

USIP-ADST

Afghanistan Experience Project

Interview #14

Executive Summary

The interviewee is an FSO posted as State/USAID representative to PRT Herat soon after the PRT was established. She described her work as “quasi-Political Advisor” to the PRT commander, a Lieutenant Colonel who led an “outstanding and effective” team made up mostly of Civil Affairs reservists.

At this early stage in PRT development, the work of State PRT representatives was complicated by multiple chains of command: to the PRT commander, to Embassy Kabul (which did not yet have a PRT coordinator), and to the Afghanistan Affairs Office in the State Department’s SA Bureau.

The interviewee had only informal interagency consultations and a brief period of Dari language training before arriving in country. She strongly recommended a more rigorous and organized program of regional studies and functional training if, as is expected, the American civilian and military personnel must work closely together in the future on stabilization and reconstruction. At a minimum, FSOs and other civilian officers en route to post should have one week of area studies, basic language training, and a week-long familiarization course at Fort Bragg where they can learn about military structures and nomenclature. More broadly, all FSOs and USAID officers who may be engaged in military-led nation-building efforts should become familiar with the “tactical” aspects of the work. The interviewee observed that FSOs are trained early on to think in strategic terms, which is fine, but getting the job done on the ground is a day-to-day, tactical enterprise.

- The interviewee’s other recommendations included:
- Standardization of interagency equipment in country, especially communications assets.
- A Kabul-based embassy officer to cover PRT representatives who needed to travel away from post for consultations or leave.
- A better way to manage the flow of visitors to Embassy Kabul because this distraction kept embassy officers from focusing on PRT coordination.
- Improvement in the State Department’s Human Resources (HR) service to PRT personnel, including access to the HR website and recognition of service in the assignment

process.

- A formal debriefing process for PRT officers at the conclusion of their tours in order to identify lessons learned.

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

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Interviewed by: J.Zetkovic
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Q: When did you arrive in Afghanistan?

A: September 2nd, 2003.

Q: Did you have training in Washington?

A: I had a month and a half or so in Washington doing consultations and some Dari. Eight weeks of Dari language.

Q: Here at the Foreign Service Institute?

A: Yes.

Q: Your consultations were in SA (Bureau of South Asian Affairs) or elsewhere?

A: That's where I was based but it was all – I mean, the whole gamut of government agencies.

Q: Okay. And could you describe your route out to post please?

A: The route? Amsterdam, Dubai, Kabul.

Q: How did you get into Kabul?

A: UN humanitarian assistance flights. The only airline that we're approved to fly on.

Q: And you arrived on the 2nd of September, '03?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you stay in Kabul before you went to Herat?

A: About a week.

Q: And what did you ...

A: Actually, I arrived in Herat September 11th, so a little longer than a week.

Q: And what did you do in Kabul before heading to Herat?

A: Consultations with government and NGOs and embassy people.

Q: Could you describe those? Were they helpful, were they – Was it crazy? Just a description of the atmosphere and the content.

A: Wasn't crazy. But it was not structured. The embassy turns over every year. And so usually we arrive right when everyone in the embassy is turning over. So there wasn't a lot of – because the PRTs were – I mean, that is constant, PRTs are new and no one knows how to manage or handle them, so it was pretty much self-directing. Everything about the PRTs. So I got the embassy phone list and I went down and I asked various people all throughout the embassy who I should go meet specifically on the issue of Herat. And then I tried to meet with all the section chiefs, I had to meet with AID because USAID did not have, every PRT is supposed to have civilians from, one civilian each from the Department of State, USAID and the US Department of Agriculture in addition to one Afghan Ministry of Interior representative. My PRT didn't have any of those people so USAID, in the absence of any of their employees would delegate their duties to State, so the whole time I was there I was also wearing a USAID hat.

So I had a lot of consultations with USAID. And with the UN.

Q: Okay. I'm going to jump forward for just a second, just to cover – to get down to the periods of time when you were there. When did you leave Afghanistan?

A: September 19th, 2004.

Q: And during the year that you were there, did you have time away from post?

A: Twice.

Q: Twice. And when was that?

A: Away from post? I would go back to Kabul a lot ...

Q: Out of country.

A: Out of country, twice.

Q: And you went off to R&R to here in the U.S.? Or where did you go?

A: It was actually called consultations. When you're on TDY you don't get R&R, you

get consultations.

Q: Right.

A: So it was the only option for that, which was to mirror the R&R policy, to let us come back, to go to Washington.

Q: So what periods of time were you out?

A: I left in April for two weeks and I left in June for two weeks.

Q: So you were over there for a long time? I'm sorry. We're back to in Kabul.

A: Right.

Q: You were describing an interesting situation where there is a model for the perfect PRT but it wasn't really what you found in Herat as far as people with specific responsibility. If you were the AID person, you said there were several people who weren't there who should have been there.

A: That was the concept, it would have these civilians and possibly to keep going to add more civilians as – I mean, PRTs are constantly evolving.

Q: Yes.

A: I don't think there's been a month where you could say this is the PRT structure. They are also different in every single ...

Q: In every different unit – place.

A: But that was the basic concept, that you would have these civilians to be advising reconstruction and governance and engagement with political figures and agriculture primarily, because agriculture is the key to the economy, so that was the idea.

Q: And what were your specific responsibilities at that post? Did you have, for instance, a job description, or ...

A: Yes.

Q: And what were they?

A: We were sort of the political – sort of the quasi political advisor to the commander, since he is the military – usually he is a lieutenant colonel. So you were the political background person, giving advice to him, giving him information on what U.S. foreign policy is and how best to engage the leadership in whatever provinces you are covering, whether it's the governor or the army corps or police, I mean the main, obviously one of

the biggest focuses was security, so those officials were probably at the top of the list in terms of who you were going to interact with.

You are – Just like anywhere else, they have an advisory, opinion – application of economics support funds, of USAID money, as well as other money that we're spending including refugee money. In addition, the military has money that they are spending so the concept is that you are part of that group that determines how to approach your strategy that is specific to your province that also mirrors the strategy, obviously, that is being implemented by USAID globally.

Because each PRT has money that is thought to be a little bit quicker on the ground in terms of implementation because you are there and you know you can assess probably better what the local situation is. Those are probably the main things. You are trying to help promote U.S. policy, which is one of the key goals of PRT, which is to support central government initiatives on a provincial level.

Afghanistan more than I would, say, Iraq, has, obviously, a problem, but Afghanistan has the additional problem of geography. That history, the federal concept has been very difficult. National concept has fractured with the war, so how do you get these very powerful people on the margins to go along with the central government policy, so that's the broad brush concept of what you're doing.

Q: You mentioned your AID-related responsibilities. Agriculture. Could you describe those?

A: The first thing that I thought was critical was devising a global – a provincial strategy, or a regional strategy, I was in the west, so we had four provinces in our region and so what is the best regional strategy for the specific issues that we confronted? Our PRT was in some ways – Well, it wasn't unique but the driving issue there was the issue of the provincial governor of Herat, Ismael Khan, who was extremely powerful in terms of money and weapons and political influence. How to deal with him peacefully to bring change and get him to go along with the central government agenda.

In other regions the governors were different, so it was – How do you implement a USAID strategy to help get that change? Civil society and media. So that was the primary thing but that required a lot of homework.

Q: Yes. Could you describe who is who in the PRT? I mean I know the personnel changed in the time that you were there but the basic structure and who you reported to?

A: In the initial period there were only civil affairs soldiers there. This was before the PRT was stood up formally as a PRT. It was a civil affairs team. Civil and military operations center. There were about 20 people there when I first got to Herat. It changed and most of the PRTs now, including Herat, have anywhere from 70 to 100 people. There's sort of a core element ...

Q: Foreigners, or...

A: No, all Americans. The core element is again, civil affairs, which is sort of seen as the driving force of the PRT. All of the commanders, with very few exceptions, have been civil affairs lieutenant colonels or in some cases majors with the smaller PRTs. And the civil affairs teams range from probably anywhere around 10 to 15, maybe 20 maximum. We had a lot of civil affairs people at my PRT when I left.

And the second core element that was brought in probably in November, I think, yes, late November, was the first time the PRT, American PRTs, were given a separate force protection elements. Those varied. In the first instance they were active duty field artillery groups, anywhere from 30 to now it's about 60 people in larger PRTs and they rotated out and were replaced by Iowa National Guard infantry. So different specialties of the service and differences between active and reserve and National Guard. You had all elements.

My PRT had a small contingent of Special Forces that were there to mainly do communications, not to do their traditional jobs, per se. We also, throughout the year, had different contingents, including psy ops teams that were doing information operations, handing out flyers, meeting on the village level with tribal groups and populations and we had humint teams that were doing – mainly concerned with security at the PRT itself and varying – sometimes we had other government agencies there when I left, also, U.S. Department of Agriculture had sent a representative at the very end. Just one.

Then we also would have DOD civilian interpreter, each PRT. That had a clearance.

Q: Okay. Were you the only State person at post?

A: Yes. Every PRT only has one State officer... IF they have one State, because they're not all filled.

Q: And you reported directly to the lieutenant colonel?

A: The reporting chain was a little bit – my official chain was the Office of Afghan Affairs in Washington, because I was on a one year TDY assignment. There were only a few of us that were sent out like that and now new PRT assignments are being made directly to Kabul so that the chain will go straight to the embassy. So my performance evaluation was done in Washington. I obviously coordinated a lot of what I did and day to day living with the PRT commander. He didn't supervise me, though. And I also had a pretty strong reporting and connection relation with the embassy, political section, DCM and USAID, obviously, because I had to report to them, as well, in Kabul. That relationship didn't really extend to Washington. It was confined to Kabul.

Q: And the description, sort of – If you had to do an organizational chart, there were a lot of dotted lines.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: On a day to day basis, you're in Herat, you're the PRT, you're working with the people at post, you're talking to the lieutenant colonel, you're talking to your colleagues at post. Do you think the new structure will work better, will be more effective?

A: Yes.

Q: Reporting to Embassy Kabul?

A: Yes.

Q: One of the questions that we've been asked to address specifically is the effectiveness of the PRTs and how they can be improved, how they can – if there were problems, have those problems been addressed in the first year up and if not how can they be improved? Do you have any comments on that?

A: The coordination office that they've established is going to help. I would imagine it would help a lot. After the – In this last year that there was a change made that there was one support person in the admin section and one support person in the political section at the embassy for the State people, AID had a different structure. And that was mildly effective, although it was not enough to fix the problem. Those people ended up working in those sections of the embassy and – because out of sight, out of mind was kind of the reality of the PRTs in many ways. If the person in the admin section was obviously – the embassy in Kabul was extremely thin on the ground in terms of resources, partly because there was not enough space to house people.

We had a huge problem with space for every agency, particularly USAID. So those people working in the admin and political sections got drawn in working on post differential reports, staffing visits, which were extremely taxing, for the whole mission and I would say that they weren't able to focus all of their efforts on the PRTs. Their ratings and evaluations were being done at the embassy by people at the embassy so there was no, there was no enforcement that they would be supporting the PRTs primary ...

Q: I have a question about the embassy's oversight of the PRTs. There are different models to follow. A traditional embassy structure, there are consulates, usually a DCM, or in some cases a consul-general would have responsibilities for managing consulates, the relationship with the embassy. If you go back to Vietnam, then the CORDS program, different models that were followed for the management structure. When you've got a central embassy and then posts hither and yon. It didn't seem to work very well.

A: That's getting a little bit – I think the new office will make things a lot better because the reporting chain, there will be an FSO-1 coordinator that supervises the political section person – or actually it would just be a PRT section. The political person, the admin person and OMS and the chief of the section and there would be some FSM

support as well.

Q: What's the name of that office?

A: "PRT Coordinator" is what it is initially being called. It hasn't really constituted itself. It's being set up right now.

Q: Yes. Who is there now to do that job? Or is it just an idea?

A: It's open. Yes. There's political coordinators filling in to do the management. And then there's also a USAID PRT coordination element and a USDA and there was a question in terms of whether that would all be under one roof and managed as one unit or not.

Q: That's still open, isn't it?

A: Yes, that's still open. I had suggested making it all one office and possibly even having USAID person be the deputy because that person had PRT experience but that became an institutional question in terms of whether or not that was making AID seem subordinate. That hasn't been resolved.

Q: Working for the entire U.S. government, not for a particular agency, how do you think the structure should be? What's the best way to run it? Should it be one central office?

A: Yes.

Q: And that would be ...

A: One office that does civilians, which has a military person attached to it because 99 percent of what the PRTs do and need are attached to the military. The MOU of the military specifies that State only has responsibility for communications and that is actually out of date now because we've just gotten classified communications in the last two months for the military SIPRNET program and so that is – State is paying for that service, so now State doesn't even provide all the communications, the military does.

So if you're coordinating anything administratively or logistically it is going to have to have a military input. There needs to be a military person in the PRT office, I think. I could give you many, many, many suggestions.

I think the personnel system in the State Department has to take note of these kinds of assignments. The PRT assignments that are in the field in Afghanistan and possibly their corresponding field units in Iraq. My experience in Afghanistan is the State Department people are doing tactical work, which we are not trained to do. We don't know what tactical work is. State Department functions on a strategic level. I mean, that's clear when you go to War College. The military starts out at tactical and if you become a

three-star general you get to strategic. But State starts at strategic.

So we're supporting for the first time, maybe not the first time, we did have CORDS, but people who were doing missions with the military in the field would go out and you're camping for a week, you're riding in humvee, you're eating MREs, you're using military radios and equipment. You're living in a place that has a 24-hour command center. It's a completely different environment than any kind of State Department post.

You don't have your administrative support. You can't cash checks. You don't have any of the same things that you grow to expect, but State needs to learn how to support those people and I would say the primary issue – there is two primary issues, one is personnel and one is communications.

The communications package was very, very, very, very difficult. And I'm not sure why. It was very difficult to get people to A: pay attention and B: coordinate on fixing the problems. It has gotten better, they finally got SIPRNET and NIPRNET, which is the secret Internet protocol the military has. They're still not mutually usable. If you go on a military SIPRNET you can't find a State Department addressee so if I was going to start writing classified cables then I needed everybody's email address at my fingertips.

If I was at the embassy I couldn't get on the military so you find yourself working in all those environments. You have to be able to plug and play if you're at Bagram Airfield, if you're at the embassy, if you're back at your home office in Washington or if you're in the field and that hasn't happened yet.

So somebody who is very creative in the IRM getting together with the military and USAID, because you all have different capabilities, you all have different institutional experiences but there is a way to make it work so that the State person can communicate. My view is that's our stock in trade, is we do information. We don't shoot weapons, I don't do KP duty, I – My value is my ability to communicate what I know back to people in Bagram, in Kabul, in Washington, in CENTCOM, wherever they are.

So if I go to the field and I see the Special Forces guy has a TACSAT or a radio he can send a classified report every night and the tactical unit team can do it every night and a State Department person, when you're in the field for 10 days and you can't send any reports.

USAID can do it because they've funded satellite communications, which are mobile and they can transmit at a very high cost, they can transmit data every night when you're in the field. Obviously, USAID doesn't need the encryption and there's a question that I won't go into great length. There's two schools of thought that some of what you're doing doesn't – You can do it without having classified information and some of it may mean that.

So whether or not State could coordinate with those agencies that haven't got the same comms or allow State to use those different systems but just, it needs a push from on how

to say these are the ways we can make these PRTs work, and in my view you get a lot of value for very little investment. People tend to look at the PRTs and say, oh, that's too expensive to pay for that much bandwidth and I don't think it really is because that person is only one person and they're out there doing your consular work, your public affairs work, your political work, your econ work, and it's, I think, they're really useful and I think probably State has a lot of the value added of doing the political reporting that you need to understand these countries.

They are extremely competent. In Iraq and Afghanistan you just don't walk in and pick up a book and start understanding what's going on. My parallel is that if something happens in Badghis Province in northwestern Afghanistan, we should be able to transmit that information as easily as the police chief or the warlord or the poppy smuggler. And we're not and that's not acceptable.

Q: You're talking about communications out. What about communications in. You are supposed to be explaining U.S. policy to a lieutenant colonel or whoever on the ground. What about what you would get from Washington or Kabul or from our chain of information?

A: That changes depending on who is sitting where in your chain of command. Sometimes there was good communication on that and sometimes there was not good communication on that. Sometimes that was on purpose and sometimes that was not on purpose.

Q: There were technical roadblocks to ...

A: Yes, there were lots of technical roadblocks because we didn't have classified communications up until very recently. But it's still not user friendly because most of the classified information process is in Natak, which is the command center, so it would be like trying to write a cable while you're in the op center and everyone is talking and the TV is on and someone is watching the video.

So that hasn't, I don't think most State people yet have a classified processing area that you would say is the equivalent of what you have it, an embassy. But we have a lot of posts that don't have classified. So that question is still being worked out. How do you use it? You draft it and bring it over, it gets very technical depending on how each PRT is set up.

While I was there, there was no, up until the last month, there was no incoming classified from State. The only classified that would be incoming is the military, sometimes there are intelligence summaries, including state cables, and so you would see them in that way, but in terms of getting policy, information or updates or guidance, it was limited just because of that until very recently. I'm not sure, I think now there's an intent to try to and improve that now that there is SIPR but these are the obstacles because you don't sit there and monitor it. I had to come over from another building to see classified email. So they would have to call me and tell me to come over.

So it's not going to be like you're sitting on the Internet getting classified email. And the embassy have to have the time and ability to that also, which they didn't have, so now a political person, I hope, would be disseminating more of that information out to the field.

Q: So you think it's necessary to have the information flowing from outside from Kabul to you as opposed to direct communications as you would have, say, at a consulate. It just wouldn't work. There is too big a flow of information to come directly outside, to you, one person at a PRT.

A: What do you mean from outside?

Q: From a department, from ...

A: You mean like cable express? Theoretically, the military should be able to get cable express. Theoretically they should get it through SIPRNET, but there is a problem of distribution of State Department cables through different military chains. People in Washington got it and people at the joint staff and OSD in Washington got it, but I found that people in the field in Afghanistan didn't get a lot of it. Because of different routing indicators. Trying to get that problem fixed was difficult.

Q: You were talking before about strategic as opposed to tactical. What about stepping back? Is there more that you should have learned about doing before you got to post on the tactical or technical side?

A: Yes. I've recommended to other people that both State and military and probably the other civilians, if they're there, in my case, we didn't have other civilians. They need probably a week's familiarization with one another's institutions. If you don't – A lot of State people that go to the PRTs have prior military experience, I think that's what attracts them. So they're way ahead of the game. I was a little ahead of the game because I went to War College and knew what a J3 did or S5 and I knew what a CMOC was and I knew what an NCO IC was. I mean, every institution has its acronyms and it's grief to you if you don't have any exposure to them.

Q: When I was in PM we had a short course, actually, it was a couple afternoons a week, for basic political officers or other officers who were going to be doing pol-mil work and it was an introduction to military structures. Is that the kind of thing you would think would be useful?

A: Not just that but like, what is ODACA, what is CERP, what are these kinds of funds that they are spending, where are the guidelines on them and then the military needs to hear about it from the other side? The military, the 900 pound gorilla with money is AID and the military commanders before they hit the ground need a thorough briefing on what the sector's AID is trying to focus on, what they are, what we're doing, what their priorities of road construction, all of that basic background in terms of what's our strategy and what's going on out there that is going to affect your area, which is a lot and

they don't know what ESF is and they don't know what a program officer does and they don't understand – For example, there are guys out there doing customs revenue issues with USAID on contract and the contractual requirement is that they report back to Kabul and they don't – even I was the USAID field program person for them. They didn't have any formal requirement to tell me anything they were doing even though I lived down the street from them.

Because the contracting authority rests in Kabul so you either have to have an informal relationship with that person who lives down the street because he's American or you have to have an informal relationship with the contracting office with USAID in Kabul. And get on their distribution list for information. The formal, official relationships don't exist yet. They should be – I mean, you don't want to strangle people with bureaucracy, but right now you end up struggling yourself by trying to create links with people who are constantly moving. If that person leaves, you have to know who the next person is. My view was – I tried to establish – it sounds silly, but it was probably the best tool I ever developed was a contact list so every person who came to the PRT knew how to find every person that I had ever dealt with because teams rotating and over and over and over there is new teams all the time.

Herat got more important to the Afghan government while I was there because they replaced the governor so now they were bringing in military teams and those military teams came in with U.S. military trainers. Special Forces teams came in. All of them became instant players in the political scene and they didn't have any background information, so trying to get everybody who deploys through Fort Bragg and that's where civil affairs is considered part of special operations. They all deploy through there.

Giving them like a one week training course on what the State Department does, what they are, how you can work with them on the ground, same thing with USAID and USDA. What the background of – what does it mean, what's the difference between Pashtun tribal politics and Tajik tribal issues and sort of the whole – the minimum one week area studies and institutional studies that you start before they get to the country because ...

Q: Where would this be? Some of it here in Washington or in North Carolina?

A: I would say Fort Bragg.

Q: And in the theater as well?

A: There's no great place to do it in theater.

Q: So training for State and other officers....

A: Training for the military, like you could send people from PM, there's a guy in PM who knows all the Pashtun tribals. You've got tons of expertise out here and it's not that far you just send them down for a week every time there's a new rotation coming in.

Like, we just missed the last one.

Rotations not just of civil affairs but of the force protection guys. Because the force protection guys are on the ground, they're meeting warlords, they're seeing poppies being smuggled out. They're also colored by news coverage of Iraq, so in my case a lot of them would arrive and just be scared to death. Didn't want to go outside the PRT wire. Because they didn't know the local situation, whether it's permissive or not. The associate everything with the threat that they might expect to face in the worst part of Iraq.

Q: Always worst case scenario. Yes.

A: But they're not getting – And it's partly my job to help them change that scenario but when they get on the ground they are immediately called out to do other missions.

Q: Other things to fix?

A: The personnel issue ...

Q: We were doing communication ...

A: Communication ties into personnel. If you have the communications, if you're able – my experience is when you go out there, the fun part of it is to get – you're it, you're State Department for four provinces, so you are, in the real sense of the word, the diplomat and you're the person you look to. Obviously, not to say they don't have relationships with the embassy because the more senior people certainly do and even NGOs do. They're always tied back to Kabul, but you're the person in first instance, especially because communication is so difficult and because you are remote so you can't just rely on what's coming out of the embassy so that was the fun part, you're kind of the jack of all trades, so you get to be – you're the liaison with the press out there, you're the liaison with the American citizens.

You're not necessarily having to do reports, your Religious Freedom Deadline (PH), which is always – things that are important but they're a burden because you have to do – whatever else is going on in your area, you have to do that report in a certain day.

So this gives you a lot more flexibility, even if you're feeding into that report, it's not your portfolio, it's complete that huge report, so you have a lot more freedom on reporting and that's great.

Q: Is it one State person per PRT?

A: Probably what you should have is a TDYer that can go around and report if there is stuff going on, if there is like a sunspot, every PRT would have its day where there would something in particular that's happening there. Mazar-e Sharif or Jalalabad or Kandoz (PH). They all kind of had their peaks and valleys in terms of activity and that certainly

would have helped when there was a peak.

Q: So a Kabul-based rover or two that would go out and ...

A: That would probably be good. Just because if somebody can pick up and they know exactly what you're doing and they have the State reporting culture, they know how to write a cable, they know how to call the American citizens. They know how to brief other countries, they know how to go to UNAMA and find out the relevant information on elections. So that's like – having that person would be really good. So going back to – the downside of being out there in terms of remoteness and not having somebody giving you day-to-day – spoon feed you, which is good, in many cases.

The bad side is that you are outside of the Internet and as Colin Powell has thankfully brought us into the 21st century on electronic communications, State Department has started to make more and more of its administrative functions accessible only through the Internet. And when you're at a PRT and – I don't know, maybe that will change, but my strongest recommendation is that you have got to get them on the Internet. You have got to find out a way ...

Q: The State intranet or Internet?

A: Intranet. I was not able to access eBid (Ed's note: eBid is the State Department HR intranet site), I did not get information about deadlines for bidding on DCM person jobs so I was cut out of that process. There is a lot of information that in any institution you just get it from walking through the hallway and you know so-and-so got promoted or so-and-so is going – so how do you plan for your next move? The minute you land you're already on the list for next year. The previous – subsequent year.

So my suggestion is that before you go to Afghanistan you should get an advance copy of the bid list. Everyone knows what jobs are going to be on it so you should submit your bids before you go to post and then your CDO needs to be told you are on whatever you are on for your Internet. However that person needs to contact you.

But the personnel system has to force it on the managers because the people don't necessarily know this. This is what's awaiting them. So it was – can't access earning and leave statements. I didn't know if I was getting my hardship and danger pay. I didn't get – I still haven't gotten my hardship and danger pay because I was out TDY.

So I wasn't – I mean there was – that has changed, there's not going to be any more one year TDY, but to some extent you're always fending for yourself as an employee, but to that extent you feel – or I felt the need for more support.

Q: You have to spend a lot more of your time managing yourself.

A: I've studied (PH) months since I got back doing admin work. I almost lost my security clearance because I didn't have access to my Internet account, which was on, it

was at the embassy, it told people I wasn't available, but they'd still send me messages and I was told to update my security clearance information and I didn't get the email, I wasn't able to access, and I almost lost my security clearance.

Q: While you were out at a PRT.

A: And that was the kind of thing. And trying to bid, you don't have anybody's emails. You don't know who to email. You can't call them because the phones echo and you can't ever – So the communications was probably the – and again, I think it's ironic because that's your job, communicating. Be on one end receiving and the other end transmitting.

Those two things kind of go hand in hand. The personnel issue, I suggested not everybody – there is obviously a monetary incentive, you get a hardship and danger pay that's equivalent – you get it other posts, there's an 18 percent differential which I think maybe helps attracts people, but in my view, I think you should abolish that differential, and you should work on the other end which is rather than the monetary, work on the performance. So make sure people going in those jobs get, if possible, their first choice on the next assignment, that you can break the OC lock on senior positions that you're not allowed to do – if you've done hardship tours elsewhere it doesn't allow you to do that.

Sort of looking at them like you would look at any other kind of plum job that people see as rewarding. Like if you go to the Line (Ed's note: Secretariat Staff) or you go to the Ops Center, I think people still see those as career-enhancing, and I think you have to make jobs in these posts seem career-enhancing because they're really fun, they're really exciting, I would recommend them to anybody because they're one-of-a-kind, but they're hard.

Q: But there was a lot of – I mean, having counseled people in jobs and having read the traffic as these positions are being established, there was a lot of back and forth and sort of coy statements that came out of the department and HR (PH) about how people would be rewarded for service.

A: Well, you are being rewarded financially.

Q: Not just on the financial side.

A: I would ...

Q: Things like R&Rs and help with future assignments and then the list of those – The package came out and everybody kind of went, wait a minute, there is some stuff missing there, things that were previewed as possible advantages that didn't pop up. Like first choice assignments, help with other assignments, the equivalent of that ...

A: You can't say first choice assignments because sometimes you have people out there

who are not – they don't do a phenomenal job – so you have to have some way, I don't think you can have a guarantee ...

Q: Or handling it like an MSI (Ed's note: Meritorious Step Increase in Pay) or saying that they can bid on a higher ranking job if they're coming out.

A: Well, you can in any hardship job, except if you're an O1, you can't break – which of course is my own personal situation. Having the bureaus look at these jobs more globally, I mean, the State Department historically you work by bureau. If you want to go to a completely different bureau when you get out of Iraq or Afghanistan, they don't know you, I don't think – The message is not, oh, that person will get that job. The message still is, we have other people who have done hardship tours in our bureau and this job will go to them.

That's what I've experienced from other people. They find it hard to get into other bureaus. Iraq and Afghanistan are not seen as trumping any other posts. I have served in other posts and I would say Afghanistan trumps any other hardship.

And I mean, there is a chance – I certainly – I would even put Iraq – I would put Iraq in yet another category. But Afghanistan compared to Beirut or Karachi or Islamabad, in terms of living is much different and would say is much more difficult. But it's extremely interesting. It's extremely rewarding in a lot of it.

Q: We're about done with our tape on this side. So what I'm going to do is flip over, Okay?

[End Side]

A: ... For forces to fill slots. The NGO community, a lot of the international community was pressing for the coalition to expand throughout Afghanistan. While I was there that was anything from 11 to 15 or 17,000 troops from various countries, predominantly the U.S.

For probably a much more challenging geographic area than Iraq, which has had up to 150,000. So the idea is you have the coalition and you also have ISAF, but you're not going to be able to man it across the country to provide security for one and all until the Afghans have the ability to do so. They are probably light years behind human resource capacity even compared to Iraq, which had a pretty good education system.

So even though our efforts have been focused on getting the police and the army up and running, their training efforts, you are looking at how you are going to provide security so you can do all the other work. So security is predominant. It is the precursor to doing everything else. And the PRTs were seen as a way to do that in the interim until the Afghans take it over.

So both ISAF now – ISAF has taken over what were previously British and German

PRTs up in the north and then the U.S. and New Zealand, which has a PRT in Bamian. All of them have been able in their respective areas of operation to provide some kind of A: hope to the Afghans that there is a future that is going to be secured by their own central government. So it's kind of like offering a buffer or a breathing space or a firewall against these other threats, whether they're from outside or from inside. I think -
- At least my experience was people love to see the American soldiers around the four provinces we covered. It went up and down. When there was fighting, they were very happy to see us on the road.

Our posture varied depending on the threat. Most of the time the threat was very low. We were not traveling in humvees. We were traveling in civilian pickups. When the tension got high people were very glad to see us in the humvees. They saw it as a promise of security, even though you're not on the ground with an enduring presence in every town. They saw Americans deployed with Afghan army. I think they were very, very happy to see that. Both parts of it. I mean, they saw the Afghan army as hope and it was the first national institution that some of them had ever seen in their whole lives and they were obviously very excited about that.

I think deep down Afghans themselves don't want to be divided and they are sick of the war and they are sick of people using political or ethnic or religious or gender-based divisions to wield power. So on a personal level I was always convinced that people were happy to see either the PRT or the Afghan national army or the Afghan national police, which were seen as not exercising arbitrary power over them.

So I think they're a good model for that. Like the firewall concept. So civil society has time to build, the police have time to build, the government has time to work with a million different problems and there are a million different problems in that country. You know, they have to gain experience. Afghans have lost – They have lost, in some cases, what is going to take a hundred years to build back. They've lost most of their agriculture base and it's not going to come back overnight.

But in the meantime and for the couple years it's going to take, maybe four or five, I don't know how many years to build up militarily, I think the PRTs are a good investment.

Q: How long do you think the PRTs should be there?

A: I don't know. I think in some cases you can graduate some and have them become consulates. As the security environment got better there are questions about that as an option. Herat has always been the quietest place in terms of coalition efforts. The Taliban never have any stronghold there. The economy is very good, which in my view – I'm an economics officer – In my view that's the key to all these questions is you take an economic approach and if you have a job you're not out plotting how to kidnap people or smuggle poppies or buy a nine-year-old bride.

So almost all the problems we have are economic-based. There's got to be an economy there. I don't know how long that will take, but areas where the economy is better, the

security situation has traditionally been not too bad. So it may take a while.

Q: We still want to get some of the fixes that you're recommending but I'm just trying to distill what you've said so far, that the PRTs as a concept is a good concept. It works for Afghanistan. What needs fixing is some things you've enumerated on the way. The communications, personnel ...

A: It's like what you read about 9/11 where the fire department and the police department couldn't communicate and trying to do different parts of the same equation. It's the same with PRT. And because, I guess State Department people's experience – you're in an interagency working environment in an embassy and every single one of those agencies has more or less some part of its own support structure so you can continue to be your institution and the PRT, those dividing lines are being forced down and the institutions probably aren't keeping up with that but I think it's probably a good thing, forcing down institutional walls because it makes people more A: aware, B: sympathetic, C: cross-pollination, some civil affairs soldiers have wanted to be come FAOs, which is more like State Department officers.

Some of them have wanted to take the Foreign Service Test, some of them have wanted to join Diplomatic Security, some of them have wanted to go into USAID and be field program officers and come back to Afghanistan and use all that experience, which is a pretty – it's a good thing.

I could see State people, maybe, if there was some flexibility to let State people go back and do USAID contracting jobs. I think it would be neat. It's probably easier to change institutions than to change countries because it's so complicated and if you've got knowledge and expertise on Afghanistan you should do whatever you can to exploit it. So I think PRTs are good for that if the institutions again can keep up on that stuff.

Like security clearances. If the civil affairs person wants to come back as an AID program officer. It shouldn't take – they are already there. They have a physical. They have a security clearance but it has taken four months to get the clearance from another agency because – So I see that as a good model for – If you're ever going to become really interagency a PRT is a good place to look at how to do it. We have to start – I was frustrated – I couldn't recommend anybody for an award.

Some of those guys did amazing stuff, like, heroic stuff. They went in and saved the German diplomatic mission in Herat that was under fire and I wish I could've given them a State Department award because it was something the State Department valued that they did, or weigh in as a civilian with the military chain, give them a military award. No can do.

So there's a lot of – Somebody gave me a mandate and authority to go do that kind of stuff and it would be great, it would be fun. And I know, I know I've talked to people in Iraq that feel the same way. It's the first time you really get to see what they do, not at just a senior level. A lot of people get experience with other agencies once they are at the

senior level but it is very different at the operational level where you're out in the field, so PRTs can maybe be a model for that if anybody is interested.

It's the same thing, the military has what they call stovepipes and you see that at the PRT. There is a different culture between reservists and guards and active duty. There is a different culture between field artillery and infantry and Special Forces and there is a lot of that. Everybody, when there is a crisis, everyone is reporting up their chain, so there would be six different reports about what's going on in Herat and if you work it right, you only really need to have one or two, but how do you get the Special Forces command to read the Foreign Service Officers report. How do you get people to trust the information from another agency?

And consequently, Afghanistan is saturated with information, so how do you sift through and find out who's got the best pulse on what issue? You know, it could be somebody's thesis.

Q: Or yours.

A: So the PRTs teach you that I couldn't survive as the only State Department person out there unless I got along with the military. So how do I – and then, how do I leverage military, since I would argue we need people to go out and be able to do this specific mission in this particular instance and I had to learn what kind of military force could do that and I had to learn how to work the military system to make recommendations. Obviously I had to go through state but there was – What's the best way to make those things happen? It was kind of a challenge.

Q: This is all so reminiscent of the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, which was a huge stopgap to keep a war from happening in the winter of '98—99, and we had State people, USIA people, military people civil affairs, contractors, police, you name it. They were all down in Pristina and then we had these other satellite offices. I mean, call them what you want to call them but it was a lot like a PRT, from an interagency perspective. With exactly the same problems that you are outlining. Personnel,, awards, communications ...

A: Remoteness from flagpole.

Q: Yes, it was – It's striking because we had the same problems that you're outlining now and we did learn from that and are we going to learn from this?

A: Standardization of equipment, if you're in a convoy you are most vulnerable, obviously, when you are traveling, and if you're car breaks down and you're State and you have a Land Cruiser or their car breaks down and they have a CERP and you can't use their parts to fix your car you might get killed.

Another thing that I think before anybody – Unfortunately in the case of Iraq the guns haven't stopped. I mean you have that in Afghanistan. But before anybody starts to do

what they call phase four stability ops or from the get go, whoever is doing the stability post war operations needs to go in with some kind of big business contract mentality, information specifically any development work you're doing and there's a system called GIS, geographic information systems? I'm not sure what it stands for.

It's a database based on plotting out through GPS coordinates that you enter. Any kind of information that you want. What comes to mind is it gets Paul Bremer standing up with a map of how the electric grid had been improved over time. Which is a good graphic. So if you're trying to do a briefing, you're at the deputy secretary level or you're at the PRT commander level or you're at the AID program office level, it helps you get your message out. I think that's a big, big, big, big issue in Afghanistan. Usually you hit the ground running and people are breathing down your neck for results, for obvious reasons, but there is a huge opportunity cost if you don't start out with the non-sexy planning issue of how you account for what you're all doing.

NGOs have their own agendas for possibly not sharing information. The Afghan government doesn't have the institutional capability to track it. So who's going to do it? USAID didn't do it because, again, even within the USAID there was OFDA, there was ESF, there was OTI, Office of Transition Initiative. And there was nobody at whatever level saying we need to start first with mapping what we've done and what we're doing so that you can coordinate it.

There was a UN office called AIMS, Afghan Information Management System that was set up to do this for the UN. Under the initial mandate of the UN assistance mission to Afghanistan, called UNAMA, for whatever reason, institutional lethargy, lack of enforcement mechanisms, people stop doing the reporting on their projects, including the military, including me.

I think if there was a system where it actually was working, though, people would use that because it would pay for itself in terms of time saved by all actors. So what you don't have now becomes apparent when you're at the PRTs and you're working out in the field. The Afghan government is trying to become the federal government and centralize policy-making, which is fine, because there is an overload in Kabul and if you're in Kabul and you're contracting for a road in Farah Province, for example, probably 99 percent of the people, the actors doing development work in Farah don't know that's being done at the Kabul level.

So how do you avoid duplication, how do you build a theater road into the main road, how do you – How does anybody help oversee problems with contracting. I mean, USAID person, I know that there is five schools being built and we've got a trip up to that village. I can go look and see if the school is being done well. When I go see the village elder or whoever is in charge of that province or district, I can counteract his criticism or the criticism of the people that the U.S. government isn't doing anything there when indeed we are.

There's obvious – It doesn't need a whole lot of explanation in terms of what kind of use

you can make of this tool. If you want to say how many water projects have we done, how many projects for women's literacy, how many projects for electrification, how many projects for the Uzbeks if the Uzbeks are saying no one is giving them any money. You can use it to defuse a lot of misperceptions and you can really use it in the PR effort in a big way. And we're not there in Afghanistan.

And I think anybody doing this kind of – Even if you don't have PRTs, I don't care, whatever your model is you need to have that information. If you want to build a dam and there's no road to the dam then you have to start, you have to back up. If you want to build in Ghawr Province and you don't know, as a person looking at a map, because you only work there three months of the year you're going to maybe time it for the wrong time and you're going to waste your money across fiscal years.

I mean, there's a lot, a lot, a lot of – You know, the computer can work for us and I don't know why it hasn't gotten plugged into the development process more because things like, there's a capacity to do it. And then once you get – There was some talk of having the PRTs used as a model because the civil affairs battalions were trained in how to use the GPS equipment and then moving from there to do it countrywide with the UN and then obviously teaching Afghans so that they can take over the process. It helps them plan.

They can say we're not spending too much on one province or we're not – There's a lot of applications for it. And then the institution building, helping the Afghans learn how to do it is also part of our priority effort there and it's going to cost a lot of money and I think it should be a big priority and I don't think – I think that people at the sort of midlevel, they are tasked to do things that are visible, they are tasked to conduct missions, deliver supplies, this is kind of an orphan, I don't know exactly why no one has made this a basic requirement of these kinds of operations.

I think in Iraq they did have some kind of software that was almost too good, someone told me it was almost real-time software in which no one could ever keep up. It was just too good. So you have to find the right system, you have to have the right database, and you have to have everyone agree that database fits their need again. Every institution wants their information.

So you probably have 500 databases in Afghanistan, but if you start – It's going to be a process of getting people onboard with it. But in 20 years, if everybody says GIS and everybody knows what that means, it would be a good thing.

And you could start having, AID doesn't give a contract unless the contractor agrees to use GIS. The big players have to be people like USAID and then the political people who are going to be – Somebody needs to tell it to Kofi Annan or – Seriously, it's a really big gap in Afghanistan.

And I try to do it on my own small level. It's impossible, you can't do it.

Q: When you made recommendations for change, was it – Would you consider them to be an official channel or was it just talking to your colleagues?

A: Any way possible.

Q: And were those heard, you think?

A: Some. Yes. Some.

Q: All the back in Washington?

A: But there's millions of action issues every day. You just figure out – I mean, from the small to the large, from the development to the political, there's just – You'd – everybody has a different way of proceeding bureaucratically. You would take one, obviously, a lot of it is crisis management. Something happened, there was a disaster, and that would always take my – and there was fighting. That would always detract from whatever development stuff I was doing, unfortunately. I mean, people are shooting each other, it kind of focuses your attention.

Q: Yes.

A: But to the extent that wasn't always happening and Herat was pretty good over the course of the year, you could make a lot of inroads on trying to implement development strategies, for example, and there would be other roadblocks in terms of, people couldn't get there because they didn't have the right cars or there were political blocks that people in Herat didn't want to go to Ghowr Province because it was backwards and so nobody wanted to do projects there.

So there are always – You just take an issue for whatever period you can afford to pursue it and try to do what you think is right and probably 70 percent of them you'd leave undone.

Q: A couple – On personnel resources, who covered for you on the times that you were away for those couple weeks? Did you just – did someone come from Kabul or just ...

A: The first time there was a TDYer who – Actually a deputy secretary, to his great credit, and I think that would be another good idea, sent one of his guys out, somebody who worked in D (the Deputy Secretary's Office) so they would get an idea of what was going on. I think every Seventh Floor principal (Ed's note: Assistant Secretary level) should give up a body. I mean it really makes – And he can go back and feed into the system what his experiences were. He saw every PRT. So he covered for me for two weeks.

Q: That's great.

A: Second time I think there was an attempt to get someone from the political section out

but they ended up not managing it. It's too short staffed.

Q: You mentioned the burden of visitors in Kabul. Did you have a lot of visitors in Herat?

A: No. It's pretty tricky to get to Herat.

Q: So the problem of the burden of visitors was that it distracted people in Kabul ...

A: Who were doing PRT support. Yes.

Q: And it wasn't a problem on the ground for you.

A: Not me because we were the furthest one away. U.S. aircraft couldn't make it out there without refueling except very large planes and they didn't come out very often.

Q: Okay. Other improvements? Things that you were – You said ...

A: Well, they've gotten – Now, with the change of priority, sort of political focus in the last – The issue of transportation. We didn't have transportation that was adequate to get us around our provinces. Our cars were constantly breaking down. I didn't get to Ghowr Province for eight months after I got there.

Q: But is that improving now?

A: That's improving because what – I would call it big army versus a small army has now arrived in Herat, so now you can fly anywhere. They have lots more cars, they have lots more people. So there's a price when you're doing many, many small PRCs and that was what General Barno preferred and I think that was probably. That was good because you had eyes and ears on the ground but the eyes and ears had bitten off more than they could chew in a lot of cases we couldn't get out and I think maybe that spurred his thinking that we need more of the PRC. So it's a little bit of a chicken and egg argument.

Can you have the people without the support, yes you can. In Herat it was too much for us to cover – There could have been – I don't know, we never did figure out the problem with why they couldn't contract better cars. Cars were just – they just didn't get us where we needed to go. They'd just break down all the time.

Q: What were you driving?

A: Sort of a motley assortment of pickups, a few Land Cruisers, not very many. Special Forces guys had the best cars, they had Defenders. They were the ones that we used whenever we could poach or have them along that they the far better cars than we had. And they took them with them when they left.

And then we got three Land Cruisers halfway through the year but that wasn't enough.

To go to Ghowr Province you had to have a minimum of eight cars so we never made it. I only went there when the Afghan national army came with their vehicles. That's the only time I got there on an extended mission.

I could fly into the capital with the UN and leave the same day but I could never do an overnight. When the Afghan army got there with their vehicles. Which is really ironic. So that's another issue. Transportation. Same thing. The issue of transportation became a little bit critical a couple of times because we were so far away that planes couldn't get there without refueling so there were a couple of cases of MEDEVAC and close-air support, either lethal or non-lethal. It was more than two hours away. Possibly three in one case. One MEDEVAC took nine hours from the time they engaged to the time they got them out.

Q: Wow.

A: That's changed because now you have a regional command in the west.

Q: Okay. Big army helps.

You talked about training that needs to get done. What about when you come back, debriefing. Has anyone sat you down like his and said, hey, what did you learn?

A: No.

Q: Nothing at all?

A: Only if I've like – I've done it myself. I went and I've talked to DG's (Director General's) office, I've talked to Ambassador Pasqual's office (S/CRS), I've talked to a couple people in the (SA Bureau's) Afghan affairs office.

Q: That was on your own?

A: Yes. Who else have I talked to? I don't know who else there would be who would be interested.

Q: So there's no formal process for debriefing for lessons learned or anything else?

A: No, but I think Ambassador Pasquale's office is doing it but that's good. They don't – I think the people who understand the systems are not the ones doing the debriefings. That office is brand new.

Q: Yes, it is.

A: They didn't know what PRTs were. They started ahead of – I'm not denigrating them at all because I'll probably catch up faster than anyone else learning it. But the people who you want to get the ear of like IRM personnel, I did go see her. When I came back

on my consultations, I spent the whole time working on PRT coordination and did I town hall meeting to advertise PRT jobs in Afghanistan, got the Iraq desk to join in.

I spent three days in IRM trying to explain to them what the specific and weird needs of PRTs were and frankly it's – My conclusion is what State Department IRM officers do is not what PRTs need. IRM guys tell me they support LANs, local area networks. We don't have a PRT and what I needed was somebody who could design and maintain classified and unclassified databases to help us share information. I needed like what I imagine the private sector can do. Doesn't even need to be located at the PRTs. I had constant – I could keep an info/tech person employed, maybe three of them full time, I would think. A lot, a lot.

Like buying Iridiums with secure sleeves so that I could call the only secure Iridium we had, or the only secure phone we had was in the talk and I would have to speak in front of the military so there was no way I could say anything I didn't want the military to hear from the State Department. The PRT did not have a secure satellite phone.

I would have to have them go over to the defense attaches office to talk on a DSN line. Having satellite based radios that all the NGOs have on their vehicles so you always have satellite communications. The military didn't like them because they weren't secure. My view was like, well, they work and if they're on every car, and in one case a car was traveling with a convoy of Americans got blown up by an RPG and they lost their radio. So the only communications they had then was a Thoria radio which was being used by one of the local NGO guys with them. So if you have a Codan radio in every car and you're being shot at, I don't care, you want to use it. You want to have as much communication, you want to have as much backup as you can.

And my understanding is that the Australian government has proprietary secure sleeves for the satellite radios that could be purchased. I could probably spend two weeks with the information guys. If somebody said it was a priority and there was money and you want to standardize it and I think it's probably a good idea to do that.

So briefing, and I did that. I briefed five different people and I briefed a bazillion people in Bagram on communications. I think the decision has to come from the top first, where you say this is a priority and this is how you can make it work and these are the resources and this person has the authority to make those decisions and right now I don't know who that would be.

The SIPRNET and the NIPRNET they got was a huge bonus. They are extremely slow but they at least allow State to get online secure.

Q: But you have to know all the addresses.

A: That's why I did a contact list. That was my best – The best thing I did when I was out there is I did the comprehensive contact list with everyone's satellite, their cell phones, two cell phones, two landlines, sipper, nipper (PH), any kind of contact

possibility because you have to be a genius at knowing how to get somebody.

Q: You spend a lot of time – I used to spend a lot of time when I tried to use sipper (PH) calling people on the phone finding out what their address was.

A: And you can't get through a lot of times on the phone.

Q: And a lot of times I was on the phone I would do the business and I wouldn't need the address anymore.

A: Yes, that helps. That works, too.

Q: Okay. You've talked about training, communications, HR, support ...

A: Transportation.

Q: Transportation. Debriefings when you come back. Other improvements?

A: That was a lot.

Q: Yes, that was a lot.

A: Like I said, having a Website. Some PRTs don't have any civilians and so that commander doesn't have any feed into what State's issues are. What's our counter-narcotics strategy, which you really want to know because you're out there driving through out a poppy field.

So if you can have some kind of Web – and the military probably would prefer it's classified. If somebody wants to bid on PRT and – what civil affairs battalion they are, what's the makeup of this PRT? What agencies are this PRT that I should go get consultations with while I am in Washington? How much USAID money has been spent on what sector so I can go talk to the sector specialists while I'm in Kabul? Any kind of resource that you can keep updating, because the PRTs are all so different.

I couldn't – At one point I was going to be PRT coordinator and I couldn't even name all the PRTs because they're changing every month. ISAF is going to set up a command. What's the – Looking at the MOU that governs the ISAF/U.S. government relationship because there isn't one.

Because there is so much turnover. There is a constant education need ...

Q: And a Website would help with that?

A: Having reference materials. We did a huge briefing book on all my four provinces and it was used within an inch of its life because so many people came through. There was just team after team to set up a regional command. More and more people just kept

cycling through. None of them had any background in the western region which is understandable.

So military assets are being deployed with an enormous frequency. I don't know how they do their deployments in terms of, oh this person went to Herat last time. Let's put them in Herat again. Some people are on their third rotation in Afghanistan. Obviously, keep them in the same country, it helps. Military might not like that because maybe they don't want to keep people – don't want to go to Iraq over and over again. But some knowledge of the country is absolutely essential. You can't buy better training.

If somebody knows all the players in that town, send them back. Let them back. Let them extend and stay in that town. They would extend and put them somewhere else. I don't know if that was to avoid clientitis but I think if the person wants to stay a lot of people would stay. Those kinds of suggestions.

Letting – they would have, some people, like specialists weren't allowed to extend and I don't know why. That's another military issue on personnel and I can't begin to know. There's a lot of pressure on staffing and why not let that specialist extend and all the time redeployment, demobilization and redeployment, which takes up to a month on either end.

So build whatever you can to build expertise because knowing what's going on in your area I think is – and the best training I saw for that was Special Forces, whatever they get in terms because they trained to liaise with local government.

So whatever element they get of that training, try and apply it to all these other people because they're actors in a political minefield as well as a literal minefield. Just being seen in a flak vest in an Afghan village is a political act.

Q: Why?

A: Why? Because you're there as a part of the international coalition and maybe that warlord doesn't like you because you're a neutral and you're not pressuring people to vote and your presence makes people feel reassured that he's not going to pressure them.

Q: Like you said, the difference between driving around in a humvee as opposed to a Land Cruiser. The message you send.

A: Or if you're an infantry guy and you have an interpreter, a local staff member who tells you that guy is a Taliban. And if that guy doesn't know enough to be suspicious of that information then that's a problem because maybe he's going to point his weapon at that guy or act differently just because the guy doesn't look standard to him because he is from a Tajik area and he is not used to being around Pashtuns. And the Tajiks may, a lot of the Tajiks will just tell you all of the Pashtuns are Talibs.

And if you don't know to discount or think twice about that information then you are

possibly going to take – And that's going to be the case in Iraq. If a Kurd tells you that guy is bad because he's a Sunni, you've got to know on your own more than that interpreter. Everyone is trying to influence you in Afghanistan. In any one of these kinds of culture. They're tribal. And everyone ...

Q: ... The interpreter.

A: ... has an interpretation that they want to influence you to take on their agenda which may be our agenda in the country. So you've got to know more than they do before you get there. So ...

Q: Would you want to go back?

A: Yes, I love it.

Q: Do you have a plan to go back at some point?

A: Possibly.

Q: Where would you want to work? In Kabul or out of the PRT again?

A: I like the PRTs.

Q: Yes.

A: I mean, they're really fun. I mean, you get to be – Depending on where you are. Some of them are not very permissive areas. Khalat is not a very permissive area. You cannot get out very well and if you get out – Same thing, if you go out in Kabul with one car, two cars, 10 cars, you have a different political profile. People may feel you're approachable or not. So it very much depends on what your force protection decides is okay for you. And if you're in Kalat you're going out in a convoy of eight to ten cars and people don't feel you're very approachable and you're probably not and it's a different persona.

And it makes operations harder. It makes your operation – It's hard to be a diplomat in a combat zone. And different parts of the combat zone are more permissive. So Kandoz has not been a very difficult area to operate, so you can get out and do a lot more and get out and make changes on the ground. So it's a bigger challenge to be down south where the combat operations are focused, but I haven't really been there so I don't know if I would like that as much, possibly because it's a bigger challenge to get things done so you have to be even more ingenious.

It tests whatever skill you have to sort of – You cannot be the kind of person who – If you have an employee and you ask them to call the governor of Herat province and he comes back and he says, "It didn't work," and he came back in less than an hour and a half, it's not the right kind of employee. Because you have to keep trying. You have to figure out

a way around the roadblocks.

And that part is sometimes frustrating and sometimes it's fun so you also have to get out every once in a while and it taxes.

Q: Well, you didn't get out much ...

A: Yes, and actually it was a mistake. You need to get out every three months I would think. I went seven months for various reasons and it's not a good thing. We need to get out. People in Kabul go to Islamabad on leave and that's probably a good thing.

A lot of people – And when you're in the PRTs, you're getting out constitutes going to Kabul because you can shop – There's stores that have Western goods, there's actually foreign restaurants and bars. In Herat we didn't have any of that so for us getting out was going to Kabul and we did do that because they had conferences, they had commander conferences every six weeks. So that was a good break.

And it was probably a good idea to keep those going just to get people away.

Q: Which of the PRTs do you think would be ready to transition into a consulate this soon?

A: Herat.

Q: A guesstimate as to the time frame?

A: No. Because that would be a political decision. I don't know. It's hard to say. I mean, right now because there is a new governor and that could create security issues so people will have to see how it works. I don't know. But anything in the north and the west is not a traditional extreme stronghold of the Taliban. So those areas probably foremost would be more ripe to moving toward the civilian versus the military command.

Q: Okay. We've been talking for about an hour and a half. Were there other things that you wanted to cover? Any recommendations that you want to make? Personal observations?

A: I don't know. I think we've covered. I'm trying to think if there was anything on the same order of GIS. Another thing that they're using the capture now – Capturing data and capturing experience is really key I think and having the time to make people go and use them as part of the training or reading in or whatever you would do normally for a normal job.

There is a thing called analysts' notebook that the military is now using and I think that getting State Department reporting factored into that effort and I think they are doing that. I'm not sure if it's continuing but in other areas they did the same kind of thing. It's software that has link analysis and if you're doing anything in a culture that is travel, I

think it's really useful.

So if I'm the next political officer and I sit down and it's very hard to sit down and absorb name after name after name after name, person and place you don't know, but if you have this database that you can just constantly refer to, I think it would be helpful, so you can go back into it and you can also get more information feed into it.

And again, having, I guess, standardization of all this stuff and that's going to break rice bowls. They do. And so you end up with way too much information to possibly ever have a clue. You can just – Maybe in some ways not having cable is a blessing because you could just be an information and meeting overload. And that's maybe what it's like in Kabul. But having standard GIS and having standard analysts' notebook inputting gets you off on at least some footing where you're not just off in left field.

I mean, I came in and somebody had done a database of contacts and have written something about one of the provincial ministers. Just written in there that the guy was an Al Qaeda member. Well, wait a minute. If anybody believes this then we're not allowed to even speak to him. But how do you vet information collection? There is a lot of it out there. Very random and it's not getting filtered. And PRPs are not trained to do that. That's not their job. In fact, they are prohibited from doing intelligence collection. Civil affairs are.

But of course they are the main actors out there doing it. You've got a dichotomy out there between what they are allowed to be doing and what they are capable of doing and the State Department person in some ways can do that but you are only one person. Other agencies are trained to do that but they're not necessarily there.

Q: If you're an FAO you'd be trained to do it.

A: Yes. Maybe they need FAOs or something. I don't know. But the – I mean, that is a constant issue. So you try and train the civil affairs people to find out stuff that you want to know and my one thing that I would do constantly, and I think, actually, that's not a bad idea.

Every State person, if I was covering four provinces and there would be any kind of military entity in those provinces, which there was, and as I stayed there longer there were more and more. My PRT split into two, so I had two military units, one in Farah, one in Herat. The Afghan national army was deployed and they came in with American military trainers. So then I had American military officers and enlisted in Badghis Province and Ghowr Province.

So now I have four American entities that I had Special Forces came into Shindand when there was fighting. Now I had five military entities who could tell me what was going on. Someone got killed in Farah or someone was shooting at someone in Badghis or warlords were extorting money in another province. So I have all this network that I have established personal relationships with. None of them are formal, there's no formal

reporting relationship between any of them and that's good and bad again.

If the military said, hey, that you have a State Department person there, if you give them information, maybe they can help you distill it into a bigger picture. Be that as it may, I did have pretty good relationships with all of them except one, where it was just too hard to communicate.

And why not? Why didn't State let me buy each one of those a secure Iridium, or something that they can send me information on. And it might duplicate their stuff, but then I can get their information and then I can do my job maybe ten times better because I have so much more information. I will put it in my reference book for the next person who goes out.

So using their stuff rather than me running around trying to find out where their chain is going in Kabul and trying to get those reports. How expensive is it for me to give them a secure Iridium with a data link. It might be expensive. But it's probably worth it. Because the alternative is you're deploying tens or dozens of troops and political officers.

And so each one of those people that doesn't have to be there with \$250,000 worth of annual support is a bargain. So just give them – But you have to think across agency lines. Why would State give those military guys some way to communicate. And every time State would ask, what just happened in Farah? Well, I can't get through on this phone to the military in Farah because our communications don't – Or the military is on the line with them so I can't get you anything.

So you would also, you would do your best to tap into other resources.

[END INTERVIEW]