

USIP – ADST

Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #11

Executive Summary

Interviewee served a 90-day detail in Afghanistan from January through March 2003, assigned to a Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs unit in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province, in northwestern Afghanistan. The PRT's activities covered five provinces. He functioned as a political officer, reporting to the embassy political section in Kabul. He also did some consular and public affairs work.

Interviewee was the only civilian member of the PRT. He also developed close relationships with other military units in the area, particularly the three CMOCs. A Special Forces unit was also stationed there. At that time the PRT was all American, plus Afghan interpreters. Their mission was to win hearts and minds by improving living conditions of the people in the area – mostly through infrastructure civil engineering projects. While interviewee was there projects included remodeling a TV studio, renovating a hospital (and providing a generator), and rehabbing a courthouse.

Interviewee's value to the PRT was that he was older and more experienced than the military people, and knew how to get things done. He found it easy to establish relationships with key Afghans, including the two dominant warlords in the region (who hated each other). It was more difficult to establish constructive relations with NGOs, many of which avoided dealing with military entities.

To be effective it was necessary to coordinate not only with Kabul but also with provincial Afghan authorities. Doing it well contributed to extending the authority of the central government – an important part of the PRT's mission. And in order to build goodwill at the grassroots level, the Army had to be ready to pitch in and help wherever the need arose, including natural disasters such as flood and mudslides.

Personal security included armed bodyguards for road travel, but in general the threat level was not high in that region and there were few incidents; the biggest was a botched rocket attack on a field hospital at the airport.

Interviewee's most satisfying success was contributing to rule of law by rehabbing the courthouse and nominating a minority judge for a U.S. international visitor grant. His most important recommendation is to provide more training to U.S. Army people on communicating and coordinating with Afghan officialdom.

United States Institute of Peace
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

Interview #11

Interviewed by: Larry Lesser
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Q: Please tell us about the job description of what brought you to Afghanistan and what the dates were that you were there.

A: I am a military veteran but it was while I was an employee of the State Department that I spent three months in Afghanistan, the first three months of 2003 (January, February, and March) as a TDY political officer attached to the Provincial Reconstruction Team Army Civil Affairs Unit that was located at Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province. That's in northwestern Afghanistan. That civil affairs unit covered five provinces. I can't even remember the names of all five right now, let alone spell them. It went over west as far as the part of Afghanistan that contains the famous western city of Herat and went east a little bit beyond the city of Konduz. I can't remember what province I was in. There were like three provinces in the north and then two below that and we covered all five of those.

Q: Okay, so you were there January to March of 2003.

A: Actually, the beginning of April is when I came back, so I was there a full three months.

Q: And what were your main responsibilities there?

A: Well, the main responsibility was reporting to the embassy political section on what was happening in that part of the country since, it was on the other side of a big mountain range from Kabul and there were no other American civilians anywhere around there. But I also served as sort of the de facto consul, doing all sorts of things that I might never have imagined, from having a guy who was once a delivery man in New York City come in with his old green card and ask about the prospects for getting back to the U.S. and trying to encourage the Afghans to apprehend criminals who had held up an NGO convoy and stolen money and equipment and raped one of the female NGO employees. I opened a USIA paper show, a photo exhibit, of 9/11 actually, about 20 photographs of the Twin Towers burning, that sort of thing.

Q: That was quite a traditional USIS/embassy type of outreach thing to do.

A: Yes. Fortunately, I had my USIA experience. The public affairs officer in Kabul was a guy that... our paths had crossed several times over the past, so we knew each other. Also, it just so happened that the political adviser to the three-star at Bagram had been a USIA officer whom I knew quite well.

Q: Could you describe in a little more detail the staffing and the bureaucratic organization of the PRT that you were attached to?

A: Okay. This was a relatively new concept. It had only started 60 or 90 days before I got there on my assignment, sometime in the fall of 2002. The PRT was Army civil affairs. Initially, that was all it was. At the time I was there, there were three other PRTs that had State Department officers like myself. Actually, the first one was in Herat. Mazar-e-Sharif was the second place to get one. While I was there, they opened up a couple more. They opened up one in Bamiyan. But anyway, the expectation was that they would get additional civilian experts – AID people, agriculture people, as might be appropriate to the area. Some areas were more agricultural than others and that sort of thing.

Q: But they weren't there yet?

A: They weren't there yet. Nobody had any civilians except State Department civilians when I left. There was a formal written agreement between the ambassador and the CINC, the three star Army general that ran the things for CENTCOM in Afghanistan, about these positions. Probably somebody in the Afghan Reconstruction Office at the State Department could produce one of those agreements. I'm just trying to remember some of the things that were in it. I remember that the ambassador pretty much relinquished responsibility for my security to the Army. I was totally dependent on them for security, for administrative support, for everything, which turned out to not necessarily be a bad thing because I actually had more freedom in terms of security precautions than people in Kabul had. What they weighed on me was that, if we went outside of Mazar-e-Sharif, these were the rules that they followed also. They always took a motorcade of at least three vehicles. Mostly that was in case one broke down or something like that.

Q: Were they also armored?

A: Oh, no. These were civilian vehicles that the Army leased. They were all for the most part some kind of Toyota SUV. They weren't even the full size Land Cruiser type thing. They were more like an International Scout, if you remember what those look like. It was a four wheel drive thing, but two people can barely fit in the back seat. There is room behind for stuff.

Q: But not more people.

A: Yes. I can't even remember what that vehicle was called. .

Q: These convoys of three vehicles at least, there were personnel in each of the vehicles, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there shooters?

A: Well, the Army troops were all armed. I should explain that where I was in Mazar, there were actually three separate civil affairs units at that location that comprised the PRT. There was one unit that was a conglomeration. And they were all Army reservists that had been activated.

The team that kind of ran the compound and the communications center and that sort of thing was thrown together. They were all civil affairs specialists, but they weren't from one unit. They were picked out individually. There was a communications guy who was an Army corporal who was not a reservist. He was the only guy there who was not a reservist.

Q: He was regular Army.

A: Yes, he was regular Army. And then there were two civil affairs teams that actually went out to the villages and did their thing, did missions. One of those was from the DC area, I think someplace in Maryland. There was a major and a captain for the officers. They had two staff sergeants and maybe two or three buck sergeants and two or three privates. So there were about eight people. In fact, I might have a picture. Let's see: there's the major, there's the captain, there's the guy I replaced. So there's a major, a captain, two staff sergeants, these two are buck sergeants, and only one private, and there's somebody missing. So that's eight. And then there was another team that was from upstate New York that had just a major as the only officer. He had two staff sergeants, two buck sergeants, and a couple of privates. So there were two eight person teams that functioned as teams.

Q: Right, in addition to your team?

A: Well, the headquarters or whatever you want to call it called it the Civil Military Operations Center [CMOC]. But really, I was free to associate myself with any of those Army people as they went on their missions.

Q: You were kind of a floater.

A: Yes, I was a floater. The officers would all get together after dinner each evening and figure out what they were going to do the next day. I sat in on those meetings. We would agree amongst ourselves what I would do the next day. So, I kind of divided up my time. Mazar is a big city. The governor of Balkh province was there. There were provincial ministries (agriculture, education, finance, all that kind of stuff). There were also a number of consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Q: From which countries?

A: India, Turkey-

Q: Pakistan maybe?

A: Pakistan had a compound there, but it was burned while the Taliban was there and the Pakistanis hadn't moved back into it yet. Things were still pretty tense between the Pakistanis and the Afghans at that point in time. Although we were a long way from the Pakistan border, the conventional wisdom was that the Al-Qaeda were free to go back and forth between Pakistan and Afghanistan and that Pakistan was giving them other support – monetary support and that sort of thing.

But the Russians had a consulate actually in Tormez (phonetic), which was up near the Uzbek border, but they had an office in Mazar that the guy who was normally in Tormez (phonetic) would come down to. He was an interesting character. He looked like a KGB gangster. He was always wearing a leather jacket and blue jeans and like engineer boots.

Q: All these consulates that you mentioned were staffed or headed by a national of the country?

A: Yes. In fact, the guy from India was probably in his 60s, looked like he was a fairly senior diplomat. The Turkish consul, although he was a young guy, was obviously one of their shining stars. He had done a stint in Washington, had served in Saudi Arabia.

Q: Getting back to the structure of the PRTs, it sounds to me (and I'm coming to this as a novice now) that this was very early as the concept was just being developed that the staffing of the PRT was entirely American and except for you it was all U.S. Army.

A: Yes. Well, we had Afghan interpreters. These were young men who learned their English various ways, some of them by being in Iran or Pakistan or someplace during the Taliban times. The best interpreter was a guy who was actually trained as a medical doctor in Afghanistan. He never left the country throughout the Russian or the Taliban time. He was a little bit older, but he still probably was like mid-30s. But it was interesting. A trained medical doctor in Afghanistan probably knew about as much about medicine as a fireman in the United States.

Q: And he had not been practicing medicine?

A: No. He was a lecturer at Balkh University in the medical school. I saw that he knew some things about medicine. You know how brothers fight. Well, one time two kids were fighting and the one kid ran into the street and ran into the side of one of our vehicles. I wasn't in that particular convoy, but it happened right down the block from the compound. Doc, as we called him, did all the necessary stuff at the beginning and determined that the kid had a broken leg and took him to the hospital. He had read about a lot of the new things in medicine that were happening and he was very interested in them.

Q: But he hadn't practiced.

A: But he hadn't practiced.

Q: Was Balkh University functioning?

A: Yes.

Q: How about describing what you understood to be the mission of the PRT and how your own work was to fit into that mission.

Well, they were very focused on the traditional civil affairs mission of the Army, which is to win over the hearts and minds of the people by improving their conditions. But they didn't have a lot of money for their projects. But they did identify things. It was like a big contest between all the

PRTs throughout the country. They would go around to their area, try and identify things to do such as digging wells, building schools, fixing culverts, roads, and that sort of thing.

Q: A lot of civil engineering.

A: Yes. But for the most part they couldn't bankroll these themselves. They had to put together a plan and send it to Kabul. All these plans competed. Then if a plan was approved it moved on. The actual work was done by Afghans who were identified by the Army people. They brought in bidders and interviewed them and that sort of thing.

Q: Were these Afghans contractors or did people get hired directly to do all the functions, including laborers?

A: Well, the projects were supervised by contractors, I guess you could say. They were Afghans. They would be known as "Engineer Abdul is one of the bidders."

Q: They're not contractors in the sense that we think of it. They weren't set up as companies.

A: No, they didn't have a fleet of trucks and all that kind of stuff, but they were guys that had enough experience at building things or whatever it was that they could pull it off. But for the down and dirty labor there was a certain street corner in Mazar where you could go anytime, and we'd do that ourselves if we needed somebody to dig a hole or something on the compound. You'd just go down and pick up a couple of day laborers.

Q: Sure.

A: The things that they actually started or finished while I was there.... In three months, you can't do a lot of construction, but they did actually remodel the TV studio in town for Balkh TV. They initiated two very ambitious projects, one a hospital at a place quite a way away called Akchah (phonetic) that was an incredible. I say "hospital," but this place had no electricity, no running water, no indoor toilets, and there were three patients in there at the time recovering, laying on canvas cots. One guy even had an IV which somebody from the family apparently was able to buy in the bazaar.

Q: Was there a doctor?

A: There was a doctor. In fact, there were probably three doctors that were there that took turns being there, so there was almost always a doctor on the premises. But it was so primitive... The one guy that was laying there had an obstructed bowel. Well, since there's no electricity, of course, there's no X-rays, there's no way to diagnose this, so they diagnosed him by cutting his stomach open to see what was wrong.

Q: That was a diagnostic procedure?

A: Yes.

Q: Son of a gun. And what did the PRT do for that hospital?

A: They got a project approved to renovate it, to dig a well, to put - I don't know whether this has even happened yet, but this was the project plan - pipes into the building, to get electricity into the building, to fix the doors.

Q: To bring in a generator?

A: Yes, a generator. In that part of the country, the commercial power was from Uzbekistan and it was very unreliable. Even in Mazar-e-Sharif where we were, which was the capital, there were blackouts that would last days.

Q: Complete blackouts? No electricity for days at a time?

A: That's right. No commercial power. And they only had small generators when I first got there. They didn't do much except keep a few lights on.

Q: Was there any problem getting fuel for the generators?

A: No, because the military provided that. There were two ways that we got supplies. There was a land connection to K2, a big supply base in Uzbekistan. Two words are the name of the city and they both start with a K. That's why they call it K2. That was probably 100 miles away, but it might as well have been a lot further. Until you got into Uzbekistan, the road was pretty good. The Russians had built this road that went straight north from Konduz to Uzbekistan and it was paved and everything, but it's all desert between there and the sand would blow across the road and they had no way to get it off except guys with shovels. So, it was a pretty hard trip. It was also a lot of trouble getting through the border.

Q: To Uzbekistan?

A: Yes. They had to go through all kinds of preliminary approvals and stuff. I went up there one time just to see what it was like. I was hoping that I could see what the trucks and things, the commercial vehicles, went through because I was hearing all sorts of things about the warlords taxing the commercial vehicles and none of that money was getting back to the central government and all that kind of stuff. But it turned out that the place where they shook down the trucks was quite a distance away from the kind of tourist checkpoint.

Q: Not too surprising, is it?

A: In fact, it was obvious that the place where we went through didn't do a lot of business. It was almost like it looked like they had just opened it up to process us and then these few Uzbek guards probably went back to doing something else after we got done going through.

Q: Right. A couple of times you've mentioned guys with shovels. Where did they get the shovels?

A: There were stores in Mazar-e-Sharif where you could buy all kinds of stuff.

Q: You would provide them, right? You bought them and if you were hiring day laborers, you were also giving them the-

A: Oh, yes, if we hired day laborers, we bought the stuff.

Q: You brought them to the place. You gave them what they needed to do. Where were those items manufactured?

A: In Pakistan is where most stuff was manufactured that I saw.

Q: You also mentioned that you couldn't get that much done in three months, but I'm sort of thinking that you just were there for three months but that the operation was considered to be much longer term and that projects could get started before you arrived and get finished long after you left.

A: Yes. Another project which I know was finished was renovating the courthouse in Mazar-e-Sharif. That is kind of a long story. I got to know some of the judges because the PAO [Public Affairs Officer] asked me if I couldn't identify a judge who was an Uzbek to participate in an international visitor program. They were doing an Afghan program but they didn't have any minorities.

Q: And who was it who asked you to do that?

A: The PAO. And of course you have to interview the chief judge and he's got about four or five assistant chief judges and none of these guys were...

Q: Minorities.

A: Well, probably half of them were Uzbeks, but they were old guys. This was a program to cultivate, identify up and coming people. So, it was a little tricky. I'm sure that I got the chief judge's fair haired boy, but at least I got somebody. The Army guys, their eyes popped out of their heads practically when they saw what a mess the courthouse was. It was another thing. It was a great big building with no electricity, no heat, not even any furniture. When they had trials, everybody just stood around in their coats. I was there January, February, and March. It was cold the whole time. So, it was routine that you met with people in their office and everybody was bundled up like they were outside. In fact, sometimes, if it was sunny out, it was actually colder inside of a building than it was outside of a building. Alongside the courthouse where they had all the records, the records for the land and the deeds, all the official records, it looked like a shed for livestock or something. The roof leaked and there was no glass in the windows and all that kind of stuff. So, that was a project that the Army guys put in and got approved. I heard from somebody that they had a ribbon cutting, so that was a project that definitely came to fruition.

Q: What about identifying the IV grantee? Did you do that?

A: Yes. I met him when he came. I was back here by the time they had the program. I met him and had a Coke with him at whatever hotel it is that they were staying in up in Northwest.

Q: So that was something real accomplished – two things, in fact: renovating the courthouse and getting a local fellow, a fair haired boy, to be a grantee in the U.S.

A: And also knowing the judges I'm sure helped the attendance at the opening of the photo exhibit. They were all there.

Q: Well, you had something to offer. They thought it was a good use of their time. That's very interesting. Your participation there was just during a three month period, but the construction on the courthouse...

A: It didn't start until after I was gone.

Q: Could you say some more now about relationships, the kinds of working relationships that you had to develop both within the PRT and out in the Afghan government and out further into private Afghan society in order to accomplish your mission?

A: You know, it was really pretty easy to develop relationships both in the PRT because as an American diplomat, so to speak, I could get these guys in to see anybody and things just went more smoothly. I had absolutely no problem getting out and about and seeing as many things as I wanted to see because they were happy to have me along. The same was true with the Afghan officials. Besides being a civilian, I was older, I had a beard, and all this kind of stuff.

Q: You don't have one now.

A: No, but I did then. Regardless of how relatively unsophisticated they might be, they realize that I was a good connection to the embassy and that that was another avenue for them to make progress besides dealing with the Army. There was no competition between us or anything. I think I helped the Army people in a number of ways. For one thing, even these majors were young guys. None of them have experience in other cultures. They had a hard time understanding the interpreters' English because they just weren't accustomed to the things that you and I don't even think about, or if you think about it, you realize, well, the reason he's confused is because the interpreter keeps getting the genders goofed up when he's translating.

Q: Had you actually served overseas?

A: Yes.

Q: And the fact that you had a military background yourself probably was a positive.

A: Yes, although I didn't emphasize that because it's not necessarily a good thing to be a retired officer when you're mostly dealing with enlisted people.

Q: Okay. Fair enough. Had you served in the Islamic or Arab world previously?

A: Well, I had been on TDY trips to Egypt and Jordan and actually to Kuwait twice. And also I had been to Turkey about four times. If you want to get a flavor for what an Islamic country is like, Turkey is probably a good way to get broken in.

Q: Did you have significant working relationships with Afghan warlords or Afghan security forces or NGOs, local citizens?

A: I had significant relationships with all of those. The area that we were in curiously had two warlords who were both big shots and almost equally powerful, which was a complicating factor in some respects because the one guy, Mohamed Atta, who was from the Masoon (phonetic) Jamiat-e Islami faction, was the commander of one of the militias. At that time, all these militias were still legitimate because there was no Afghan national army. They were trying to train the first couple hundred Afghan national army people in Kabul and if they were going to have any kind of civil defense/national defense, they had to let these warlords keep their militias at that time. The provincial governor was clearly an Atta man. It was almost useless to meet with him because he couldn't make any decisions on his own and you knew that he had to check with Atta before he did anything. The other big warlord, who was actually probably in the region more powerful than Atta, was the famous Rashid Dostam, who was an Uzbek who had changed sides. He had been aligned with just about everybody by that time. He had been aligned with the Russians, he had been aligned with the Taliban, and he had been aligned with Masood when they defeated the Taliban.

Q: So he was a survivor.

A: He was a survivor. Of the two, I actually liked him a lot better despite his reputation. One thing about the Afghans, they're not shy about telling you whether they're Pashtuns or Tajiks, and they were also not shy about telling you their political or militia affiliations. The biggest army unit around, Atta was the commander of that. So that was his legitimacy from Kabul. Dostam was representative to the north or something like that. The villages were always controlled by either the Jamiats or the Junbish. The Junbish was Dostam's party. The Jamiats was Atta's party. There was some kind of division between the provincial level and the town that was kind of like counties or something; I forget what they call them. If the bureaucrats that were in place seemed to be fairly competent and halfway honest and not trying to just take advantage of the fact that they had been appointed to these positions, they were almost always Dostam's people. Atta controlled Mazar and he controlled the airport and so that's how he kept his coffers full. Dostam owned the rest of the countryside, so I'm sure he had roadblocks and things where he taxed people. He was the guy that I think made the most money at the Uzbek border. Being an Uzbek himself, he was always going up and down there. In fact, his personal protective staff were Uzbek army guys, not Afghans.

Q: And what was the relationship between these two warlords?

A: They hated each other.

Q: Did they actively try to challenge one another?

A: Not while I was there, but there were almost always little conflicts going on at the lower levels. That was another problem, that Atta was less able to control his subordinate units as far as misbehaving. I met Dostam after I had barely been there a couple of days. There was also a Special Forces compound in town.

Q: Which was not part of the PRT.

A: Not part of the PRT. In some places, they were co-located. In Mazar-e-Sharif, they weren't, but they worked closely together and that was another thing that I tried to take initiative at, to keep the lines of communication open with those guys because they knew a lot about what was going on with the warlords and stuff that the civil affairs guys didn't know. But anyway, Dostam had orchestrated the first disarmament in the country and it was going to be in Meymaneh, which was the capital of Farah province. So, I got into a vehicle with these guys and we went across the Dashtalayli (phonetic) desert between Mazar and Meymaneh. Dostam had orchestrated this thing. This was actually my first cable report. It took me forever to get it the way the embassy wanted it because I had so much information and I wasn't really accustomed to what they wanted.

Q: They said the traditional "TMI," "too much information?"

A: Yes. But when we arrived in Meymaneh, we were ushered into this room and Dostam was sitting up in front with a whole bunch of other people who were obviously big shots. It turned out that he had gotten two or three ministers from Kabul up there for this thing and he was playing it for all it was worth. He was also doing it to one-up Atta, who was out of the country at the time. But that fact also made it almost impossible to get any real progress on disarmament.

A UN political guy from Mazar was up there. I had not met him previously. In fact, this was the number two guy, but both of those guys, who both happened to be Germans, were two people that I ended up working with.

To encourage everybody to give in their weapons and kind of demilitarize the situation was a good thing. And also, the UN guys didn't know anything about guns. So, the Special Forces guys helped. They were all from the Georgia National Guard. But one of the guys, who was actually the medic for their unit, ran his own sporting goods store in Georgia and was a gun expert. So, as people came in and turned in these things, he was identifying what they were. They were inventorying everything and all this kind of stuff. But the sense was that it was a lot for show and not much was really accomplished. A lot of the stuff even I could tell was old, probably didn't work. There was an impressive amount of stuff turned in, but I think that they still had a lot of things held back. Like I said, Dostam was trying to take advantage of this to one up Atta. Atta's main general up in that area, whose name was General Habibi, really pretty much refused to cooperate because he said, "Well, this stuff belongs to General Atta and I can't give it up without his permission," and Atta was in France or someplace.

Q: What was the incentive for them to turn in their weapons?

A: There wasn't any incentive. There was no "I'll give you a dollar for every gun" or anything like that. They didn't have any kind of program in place for retraining these guys to be farmers or whatever. It was basically Dostam being like a Tammany Hall politician and getting up and telling people that "We have to quit being so antagonistic and militaristic. It's time for a change." Dostam always supported the central government, at least in his public statements. That was another reason why I liked him better than Atta. I knew in my heart that both these guys were in it for themselves. He wasn't altruistically just trying to save the country. But he never did anything to undermine a move towards a more powerful central government. Indeed, he's come out landing on his feet. He's now Karzai's personal defense adviser or something like that.

Q: Sounds like it's equivalent to National Security Adviser in our government.

A: Yes, probably something like that. But they really couldn't give Dostam a line position in the Afghan military. He's not really an Afghan and he's so controversial. There are still all these rumors about him herding people into these packing containers and letting them die of starvation or heat prostration or whatever.

Q: But it's still difficult for me to quite understand why Dostam would get out so far in front in a weapons collection program. You say these guys are, like politicians generally, in it for themselves, or at least that has to be a part of their motivation. So what was in it for him?

A: I think that he thought that he was going to get a high position in the new government or something. He was also pushing federalism. If they had divided the country into federal republics, he could have very likely had a high position in a state or whatever was created.

Q: The regional entity.

A: Whatever it turned out to be.

Q: Was he looking for favor with the Americans or the allied forces also by doing this?

A: Oh, yes. He had some genuine affection for the U.S. military because of the close air support and stuff that helped turn the tide in the battles up in the north, and he obviously was better off if the U.S. military was favorably disposed towards him.

Q: But you're not suggesting that the U.S. put him up to it, saying, "Wouldn't it be a great idea, Dostam, if you could retire a lot of weapons there?" You think it was more his own initiative.

A: No, there wasn't anybody up there talking to him that had that kind of influence with him. He was already doing it when I got there. I might have tried to talk him into it, but I never had the chance.

Q: Right. Another angle on your being there for three months: did you succeed somebody and did somebody come after you?

A: Yes. I succeeded a State Department officer. I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember her name.

Q: It's bound to occur to people that three months is a very short time to do work that requires good relationships and contacts and knowledge about who's who and who you talk to when you need this and that. Three months is very short indeed.

A: Well, my predecessor did a good job of leaving me a contact list. I think I did a pretty good job of leaving a contact list for my successor. I spent almost two years in another country and there were some people that I cultivated the whole time that I never got as close to as I got to other people in Afghanistan. Part of it was that they were so grateful to the U.S. for helping them get out of this quagmire that they'd been in for such a long time. Also they were so anxious for reconstruction that they wanted to work together. You didn't have to go through all this having tea half a dozen times and all that kind of stuff to kind of get to know each other. You could sit down and get right down to business and it worked. It might be harder now. I had more trouble establishing relationships with the NGOs.

Q: Say something more about that.

A: Well, part of that was that there was a competition, jealousy, I don't know what, between civil affairs and the NGOs.

Q: And these are western NGOs, not Afghan?

A: No, western NGOs, Doctors Without Borders, all the big ones were there. There were probably 20 or 30 NGOs operating if you counted up all the NGOs in the five provinces (they weren't in all the provinces). They didn't all have an antagonistic relationship or an antagonistic viewpoint towards the U.S. military, but some of it was that ones like MSF [Medecins Sans Frontieres] had been operating in that part of the world for years and years. They operated with the Russians, they operated with the Taliban there. "We know how to do this better than you do. You guys are a bunch of young kids from North Carolina or Georgia or someplace like that and you don't know what you're doing. You're going to do more harm than good. If you build a well in the wrong village, you're going to advantage some bad guy and you're not even going to know that." Some of that criticism was legitimate, of course, because they didn't have the kind of sophistication where stuff like that even occurred to them. But their hearts were in the right place and they were trying to do the right thing and they tried harder to work with the NGOs, I think, in many cases than the NGOs tried to work with them. A lot of the NGOs had this idea that if there's a gun around anywhere, that's a bad thing. They oversimplified things, too. These Afghans aren't dumb. They can tell the difference between an NGO and an army soldier and they're not going to think just because there is a soldier on your compound talking to you or something that somehow you're now militaristic and they need to worry about you or something like that.

An example of how I facilitated something was in regard to a village. One of the things that the civil affairs troops did everywhere they went was to collect a lot of demographic data which they

turned over to the UN. How many families are in this town? How many buildings? How many males? How many females? What are the age ranges? All that kind of stuff.

Q: Who was collecting these data?

A: The civil affairs soldiers, and giving it to the UN. That kind of opened the door, it gave you a pretext to have a conversation with the village elders and all that kind of stuff. Then that's how you spring boarded from that to possible things that you could do in the village. Well, this particular village made a strong plea for rebuilding their school. I went with three or four of the soldiers who had been to this village to meet with the minister of education for Balkh province and it was a very educational experience for all of us really. Basically, after the soldiers presented their plan, he pretty much said, "Well, if you build a school, there are not going to be any teachers. The teachers get their assignments and their money and everything from my ministry and we have already got information about population and where the schools are needed and all this kind of stuff and we have a plan." Although they didn't have any money or the means to implement their plan, they had their act together and they knew what they wanted to do and building a school in this town wasn't part of the plan. We managed to hash that out. You should have seen the look on the face of this female soldier who was giving this presentation. It was almost like this guy slapped her in the face when he told her, "Well, you're not going to get any teachers if you build a school there." By repeating both sides of the story, I got them both to realize that this wasn't really a standoff, that they each could contribute to the other's goals. They ended up deciding to do something in a nearby place where they did have plans and that would take care of the children in the village that they were concerned with as well.

Q: So your role there was like a mediator.

A: Yes.

Q: To take people who start off with positions which were incompatible to "Let's work together and see if we can't put something together that will meet the needs of both." That meant that the minister had to be more flexible because, if I understood you correctly, they were going to end up providing teachers to a place that wasn't originally part of the plan.

A: Well, no, they wouldn't. The bending came on the part of the Army by giving up the plan to build a school in that particular place. But to put it someplace else where the Afghans had already planned to put a school.

Q: They wanted a school, but they didn't have the means to build the school. Here comes the Army, which can make it possible to build the school and the minister says, "That's great because we would like a school there and we will staff it with teachers."

A: Yes. But the Army had to bend on where the school was going to be.

Q: Right. Well, I guess that's a learning experience that you can't decide those things without reference to the local authorities.

A: Yes. And another spin-off to that was that they increasingly did more and more coordination with the local authorities. Eventually... I talk like I was there a million years but it's incredible how much can happen in 90 days when you work every day for 10 or more hours. At least a one-year assignment was packed into every 90 days.

Q: That's a very interesting point. Because everybody wants to accomplish things, take advantage of every opportunity. And I don't just mean the Americans. I mean the local folks needed to make things happen, too. So the whole decision making process there would be a lot of pressure to resolve differences quickly.

A: Yes. Another thing that made you act quickly was that communication was non-existent. So, particularly if you were outside of Mazar-e-Sharif meeting with somebody, they knew that you couldn't just get on the phone and work things out if there was some detail that you left out or something like that. You couldn't even arrange appointments in advance because no one had a phone. You would just show up and that's the way they did business.

Q: But you've already pointed out in a couple of other contexts that sometimes people didn't feel that they had authority to make commitments because they had to refer to someone else. You mentioned the warlords, that if somebody was part of the Atta group and Atta wasn't available, well, then this guy wasn't going to make a commitment. The Americans also face that kind of thing. You'd be out there in a village talking to the head people and you would see a good idea but you didn't know right on the spot whether you had the money or other resources to meet that even if you got behind it. Or did you?

A: No, they didn't, and that was the hardest thing for the soldiers to do, to leave a village and make it clear that, "This is not a hard and fast promise. We want to do this, but all of the things that need to be done in Afghanistan are being examined in Kabul jointly by your government and our government and decisions are being made about what order they're going to be done in and all that sort of thing. It's not guaranteed that it's going to happen. Bear that in mind." They recognized that they needed to do that and they always tried to do it.

Q: "They" being the Army?

A: Yes.

Q: And they were able to get that across to the local officials they were dealing with?

A: Yes.

Q: And it sounds like it worked pretty well from your perspective.

A: I think so. Nobody likes to be told that it's not a sure thing if they could have you tell them it was a sure thing, but...

Q: Sure, but they would understand that you didn't have the money in your pocket at that moment and that like any other organization, you had to go back to the source and sell them on it.

Besides the difficulties that you described with Doctors Without Borders, you said there were 20 to 30 NGOs and presumably some of them are American-based, too. Any other ways to characterize the relationships with the NGOs? Could the NGOs have done a better job than the military of providing required assistance?

A: I think the answer would have to be yes and no. It depends on what it is. Certainly it's ridiculous to think that the military could always do a better job than the NGOs or vice-versa.

Q: And some of the NGOs have the advantage of a longer history there and better knowledge of local conditions.

A: Yes. The direction I was trying to get them to go was like the court house. That was the thing that no NGO was going to do anyway. What the NGOs really didn't want the Army doing was building schools and hospitals because that was their bread and butter. I should also say that even by the time I left there, the Afghans were already starting to feel that the NGOs were not giving bang for their buck, that they were getting a lot of money but weren't producing that much results in terms of the reconstruction type things. Now, the other things that NGOs did, like the UN conflict resolution attempts and stuff like that, you can't really measure progress so noticeably on that. I had a governor say, "If someone had just given us the money, we could have built a road twice as fast and it would have been 10 inches of gravel instead of six inches of gravel for what we gave the NGO to do it."

Q: Of course, you never know quite how to evaluate that.

A: No.

Q: Let's turn to a different area: governance. Can you describe PRT activities related to promoting democracy, creating local governance, and extending authority of the central government?

A: One way they extended the authority of the central government was by coordinating their proposals with the provincial officials who had been appointed by the central government.

Q: Was that a central part of what you understood as the mission of the PRT and of your role in that mission?

A: Yes, and that evolved. Like I said, I'm not sure initially that they realized how important it was to do those things. That meeting with that education minister was an object lesson in that. Once they realize that, geez, if we had done this without coordinating it, we would have probably wasted all the money that we had put into that school.

Q: Could they have gone ahead and started constructing the school without coordinating?

A: I don't know whether they could have or not. Pretty soon it got to the point where I don't think they could have gotten projects approved if they couldn't show that they had all the squares filled with the civilian government officials. All these things were evolving at the same time. So, initially, there weren't ministries, or if there were, they weren't that effective. But as they became more effective, then you had to deal with them more. And the same thing with the money situation. Initially, all these ministers were in name only because they weren't getting the funds from Kabul but they needed to run their ministries. But as all that stuff advanced, everything started to jell more and more and be more rational.

Q: During your time, did you have a lot of business to do with the regional ministries?

A: Yes.

Q: And they were effective? They had budgets and you weren't just going through the motions then? They were important players?

A: Yes, and they definitely had budgets. They didn't always have money. It was complicated. They were supposed to get their money from the bank. Sometimes the bank was controlled by one party and the minister was from the other party and the bank would be more forthcoming with giving to one side. It was a mess.

Q: When you learned of a mess like that, was there anything you could do to help clean it up?

A: Well, you had to be careful about that. You couldn't really go to a warlord and say, "The minister of education is complaining that he can't get any money out of the bank because he's a member of the wrong party." But you could say, "It looks like there's still something wrong, because the education ministry has a budget but they're not getting their money." That sort of thing. It's not like I sat down with these guys every day anyway, but I would always try and take advantage of meetings. And Atta had to be careful. I didn't have to be careful, but I could tell that he had kind of a short fuse and I know I pissed him off a couple of times, most notably when I was trying to get to the bottom of a rocket attack near the airport. At the airport, there was a Jordanian field hospital that was supported by the U.S. in terms of supplies, but the Jordanians provided all the doctors and nurses and even the security people. So, at the airport, you had the airport, the field hospital, and also a small logistics element of U.S. Army guys that were responsible for getting the supplies that the field hospital needed. Well, there was a rocket attack at the hospital and the attack was so inept that you couldn't even tell which one of those three things was the target. They found 12 rockets strewn together and they were supposed to go off sequentially. The fuse thing broke after the first three went off or something like that. They were aimed in such a way that they just all exploded harmlessly out there beyond the runway or something like that. But Atta was responsible for the security of the airport.

Q: Including the field hospital.

A: Yes. And he wanted to sidle up to the Jordanians because he thought that he might be able to get military supplies or uniforms or whatever to kind of help him in his race with Dostam for

supremacy. He was very active in trying to get support from other countries, let's just put it that way – not just Jordan.

Q: The question was, where would you come in? Where would there be room for you to act? You or the PRT in general.

A: I told you I made this trip up to K2, to the supply base. The colonel that was the commander up there came down just to see what this logistics element looked like. So, I had Doc, our interpreter, make us an appointment with Atta. Atta wanted to just do the traditional greeting and tea and eating almonds and that sort of thing. I took advantage of the fact that I had these other U.S. military guys there to ask him very pointedly about how the investigation was going on the rocket attacks. It was inconceivable to me that something like that could happen without at least the knowledge of the airport security guys. You couldn't get in or out of the airport without going past their guys. I don't know why they would have been responsible for that attack, but they must have known something about it. That was one thing.

Another thing was, once a week, the UN sponsored a meeting. They called it the Security Council. We would go over all these different kinds of incidents that had occurred during the previous week. If something was really serious, they would commission a couple of guys to look into it and stuff like that. But one week, there was a big thing about some junior warlord who was pretty famous in the fight against the Taliban. Wherever it was he had lived, he stole a bunch of sheep or something like that. The local police threw him in jail. Well, a bunch of his militia guys came and surrounded the police station and intimidated the police and made them let this guy go. So, both sides agreed that they would send somebody to look into this. Well, the next week, we're going over the incident reports and all this kind of stuff and nobody says anything about this guy. So, I said, "Well, last week, we agreed to look into the report that so-and-so had intimidated the police and escaped from jail. How come that wasn't mentioned?" Then one of his supporters got up and went into kind of a typical Afghan speech about, "Oh, the people love this guy very much. Blah, blah, blah." But it forced them to have to revisit it. Even though he made this big long speech, nobody was buying it.

Q: So you at the very least could raise something so that it couldn't just be buried.

A: Yes.

Q: And how did that work in the case of the botched rocket attack at the airport?

A: Atta arrested some people from the local village, but they weren't the ones that did it.

Q: Just on the face of it, insofar as he was the one in control, you would think he would be at the very least highly embarrassed. It makes him look bad that the rocket attack occurs where he's responsible for security.

A: That's why he didn't want me to ask him about it when these other colonels were sitting there.

Q: Well, that's just appearances. One way or another, even if he doesn't want to talk about it there, he would logically still want to do something about it, make sure that people don't play with his authority, unless he was complicit in it. He's in an awkward position.

A: Yes, but unless people kept raising that, it would be forgotten about. In other words, he's only in an awkward position if people keep bringing it up. That was one of the things you had to do.

Q: So you brought it up and some people were arrested, but they probably weren't the actual perpetrators.

A: That's right.

Q: End of story.

Just to close off the subject of security, it sounds to me as though you weren't terribly concerned about personal security.

A: Oh, I never fully described what the security rules were for my personal security. If I was in Mazar-e-Sharif, I could go somewhere in a single vehicle as long as I had one soldier and a guard from the compound. We had Afghan guards that guarded the compound and also rode with us whenever we went on road trips. Usually if we went in, the guard would stay with the car and the soldier would come with me.

Q: Who drives?

A: Usually they had two soldiers.

Q: One driving and one doing protection?

A: Yes, one driving and one sitting there with a weapon, and then the guard in the back. There were times when I went to see the Turkish consul that I just took one guard and one of the majors with me and I drove. Part of that agreement between the ambassador and the CINC was that the State Department people had no guns and no clothing that had any kind of military appearance. So, I always looked like a civilian. Sometimes the Germans from the UN had on all this camouflage stuff that they had bought downtown at the bazaar, but I always looked like a legitimate non-combatant.

Q: And you had diplomatic credentials as well, is that right?

A: I had a diplomatic passport.

Q: So you weren't formally accredited to the Afghan government.

A: No, because there wasn't a real consul there.

Q: Right. Well, you could have been accredited as part of the embassy and you were just doing temporary detail work in the country. Anyway, it wouldn't surprise me if you said that the Afghans at that point didn't have a formal accreditation procedure. But maybe they did.

A: I don't know.

Q: Still, compared to the situation in Iraq – and I was interviewing returnees from the Coalition Provisional Authority last year – you were relatively more relaxed about personal security.

A: Yes, and part of that was that in the northwest where I was it was probably the safest place in Afghanistan. If you interview some of the other guys that were there at the same time I was, I know from talking to them that they had more restrictions on their movements and stuff.

Q: And were there any security incidents of significance during the 90 days or so that you were there?

A: Other than that rocket attack, there were no attacks on our compound or anything like that. Every once in a while, you'd hear a mine explode or an automatic weapon firing and usually they tried to find out what that was. Usually, it had some explanation like some guy was celebrating his baby being born.

Q: Changing subject again: PRT activities related to economic reconstruction and development. What U.S. agencies were responsible for these activities? Did civil affairs soldiers participate in reconstruction and development projects? What was the impact of these efforts?

A: There wasn't much that happened that really directly supported economic development. There was a bread factory in Mazar that the Russians had built that probably could have been put back into operation, but nobody even talked about that while I was there.

Q: But you were doing infrastructure kinds of things – roads, schools, hospitals.

A: We fixed culverts and things like that, so presumably, this helped farmers get their crops to market and stuff like that. But it was very rudimentary economic development than in the sense that you would normally think of.

Q: It sounds like a lot of it could have been post-conflict reconstruction, things that had been destroyed or damaged and were now being made serviceable again.

A: Yes. When we went to Meymaneh, we couldn't even use the road. That's why we drove across the desert. The famous ring road had such big pits in it and stuff that it was impassable. So, just getting the basic things like a two lane road and water and electricity, those things needed to be in place before you started thinking about the banking system and all that kind of stuff.

Q: Did any other U.S. government agencies come out or participate? I understand none were actually attached to the PRT, but did AID or others come out and promise anything or initiate anything?

A: There was one AID traveler who traveled from the embassy.

For Army civil affairs economic development isn't part of the portfolio, you might say. We hadn't gotten to the point where other civilian agencies or NGOs were doing much in that area yet. They were still working more on basic infrastructure things.

Q: Okay. Let's move on. Some PRTs were organized by the U.S. and handed over to other countries. It sounds to me as though that was not a factor in your experience.

A: Actually, when the person who replaced me left, the British took over the PRT in Mazar. The plan was that we would continue to have a U.S. State Department officer there anyway. I believe that did continue. But the PRT was taken over by the British. I think the Germans took over Bamiyan later. I know other countries were talking with us about that because when I was at Bagram, I met a Korean lieutenant colonel in the mess hall and went and had tea with him later that night. He was really pumping me, trying to find out what he should tell his government about what their involvement should be in the PRT. Should they take over an entire PRT or should they volunteer to provide medical personnel for one? And which ones might be better and that sort of thing? But I don't think the Koreans ever did. But they certainly were considering it.

Q: No, I haven't heard of the Koreans getting more directly involved. Based on your experience, do you have any idea how the non-American PRTs might have differed from the U.S. PRTs?

A: Let's see. I did meet the guy that was there when the British were there. One thing for sure is that the British had a lot more people than this 20 or so that we had. They also fixed up the compound considerably. But we had very primitive conditions. I slept on a cot in a sleeping bag the whole time I was there. There was no heat except for building a wood fire in a stove in your room.

Q: You had your own room?

A: I had my own room. I was the only person on the compound that had his own room. The soldiers were all two, three, four in a room.

Q: Was there indoor plumbing?

A: There was.

Q: Was it preexisting?

A: It was there. You had to throw the toilet paper in a trash can. It was a septic system and it couldn't take very much. Also, there was a minimal amount of hot water. They had these little things that held about 10 gallons. They heated up by electricity. There were two of those upstairs, no, probably three. There was one room that actually had a bathroom attached to the room and that was where the female soldiers from the one civil affairs unit both lived. Then, there was one other bathroom downstairs that had a tub and shower. But you could really only take a shower about once a week.

So the British fixed it up. In fact, I think they probably even had a bar in there by the time they were done.

Q: But you can drink even without a bar, can't you?

A: Yes, although there wasn't much drinking in Afghanistan. I shared some scotch with the Germans from the UN a couple of times. The NGOs, I think, had parties. I did go to one Friday TGIF thing at World Food Program and a couple of times at the UN compound.

Q: But there weren't very many opportunities for entertainment in your off hours, I guess.

A: No.

Q: Just people getting together if they chose to do that.

A: Yes. Although I think it's good to be there longer, the way conditions were when we were there made a 90-day assignment pretty tiresome after a while.

Q: Let me ask you about rule of law. Was there any PRT involvement with Afghan police, courts, and prisons? You already told me that you did get into the courthouse.

A: Yes. I sent a long report on how you got to be a lawyer and how you got to be a judge in Afghanistan. Basically, you can go to law school or you can go to the seminary, so to speak, and either way, you come out to be a judge because it's the sharia law system. I also knew one female lawyer. Women were not accorded the same status as lawyers as men were. Basically, she was like an investigator for the prosecutor's office, but she was a law school graduate.

Q: From an Afghan law school?

A: Yes.

Q: Not during the Taliban time though.

A: No, from before.

Q: Was there any involvement with informal or traditional justice systems?

A: Not that I'm aware of.

Q: Let's get to the summary questions then. Under the heading of "achievements," in your opinion, are the PRTs accomplishing their mission and in particular is the PRT an effective vehicle for providing security, expanding central authority, reconstruction and development, and utilizing American military and civilian resources?

A: I'd have to say yes. Even though they really did not have the capability to militarily oppose any determined attack, just the fact that you had U.S. Army soldiers present lent an air of security that I'm confident allowed everybody to work more easily. It was more symbolic than real as far as protection was concerned.

Q: It seems to have been effective.

A: It was effective. The presence was there and also the fact that they could call for reinforcements. So, it had a stabilizing influence. Unfortunately, I don't think that was fully appreciated by some of the NGOs.

Q: What you're implying, I think, is that it actually created an environment which made it easier for them to do their work, too.

A: Yes, I think so.

Q: What about the subject of expanding central authority, which I guess was one of the goals of the American and allied presence?

A: Yes. Well, it was certainly my goal. I think that the Army probably needs to drill that into their people more. They were more task-focused. For example, shortly before I left, there was a big flood and there were mudslides and all this kind of stuff. The major that was in charge of the CMAC got approached probably by the UN, somebody there. A whole big contingent was going out to look at this mudslide and see what they could do.

Q: Did the mudslide take down houses or cover up roads?

A: I think it took down houses. I don't think there were any fatalities, but it was springtime, the snow was melting, and then we had a whole bunch of rain. In fact, I've got pictures of our street in front of our compound. It looks like a canal.

The major wasn't inclined to respond. He was getting worn out by the fact that every time he had to go to the UN the lady in charge of the UN really didn't like the Army and was always giving him a hard way to go. He knew what NGOs were going to be there and that sort of thing. Also, there wasn't that much direct assistance that he thought he could provide. This goes to the task thing: If there's not something I can do, then maybe there is no point in getting involved. This was after the invasion of Iraq had already started. I said, "Major, we need to go because people are already worried that the U.S. is losing its focus on Afghanistan and changing all their emphasis to Iraq. You'll just lend more fuel to that fire if you don't go to this thing even if you can't do anything." So, at least some of the midlevel leaders, the Army guys, need to get a more

global view of things. That would be more helpful towards that sort of thing. That's not an indictment of them. It's just that I think there was no training that got them to think along those lines.

Q: It occurs to me that this term, "expanding central authority," sounds a lot like we're talking about nation building. That remains a controversial topic, to address things in those terms.

A: Maybe if the PRTs are bigger, you can think in terms of nation building. But when I was there, the PRTs were small and they were still more in the non-conventional warfare mode of almost being an adjunct to Special Forces and just building goodwill at the grassroots level, and there is a leap from that to nation building.

Q: Sure there is. But your overall assessment is that they're pretty good at accomplishing their mission.

A: Yes.

Q: Within realistic terms of what you can accomplish.

A: Yes. That's where you have to start.

Q: Could you pick out what you'd regard as the main successes and disappointments of your effort in Afghanistan?

A: Well, I've already mentioned the courthouse. Rule of law is so important to nation building. That was a real as well as a visible symbol of not just support of that but kind of showing how important it is. That's especially in Mazar-e-Sharif, where Uncle Sam's spent their biggest buck. Certainly everybody should see that. In fact, I think now about the things that we were doing in Kabul, like we rushed around to rebuild a women's hospital that they bombed by mistake. I don't know that there was any message from that effort except that we were sorry that that occurred and that it was unintentional and we were trying to recover it.

Q: Yes, there is kind of a moral obligation in that case aside from questions of development priorities.

A: It's really a matter of degrees. Just getting the communication going between the civil affairs people and the Afghan officials. I don't think that either side appreciated how valuable the cooperation with the other side could be. And there were also some good relationships forged with NGOs, mostly ones that were affiliated with churches that were more conservative. They weren't so concerned about being misidentified as part of the U.S. military or whatever. There was something called Samaritan's Purse that was in Konduz and they were mostly nurses and things like that, medical. That was another medical thing, but it was a religious-backed thing from North Carolina or somewhere. The Army tried to get all these people to register with them voluntarily in case there was some big disaster or something like that, so they could somehow have an inventory of who was where and how to get hold of them in an emergency and that sort of thing. Even some like MSF gave us some information along those lines.

Q: Keeping channels open is an accomplishment, especially when there's a lot of potential for suspicion and mistrust.

A: Yes. Some of the other NGOs had their own kind of security. I don't know what you would call it, but they actually intentionally avoided the UN security system. These were the real renegades. They didn't want to be associated with any of these traditional aid organizations. I actually went and talked to those guys a couple of times because they were trying to do their own intelligence collecting, or whatever, to determine whether they could tell where the wind was blowing. That was fine with me. I just tried to meet as many people as I could. You never know when an opportunity is going to present itself to be able to do some good, but if you don't talk to each other, you're never going to know.

Q: Were there any significant disappointments or failures in your time, something you really wanted to do and weren't able to get done or some obstacle that you didn't anticipate that got in the way?

A: I guess I'd have to say no. If it hasn't occurred to me by now, it can't be that significant of a disappointment.

Q: Well, in fact, you do draw quite an upbeat picture. Again, in comparison with most of the people I interviewed on Iraq, it's a much more positive picture of the level of acceptance and the effectiveness of the American presence in Afghanistan.

Any suggestions on how PRTs could be improved? Any advice to pass on for future operations?

A: Don't take white underwear. I told you that one already. It wasn't on tape.

I think what I said a little bit earlier - and the senior NCOs could get this, too, because they're very savvy - is just to have a little bit better idea of the big picture and how the individual projects that these guys are so good at designing and executing and proposing fit into the big picture of our national objectives and so on.

Q: I guess that's one of the reasons you were there. By training and disposition, you're more likely to be a big picture guy than guys who are trained to accomplish tasks.

A: And I was very happy about how receptive the various majors were - less one, but more the other two guys who were actually pretty sophisticated. They understood where I was coming from and I think what the political perspective added. It actually helped them have a greater appreciation for what they were trying to do. I think they were frustrated often because they didn't know if their proposals were going to be approved. They went out every day and saw how much needed to be done and they realized how little they could do.

Q: Just a little technical point. You were there for about 90 days. What about these military officers who were in charge of their PRT teams?

A: Their assignments were about 10 months to a year. Even at the CMOC that was made up of individuals, their tour was the same for everybody, so it was an integral team for 10 months.

Q: And they would all leave at the same time and a whole new team would come in?

A: Yes. And they tried to build in an overlap. The Special Forces did that, too. I didn't see any transition in the civil affairs, but a new Special Forces group came in toward the end, so at the time I left, they were overlapping and they were both there, the old ones and the new ones.

Q: But their tours were generally 10 months as compared with your three months.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any last words, overall summary? Sometimes, particularly when it's two years later and you're recalling some of this, you may have an insight that you had not articulated before. Any final words of wisdom?

A: Actually, I'm more favorably disposed to the whole concept now, I think, than I was at the time. If you had asked me right when I came home, "What are your disappointments," I probably could have rattled off a whole bunch of them. But now that I've had time for it all to sink in, I think that overall, things moved in a positive direction though there were bumps in the road.

Q: You have a pretty positive assessment of the concept and of your own participation in it.

A: Yes, but the bridge that has to be made is the grassroots to the bigger picture thing. These small teams are like the Special Forces working with a village in Vietnam. There are all kinds of discrete tasks and things that you can accomplish and that sort of thing, but it's all part of a bigger picture. Getting that to fit together is the challenge.

Q: With that, I think we will close the interview.