally and be in a crowd without a way out of it. So, I was basically stranded inside of camp when one of three major political events happened in the lead-up to the presidential campaign. Had either State or USAID had a vehicle out there, I would have been able to go to it, but they didn't, so I couldn't.

*Q: When I was doing some interviews for the Iraq Project, I learned they apparently had some resources that were kind of at the disposal of people who, I think, were like your counterparts. I'm wondering, do you have some resources that you command?*

A: No, none. No.

*Q: So that's a big issue.*

A: Yes.

*Q: And procurement, all of your supplies are procured centrally?*

A: Yes, I pick them up at the embassy when I pass through Kabul.

*Q: How often do you get to Kabul?*

A: About every six weeks.

*Q: And is it a major undertaking to do that?*

A: No, it's not such a big deal. USAID has chartered an air service that flies between Kabul and the PRTs that have air strips where fixed-wing planes can land versus rotary wing, versus helicopters. There are a few PRTs that don't have an airstrip or are nowhere near airstrips, so they can only be reached by road or by helicopter.

*Q: But you have one.*

A: Yes, Bamyan's got a big enough air strip that we can get small fixed-wing planes in.

*Q: Okay, so every six weeks or so you're able to come into Kabul and resupply and touch base with the embassy.*

A: Yes, check my state.gov e-mail, pick up my own mail, just sort of take care of the random administrative things that come up.

*Q: Your suggestions for your successor? You're going to be there just a year, is that the tour of duty?*

A: Yes, that's right.

*Q: So you're more than halfway. If you had some advice in addition to some of the things you've been mentioning, training for your successor or preparation what would have been useful...*

A: Language training would be very good. I would highly recommend some Dari language training. Our interpreters are okay, but it would be really good to at least have a basic grip on the language to be able to conduct at least some pleasantries in Dari.

*Q: The courtesy level training would be helpful.*

A: Yes, it really would be. Getting some sort of acquaintance with military structures and military operations would be very useful. There are a lot of acronyms that fly around and a lot of things that are just a common language for everybody involved with the military and really alien for people who aren't.

*Q: Right, and they're transnational, I guess. That is, the Kiwis use the same acronyms and have the same structure as our folks.*

A: Some of the same. There are some differences, but there is quite a bit of overlap. So, I don't know that it would have to be a full year at a war college, although I found it very useful. I think it really has come in handy with my effectiveness in arguing for a decision to go one way rather than another way based on political versus military grounds. But speaking the same language and being able to discuss issues of information operations and psychological operations and legitimacy and effectiveness and those sorts of terms of art, I think, really help a lot. Partly, it speeds things up because you're speaking the same language and you can use the shorthand. But it also really does seem to have an impact on how seriously they take the argument.

*Q: I was going to say, I'm sure it gives you much more credibility than if you didn't have that ability.*

A: Yes. To know the terms of art of their profession and how to use them correctly really does make a difference.

*Q: Definitely, yes. That's important. I think you mentioned the USAID person that is on your team and the USDA person. Did any of them also have some military background or familiarity?*

A: No.

*Q: I think that probably is one of the most important things that people need to have before they go serve in Afghanistan if at all possible, the familiarity with things military, however they come by it.*

A: You know, it helps to bridge the gap. Being able to meet them part-way, to be a civilian who meets the military part-way, acknowledges their concern, and can argue the countervailing concerns really is useful. Otherwise you run the risk of just talking past each other and in the end, in most cases, the civilian is going to lose out just because we haven't got the people, we haven't got the resources.

*Q: Exactly, yes, I can well imagine that.*

*One last thing. You had alluded earlier today to corruption as a problem. I was wondering whether you had been able to make some inroads, not that it's going to be resolved quickly or overnight, but it's an area that you have been focusing on in the PRT, so I just thought I'd ask if you had seen some results.*

A: Well, it's hard to say how much could be attributed to the PRT's effort. Two of the worst public officials are no longer in office. The former provincial governor and the former Afghan chief of police have both lost their jobs. We did do negative reporting up our chains, both civilian chains and military chains, on both of these individuals.

*Q: Where did they go?*

A: Well, the former governor is out of a job as far as we know and has said that he's planning on running for election. The former acting police chief has been seen hanging around Bamyan and nobody's really sure what he's doing or what his plans are. I don't know what, if any, of that can be attributed to the PRT's efforts, whether it was in reporting or sort of pushing them to try to do better and having them have to do things in different ways than they would have if they had been able to act with impunity. But it's hard to say how much is that and how much of it is because there were other people with pull in Kabul who were able to report back to their political supporters what turkeys they were being and that those were the people that managed to get rid of them.

*Q: And they apparently were able to put good people in those offices?*

A: We hope so. We've had very good contact so far with the new chief of police, who's very professional and has seemed to us to be very straightforward. Of course, our new governor is Afghanistan's first woman governor. So we really will be hoping that she does well because the spotlight is going to be on her.

*Q: You said there are very few literate women in the province.*

A: Yes. She's not from Bamyan. She's ethnic Hazara, so she is the same ethnic group as the majority of the population here, but she's not from Bamyan province.

*Q: But is she well accepted by the province?*

A: Well, so far so good. Her appointment was announced in early March. Since then, she's probably only been in Bamyan for about five or six days, so it's still too early to tell.

*Q: That's exciting anyway. You'll probably be meeting her in the near future if you haven't.*

A: I have met her. She's very personable. She speaks English. We certainly are hoping that she'll be good to work with.

*Q: Are there any other thoughts that you would like to leave here on our tape? I will also ask you to think of additional names of people who would be good to do similar interviews. If they have already returned from Afghanistan, that's even easier, but if not, we can contact them in the field. I was going to ask if you could send those via e-mail when you have a chance.*

A: Sure, I can do that. That's very easy.

I can't think of anything in particular off the top of my head to add. If I do, I'll send you an e-mail.

*Q: Yes, that would be great. I think we've really touched on a lot of important items here and it's clearly a team that is working very well together and it's really exciting, what you're doing. Is there any thought of people staying longer than one year in your position? Does that depend on you at all?*

A: I think that if people wanted to extend they could, but I don't know if anybody has extended beyond a year. People go and come back again. But this is a hardship tour. I don't know anything else that would be comparable. Iraq has a whole other set of hardships, I think.

*Q: Obviously, you give up your family for a whole year, which is not an easy thing to do.*

A: Yes. And being able to cook your own meals and having a private bath and a private shower and more than one room and be able to eat in restaurants and go to movies and driving your car by yourself and going out at night and just any number of other things that are just simply not possible. I took just a short TDY to Islamabad, which was one of the things that were available to us, just sort of to boost the morale over the winter. I was talking with somebody at the embassy there and they asked me if I had had a chance to have a security briefing and I

said I wasn't there long enough. He said, "Well, I suppose that the security situation in Afghanistan and in Islamabad is probably pretty much the same." I started laughing because even though Islamabad is also a one-year unaccompanied tour, people are permitted to ship their personal vehicles, they can drive their personal vehicles, they can go to restaurants, they can go to hotels, they live off compound, they've got houses, they've got domestic staff. It's simply not comparable.

*Q: No, this is much more like joining the Marines, if you will, I guess.*

A: Yes.

*Q: You don't have any of the trappings of a normal Foreign Service assignment. That's a given.*

A: Yes.

*Q: The Iraq folks that I talked to didn't have to work seven days a week, but on the other hand, there were no distractions to tempt them away. Would that be similar in your circumstance? You need to go home and read a book maybe, but since home is shared barrack....*

A: Yes. At the moment, I do have my own room, although that may change shortly because we've got some pressures on space and housing. It's a six-day week with Fridays off. I really do make every effort to take Fridays off and go outside the wire and either go walking or hiking or go spend the day at one of the UN guesthouses or something like that just to be away, to have a change of scenery.

*Q: If you go for a walk, can you go by yourself?*

A: I don't go by myself. We stay within communication chains. We let the command post know where we're going. And we go with somebody else.

*Q: Yes. Sounds very sensible.*

A: Yes. But that's better than what they can do in Kabul. People who are posted here to the embassy can't go for walks outside the compound. It's not permitted.

*Q: Oh, is that right? I didn't realize that.*

A: Yes. They go in an armored vehicle or they go in a flak jacket in an unarmored vehicle or they don't go.

*Q: And the compound in Kabul is, I guess, nothing like the Green Zone in Baghdad, which is a little city unto itself.*

A: No, it's roughly the size of Main State.

*Q: Then you quickly exhaust the novelty possibility.*

A: Yes, very quickly. That's one of the reasons I don't come to Kabul any more often than I have to.

*Q: No, you're in a better situation out there in Bamyan where they kind of like you and are welcoming.*

A: Yes.

*Q: Could you go to an Afghan home for dinner out there in the province?*

A: Could conceivably, but there, too, without the language.... Aside from Afghans who work for the international organizations, I don't know any Afghans who speak English except for our director of public health and our new governor.

*Q: Right, so there are a few of those. That's why, again, that wonderful courtesy level language would be really important.*

A: Yes. There have been some invitations where people whom I don't necessarily know very well say, "Please come visit my home. Come have a cup of tea." I've turned them down simply because I don't have my own interpreter. I'd have to take somebody from the PRT out in the evening and take soldiers with me. It turns into such a production that I just can't impose that.

*Q: Sure, on your host there. That's a shame, but I understand how that would have to be.*

*It's been really interesting for me to talk to you.*

A: Well, I'm glad.

*Q: I really appreciate you sharing your experiences and giving us a pretty full picture here of what life is like.*

A: Yes.

*Q: Thank you for what you're doing there.*

A: I think it really is a very worthwhile project and I'm glad that the Department is doing something to document it and try to improve it and maybe figure out how to make it work in our other places, too.

*Q: Yes, I think they are going to try to use these lessons learned and get them accumulated and compiled in a timely manner. The reason for talking to real people in their own words, I think, is to put the flesh on what would otherwise have been a dry, bureaucratic report – and we know what happens to those sometimes.*

A: Yes, we do.

*Q: But anyhow, I thank you for your efforts out there. Do stay safe.*

A: Thank you. Will do.