

USIP - ADST
Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #43

Executive Summary

The interviewee commanded Regional Command West from October, 2004 until June, 2005. He oversaw two PRTs, Herat and Farah. As brigade commander, his role was to provide a regional focus for reconstruction and economic development. He describes considerable success in his mission, managing to coordinate the priorities of various governors.

His experience with the many NGOs in the region is illustrative. Although initially many NGOs were stand-offish toward the PRTs, they eventually changed their attitude through interaction with PRT members, most notably during a provincial riot, when the PRT evacuated NGO personnel to safety. Following that event, the NGOs were willing to cooperate and share information with the PRTs.

The interviewee provides a clear description of the standard operating procedure for PRTs to follow in reporting on and seeking to have corrupt officials removed. The actual transfer of these officials was not a PRT function. During his time in the West, the interviewee describes the PRT's notable success in economic reconstruction and development, including the building of hundreds of wells and numerous schools and health clinics. Because of the permissive security environment in Western Afghanistan, the PRT was able to adequately monitor its projects and even to take the time to educate its Afghan contractors in better construction techniques. The interviewee also describes the PRT's work in providing basic police training, and explains that community policing techniques as we know them are novelties in Afghanistan – the idea of active patrolling for example. Another successful initiative was the implementation of the DDR (demobilization, disarmament and reintegration) process in the provinces. The PRTs managed to “influence the decision” of many militia commanders to disband their forces, using the inducements of money and business training. In the interviewee's experience, the PRTs were very successful in gaining the cooperation of the tribal elders and head mullahs, especially once they demonstrated to them that unlike previous military forces or militias, the PRT was actually there to help the village, not to rob or harm the people.

The value added by the State, AID and USDA representatives was “immense.” The State rep was especially able in meetings with local political leaders; he also provided an important information channel to Kabul and the Ambassador, often providing the PRT with information well before DOD channels provided it. The interviewee was in charge of the transition of the Herat PRT from American to Italian leadership. He describes how this took place and what differences exist between an American and Italian PRT.

In the opinion of this interviewee, the PRTs' most significant achievements were their ability to demonstrate, by the mere fact of their presence, the concern and reach of the central government. Since most places had never before had a visit by anyone from Kabul, the presence of the PRT, seen as a representative of the central government, was given great significance by the local people. At the same time, the atmosphere of security the PRTs created induced local investment and development efforts by NGOs. The final reason, in the view of this interviewee, the PRTs are so successful in Afghanistan is because the Afghan population is no longer interested in fighting. The decades of civil war have exhausted them, so they are ready and willing to live peacefully.

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

Interview #43

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Q: Would you describe where you were in Afghanistan and what your job was there?

A: I had two jobs there. I arrived in June 2004 and was assigned as a military officer for combined joint task force 76, which was located at Bagram Airfield. CJ276 was the combat headquarters for Afghanistan, at least for the coalition forces in Afghanistan. I was there for three months and then in October of 2004 I moved to the city of Herat in Western Afghanistan as the commander for our regional command West.

Q: Regional Command West included two PRTs. Were you responsible for other missions or other forces not connected with the PRT?

A: Yes, there were two PRTs. One in Herat and one in the province of Farah and I was responsible for two other provinces, Badghis and Ghowr. I had one U.S. combat battalion assigned and three Afghan battalions.

Q: Our focus here is only going to be PRTs even though you obviously were responsible for a lot of other things; could you quantify approximately what amount of your time would have been devoted to PRT activities, missions and supervision?

A: Okay. I think first it might help if I describe the mission of the PRTs and then I'll describe the mission of the brigade, and then I can answer that question.

Q: Sure.

A: PRTs were responsible for operations within the province where they were located. So, even though there were four provinces there, a good example was the Herat PRT, which was responsible for reconstruction, economic development activities in the province of Herat and by doing so they spent significant amounts of time talking to the provincial governors, the provincial chief of police, head mullahs, district governors and others, and various elders within districts within that province. My role as brigade commander was to provide a regional focus for reconstruction and economic development because quite a few of the requirements for development within Western Afghanistan were larger than just one province and the execution of those projects would have required input as well as resources from all provinces. I spent more of my time at a

regional level trying to get governors and other politicians to talk to each other to provide a regional focus to development out West.

Q: How would you go about coordinating with the governors to get their cooperation in some of these development projects?

A: The first thing I noticed was the governors had not all sat down in one room and talked to each other, so I spent a significant amount of time traveling to the four provinces and meeting with each governor and trying to identify and did identify what they considered to be their most urgent requirements for reconstruction and development. After aggregating that list and figuring out what they had in common, I managed to organize a governor's conference where they all came in and sat down, talked about what their requirements were for development and they actually publicized the prioritized list of what they thought they needed for the Western region. Having said that, though the PRTs were responsible within each province, USAID was also there and USAID was very significant in assisting with regional development because of course they have the money and they have the expertise to do larger projects such as power grids, roads that cross boundaries of provinces. The first thing was getting them to agree they had a regional problem, setting them down to discuss those problems and agree on some relative priorities and then having done that, that provided sort of a template for aid agencies to look at the order in which they should attack our projects out West.

Q: Sounds very nicely organized. What were some of the priorities that were identified in this initial stage?

A: You may know that Afghanistan has been in a drought for something like 20 years. Water was very high on the list. Power. Transportation in the form of mostly roads and education and health. I don't know if they were the exact priorities, but those were definitely in the top five. Women's rights was in there, too and I was very pleased that they actually included that.

Q: I've seen that as one of the main development goals as well, so I know its an issue that is definitely receiving a fair amount of focus. Okay, the governors agree on the priorities and then you mentioned USAID also was present. Were there other NGOs and development organizations not related to the coalition forces?

A: Yes, there were quite a few. At least in Herat province we found out that there were about 40 plus aid agencies there from different organizations around the world. We certainly know Japan was there. Germany had organizations there. India had an organization there, so definitely they were organizations not associated with the coalition. Part of the PRTs' mission having discovered that was to try to coordinate as they talked to government officials within the province and they got their list of priorities and identified requirements for reconstruction and economic development. They tried to bring in all of these organizations to have them choose from these lists and from these priorities, provincial priorities so that there would not be different organizations doing the same kind of work or doing identical work in the same districts. That actually happened

several times until we identified and started talking to all of these organizations which really was rather difficult because we wore a uniform. Quite a few organizations did not want to talk to the PRTs.

Q: I've heard that. How did you overcome the difficulty of their perception of you?

A: It was an unfortunate incident that caused that and is actually one of the reasons we (CJ296) established a brigade headquarters in Western Afghanistan. There was a riot in Herat in September of 2004 and the target was the UN Ops Headquarters and there was a riot there. The rioters broke into the compound, raided the files and pretty much burned that compound to the ground. The PRT was there at the time as well as another U.S. battalion, evacuated over 100 civilians, some U.S., most non-U.S. out of that compound and then escorted them the following day to the airport and got them to safety out of Western Afghanistan. The fact that we did that really gave us a lot of 1) credibility that we were there to enforce security and provide security, but 2) it actually gave them the opportunity to talk to soldiers when they found out that we are basically good people and we're trying to do good just like they were.

Q: Right, so they needed to have some first hand exposure under those difficult situations.

A: That's exactly it. Right. It's unfortunate, but as a result of that these other non-governmental organizations came to the table and began talking to PRTs and talking to my headquarters as well.

Q: That's a very positive outcome for an adverse situation. What was the cause of the riot, just out of curiosity?

A: In early September, I think it was early September, the governor was removed and a new governor was installed. That governor who was removed was Ismael Khan, who had a lot of followers. He was a war hero.

Q: I've heard of him.

A: Right. He had a lot of followers who were rather upset. Without getting too political, the UN had some information on him and his followers went in and got the information. What we believed was his followers were trying to create an air of instability to prove to the central government that only Ismael Khan was able to keep security, keep a quiet and secure situation out West and we think that was the purpose of that.

Q: Okay, I had someone recount an experience where the PRT actually was instrumental in backing up the Afghans negotiating the removal of a provincial governor somewhere. In this case, or during the time that you were there, did the PRT play such a role, where they were helping to carry out the mandate of the government to remove certain people?

A: Here's how that happened. I mean we didn't have an active role. PRTs never go to

the governor's office and assist anyone with actually removing him. What we did, and that was pretty much standard, we identify corrupt civilian officials, government officials. We would collect and aggregate as much information as possible indicating what they were doing that we thought was counter to supporting the central government. Once we got that information we would submit, the PRTs would submit that information to the high headquarters; in my case they'd submit it to the brigade and we'd review it and add as much information as we had or go out and collect additional information, then submit that information to my high headquarters which was my joint task force 76. At that level the intelligence community reviews it; there was a specified format package for that. The commanding general reviews that and if he approves then that information was submitted to combined forces command Afghanistan in Kabul. From there it would go to the ambassador; at that time it was Ambassador Khalized and he would speak with President Karzai about that. That was the process for removing someone if a PRT was involved. PRTs were never actively involved with backing up someone that says "get out of this office." We provided information and would make requests that someone should be removed based on their actions while in office.

Q: That might have been a significant part of your mission there, identifying officials?

A: It was a significant part of my mission especially in the two provinces where I did not have PRTs. It's a bit more difficult, but we were able to do that.

Q: Returning to PRT missions and the economic and reconstruction roles. Could you identify some project or projects that you undertook and how they evolved, what measure of success they had?

A: Sure. There was actually a fairly rigorous process the PRTs would go through. The first objective was to visit all the districts and show Afghans that there was a U.S. presence, that there was a coalition presence in their province. As they did that, they would meet with district subgovernors and district chiefs of police and try to identify what they thought their major problems were. That list was pretty consistent that I mentioned above. It typically would be that number one almost always was clean drinking water, then health, education and roads. Those were very high and security was also very high. Now, add that PRTs do not, never had a mission to provide security for a province. That was Afghan army. That was not my role to provide security. Although they had security forces, those security forces for a PRT were only there to escort them safely to and from their missions. Having said that, after visiting districts and assessing what they thought they needed, they would return and try to coordinate those requirements with the provincial governor and his list and work with his staff. Where those priorities matched, they would go back to those districts and actually do research, try to identify areas where they would build things such as wells. We built tons of wells. I don't have those numbers with me. If we talk later on I have a book at home that has some of the statistics of the numbers of projects we did and the types of projects. We built in the hundreds of wells to get clean drinking water for villages. We built numerous schools for both boys and girls and that's important to understand because they don't have coeducation. They don't combine boys and girls in the same schools. They don't

have coeducation there. Typically if you built a new school for the girls and it was better than what the boys had, the girls got evicted and the boys took it. We built a lot of schools and they were always duplicates. You had to build boys and girls schools.

Health clinics was also a concern and there were cases when we would get some place and they had medical staff and sometimes they were in substandard, most of the time they were in substandard buildings or tents or whatever they were; we'd either renovate what they had or build a new clinic and that happened rather often.

Q: Were the schools and the clinics built by contract companies, local Afghan workers?

A: Yes. When a PRT let a contract it was pretty much what the U.S. government does; we submit a request for proposals. We get proposals from Afghan companies and we go through a very detailed process of evaluating those proposals and then we award it to an Afghan company. Once they start work the PRT engineer (each PRT had two construction engineers) they would go out and monitor the progress and quality of the construction that the Afghan companies were doing.

Q: Okay, so monitoring was feasible. The security situation permitted you (these construction engineers) to be on site when you needed to be, and to oversee the quality of the construction. Was that ever a problem?

A: Yes, initially the quality was exceedingly poor. Their construction methods are just different than ours. The last thing that we wanted as a coalition there was to build a building and have it collapse on someone. There were different construction techniques that they used. Our engineers really educated quite a number of Afghan construction companies on how to build really sturdy structures. We enforced that.

Q: So you were in a permissive enough environment that you were able to do this work without danger. Is that right?

A: Yes and I also need to add that the environment of Western Afghanistan was different from the environment that you read or may hear about in eastern or northern Afghanistan. The threats were just different in Regional Command East and Regional Command South where the other coalition forces were. Western Afghanistan was probably the most permissive area of Afghanistan and we were able to go out and do that and feel very secure doing that.

Q: Well, that's good, I have most recently spoken to people who were in the east and it sounds as if they have a rather more dramatic situation in terms of personal safety and it just didn't sound very safe at all.

A: Most dangerous.

Q: Very dangerous?

A: Right and typically they operate a bit differently when they go out and have to do projects. They occasionally will take U.S. army units with them because they need that additional security to do things. Out West, though you say permissive, there is some danger associated with it, but we found out West that the Afghans were more tired of fighting and they just wanted someone to come out and help them do things and help them get the country moving in the right direction. In RC (Regional Command) West we never had a PRT attacked by any force. Even though they travel through some dangerous areas, no PRT was ever attacked.

Q: What was the size of your PRT? You mentioned you had two construction engineers, but what was the composition of the two of them there in the West?

A: Okay. Total numbers I would say ranged from about 82 to 92 and that fluctuates. Within a PRT you had a headquarters element, the PRT commander and his staff. You had a security element, which was really an infantry platoon of four to six squads.

Q: Four to six squads. That means how many total?

A: Squads, oh, I'm sorry. A squad is approximately 11 people, 11 soldiers, infantry soldiers.

Q: Okay.

A: They provide security on the missions when the PRT would go out to do their civil military operations. Then you had within that two civil military operational teams. One was more of an operations section and they spent their time really dealing with the provincial side of the house - the provincial governor and organizing the operations of the second civil military operations team, which was the one that actually went out to all of the districts within a province and that was their mission. Then you had your support staff, your cooks, your mechanics, and your maintenance section.

Q: Okay, the two civil military teams would have comprised about two dozen people?

A: No, it wasn't that large. Let's see, it would be about a dozen.

Q: That gives us a sense of the magnitude. Did you have a Department of State or USDA or AID person?

A: The PRT had a Department of State representative, a USAID representative and what's the third one?

Q: USDA?

A: USDA, yes, that was the third one. Then they also had an Afghan representative from the Afghan national police.

Q: Okay, let me ask about that individual. I understood that someone from the ministry of interior was assigned to each PRT and from what you're saying it sounds as if it was a police officer?

A: Yes, ministry of interior supervisor of the police and it was a senior police official.

Q: How did that official contribute to the PRT or what was his role?

A: His role was to be the liaison between the PRT and the provincial and district chiefs of police. They're also quite good at sizing up police security type situations.

Q: Crime and so on?

A: If you needed some statistics or needed to find out what kind of criminal activity was going on, that was the guy who could go out and move about and go to the police officers and police subposts and find out what was going on.

Q: So, he was no doubt a very useful individual to have as part of the team there.

A: Yes and they were quite good when they were traveling around on these missions to remote parts of the province. Sort of good will as well.

Q: Okay.

A: I should also add in talking about organization of the PRT, they also had interpreters, both U.S. citizens and locally hired Afghans. They would have anywhere from seven to 12 interpreters. Interpreters were used for language interpretation, but also, used as cultural advisors.

Q: Right, I can see where you would want that. Before you left for Afghanistan, did you have some training in the culture and, mores?

A: The short answer is no. When I found out I was going and I had some friends who lived in Pakistan, they recommended some excellent resource books that I read before I went there and that's how I figured out, at least had some background on the culture there. I'll leave it at that unless you have other questions about it.

Q: Well, I know it's not feasible to have language training for our folks by and large, so you do have to have interpreters. I've worked enough overseas to know that those folks are cultural advisors, too and it's really very important to have them. The police official reminded me that also many of the PRTs had a police training mission.

A: That's right.

Q: Were your PRTs also involved in police training?

A: Yes, they were called MP military police technical assistance teams and CJ276 sort of created those and sent those out. They were not part of the original organization of the PRTs and yes, we're involved in that. Their roles were to go out and assess the status of the police forces within the districts and where they found corrupt officials they would report that and if necessary we would go through that process that I described earlier for removing officials. Most cases what they found was that they were not well trained and the MP assistance team would develop sort of a training package and they would go back and train these policemen how to be policemen. Some of that training was basic, can be very basic such as how to make a traffic stop. They needed that or riot control training. Those are things that they just didn't know. Patrolling is something they don't do; while our police are out and about, their police are very static and that's historical there. The PRTs were training them how to get out and be seen by the people to help sort of foster that feeling of a secure environment.

Q: The concept of the Afghan police before they had this training sounds as if they had a well-defined mission similar to our police, but it doesn't appear that they tried to undertake it.

A: Yes, their concept of police work is very different and it's very similar to their experience with tribes. You have an elder and if you have a problem you'd come to the elder. That's how the police operated. If you had a problem you'd go to the police. The police are not out and about within the community. It is still taking significant effort to convince them that the police need to be out and about and not just static at checkpoints or at the main police station.

Q: You mentioned early on that you'd had a number of meetings with tribal elders. You also mentioned warlords; I don't know if that's the right term to use all the time, but in terms of incorporating those folks into your mission, how did you manage to do that and were they generally positive to the PRTs' work?

A: I'll address warlords first and why that became positive. The IOM was part of the DDR process, which is the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process for the mission. You can call them warlords if you like, but they had their little militias there. As that process went on, part of the reintegration package was, if these soldiers would turn over their weapons they would get training; they'd get a stipend, they'd get training for career fields as well as getting \$100.00 worth of foodstuffs and that was a big motivation for a lot of the fighters to turn over their weapons. This was early on, this was October, November, December timeframe when that was started out West.

The other carrot in that was for the commander of these militias. If they would disarm at least 60% of their soldiers, then they would get a significant stipend for about two years as well as get training - more executive style or business style training. There was some motivation in that for them as well. Early on I mentioned that, at least at my level, to improve security, some of what we did was to influence that decision for them to do that (demobilize, disarm) and we were successful at that. As we became more successful and as they were able to realize that even though these militias were drawing down and

disbanding, security was getting better, then they began to come to the table and talk to PRTs, not necessarily talk to PRTs, but certainly not bother PRTs if they were moving around. The term warlords out West is a little misleading because even though there were some, they disbanded rather early. The more significant problem out West was drug lords and the major threat in Western Afghanistan was not necessarily the cultivation but the drug....

Q: Drug trafficking?

A: The bad governance associated with drug trafficking. There were drug lords; there were government officials involved in that. Getting them, I mean, they were more than happy to let the PRTs do whatever they wanted as long as they stayed out of drug eradication.

Q: Drug business, okay.

A: We all stayed out of that. That was not a U.S. mission, a coalition mission.

Q: The tribal elders were also important forces. Did you find you could work with them?

A: Yes, the PRTs probably worked, they definitely worked more with them than I did. When I talked to a tribal elder it typically was because either they did something exceedingly well or there was an impasse and the PRT needed some extra horsepower. It was pretty significant for the brigade commanders to go down and talk to the tribal elders. I was used quite often as the big stick sometimes or the bearer of additional "carrots." The PRTs as they moved around the countryside, if you really wanted to find out what was going on, go find a tribal elder and talk to him. Whenever we went to a village -and it was sort of a process- there was a priority list of people you wanted to talk to. You certainly wanted to talk to, as you went through the district, the district governor and the district chief of police and then from there, as you moved through these villages, you talked to the tribal elder, you talked to the head mullah there as well. As they moved around they spent a lot of time talking to the elders and that's where they got a significant amount of information - from the tribal elders and from the head mullahs. They also found out exactly what they needed there because quite often what the subgovernor thought the priorities should be for reconstruction and economic development was not necessarily what the villages actually needed. They would spend time talking to the elders to verify information on what was really needed for reconstruction and economic development.

Q:, You mentioned the mullahs. What was their attitude toward the American presence, the coalition presence and the PRTs?

A: Actually it was quite good. Once they realized that you're not there to rob them. There was a different attitude in Afghanistan before the election and that was "the government is not here to help you." They were used to being treated rather rudely by

military forces, militias, police and quite often when they came to a village, they came to the village to rob it, not to help it. It was, I hate to use the term "show me," but a lot of times we would get there and show them that we're not there to hurt them. We're there to provide assistance and it was quite good. The difference in religion was never an issue. I never ran across a situation where that was an impediment to talking to a mullah or arriving at some conclusion for a problem.

Q: Is that area of Afghanistan Sunni Muslim?

A: I don't remember what the majority are, but I know it was fairly homogeneous and they were both, but I could get that information for you. I don't remember that off the top of my head.

Q: It doesn't particularly matter, but I was just wondering if they happened to be Sunni being close to Iran.

A: They were certainly not as radical as you found in the east.

Q: All right. You had a Department of State representative in the PRTs. Did you have one at your command as well?

A: I did not have one at brigade. There was one at my higher headquarters and I had a USAID representative, but not a Department of State. I used the PRT Department of State rep as my representative as well, so he worked with me also.

Q: I was wondering how you perceived the value added of one of these folks, the diplomats..

A: Immense - because 1) they are far more experienced in dealing with government officials than I am. There were times when the Department of State representative would have meetings with provincial governors or the mayors and were able to get information from them that I never would have gotten; plus they have a direct link to the ambassador's office which has a direct link back to Washington. They were able to find out at least from my perspective what the U.S. government's intent was for a specific area, but they were also able to talk to government officials, get information out of Kabul that the ambassador was getting from the president and let us know at least what the central government had planned for an area. There's absolutely no way I would have been successful out West without a Department of State rep and I also believe that that's exceedingly important for PRTs and the success that they've had in Afghanistan. They were able to talk to some of the local officials a bit easier. They also talked to a lot of the non-government organizations that wouldn't talk to us previously.

Q: Yes, the reason the NGOs were so reluctant to talk to you, how would you articulate that?

A: They viewed it as a security issue. What they were afraid of was that if the locals saw

them talking to a coalition soldier, then the locals would confuse them or at least start identifying them with military and they thought they would become a target of terrorism or warlords or whatever and that's how they saw it. They saw it as a security issue.

Q: Right, okay and apparently that wasn't a problem in the West because...

A: After that significant event, yes, it was not a problem and even after that up until I left, I won't say regularly, but the PRTs once a week would meet with those non-governmental organizations and discuss what reconstruction activities were going on in the province and that worked extremely well. From my perspective, what I told them at my mission was, I'm responsible for security out West, I'm also responsible for your security, so whenever they went out somewhere and set up an operation they became very good at telling us who was there, where they were and a phone number and we would exchange that information so if something happened we would come get them. They certainly appreciated that and that also fostered that interchange between the PRTs and the non-governmental organizations.

Q: It doesn't sound as if they were particularly jealous about you taking over their mission ?

A: I don't think that was an issue and there was certainly more than enough work that there's no way we could take over their mission. A PRT's budget is far less significant than what the non-governmental organizations have.

Q: It sounds as if there were some tensions at some point in history with the NGOs, but apparently it was resolved and everyone kind of understood that they were mutually beneficial to one another.

A: Right. Make sure that you understand that that was not countrywide. We were rather unique with the relationship we had with the NGOs out West. That was not the case in the east and the south, so if you talk to someone there I guarantee you they will have, someone who was in RC South, they would certainly have a different experience working with the non-government organizations than we had in the West at the PRTs and at the brigade.

Q: Right. I've heard a number of different versions and some days it is a little bit like the blind man and the elephant. You get a variety of views of the picture. I was going to focus now on the PRT handover to the Italians, because you had direct experience in organizing the transition from a U.S.-led PRT to, I believe, an Italian-led PRT?

A: It was Italian, that's correct.

Q: Would you describe please how that was arranged and what the process was.

A: The Department of State rep came in handy because the fact that that was to occur did not come through military channels. It actually came through interpretation of message

traffic from my Department of State representative and that's probably one of the sort of the problems with that process as I saw it. For me to operate, I really don't operate on orders from the Department of State; however, having realized that that was really political activity, that's what drove me preparing to do that, us preparing to accept that. The Italians came out rather early really last fall to start preparing for that with several government officials and senior military leaders and identified their desire to take over a PRT and after visiting they sort of settled on Herat. Having done that, probably four months before the PRT was transitioned to Italians, we started that planning process. Their PRT is a little bit larger. They have a 124 person PRT.

Q: Do they have the same entities represented?

A: Yes, it's pretty close to the same entities. Actually they do have one extra entity. They have a Special Forces team of nine assigned to them and U.S. PRTs do not have a Special Forces team.

Q: Okay.

A: In the planning process, once I understood that they were coming it was sort of develop a transition plan for training them how to operate a PRT.

Q: Do you have a manual for all of you to use?

A: No. We had to create it. We were the first ones that were actually a transition where there would be an overlap. There was a direction from high headquarters to do it, so we did that. The brigade headquarters and the PRT worked together and we came up with a training plan for that to occur. We provided that to our high headquarters and they have that as a model for other PRTs when that occurs. We developed a training plan that included both civil military operations as well as security operations, what they needed to know to operate as a PRT, with extensive training on reconstruction and development projects that were ongoing and what the process was to do that. Also we had to acquire additional facilities to move everybody there because of the process of Italians coming in, training them and moving some U.S. soldiers out. Fortunately I had an airbase where I could move the U.S. PRT too as we got more Italian soldiers. In addition to training Italians, the PRT still had its ongoing missions that it had to do and they were doing split operations. Part of that training was we took Italian soldiers out with the PRT on their missions. There was a lot of on the job training as well as maybe formal training when they sat them down in a class or in an office and they went through the procedures that they used for doing certain missions. There was a pretty significant transition period.

Q: Was that 30 days ?

A: No. Let's see, the transitional authority to the Italians occurred on 31 March, I think, and the Italian soldiers started arriving around the first or second week of February. It was probably about six or seven weeks.

Q: Now if you were transitioning to an American group wouldn't you have had to do many of the same activities, show them what you were doing?

A: Yes, but that takes about 10 days. One, because American units pretty much operate the same and also within a PRT the entire unit doesn't transition out at the same time. So, the commander comes in and there may be an overlap. The commander may come in and part of the subordinate units may go out. He may get new civil military teams. Well, they take about 10 days in transition and then they go away. Then later on the security forces may transition and then that happens in 10 days and the second platoon is gone. When a PRT is replaced it's replaced over time. It is not replaced in its entirety. So, it's not as if a PRT is a specific unit where you bring in a new unit and then take out the old unit in its entirety. It phases in and out.

Q: I see, whereas the Italians were all going to be coming in at once.

A: They were coming in at once and the U.S. unit was going away. There was no institutional knowledge for the PRT to remain.

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A: And the Italian military really had no concept of military soldiers doing civil military operations. That's normally a civilian role, but they understood that because of some of the places and some of the areas they had to go, the military had to do that, so we actually had to teach their soldiers how to do civil military operations.

Q: Did they have the two construction engineers?

A: They did bring engineers with them as well who would have to go out and do the same thing that the U.S. engineers did. At least at Herat, the PRT had hired an Afghan civil engineer, so they had that additional resource.

Q: The civil military teams in our PRTs are comprised of people with engineering background, but also what other backgrounds typically?

A: Well, the majority, or the lion's share of civil military soldiers in the U.S. army are reservists, which means they have a myriad of experience that's not just military. Some of them could be engineers. Some could be teachers. You could have any number of different backgrounds, but specifically you would assign two people who were engineers either as civilians or from a military unit to the PRT who had that specific expertise.

Q: I'm thinking if the Italians weren't using reservists, then they wouldn't have some of the same expertise among their members to draw on which you would want in your civil military group.

A: That would be exactly right. The Italian PRT was all active duty.

Q: To wind up, the general question I'd like to ask is simply to what degree you think the PRTs are accomplishing their mission, dividing the mission into four subparts: security, expanding central authority, reconstruction and development and finally utilizing American military and civilian resources? I want to give you a chance to comment if you thought your resources were adequate or whether you felt you needed more funding or more personnel.

A: Okay. I think I talked earlier about PRTs and security. Really the PRTs role in security is to provide security to the PRT to execute their mission of reconstruction and economic development, which required them traveling within all parts of the province. That was really their primary role in security. It was a little different out West as I mentioned where they did extract some civilians assigned to non-governmental organizations and take those folks to the PRT compound and secure them after riots. They really didn't have a security mission per se as a combat unit would have. Given that though, when the PRT moved into town people tended to move in that direction and locate in the vicinity of the PRT because security around PRTs is good and so there was this aura of security around the PRT that permeated throughout the districts where PRTs located, but as a mission they did not have a direct security mission. However, they were quite successful at extending the regional and central government. One, by just going to all the provinces in the district and telling them that the provincial governor told them to go to these districts and meet with those specific governors and district governors and chiefs of police. Having said that, that's not necessarily so, but it gives the impression that the central government is concerned; the PRT would represent itself as agents of the central government and the provincial government and listen to the issues, concerns and problems within the province. They were quite good at that and those PRTs out West went, the year I was there, went to each district at least twice and in most cases more than twice, but that worked extremely well. I'll tie that to reconstruction and development. They were representing the central government and people began talking and describing their desires, concerns and problems; they were able to, because we showed them that we were there to assist them. They were successful at reconstruction and economic development, which you cannot be successful at if the security situation doesn't afford it. Specifically after the presidential elections, it's certainly evident that the people out West took more responsibility for security by turning in people who were doing illegal activities, turning in warlords, drug lords, whatever, but people began to take more responsibility for that which made it easier for the PRTs to move out and about and do their missions. The PRT had a budget that brigade provided from its higher headquarters and they were able to go out and do projects. Now, you can always say you can always use more money, but we took the money we had and we made an impact by doing projects that were very quick to complete that provided immediate benefit to the Afghan citizens. As I mentioned earlier, something as simple as a well, which is maybe \$200 or \$300 to build a deep well for them to get water. They see that as a resource from the central government that sent us there to do that for them. All of those things sort of tie in.

Economic development goes along with it; as I mentioned, people move out toward PRTs because they see a more secure environment coming and they start spending more

of their money on development. So, out West a lot of the economic development we saw was not government money, it was private economic development that was occurring.

Q: From international sources?

A: Local sources.

Q: Local investment?

A: Right and if you were to go, I went to Herat in the summer of last year and went back after being assigned there and after a total of six months they would see a significant difference in the amount of commerce occurring. It's certainly on the rise.

Q: That's impressive.

A: Of course the military is pretty good at using military resources, but we had some time to learn and growing pains. We learned how to use civilian resources in terms of the USAID rep, the Department of State rep, USDA rep and even the Afghan ministry of interior representative with how you can use those resources to really further extend the role of the central government. Most places had never seen anyone from Kabul and when the ministry of interior representative would go out on these missions, that to locals was a big deal. That someone from the central government took the time to come out to their district or to their village in an area as remote as RC West. Herat is 250 miles away from Kabul so that's quite a distance. Given the lack of transportation infrastructure that's there, by doing all of that we learned how to increase the benefits that we could provide just by showing up with these other folks, other civilians. USAID has an incredible resource depository in Kabul with engineers. They have a great deal of funding and they did large projects that provided a benefit to the region and the Afghans were able to see that benefit. USDA was excellent at assisting the nomadic population with caring for their animals and to them that was exceedingly important. That was a great deal of good will that we were able to gain out of doing that as well as teaching farmers how to farm better, how to irrigate better and use less water. We talked about how we used the MOI (Ministry of Interior) representative and the State Department representative. I think all of those combined really contributed heavily to the success of the PRTs in Herat and Farah.

Q: Did you have the sense that you were helping the Afghan population to forge its identity then as Afghans because if they never had any contact with people from Kabul this was a new experience. Obviously they knew they were having elections for national government, but up to this point they didn't particularly feel they had a nation that they were attached to?

A: After having talked with some of the older Afghans, older meaning in their 40s, 50s, who'd been around before the Soviets, they all say that there was a feeling at one time that they felt like Afghans, and that Afghanistan was a nation. Some of the tribal affiliations became much more important during the Soviet invasion because your tribal

members were people you could trust. I think more than us getting out, the election of a president probably contributed more heavily to Afghans feeling like they were Afghans and that Afghanistan was more of a nation because they had one authority over the entire country. The fact that we're able to get out to those different areas just lent additional credibility to the fact that there was an Afghan central government.

Q: So they accepted President Karzai as their Afghan leader as opposed to someone whom the Americans had anointed if you will?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Well, if you had the option to establish more PRTs do you think that would be a valuable thing or do you think the number currently is about right?

A: The plan now is to put one in each province and I think that's important. One because, one of the things I didn't mention that PRTs do and that is they also assist some of the lesser governors and their staffs with how to provide services, with how to be a government entity and in some of the provinces that's really necessary. PRTs assist with that and they also assist of course with reconstruction and economic development. Is the current number sufficient? No, I would say having one in each province is what's necessary. Having said that I think there are some places where you can remove PRTs and Herat is definitely one of them because it has a fairly sophisticated government service, but Italians are there and they're not leaving. I think there needs to be one in each province and as the provincial governors and their staffs become more adept at providing government services and reconstruction and development increases, then you can start removing the PRTs. I think a sign of success is a PRT working itself out of a job where the government takes over that mission and not some external entity like a PRT.

Q: Eventually that's what we would hope to see happening.

A: Yes.

Q: Are there any other comments you'd like to add here?

A: Oh, I could talk for hours about this. I will add, we had, I think, General McCaffrey come over to Afghanistan and his question to us was why are PRTs working here when we've had limited success with anything like this in Iraq? There are some significant cultural differences and significant environmental differences and I think mainly the Afghans have been fighting a very long time. They have been fighting for about 30 years and as I mentioned I met with governors and warlords and drug lords and they're tired of fighting. I think that's a difference. That's one of the main differences between success of PRTs in the respective countries and that's the desire of the people to live peacefully now. If you look at the root of the insurgency or the terrorist operations in Afghanistan, it is by a very small percentage of the population of Afghanistan and a significant number of those folks are foreigners. It's not the Afghans. The Afghans are ready for peace and

they're ready to move on with their lives and I think that's what a significant difference is. I think the PRTs have been exceedingly important with extending the reaches of the central government and providing hope to at least the Afghan folks in the West of Afghanistan where I was.

Q: Great. I definitely appreciate the time you took today to share your experiences and thank you for all you've done.

A. Sure, you're quite welcome.

Q: I wish you great continued success. So, stay safe and good luck to you.

A: Thank you.

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