

## USIP – ADST

### Afghanistan Experience Project

#### Interview #9

#### Executive Summary

(Note: This is a combined interview of three USAID employees at USAID Washington, identified as Interviewees A, B, and C.)

Interviewee A energetically voices his concern that the establishment of some 20 PRTs throughout Afghanistan was done without sufficient analysis of whether the PRT notion made sense and whether stationing civilian and military personnel together in PRTs “significantly increases the pace or success of reconstruction.” He also strongly objects to the idea that the PRT concept is a “breakthrough,” calling the idea “preposterous” and a demonstration of “utter ignorance of this field of knowledge,” since civilians and military officials have a long history of working together in the field. He also criticizes the notion that it is easy to overcome the difficulties of civilians and military individuals operating together by providing training. He points out that the training required would be enormous. Another major failing of the PRT planning process was the failure at the outset to achieve an interagency memo or agreement that specifies what the PRTs are, what their objectives are, what the civilians are expected to do, and what the military were expected to do. Interviewee A admits that PRTs are useful as an intelligence gathering tool, to show the flag and reduce Taliban opposition. He also allows that an AID/State officer is a useful advisor to the civil affairs officers, many of whom do not have extensive overseas experience.

The interviewees point out that there seems to be a disconnect between the stated purpose of the PRTs, i.e., to extend the writ of the central government, and what the PRT can actually do, which, in the case of AID, is to provide a platform for monitoring projects and finding out what’s going on in the remote areas. However, that is not extending the writ of the central government.

At the end of the day, though, these officials accept the need for armed protection for civilians working in Afghanistan. They believe that having disciplined, foreign troops in the middle of chaos is generally a good thing, that it helps “tamp down the violence.” They admit that the PRT structure has utility, but is not “the silver bullet that it is sometimes portrayed as being by its proponents” and should not automatically be applied in other crisis situations.

In the view of the principal interviewee (A), this PRT study could be especially useful if it examined whether related models might be even more effective. Rather than having foreign flags flying over PRTs, for example, a variation on the structure might have local government flags flying over local government facilities, staffed by local civil servants, but surrounded by a security perimeter of foreign troops.

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

**Interview #9**

*Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen  
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Q: As I've been told that the PRTs [Provisional Reconstruction Teams] are an innovative organization, and also in some sense controversial, we're interested to explore that from your points of view here in AID. Your colleague showed me his slideshow, and one of the slides was actually quite informative. It tells that five percent of the USAID budget for Afghanistan is devoted to the PRTs. I'd like to explore that fact and ask you to describe the role of the PRTs in your overall Afghanistan program.

Interviewee A: think whenever someone asks an analytical question you have to put some kind of context in this thing. If the question is, "How well are PRTs performing in Afghanistan?" That already sort of assumes what I think is the larger analytical question, which is, "Does this basic construct make much sense or not?" And my concern is that the notion that civilian and military personnel should be stationed together in geographically dispersed locations in post-conflict situations, and that dispersion and cohabitation somehow significantly increase the pace or success of reconstruction, is in my view an utterly untested hypothesis.

We had the good fortune of sitting in the meetings when the U.S. military first proposed PRTs in Afghanistan. The idea was to hypothesize that this might be an interesting experiment, let's do two of them, then we'll conduct the big U.S. Government review to see if this was successful. Well, we did two and everybody liked the idea of these dots appearing on the map, and then we did three and four and several of us raised at the Deputies' Committee level: 'well, wait a minute, weren't we supposed to analyze these things before we did more of them?' And the military's reaction was, 'this was so *primo facto* successful, that we want to do ten and twelve and fifteen of them!' But there's no proof that they contribute to anything, and that was swept away in the general enthusiasm of seeing ever more dots on the map.

And so that's my first level of analysis, that in a post-conflict situation there are a number of processes that you want to see take place. It might be useful if we shared with you a menu that the CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies] has developed. It's sort of a menu of all the things that might happen to put Humpty Dumpty back together again: demobilize militias, re-establish the justice and prison system, get the displaced persons back to their places of origin. Now those are the processes that are important in making a post-conflict transformation successful. So the question is: does the establishment of outside forces, military forces, linked

with civilian donor organizations in dispersed units across the landscape contribute to those processes? I think that's a completely untested hypothesis. My sense is that this concept partakes of a lot of military doctrine. That you take ground and hold ground by putting military units on the ground. You put boots on the ground, so to speak.

In the U.S., 90-some million people just paid their taxes in this country. To the best of my knowledge, we did not put IRS [Internal Revenue Service] agents in fortified positions around the country in order to do that. If the US military had been put in charge of this, they would have put fortified IRS positions across the countryside. Because of the military concept, you've got a mission, you've got to make people pay their taxes; let's get some people out there and start talking to the people and mobilize support. And you know, we think that 60 years of development experience and diplomatic experience suggests that there are lots of ways to get the things done that you want to have done. We established a new currency in Afghanistan. We didn't put any fortified positions in the countryside. We just came up with a plan to strengthen the central bank and all of a sudden on every street corner in Afghanistan, people were using the new Afghanis. So I just think there's this fundamental unanswered question, of whether creating little teams of foreigners, scattered across the countryside in Afghanistan has anything to do with anything, other than some military tactical things; it's quite useful as an intelligence gathering tool. It's quite useful to show the flag and tamp down Taliban opposition. It's quite useful to have some technical experts if you're a civil affairs officer and you're trying to win the hearts and minds of the locals and having an AID person there, or State Department political officer, provides a certain cachet and enrichment. But, I don't know that it fundamentally has anything to do with stabilizing the countryside, except from a security point of view.

So the idea that this is some breakthrough concept is preposterous in my point of view. In a hundred peace-keeping settings, the civilians, the UN agencies, NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations], International Red Cross, donor agencies like USAID and the military forces on the ground had developed some sort of *modus vivendi*: sometimes co-location, sometimes humanitarian operation centers where they get together in a more flexible format and discuss what needs to be done. But the notion that the civilians and the military haven't ever talked to each other before somebody dreamed up a PRT just speaks of utter ignorance of this field of knowledge.

So to answer your question in a most circularized fashion, we programmed virtually none of the funds through these programs, through these mechanisms -- maybe I'm thinking without a base since I don't pay attention as much as [Interviewee C] does to Afghanistan right now -- because we wouldn't think of this as... I don't want to say "relevant," but it would be like it doesn't seem you're concerned with the major things we're talking about: improving education, improving the judicial system, improving the road system in Afghanistan, improving revenue collection for the government, improving civil society participation and democratic processes. It's just unclear to me what the establishment of a bunch of little foreign teams across the countryside has to do with any of that.

*Q: If I could add that I'm not here as a PRT advocate.*

A: You're not an advocate, I understand that, but someone will hear these words.

*Q: This is very helpful.*

Interviewee C: The mantra of PRT policy in the U.S. government is: the purpose of the PRTs is to extend the writ of the central government. And as [Interviewee A] points out, how do you make that leap to a group of foreigners in camps surrounded by guns, traveling around in bright blue flak jackets surrounded by guns? This extends the writ of the central government how?

That is repeated over and over again as the purpose of the PRTs; however, in practice, what is its value to us? It's a great tool for monitoring.

*Q: By "us" that is U.S. government?*

C: We're not allowed outside Kabul without force protection under diplomatic security requirements. So the PRTs are the only viable platform for us to get out and check out our projects and look at opportunities and see what's going on remotely. But that's not extending the writ of the central government.

There's always a debate about whether or not the PRT should play a more activist role in terms of reconstruction planning and programming under the rubric of extending the writ of the central government. Our colleagues at the Defense Department had visions of passive government programs across the local level. There is such a thing as the national solidarity program, which is small scale, quick impact projects in every village. There is the government's Afghan stabilization program which is designed with a systematic approach to building the capacity of local government, with public administration training, equipment, infrastructure, etc. And then the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development has its own database of priorities. So that begs the question of what kind of value added our not running around finding local priorities has, since there already is an established priorities database. It's an interesting contradiction.

*Q: It was mentioned at the outset that AID was involved with the creation of the PRTs. Can you give a brief timeline of what period we're talking about for the conception of the PRTs and AID's ability to function before that time in Afghanistan?*

C: Starting in fall of 2001, we were already designing a reconstruction program and getting it together so that when the war was over we could move in. Then the question was, "how can we get around the country and what is the most appropriate vehicle for doing so?" We had an internal debate here at AID about whether we should hook on with the UN and use UN security protocol and arrangements or hook on with the U.S. military. And to be perfectly frank, there was a very big debate here in that some of us had serious reservations. The U.S. military there, whose purpose is to fight a war, now had the purpose of keeping us safe. Putting us with the guys who are fighting the war, I don't see how that keeps us safe. But at the end of the day the security requirements were such that we would not be allowed to use the UN as a platform for getting around the country with their security arrangements. We would have to have the U.S. military protect us. So from day one, when we would venture outside of Kabul, we traveled with Marines and guns and what not and then over time those security requirements got tighter and tighter. Now, they're incredibly strict even though much less of the country actually has to fight

a war. In 2002, the war was 30 miles outside of Kabul; we could walk freely in Kabul; now we can't.

*Q: Why have the security restrictions gotten tighter if the situation has gotten more secure?*

C: You know, the bureaucracy caught up with Afghanistan. In the early days, things were moving so fast, there were no people or staff; no one had time to think about such things. We'd just like, "plop" people like the Assistant Administrator of AID down in Kabul.

Interviewee B: That's what happened in Iraq.

C: And then eventually as more people came on board they started to think about these programs. More roles could be established, more bureaucracy, and they said, "Oh no, now we have people running around unprotected."

: That's what happened in Iraq. When we first got there, we were basically just traveling freely around the country in our vehicles, but as things started to get in place, especially in the Embassy camp in Iraq, you couldn't do anything.

: Right, right. So initially there were these little military outposts and they were called "chiclets" at the time. I have no idea what "chiclet" stands for anymore – "combined humanitarian..." -- I don't know. We had a woman on the AID staff whose job was to be the circuit rider. She used to visit these little "chiclets" and use that as her base for getting out and monitoring our projects, finding local opportunities and so on. And then from that DOD [Department of Defense] thought, "We should institutionalize these and bring aboard civilians." We had our misgivings because we felt that we were going to be institutionalized into a security protocol that we often felt was counterproductive. It doesn't help us to do our job to be surrounded by eight soldiers. Afghans don't like you talking to their wives when you're surrounded by eight soldiers. It's a little intimidating.

*: I get the picture, yes.*

: But there could be no other way that we would be allowed to do this. So the first PRT that opened up was Bamian I believe.

We had someone placed in Bamian and then there was Gardez and we had someone placed in Gardez. And we were all really trying to find out, "What is this? How can we make this work, what can we do with it, should it even exist?" And as [Interviewee A] noted, once these two were up and running we were supposed to be evaluated, but they just went full steam ahead. So since it was decided to move forward on the concept and expand it, we realized, "okay, there's not going to be an evaluation on whether or not it's a worthwhile concept to pursue, so what can we do to make it at least work for us?"

o since that point, that was Summer 2003, we've taught ourselves how to play this and make it so at least it helps us to do our job in some way, shape or form. We did get to help participate in

the development of the policy and guidance for PRTs at that stage.

*: Okay, we'll go into that a little bit more. I was going to ask you for more detail on how you determine whether to assign an AID officer to one of the PRTs, because perhaps there are some where you decide you don't need someone or it's not the right time.*

: We were assigned to every single PRT and if NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] coalition members that have PRTs wanted us, and were willing to support us, we'd put people in those spots.

*: It's just one officer generally or is it a team sometimes?*

: There's a one-per-PRT minimum. At some of the bigger posts we've been expanding the staff. We also have what's called the regional development zone platform. So, for example, we have two people in Herat. In Jalalabad we have, I think, three people; so it depends upon the posting.

: We're directed by the National Security Council. We and State are directed to have somebody in every PRT. It's not like we have flexibility to determine where the most useful ones are. This issue had been discussed at the Deputies' level and that's the determination that the U.S. government has made.

*: Okay, how are the AID employees selected and prepared for their PRT duties?*

: They're PSCs; do you know what a PSC is?

*: Personal service contract, yes.*

: For the most part, we use PSC (contractors). They have a wide range of experiences; they've worked with AID, they've worked with the military, they've worked with Peace Corps; lots of them are former NGO workers. But what we're looking for are those individuals who can work with the military as well as having development experience in some way, shape or form. We are always recruiting because there are so many PRTs now and we have a constant turnover. Although I have to say that we've now gotten to the point where we've approved a pipeline of people we want to go out to certain PRTs. The training program: they arrive in Kabul, where there's a whole orientation program that they do for about two weeks. They meet with every section of the AID mission; they're brought up to speed on all of our programs and what each of us is doing in his specific job. They learn about the military; they learn about the embassy. At the end of two weeks, staff responsible for the PRTs then assess a person's temperament, personality and skills and match them to the most appropriate PRT.

They live, eat, sleep, 24/7 together. So personality is a big factor. We have found that it's important to make sure that they are compatible. We know the PRT commander and the embassy person, and we try to get a good fit, which is very important.

*Q: For someone who has a strong development background, perhaps, and maybe some language skills, AID experience, and so on but no military experience, how do you teach them about the military culture or do they learn that once they get there?*

C: It's part of the orientation program, where they learn about different branches of the military and about how the military operates, the kind of the culture surrounding the military; it's part of the orientation.

*Q: I spoke with a State person who was in one of the PRTs and she said she had a very helpful preparation by doing a year at the Naval War College. Without that she would have felt at a great disadvantage. Do any of you have a military background, and can anyone tell me what would be some of the most important lessons that someone new to the military had to learn?*

A: That the military had to learn?

*Q: No, let's say the civilians first and then we'll talk about the military and what they might be learning. But since they're the big force there it's probably more the civilians adapting to the military culture.*

C: Well, actually, you'd be surprised that it's probably the bigger adaptation the other way around.

*Q: Is that right? Well, let's hear about that.*

A: Well, again this is why I went through all that soliloquy at the beginning, because I'm afraid that if this study goes in the direction of taking as a given that this is the right mechanism – i.e., how can we make it work better, how can we make the civilians understand better how to work with our military structure -- we will continue a dangerous and inefficient initiative in the U.S. government. Because there was an *ethos* in civilian-military relations up until 9/11, with significant variation in the Bosnias of the world and so forth, where we were essentially in a peace-keeping environment. There was a feeling that the purpose for being there was to promote the peace, do the humanitarian work, reconstruct the country. The military forces that were there were to keep the peace so that the civilians could do their job.

Now, a couple things have happened. The military has figured out that the civilians are not very good planners, none of us; they get frustrated and yet they see more and more of their manpower being put into these kinds of environments. So, being the military, they need to control the environment, control the battle space, in military-speak.

So part of it is driven by that and part of it is driven by the fact, as you said, that there's a lot more folks there in uniform. So that is, I'm afraid, the question that will increasingly be asked, which I believe to be the wrong question, that "how can you guys adapt better to fitting into our structure?"

But having said that, let's just take it as sort of a neutral question. How can the civilians learn more about the military? It's a profoundly difficult problem both ways. There are books written

on it and I believe USIP published one of them where they had an NGO worker and a military officer each write a chapter about how to deal with the other. I frankly do not know of a way to give people a quick orientation to rank or military organization structure. I've been to a million conferences. I used to be a consultant where I taught the course: "How to deal with your civilian counterparts." Who are these guys? What's their culture? What's the difference between a 'Save the Children' and a DFID [British AID]?" So you can give a little bit of orientation that's generally helpful. But other than immersion for a year as you have suggested with your friend there, I'm not sure of a simple way to do this. I think what you might want to do is evolve some kind of clear, doctrinal basis. What we don't have to the best of my knowledge is some sort of inter-agency memorandum or agreement that specifies what these things are, what their objectives are, what you expect the civilian guys to do, what you would expect the military guys to do. If we had some general memorandum or agreement signed on by the heads of all relevant agencies, then a lot of these questions would flow from that. Absent that, we're sort of in this diffused, "oh, let's get to know each other better" mode and you can spend endless months of training and not particularly gain anything from that.

C: If you remember, we tried to get such an interagency memo early on and it just totally bogged down the bureaucracy.

A: That's right, I forgot about that.

B: Well I have a perspective as a civilian here. Zero knowledge of military and I had to go to Iraq and do a lot of military liaising between USAID-military. I knew nothing. One thing that I noticed is that it doesn't take much if you would just learn the ranks and the patches and a sergeant from a general from a captain and be able to address people correctly. There are little things that you can do to very quickly establish credibility. There's so much to learn and it's very overwhelming when you first get there. But it's the little things that you can do to really develop a lot of trust and gain respect from military personnel that I worked with; it's one thing that I noticed.

Just to learn their language and their expressions. I don't know if you can take a course on that or you just learn that from experience.

*Q: Some people are more attuned to learning those kinds of things. Now there's a personal skill that I would imagine AID folks bring to their work. It may not be a universal trait but I can see how it would go a long way if you learn the vocabulary and the language of the people you're working with. And if they happen to be Americans, maybe it's something that's easier to do.*

A: Your point is well taken but again, and I know you're not an advocate for this and you're just asking the questions, the question of how many resources to invest in training is an important one in the resource-constrained environment we all live in. I did a major study on this, on how we can train to each other's culture, and the results were quite distressing in the following sense: The question is, if I take you and I have six months, can I get you to understand the military better? Sure. That's one analytical question. If I ask the following analytical question: If I take the pool of a hundred thousand civilian relief workers who might be assigned to a PRT in Afghanistan and a pool of 1.2 million soldiers who might be assigned to a PRT in Afghanistan --



recognizing that each of them rotates through their jobs every two or three years and in some cases in the military every three years, rotates out completely going back to civilian life -- how can I train enough of the civilians and enough of the giant matrix in a million cells on this axis and a hundred thousand cells on this axis? How can I train enough in both groups so that when they come together the rifleman and the health worker who happen to arrive in Ghazni at the same time have been trained in each other's skills? Then it becomes one of the most profound problems, because the resource implications are vast. And even then the chances of having been trained up in the same skill set are pretty slim. So I think a little bit of orientation helps but this sort of silver bullet of "gee, if only we could understand each other's cultures," when you're trying to operationalize it in the real world, becomes very difficult. At least those were the results of our study.

C: I think we're going to face those same problems. Also challenging is whenever the PRTs shift over on the military side, they get a new commander, new PRT staff, and what not. We're starting over from scratch because many of the soldiers in the PRTs have never been out of the United States, and they're there in Afghanistan and they don't know things like, if you're a man you can not talk to an Afghan woman. You can not go looking at an Afghan woman. Don't ask for meetings on Friday with any local officials.

A: Don't have Marines patting down women. Ugh.

C: Yeah. Big "no no." Do not point your gun at a child, do not call them "Hajis" to their face. Some of them speak English. So there's a whole range of cultural things that they're trying to adapt to, and on top of it the military has all of the reconstruction money. You're talking about people who have never done development before. They don't understand the local politics, they don't understand the local geography, so that when a local elder comes up and says, you know this village desperately needs a well and we need it right here, this is where the water is, they never think to ask around regarding to whom that land really belongs. Local elder's mother? Where's the water really coming from? Straining the water table from the poor village right next door. Those are things they don't even think of. It's getting a lot better on the ground for having the civil units there; the civilians are now catching up with them and saying, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you might want to ask these questions."

*Q: I think I know the answer to this question but, let's explore it a little bit more. Would you say that it would be a better idea if the military and civil affairs soldiers really weren't trying to do development work? They have a lot to do with security and there are maybe some other special things that they need to do. Why do we need them to do development work?*

A: Well, look. Now I'm a U.S. citizen; we're fighting a war in Iraq, or Afghanistan. Our goal in Afghanistan is not just to do development work. We're doing development in pursuit of U.S. foreign policy objectives. The U.S. foreign policy objective is to create a stable, democratic state in Afghanistan that's at peace with its neighbors. I realize that there are many tools in the tool kit to get there: diplomatic, military, developmental. So in the abstract, should soldiers or civilians do development work? Generally in the abstract, civilians should. But do I object to civil affairs officers having some money so that they can win the hearts and minds of local people, so that they will kill fewer American soldiers, so that we can clamp down on the medieval terrorists who

are keeping women from exercising their rights? Do I object to their having money? No, I mean of course not. Should we have some rigid rule that no soldier can ever build a school? No. We have been pretty harsh on PRTs. Writ large, civilian-military coordination, the bringing together of all the assets in the U.S. government toolbox is a good thing. I have no objections. There are some very sophisticated civil affairs officers. There are some very sophisticated infantry officers. [Interviewee C] is right. A lot of these guys have never been out of the United States. Other guys have done four tours of duty in Bosnia or somewhere and are quite sophisticated. So I'm not one of these people who thinks, "Oh, the military is encroaching on our turf, they should never do this." My only problem with this is more that this is being proposed as some grand new breakthrough and that I don't buy. I think it's an interesting twist on the standard question of how civilian and military should coordinate in post-conflict situations.

*Q: I think I understand you there. In terms of the security situation and how PRTs are viewed by the Afghans, we touched a little bit on the faux pas that the military folks might commit. Yet you've said it is an insecure situation; protection is needed. Do you find that the AID officials who work in PRTs are viewed by the Afghans differently from your other AID officials working outside the military structure?*

C: We don't really have any AID staff working outside the military structure. Even when you travel outside of Kabul, you have to do PRTs.

*Q: I guess what I mean is folks who are not attached to a PRT.*

C: No, we've got all kinds of anecdotal reports on what Afghans think. We get lots of reports from Afghans saying that they like the presence of the PRT because they do find it has a security spin off. They're afraid that the U.S. and NATO will pack up their bags and go home, and that they will be vulnerable to being taken over by terrorists again. So they do like that international presence beyond Kabul. There are lots of complaints about some of the heavy-handed approaches of the military. There are some of us who do fight a war differently from civil affairs, but Afghans can't necessarily distinguish between the AID/State person, a contractor, and a civil affairs person. I think you're just going to get a diversity of opinions from Afghans on PRTs and U.S. personnel, associated with them or not.

A: As a general rule, I agree. I think that if I had some utter humanitarian who worked at our mission in Kabul who walked down the street of Ghazni or some place and some guy who was living out with a PRT in Ghazni and he walked down the street, or she walked down the street in Ghazni, the question would be how would the local terrorists treat them? Would they kill one of them? How would the local citizens react? I don't think people could tell the difference between some foreigner who might bring you something good or who might bring you something ill. Maybe people were targeting people, but is that what they're trying to get at? Would it be somehow losing effectiveness by associating with the PRT?

*Q: No. I think the point is simply to see if it's a meaningful distinction and it seems that it really is not, whether someone belongs to a bureaucratic structure called a PRT or whether someone is a contractor. There's no reason that it should be so important to the Afghans. But the question addresses how people doing development work, promoting democratic government, or*

*promoting public health -- any of these kinds of traditional AID work -- are viewed by the Afghans, given that they're surrounded by military escorts or protection. It must make the job a different one than when you're working in another environment.*

A: Do you know that the NGOs have argued quite strongly that the presence of troops makes them more vulnerable? I don't know if we have any good empirical evidence on that. Certainly even our own staff sometimes says that you're safer just riding in your little unmarked car in the countryside than surrounded by ten armed guys. My own personal view is that it's very context-specific. If you're in an environment where what you're concerned about is general banditry, the answer to that question is one thing. If you're talking about where you're near assassins who are targeting foreigners, then you get a different answer to that question. In general, across the board, we at AID don't take the position that we want the military to go away and that they're making our lives miserable or much more difficult. In some of these war zones we may not like the fact that you're traveling with armed guards, but I don't know what choice you have as U.S. government officers.

*Q: And usually we can't tell the nature of the threat sufficiently to distinguish between the bandits and the terrorists. Is that correct?*

C: We don't have that kind of intel. However, that hasn't changed the security regulations outside of Kabul. You still have to add some kind of armed escort to travel to Bamian or Balizhan (phonetic), as we would in Islamabad.

*Q: Again, just restricting ourselves to the PRTs and then we can draw some conclusions, I think that I heard you say earlier that a little bit more analysis would have been helpful at the outset and it maybe would be helpful at this point in time. Am I correct?*

A: First of all, in the way you made your comment earlier I think you're reflecting accurately the military view that this is some grand new invention. There are many models of civilian-military cooperation. We posited one just as a cost-saving effort: what we call the circuit-rider approach. I see the advantages of the PRTs. They give you a place from which you go out and observe whether your irrigation project is working or not; it gives you an opportunity to go out and talk to people who have been patrolling through the local villages. You know, they pick up useful information. As long as they pick up useful intelligence, it needs, like any information, to be processed, to be turned into intelligence. You don't take the whole information and do anything in life. Sometimes it's quite useful information, but the purpose of having somebody imbedded in them doesn't flow necessarily from those benefits. We can have somebody dropping by every two weeks and looking at our projects and stay at the PRT overnight. The hypothesis is that there's some greater synergy; that the military dollars would be better spent if there is an AID guy there, that the AID dollars probably wouldn't be spent if there weren't a platform from which to spend them. These are analytical questions worth examining, given that we're only spending a fraction of our dollars through PRTs. On its face, that would seem to indicate that we don't need PRTs to run programs in Afghanistan.

Now there's some value to showing the flag. You started off fighting a war and not wanting to deal with UN peacekeepers. But in fact, what we're doing is a peace-keeping role in the

countryside. This is what peace-keeping forces do; they show presence. And the idea of having the presence of disciplined, foreign troops in the middle of chaos, whether it is Rwanda, Afghanistan, any place, is generally a good thing. So this is a brand new invention in which we've got hundreds of foreign soldiers down in Khost, and that helps tamp down the violence.

This is not a remarkable conclusion. This is not "oh, brand new PRTs, a wonderful new innovation." This is what peace-keeping troops do! This is great; we've been doing it for 50, 60 years. So, I'm not indicting it. Let's strip away the PRT language. I have nothing against distributing foreign peace-keeping troops in the countryside of chaotic environments, I think it's a good idea. I have no problem with civilian-military coordination. I'm a U.S. government officer; I think it's a great idea. Having said all that, this doesn't lead me yet to the conclusion that this particular configuration is new, different, or more than anything else. That has been my pitch, that if you're going to look at this, look at the honest analytical question as to what we have got here, not just assume that this is a great thing and that we are going to do more of it. How are we going to get civilian and military to understand each other? I mean, let's stand back and look at the big picture.

*Q: I think one of the purposes of this project is not to assume that the PRTs are fantastic and not to prejudge them but, perhaps late in the game, to do an evaluation. We'd like to know if this is the right way to go about it.*

A: Sure. The question is whether or not to roll this out if Uganda falls apart next week. Are we going to take it as a matter of course that we'll have 15 PRTs across Uganda? So I think not in terms of whether or not it is too late for Afghanistan; rather the question is whether this is something that should be carried forward to other crisis situations. In that sense, this study would be quite useful.

*Q: I think that is in people's minds. I'm interested that you characterize what PRTs do as peace-keeping operations. I guess I wouldn't have said that myself, because I'm not quite sure that we have a sufficient level of peace.*

A: I've been in a couple of places under fairly frequent fire, indirect fire. Somebody would drop some mortars around or snipers would shoot a bit. Those places are fairly stable. I would be shocked if Secretary Rumsfeld would characterize this as peace-keeping operations. I'm just saying -- and I wouldn't characterize it as a peace-keeping operation; this is the war on terrorism and I understand it -- that when you strip away the terminology we reduce this to the primary function of extending the writ of the Afghan government to the countryside. There were some discussions, and I won't go into classified stuff, about explicitly putting representatives of the relative Afghan ministries there and then you would more explicitly address this goal.

I guess another analytical question is, what related models might be more effective in achieving our goals? What if Uganda fell apart and we said, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to work with Uganda's government and identify their 15 leading administrative centers where they used to have courthouses and federal office buildings and stuff, and we're going to put all of our money into rebuilding and re-staffing those Ugandan government facilities in the countryside and the equivalent number of forces are going to be used to establish a security perimeter around

them. So Ugandan citizens will have the benefit of foreign troops providing stability but they'll be able to see the Ugandan flag flying over the Ugandan courthouse and Ugandan civil servants going in and out every day." Now that, I think, would have been a very useful model for extending the writ of the Afghan government to the countryside. But a bunch of New Zealand troops sitting somewhere, sometimes flying the New Zealand flag I'm told, I don't know, I think they've tried to tamp that down....

C: They didn't talk about flying the American flag so I guess....

A: So, what are we trying to get at? What are the functions we're trying to get at, what are the structures we need to accomplish those functions? This one seems to me to partake a little bit of a lot of things that we've been talking about. Some extend the writ of the government; some provide some traditional peace-keeping presence. I mean presence is a technical term, right? The presence of observers tamps down violence. Not always, not completely, but whether it is ten unarmed Danish tourists or 500 heavily armed troops, that would tamp down a certain amount of violence. So that's a function that's useful. Better information-gathering is a function that could be done a lot of different ways: better observation of our existing programs, better assessment of needs of the local citizens. We ought to map out the functions that we want to accomplish in these kinds of environments and then examine the structures that we need to do it. This is not an awful structure; it has a little bit of utility in all these areas. But I just don't think this is the silver bullet that it is sometimes portrayed as being by some of its proponents.