

Capacity Building in the Operational Environment: Stories and Lessons Learned



**U.S. Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

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14. ABSTRACT (<i>Maximum 200 words</i>): Building Partner Capacity (BPC) has emerged as a crucial, non-kinetic process for sustaining operational success, particularly in Afghanistan. As of this writing, there was no definition for BPC in U.S. Army documents that offered a clear and accurate representation of capacity building, as we found it during our research. Nor were there published field manuals specific to or systematic analyses of BPC. These knowledge and information gaps provided the impetus for exploring BPC as seen through the eyes of the leaders, Soldiers, and civilians who applied it. We collected capacity building stories and lessons learned that showed the scope of BPC to be extremely broad and its conditions and determinants to be as varied as the myriad cultures and environments in which Soldiers operated. Those who conducted BPC operations experienced success largely as a function of their knowledge and skills acquired from trial and error and shaped by environmental circumstances. In addition, because formalized doctrine relative to BPC was largely absent, Soldiers, U.S. Government personnel, and civilians exchanged BPC experiences and conducted themselves according to what they gleaned from them. Such story telling has imparted knowledge and the wisdom of experience throughout military history. The purposes and methods for collecting and telling capacity building stories and lessons learned contained in this book followed that tradition.					
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GLOSSARY

The participants who were interviewed for this book used a variety of terms and acronyms that may be unfamiliar to readers not directly engaged in capacity building, regardless of their level of experience in the military. Most terms were described or defined in the text. The following terms, however, were used with such frequency and were so central to the work described that we present them to readers in a glossary.

Civil Affairs (CA) and Civil Affairs Team A (CAT-A): CA is an area of U.S. Army Special Operations whose main focus is on the civilian population in a war zone or disaster area. Depending on an assessment of the needs in the area and the objectives of U.S. forces, CA Soldiers seek to interface with host nation military and civilian agencies and to assist local nationals by providing humanitarian assistance and critical infrastructure. A CAT-A is an operational team of CA Soldiers, usually consisting of an officer, a team sergeant, an engineer, and a medic.

Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP): CERP was established to give U.S. military commanders the ability to fund urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction without getting too entangled in bureaucratic procedures. The intent of the program was to help commanders build good will with the Iraqi and Afghan people, with the ultimate goal of furthering security and stability.

Non-governmental Organization (NGO): NGOs are private and often non-profit organizations that work to provide service and humanitarian aid.

Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT): A PRT is a unit built and operated by the U.S. with the goals of improving security, extending the authority of the Afghanistan and Iraq governments, and facilitating reconstruction efforts in a specific local area. PRTs consist of a military component as well as civilian representatives from U.S. government foreign affairs agencies. The PRT training for deployments to Afghanistan is overseen by the 189th Infantry Brigade and takes place at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), and Tactical PSYOP Team (TPT): PSYOP is an area of Special Operations whose mission is to convince the local population to support U.S. strategic objectives. In order to do so, they continuously analyze the attitudes and behavior of enemy forces in order to produce effective and persuasive information to gain and maintain U.S. support. In 2010, PSYOP was re-designated as MISO. Because all of the interviews in this book took place prior to the re-designation, we used the term "PSYOP" throughout this book to be consistent with the terminology used by the participants. The smallest organizational PSYOP element is the TPT. A TPT usually consists of three Soldiers: a team chief, an assistant team chief, and a third Soldier who serves as a gunner and operates a loudspeaker system.

Special Forces (SF) and Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA): SF is a component of Special Operations tasked with unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, direct action, hostage rescue, and counter-terrorism. The basic operational element of SF is the ODA.

An ODA consists typically of 12 men: a detachment commander (officer), a detachment technician (warrant officer), a team sergeant, an operations and intelligence sergeant, two weapons sergeants, two engineer sergeants, two medical sergeants, and two communications sergeants.

Shura: Shura is an Arabic word for consultation. It refers to the Islamic law that requires a leader or elder to consult with his followers before making decisions.

In the interviews, participants use the term to refer to a gathering of U.S. Soldiers and local leaders or elders held for the purpose of making decisions.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID): USAID is a federal government agency that seeks to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives by providing economic development and humanitarian assistance around the world.

INTRODUCTION

Building Partner Capacity (BPC) has emerged as an operational imperative and remains among the most compelling and complex military research topics and practices. As of this writing, there were relatively few definitions for BPC that existed in official U.S. Army documents, and none of them offered a clear and accurate representation of BPC, as we found it. Nor were there any published doctrinal field manuals or systematic empirical analyses of BPC¹. As such, the existing knowledge and information gaps steered us towards exploring BPC as seen through the eyes of the leaders, Soldiers, and civilians who applied it. The evidence we gleaned showed clearly that the scope of BPC was extremely broad, and that its determinants were as varied as the myriad cultures and environments in which Soldiers operated.

The leaders, Soldiers, and other personnel responsible for executing BPC experienced positive outcomes largely as a function of their knowledge and skills acquired from trial and error and shaped by environmental conditions. Although they had general ideas about what they wanted to accomplish, the participants had no BPC handbook or field manual to follow. And few, excepting Provincial Reconstruction Teams, received any formal BPC-specific training prior to deployment. Because formalized information and training doctrine relative to BPC were largely absent, Soldiers, U.S. Government personnel, and civilians exchanged experiences and conducted themselves according to what they gleaned from stories. Such story telling has imparted knowledge and the wisdom of experience throughout military history. The purposes and methods for collecting and telling stories about BPC contained in this book followed that tradition².

Prior to their interviews, we asked the participants to think carefully about their BPC experiences. During the interviews, they were asked to follow a relatively informal protocol to express their BPC experiences as stories that had a coherent and chronological beginning, middle, and conclusion. In addition, we asked for specific information about lessons learned and any second- and third-order effects of their decisions relevant to BPC. We allowed the participants to share their BPC stories with very few constraints in an effort to capture an unhindered content flow of details and perceptions as the stories unfolded. Many of the participants were interviewed individually, while others were interviewed in pairs or in small groups. Clearly, the number of participants that were present during the interviews impacted the stories, although we had no way of knowing how or to what extent. Regardless, we forged ahead and recognized the content's value in spite of uncontrolled research settings.

Our initial intent was to produce a research product that represented very thorough analyses, included a concise operational definition for BPC, and offered empirically-based recommendations for pre-deployment BPC training and follow-on data collection. However,

¹ During the course of this research, Soldiers and civilians published reports about BPC and their experiences with it. A reference section citing selected reports is included in this document. As of this writing, the U.S. Army has yet to publish official doctrine or a field manual dedicated solely to BPC. However, discussions about and instructions for planning and executing operations related to BPC can be found in the reports listed in the reference section.

² The names of the participants, their locations at which their BPC work was performed, and the dates during which it was completed were removed from the book to protect those participants and foreign nationals from any potential backlash as a function of the information that was omitted.

after reviewing the completed manuscript, it became clear that its highest potential emerged from its raw, conversational tone and form, and from the unexpected diversity of individual perceptions, conclusions, and experiences. It stands now as a broader contribution that should not be compartmentalized according to its individual components, but is best understood and appreciated according to the sum of all its parts. As such, readers will benefit most from a thoughtful review, from start to finish.

The stories presented in this book contain many common Soldier proficiencies and lessons learned from which leaders, Soldiers, and civilians may profit. However, the scope of BPC is so broad and its proponents' experiences so varied that readers will not always find consistency of information. The strength of this book is based on these facts: Capacity builders expressed and experienced contradictory opinions, varied perceptions, differing expectations, and a multitude of methods for accomplishing their missions. In addition, the BPC efforts were subject to varied cultures and languages, a wide array of security determinants, and were rarely performed under a general order or according to a common structure. Given these complexities, we made no attempts to impose value judgments on the information presented. We made no attempts to objectively verify the accuracy of the events described beyond the story tellers themselves. Except for the information contained in the Conclusions and Lessons Learned section of this book, we did not go to any great lengths to synthesize or condense the content in order to provide readers with a restricted or narrow definition of BPC. We present these BPC stories as they were dictated to us, with a minimal amount of editing. By our standard, the complexity and the varied, sometimes contradictory nature of these stories only increase their compelling character and instructive value. However, the information in these stories does not represent official U.S. Army doctrine, nor does it represent the official opinion of the U.S. Army Research Institute or the opinions of the editors.

Most importantly, at a time when the U.S. military is scrutinized so closely from within and without, these stories represent some of the very positive, selfless efforts in which individuals are engaged. This book can be viewed as a collection of good news stories, as dictated by the leaders, Soldiers, and personnel who are committed to the difficult, but essential process of building capacity in unstable, uncertain, and often dangerous operational environments.

LESSONS LEARNED

Stories are among the most established ways to transmit military knowledge and experience. The tradition of transmitting knowledge through the recounting of personal experiences allows seasoned veterans to share lessons learned with less experienced Soldiers. The primary purpose for conducting interviews and publishing them in this book was to gain and then to share Building Partner Capacity (BPC) perspectives from the Soldiers and civilians who were and are still engaged in this work.

In the case of BPC, the development of doctrine lags behind operational requirements and practices. As such, the men and women who participated in this research worked to build sustainable infrastructure and to provide valuable services to people around the world with little formal training on how to do so. They provided honest and open accounts of their experiences with BPC, reflected on areas in which they were successful, and expressed what they wished they could have done differently.

The experiences recounted by the participants are diverse. There were a variety of factors that impacted each participant and his or her subsequent evaluation of their experience, such as the security and stability of the area of operations and the needs of the people in differing regions. In addition to regional conditions, the participants' environments were constrained by others with whom they shared their battle space, by personality issues within their own teams, and by the resources available to them at any given time. Even individuals within a team had very different experiences due to their unique positions. For example, a Colonel and a Sergeant First Class each saw different elements while viewing the same situation, as did an Infantry Company Commander compared to a PRT Commander. Although the diversity of opinions and perspectives made it difficult to determine a single best definition of BPC, that diversity made the information in this book richer and provided a more genuine view of what was being done, how it was being done, and the consequences associated with both.

Because of the variety of opinions and experiences, we were able to distill from the manuscript a valuable list of lessons learned about BPC in the operational environment. For most of the issues or problems described by one participant, there was another participant who recounted a strategy for dealing with that same constraint in their area of operations. Our hope is that the experiences and reflections of the participating Soldiers and civilians contained in this book can help serve as a reference guide for others who are facing similar challenges. In addition, the information in this book will help provide a foundation of previous and current experiences of individuals who have engaged in BPC, support the development of BPC doctrine, and will continue to inform those who are being prepared to build capacity in the near future.

Lessons Learned

There were four broad themes that captured the majority of challenges discussed by the participants: (a) issues of sustainment, (b) continuity of effort, (c) unity of effort, and (d) building and maintaining relationships. For each of these challenges, there was at least one participant who either described a situation in which their team dealt successfully with the challenge or proposed a solution based on their experiences. We described those challenges and the proposed solutions as lessons learned in detail below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Lessons Learned

Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Sustainment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thorough Needs Analysis 2. Quality Control 3. Long-term Planning 4. Development of Local People
Continuity of Effort	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication Between Successive Units 2. Continuation of Work from Predecessor 3. Plan for Successor 4. Local People as Key Agents of Continuity
Unity of Effort	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trust Between U.S. Entities 2. Communication with Other Entities in the Area of Operations 3. Sharing of Resources
Building and Maintaining Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perceiving and Treating Local People as Peers 2. Earning Trust and Credibility

Challenge 1: Sustainment

The ultimate goal of BPC is to help countries become self-sufficient at governance. Therefore, sustainability of the projects and efforts implemented is an absolute requirement for successful BPC. However, participants repeatedly told stories about failures of sustainability. They also provided valuable lessons for how to make efforts sustainable by implementing thorough analyses, planning, and the development of human capital.

The most common failure in sustainability was the building of what was termed “monuments” to U.S. government BPC efforts. These monuments were projects (e.g., buildings and structures) that were funded and erected by U.S. government agencies to provide needed services, but that failed to be useful to the local people. Therefore, these monuments represented a reminder of the failure and waste. One example of a monument was recounted by a participant who described a visit to a village in southern Mauritania to check on a fire station that was built previously by a Civil Affairs (CA) team. When his team arrived in the village, they found that the fire station was not functional because the village did not have any equipment for putting out fires. They lacked fire trucks as well as basic office supplies, like desks.

In addition, they did not have access to a well to fill reserve tanks with water for use in putting out fires. The previous team built the fire station without considering any additional needs of the locals beyond the structure itself.

Other Soldiers told another story about a monument built by a donor from Japan. The donor contributed a state-of-the-art incinerator to a South American hospital to allow for the disposal of hazardous medical waste. Unfortunately, when the incinerator broke, the replacement parts were too expensive for the host country to afford, which rendered the machine useless. The donor had failed to consider the long-term requirements for sustaining the operational condition of the incinerator.

Although many of the participants recounted stories related to relative failures of sustainment, a number told stories about how their unit or team made an effort to prevent the building of monuments. From those stories of success, we derived four solutions to the problem of failures in sustainment: (a) conduct thorough needs analyses, (b) implement quality control, (c) provide long-term planning, and (d) develop local people who can provide sustainment.

Sustainment Solution 1: Thorough Needs Analysis

Prior to building any project, it is important to conduct a thorough analysis of the needs in the area. Two participants told a story about how their team collected data about the needs in their area of operations. They were interested in improving health services in Afghanistan. They set up a clinic on their firebase and kept track of where patients came from and what their medical needs were. They then used that information to put together a plan for an Afghan-run facility that could provide all of the services needed for the community. Although taking the time to conduct an analysis and collect thorough data about existing medical issues delayed their initial project proposal, the facility they planned met the immediate and longer-term needs in the community and increased the probability of sustainment by the local people.

Sustainment Solution 2: Quality Control

It is important to monitor the quality of construction while a project is in process. One Army leader recounted an example of a latrine at a girls' school that was built so poorly that it was condemned a few months after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. He talked about how his PRT responded to poor quality construction. One of the ways that his PRT worked to improve quality control was to provide security and transportation to the Afghan evaluation team that was previously unable to access and monitor the work sites without such support. In the end, the Afghans improved oversight and quality control of construction because of the heightened security and reliable transportation provided by the PRT.

Sustainment Solution 3: Long-Term Planning

As the descriptions of monuments demonstrate, building a structure in and of itself is not sufficient. An effective project proposal must include a detailed plan for how to sustain it long-term. For example, a newly built clinic must have a means for getting new medical supplies on a regular basis. One participant described working with an NGO, USAID, and the Ministry of Health in Paraguay to develop a sustainable system for distributing drugs donated by the NGO to clinics in Paraguay that needed them. In the past, Americans had taken responsibility for

distributing the drugs. The new system handed duties over to the Paraguayans so that distribution could continue long-term, even if the Americans were to leave.

Sustainment Solution 4: Development of Local People

Although most participants described efforts to provide material aid such as the construction of new buildings and the provision of supplies, several individuals argued that the main focus should be on developing human capital. Human capital refers to the value gained by individuals through education and experience. Three methods for developing human capital include training local people in BPC skills, building a network of local leaders, and planning ahead to develop the future generation of leaders in the region.

It may be beneficial to train local people in the skills and procedures involved in the planning and implementation of sustainable infrastructure. For example, one leader talked about how they dealt with the lack of quality construction by training Afghans in engineering and construction best practices. They set up monthly instructional sessions with local contractors and engineering students at a nearby university.

Several other participants described the formation of a stabilization team of Afghan engineers, surveyors, and community mobilizers in their area. At first, the Afghan Stabilization Team worked with the Americans to assess the needs of the village and prioritize projects to address those needs. Then, the Afghans took over and wrote the proposals and were able to get them approved at the national level. Although the projects could have been completed faster if U.S. Soldiers had taken over, the locals took ownership of the projects because they saw their own countrymen plan and build them. One positive outcome was a decline in the influence of the Taliban in their area.

Another method of developing the capacity of local leaders is to build a network among them. A leader talked about setting up meetings in small villages in Paraguay where his team was traveling to conduct donation events. They made sure to set up planning meetings with the local military commander, the local mayor, and the school director. They often found that the local leaders had never met before, even when they were in very small towns. The point was to establish a network of local leaders who knew each other and who knew what resources they could provide.

Part of the issue was helping the local populace re-gain trust in the military. The CAT 842 talked about a similar technique in which they tried to link up pro-GIRoA elders in small villages with other elders in the main village in a district. Sometimes, they just needed each others' cell phone numbers so they could converse about their problems. Rather than serving as a go-between with local leaders during their deployments, the participants found that it was effective to encourage the local leaders to communicate directly so that their relationships could be maintained after U.S. Soldier deployments ended.

A leader emphasized the importance of planning ahead for the next generation of leadership in the area. He envisioned developing future Afghan leadership now so that when the current leaders (who were often illiterate warlords) cycled out, a new generation of educated leaders replaced them. One of the most challenging aspects of this solution was that it required a long-term focus. The leader pointed out that this was not something tangible because it did not allow

for ribbon-cutting ceremonies or other public rituals that played out well in the media or with the public. This aspect of sustainment involves a long-term, quiet commitment without self-promotion or fanfare.

Challenge 2: Continuity of Effort

A second major theme was issues with continuity. Many participants described problems related to the changeover and inevitable turbulence between units or teams. Because each unit or team is in a single area for a finite amount of time, one region may be influenced by a number of different units over several years. If each unit brings a different set of goals or methods to their work in the region, it could be problematic for the local people who sometimes lost trust in the U.S. government. One leader told us, "You have to understand that you're going to execute your predecessor's plan and you're going to plan for your successor." To maintain such continuity, there has to be a high degree of trust and communication between successive units.

An area which Soldiers and PRT members could not control that had a strong effect on continuity was the operational tempo. Several participants said that their deployments were too short to achieve BPC of lasting value. One leader talked about how he was the first PRT Commander who planned to return to lead the PRT again. He chose to do so because he felt like his first nine-month PRT tour was just enough time to start developing real relationships with the local leaders. He wanted to go back to build on those relationships and hopefully be more effective because the relationships had some foundation already.

A second problem is that many teams did not return to an area after they conducted efforts there initially. A participant described how his team was able to make huge strides in a small village in 30 days. But that after they left, no follow-on effort was expected to maintain what they had done.

A third problem is the incongruity of the deployment cycles of supporting units. A leader described how the SECFOR and the Foreign Service Officer changed out during the PRT cycle, both of which caused major disruption because it took several months (in the middle of the PRT cycle) for personnel rotating in to get acclimated and trained, and the team had to be rebuilt multiple times. Those disruptions limited the effectiveness of the PRT.

With respect to what they could control, participants told a number of stories about how they continued the work of their predecessor successfully or provided plans for their successor. Four solutions they described were: (a) communication between consecutive units, (b) seeking to provide continuity from the previous unit, (c) considering the future when implementing operations or projects, and (d) viewing the locals as valuable agents of continuity.

Continuity Solution 1: Communication between Consecutive Units

One method of improving continuity was to improve the communication between consecutive units. A leader described his frustration over not being able to respond with data when locals asked him what the U.S. government provided to them. He was frustrated because use of the designated reporting tools were inconsistent, which limited his ability to look up what had been done in his area by previous units. In contrast, others were able to rely on data collected by a previous unit. They described how the thorough AAR conducted by a previous team in a nearby

area was invaluable in planning a VMOP in their area. In addition, the leader talked about how the trainers for PRTs responded to failures in communication by ensuring that incoming PRT Commanders spent time with the outgoing Commander in theater as they transitioned.

Continuity Solution 2: Continuation of Work from Predecessor

One major challenge to providing continuity was that incoming leaders and units were more likely to see the failures of the previous unit rather than the successes. Given that hindsight is 20/20, incoming leaders arrived with the attitude that they could do a much better job and discarded the advice of the previous unit. There are several problems with this attitude. First, there may have been reasons that the previous unit operated the way it did that are not yet apparent to the incoming unit. Second, by changing everything rapidly and discarding others' work, U.S. forces lose credibility with locals. Two participants described how they spent six months planning a teachers' college that was desperately needed in the area, only to have a follow-on unit come in and announce that no more projects will be funded over \$5000. Not only was this upsetting because they felt that the college would remedy the problematic shortage of teachers in the area, but it was embarrassing because they had so many Afghan officials intimately involved in the planning. The participants referred to the incident as a "loss of face for CA." In contrast, other CA Soldiers described a number of ways they were able to build on previous or ongoing efforts in their areas of operation, largely by working with USAID and NGOs to expand projects they had already started.

Continuity Solution 3: Plan for Successor

Several participants described instances in which the failure by a previous team to consider how their actions would affect future teams made the local people skeptical about whether the U.S. had their best interests in mind. One participant described a situation in which a previous CA Team failed to provide quality control and oversight of the building of a fire station in a small village in Mauritania. The building ended up being useless, which cost both the next team and a number of well-meaning NGOs the possibility of good and lasting relationships with the people of that village. Two leaders recounted how ISAF and SOF bombed and destroyed a number of buildings they had created in a province after Taliban forces used them for hiding places. After they destroyed the very buildings they had built to help the locals, the locals didn't trust that the British or the Americans were serious about rebuilding.

One proposed solution to the failures in continuity between consecutive units was for units to take responsibility for planning to sustain their projects. For example, participants talked about the need for developing a resupply chain to ensure that projects such as medical clinics maintained the supplies they needed to be effective in the long-term.

Continuity Solution 4: Local People as Key Agents of Continuity

A Field Program Officer from USAID described several examples of how locals served as key agents of continuity. First, there was an Afghan co-worker with USAID. He was invaluable because he knew everyone in the area, knew their backgrounds and history, and also had a thorough knowledge of USAID and its programs. Any FPO could rely on his knowledge and the relationships he had built. Second, the PRT Commander had a dedicated interpreter who had served multiple, consecutive commanders. There also were dedicated interpreters assigned to

CA, medical, and USDA. Because the interpreters were assigned to one specialized area, they had gained expertise in the issues relevant to their assigned positions. Because they remained in the same positions while the Americans transitioned in and out, they could pass knowledge on to the next American in the rotation, which helped transitions go more smoothly. Having local workers in specialized positions within the PRT helped maintain continuity when the American members of the PRT came and went between deployments.

Challenge 3: Unity of Effort

Many of the participants discussed problems with unity of effort, whether between PSYOP and an ODA, Special Operations Forces working with Conventional Forces, within the PRT, or between military personnel and NGOs. Although most stories were about failures, several participants recounted stories about how they were able to successfully bridge cultural or personality differences across groups. Participants had three main suggestions for dealing with challenges to unity of effort: (a) gain the other entity's trust, (b) communicate with the other entities, and (c) share resources.

Unity Solution 1: Trust between U.S. Entities

One theme that emerged repeatedly throughout the manuscript was mistrust between different entities of the U.S. government and how that mistrust limited the capacity of U.S. forces to provide valuable services. Several participants from a CA Battalion spoke for many of the other participants when they told us they felt like they wasted two months of every deployment trying to gain the trust of other government agencies before they could even begin working with the local people. Two PSYOP leaders told us about how they were successfully able to build trust with other units from Special Operations so that they could pursue their mission.

One leader gave two examples of how his team was able to gain the trust of the ODA to which they were attached. First, his Team Sergeant stepped up and served as a mortar man for the ODA when they needed assistance. Second, when they encountered an IED, his team acted according to protocol, which impressed the ODA.

Another leader recounted how his team successfully supported a MARSOC mission, which resulted in the Marines accepting them. The reputation they built with the Marines preceded them when a Special Forces group followed on after the Marines. Unfortunately, in both stories, it took a crisis or an emergency in which the PSYOP teams could prove themselves and convince the other units to trust them.

A participant described how an Infantry Brigade tried to build trust between the military and civilian members of an incoming PRT before deployment by having them work together in the training environment to solve problems together during field training exercises. These exercises are not only designed to train the members in how to solve problems they may face in Afghanistan, but also to develop trust and rapport among the members of the team. The 189th Infantry manages to build most of their PRT team before deployments, which gives them an advantage in building rapport prior to deployment.

Unity Solution 2: Communication with Other Entities in the Area of Operations

Multiple participants told stories about miscommunication between units. For example, one leader described a situation in which one unit built a school for a local village where another unit had refused to build the school for good reasons. Once it was built, the villagers had no reason to agree to work with the unit that had refused the school. In contrast, another leader told a successful story about improving communication between his PSYOP unit and the other forces in the area. Although he and his team had not been invited to senior leaders' meetings initially, they took initiative and started attending regularly, which helped remind the other leaders of their existence and their capabilities.

Unity Solution 3: Sharing of Resources

Although there were multiple stories about failures to share resources, a number of contributors recounted stories of success in sharing resources. Multiple participants described how it was especially difficult to convince military leaders to share resources with or to take advantage of the resources offered by civilian agencies. For example, the Field Program Officer from USAID was grouped with other civilians at the PRT and was told that any resources requested were a diversion from the mission.

A story about the civilian who used a spaceship metaphor during a briefing illustrated the difficulty of bridging the cultural differences between the military and civilian organizations. But, as he pointed out, those very cultural and perception differences represented the value of having non-military representatives available at the PRT.

Several participants talked about how they were able to share resources with civilian agencies successfully. The contributors from a Civil Affairs Battalion gave several examples of how they worked with NGOs. When they built a tilapia fish farm to teach the locals, they were able to staff it with volunteers from VSO. In another example, they provided transportation to a British optometrist who wanted to get to remote villages to provide direct medical care. One leader talked about setting up networks of agencies that complemented each other's work. For example, his team built a system to distribute donated medication to clinics that needed it by partnering with the U.S. embassy, an NGO, and the host nation Ministry of Health.

A leader described the success of his team. Once per week, the leaders from a variety of agencies in their area (PRT, Task Force, ODA, ODB, OGA, ADT) got together to discuss their work and coordinate resources to accomplish their missions. Perhaps his team is a model of how to manage the complementary missions and diverse sets of resources that different agencies bring to the table in a single area.

Challenge 4: Building and Maintaining Relationships

The participants articulated two main ways in which they were able to cultivate meaningful relationships with host nationals. First, it was important to remember the humanity of the local people and to see them as valuable peers. Second, it was important to take the time to build credibility and gain the trust of the locals.

Relationships Solution 1: View of Local People as Peers

Three members of PRTs recounted different experiences in which they viewed and treated Afghan people as peers rather than as victims in need of assistance or as militants in need of intimidation. As discussed above, one leader emphasized that the most important lesson he learned as commander of a PRT was that investing in human capital was more important than material development. And, in order to develop local leaders, he had to build good relationships with them.

He recounted a poignant story in which he asked a Governor and senior leaders for their input about how to better train the incoming PRT. They were astonished because it was the first time they had been asked for their input into how Americans operated. Unfortunately, Americans had a pattern of coming into an area, assessing the situation, and implementing actions without asking the local people for their input. As the Field Program Officer (FPO) with experience in several PRTs pointed out, the local people remained in the same place while Americans came and went. Therefore, the locals had a much different and richer perspective about the history of efforts in their area. The FPO described how having specific interpreters assigned to every FPO, commander, CA, medical, and USDA representatives enhanced the mission of the PRT. As the interpreters worked on a single dedicated area, over time they gained expertise in the area and developed important contacts that they shared with the Americans who rotated in and out of their positions.

Another aspect to considering the humanity and value of the local people was to consider their needs. The CAT 842 discussed a program implemented in response to the need to eradicate poppy crops in Afghanistan. Instead of simply destroying the existing plants, the program took into account the fact that families relied on the sale of the crop to survive. Therefore, they introduced saffron as an alternative to poppy. They provided the saffron seed, trained farmers in cultivation, and set up a system to sell the crop. As they transitioned their fields, farmers were given food to feed their families until the new saffron crops were ready. Instead of punishing poppy growers by destroying their crops, which might push them towards supporting the Taliban, the program nurtured them through the process of transitioning to the saffron market, provided for their needs during the transition, and increased their revenue.

Relationships Solution 2: Earning Trust and Credibility

Throughout the manuscript, participants described four main ways to build credibility and earn the trust of local people. Many participants told stories about giving humanitarian assistance through the provision of food supplies, school supplies, or medical care. Providing aid demonstrated the commitment of U.S. forces to providing effective help. However, several contributors pointed out that some regions had been inundated with aid, but had seen few real efforts to improve infrastructure, which made some locals skeptical of U.S. intentions.

A second, more effective, method for building trust was to spend time getting to know the local people. One leader described how easy it was for Americans to discount powerful elders in some Afghan regions based on appearance alone. He gave the example that a key elder may have been an old, frail-looking man in a pair of worn out shoes, but that it was impossible to know how revered he was by the local people unless you took the time to get to know him.

A third method for building trust was to learn the local culture, customs, and language. The leader described the importance of following the customs of Afghan social traditions in order to get to know the local people. He described how in Afghanistan, business was transacted only with long-time friends, not with casual acquaintances. He also emphasized that understanding was lost in translation often when an interpreter was used during a personal conversation. He suggested that it was very difficult to have a truly intimate relationship with another person if an interpreter was part of the conversation.

Finally, the saying, “Actions speak louder than words” is applicable to building and sustaining trust. Several participants recounted stories about how they earned credibility in a village by providing a needed service. Two participants described how their team was able to gain local support by refurbishing a mosque. By renovating the mosque, they gained the support of the local mullah, demonstrated their respect for Islam, and showed their competence at getting things done. Others earned credibility by working with the contractors to lower their overhead costs. The contractors were very concerned about security issues and were paying money in bribes to pass through checkpoints as they transported supplies. By working with the contractors directly, leaders and their team were able to find out their needs and arrange to provide them with security.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This book represents an exploration of BPC and an attempt to provide military and civilian readers with emerging guidelines for success. We suspect that, as with other relatively new areas of military interest and practice, more concrete operational definitions and methods will emerge as a function of increases in knowledge and experience over time. As researchers, we do not promote nor adhere to any one point of view presented in this book. We understand that this book does not include all the perspectives on BPC that exist among military and civilian personnel. Our hope is that the information presented by the individuals interviewed for this book and their stories will be useful to those who prepare for or continue the work of BPC in the difficult circumstances ahead.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are a relatively new concept. They were designed to consolidate Capacity Building efforts under one commander and to maintain focus on specific provinces in Afghanistan and Iraq. The PRTs emerged from the recognition that effective Capacity Building needed unity of command as well as unity of effort among the various departments of government (e.g., Defense, State, and Agriculture) involved in the enterprise. The first PRTs that began in Afghanistan, and then later in Iraq, were responsible for coordinating and synchronizing reconstruction and development projects in the districts of their assigned provinces. They were staffed with Army, Navy and Air Force specialists and Civil Affairs experts, as well as inter-agency personnel from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Department of Agriculture. The primary efforts of PRTs are synonymous with the “Build” phase of the “Clear-Hold-Build” methodology in U.S. Army Counter-Insurgency (COIN) doctrine.

PRT Story 1

Training PRTs was a Learn-As-You-Go Experience

Let me take you back to my understanding of the history of PRTs. It must have been 2005. Someone of authority in the Afghan theater decided, at some point, that we needed to put some folks on building capacity for the Afghan people and working with the government other than at the national level. Therefore, they put together some enablers, Civil Affairs (CA) elements in particular, with a little bit of SECFOR (Security Force) thrown in there to try to get after capacity building at the local level, and they called it a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

At some point, there was a decision to take the first step at formalizing the requirements for a PRT. And so the command in theater, through CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command) and JFCOM (U.S. Joint Forces Command) published a request for forces for PRTs. At that time, I think there was real concern about how to do that because the Army was stretched pretty thin with requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. At some level way above me, folks figured out that maybe this was one of those missions that the sister services—Air Force and Navy—could participate in, where they could relieve a little bit of the personnel pressure but still get after the mission.

The request for forces was originally for 12 PRTs, six each from the Navy and the Air Force. Each PRT had a CA team from the Army Reserve and a SECFOR from the Army National Guard. The active Army was also tasked with providing a few staff. The bottom line is that your operator, your logistician, and your senior enlisted guy are out of the Army active component. I think part of the thinking on that was to get some familiarity and ability to connect into the Army architecture in theater because it is mostly an Army structure over there.

Team location also affected composition, so if you were in a location with more military support, you had a very small footprint. If you were out in an isolated area, with minimal support available, you had a much bigger team because you had to have fuel handlers, extra medics, a doc, and extra food service guys.

The overall architecture is essentially a commander, a coordinating staff, with an S1 (Adjutant), S2 (Intelligence Officer), S3, S4 (Supply Officer), S6 (Communications Officer), a CA team, a SECFOR team and then some enablers like an engineer and an MP (Military Police) team.

Forming and training PRTs was very much a learning experience when we were tasked to stand them up. We were literally researching what a PRT was as we were building the training plan. We knew we had to get them through the southwest Asia training guidance at the time and do all those things. But we were trying to figure out, in regards to capacity building, what they needed to know so that they could be successful in theater.

We did some creative things. I think it was in that first iteration that we pulled in the Fayetteville, North Carolina Power and Water Commission to try to get after infrastructure issues. We had a lot of folks come out of Washington to talk about State Department, Counternarcotics, etc.; all the different agencies. We were not sure what all we were getting after, but we knew those were things that PRTs needed to know.

In the first rotation, the focus was on combat skills because we were very familiar with those and so we could get after that pretty well. We then tinkered with how to get after the other side, their ability to do reconstruction efforts, their ability to work with governance, and there really wasn't any interagency coordination at that time. We had a (now retired) Special Forces Sergeant Major on our team and that was fortunate because he had been in Afghanistan. He was able to help do some of the training scenarios for meeting engagements; what rank looks like in terms of actual meetings, a lot of the culture stuff, and things like that. That was the first iteration: an upfront focus on combat skills and just the beginnings of the capacity building stuff. A lot of feedback from the PRTs out of that first joint training was that they needed additional training, which was not terribly surprising.

With our second rotation, we started a lash-up with the interagency to be a part of the training. We did an interagency training class trying to link in all the capacity from USAID, State Department and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It was essentially an academic exercise with a couple of days talking about capacity. We were able to get a couple of sharp State and USAID folks that helped us during the Field Training Exercise (FTX), but it was still pretty much in its infancy. We knew a little bit better about some of the classes and focused more on the culture and the organizations in theater that could help the PRTs.

There were a lot of issues on that rotation with life support. We had moved them out to a training area on Fort Bragg we called Forward Operating Base (FOB) Patriot. It was, "We want to do it in three weeks. Let's build this FOB for 2,500 folks starting now." We were still building that FOB when the PRTs arrived and some tent heaters didn't work in the cold weather as well as they should have. Even with those kinds of issues, the training was a little bit better during that second rotation. We still got the feedback from the sister services at the completion of training that they didn't think they needed all the military training provided. But we also make them do a 60-day assessment once they get into Afghanistan and generally the feedback was "Boy, we're glad you pounded that into us because we didn't know what we didn't know." Generally, after they have been in theater a few weeks, they have a better appreciation for what we've trained them on.

For our third joint rotation, we started ramping up our interaction with the interagency and, in my mind, that's really where a lot of the ability to work on the Afghan side of building capacity comes. The military has the CERP, but the big dollars in shaping the governance piece, in my mind, really comes from USAID and State Department, with USDA also being important because of the nature of the Afghan economy. Those organizations have the knowledge that the Afghans need to build an economy that can sustain itself over time, feed the people and start exporting stuff. So the next iteration, we started with this idea. I spent a lot of time working with the folks in D.C.; making a couple trips up there to try to figure a way to embed those interagency folks that were going downrange from State Department, USAID and USDA into our training because that was really the only training model available at the time.

Now, as it has continued to mature, the training model has continued to lengthen. With every iteration, as we got feedback from the PRTs downrange and linked in closer with interagency, it became apparent there were issues the PRTs needed covered in training. Certainly, language and culture are obvious areas where we've expanded training because those are important aspects of life for a PRT.

Integrating the U.S. Command Team Concept Required a New Cultural Perspective and a Lot of Training

Before the PRT can be successful with Afghan Culture, it has to understand the differences in language and culture inside the PRT. The staffs are generally sourced with Navy and Air Force folks that don't always know how to plug into Army architecture, and Afghanistan is predominantly an Army architecture. These are very talented individuals, but they don't always have the knowledge base to come in and do ground combat kinds of things. They don't always have experience in how to identify key leaders so that they know who to influence and how to influence them. They don't always know how to do an analysis of their area of operation that allows them to figure out the best way to go about orchestrating all the capabilities they have to try in order to improve the lot of the Afghan people.

We do a two-day Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) seminar upfront to try to get everybody on the same page so that everybody has a common frame of reference. We are also mindful that they're going to have to use that construct when they talk to their Brigade Combat Team (BCT) or their associated Maneuver guy.

I'm sure the Navy and the Air Force and the fighter pilots and the carrier guys all have their own methodology for approaching a problem, probably very similar to MDMP, but it's difficult when people are using different terms, so we try to get rid of language problems.

You still have to deal with differences in culture. On our first iteration, I was standing at my desk at Fort Bragg, where the training was and there was a weather front moving through, as happens in the summer at Fort Bragg. I got a call from a PRT commander who said, "Hey, I just called Pope Air Force Base and there's a weather front moving through."

I said, "Yeah, Roger."

He said, "Okay, what's the plan?"

I said, "What do you mean, what's the plan?"

He asked "What are we supposed to do?"

I said, "Well, if there's a lot of lightning, I would ground my equipment, disconnect my antennas and move away from anything that is going to conduct electricity."

He asked, "Aren't we coming back out of the field?"

I said, "No. You're staying out there."

That may not be the way they do things in the Air Force. In the Army, when you are in the field and a storm rolls in, you disconnect antennas and move away from your stuff, and once it blows through, you continue to train.

It's that kind of culture difference that is much less evident as we go along. I don't know whether the word's spreading out through the Air Force community, "Hey, when you go into this PRT training, they're going to do Army stuff to you."

Culturally, the Navy, from my experience, has had less of an adjustment to the way we do it because they look at Command a little differently than the Air Force does. The challenge that we experience sometimes with the Navy is with the interagency folks. The Commander and the three interagency reps are supposed to be co-equals. But in Navy culture, the commander is the Captain of the ship and that's that. Sometimes that takes a little bit of working through.

Those cultural differences are even more pronounced with the interagency. The main reason we wanted to do the Civilian-Military integration in training was to try and get beyond those differences. On the first or second time that we had the Civ-Mil block, key feedback from the interagency was, "Those military guys don't take us seriously." That's one of the reasons we have the interagency reps do the battlefield skills so they aren't afraid and they understand what they need to do. I think some of their hesitation is, "I don't know what to do, so I'm not going to do anything. If I get in the vehicle wrong, or do something wrong, they're going to make fun of me." I think that's an honest thing for most people; if you don't know how to do something, then generally you don't want to get in the middle of it. We try to break down those barriers, to give the interagency some level of competency with the equipment that they're going to be around.

During the first days of the Civ-Mil training, one key focus was on building the team, going through team building exercises. The idea is for the military members, particularly at the command and staff level, to see that this may be a 55-year-old woman who can contribute to what we're doing. Conversely, the 55-year-old woman from, let's say, the State Department can see the military guy and say, "Yeah, he's hasn't done this all his life, but he seems like a pretty smart guy; this guy might be willing to work with me and I've got to approach him to try to help span that cultural difference."

That's one of the reasons we embed them in the PRT, rather than let the State Department folks stay in an apartment and then come to training. We want the training environment to be just like the environment downrange. We want them to get through the preconceived notions upfront and figure out where everybody's place is on the team. When an interagency rep comes back to us with an issue, our answer is, "Go back to your PRT and figure it out. If you need something, you need to work through the PRT Commander or whoever the interagency higher is." On the other side of that, we try to coach the military folks upfront that, at some point later on in your training, you're going to work with interagency folks and they're important. You need to pay close attention to that. We tell them, "Save a bunk, save three bunks for those folks. In your Tactical Operations Center (TOC), you need to set aside a workspace for those folks." More often than not, they forget to save space because they're using all the space they have before the interagency folks show up a few weeks into the training. But sometimes I get surprised when the PRT military folks set aside space and a bunk; when a Commander works the interagency into his planning from the beginning.

I think it is kind of surprising that, in the relatively short time that we have the interagency folks on the ground, you can get to the level of performance that we get at the end of the three weeks during their last couple missions on the training exercise. We have some Commanders—and I focus a lot on the Commanders because from our training perspective, they're kind of the linchpin—that don't figure out that they don't really need to go to every Key Leader Engagement (KLE). They can send the State Department person and one of my CA people. That might be the right answer. They sometimes feel that they've got to be on every

engagement. But, by and large, it's really kind of surprising that most of them, at the end of those three weeks, have got it figured out. One of the best quotes we ever had was from one of the interagency women. We were talking about the idea of an integrated command team. The military philosophy is that somebody's always in charge; there's always one person who's going to end up being ultimately responsible. But the integrated command team concept is not really like that at all. This woman described it as kind of like a board of governors that are all co-equals.

We do a couple things here in training to help foster that team attitude. One, we participate in their working groups even if it's not necessarily beneficial to us. I'm usually the face of the 189th to the working group and that's probably a little bit more palatable than some guy who's still in the military and hasn't softened around the edges a little bit. Just by being a little bit older and a civilian as opposed to a military guy, I can help them work through some of their issues.

Another thing is that we bring the interagency into the planning process early so they have a vote. The interagency people might think they can get their pre-deployment training by some other means, but that most likely can't satisfy our requirements and we'd lose the chance to link the civilian and military up early.

***Our boss calls it
"forming the tribe."***

Our boss calls it "...forming the tribe." Forming the tribe is so important because it's not only sister services and interagency differences, the service components come with different skills and cultures. Any PRT will have Army National Guard, Army Reserve, and active Army as well as active and reserve from the Navy and Air Force. Even within the military structure of the team, trying to span that stuff is incredibly difficult.

PRT Training is Ongoing and Always Evolving

When we started this lash-up, it was a little rough the first time out. Our thought was that we wanted the interagency folks going downrange to be familiar with what they needed to do in terms of battlefield skills capability and then we wanted to work on the integrated command team. It's hard to get the commander and the State, USAID, and USDA reps to be equals when some of them can't perform basic things, at least from the military's point of view. Questions come up like: "Where do I sit in the HMMWV?" "Do I have to be there for the pre-rollout-the-gate brief?" "If we have to stop because we think there's an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), what am I supposed to do?" "If somebody gets hurt, should I sit in the back and do nothing, or should I get out and help?"

Around 2007, a USDA rep was killed and the agencies came back to us and said, "We really want some basic combat skills training." We're not making them combatants, but they become familiar with all of the things that are going to be around them so that (a) they're not afraid of it, and (b) if there is a situation where they can contribute, then they have the skill set to do so.

Bringing all that together and trying to give people a common framework so that they have a coherent ability to plan, decide, and execute something is an extraordinary challenge. Even though everybody knows what the end state may be, just getting the terms and the methodologies in common is hard. We've worked at that for three years now with some increasing degrees of success. And at the end of the three weeks of training and the Mission Readiness Exercise, they figure out how they're going to do the KLE – who goes, what do they say, who takes the lead on that particular engagement and what do they define as success criteria for that engagement. I think we have done that fairly well.

PRT Story 2

Building Human Capacity Was More Important than Building Structures

What I have found, at least in my personal experience, is how we treat Afghans, how we build human capacity, is probably in some ways even more important than what we're trying to do with structures. Our particular PRT has really tried to reduce some of the vertical structures that are being built because we found that they were not getting used for the purpose that they were designed for. So we have tried very much to focus on human capacity.

What I would consider one of the most interesting stories of human capacities is that of a Deputy Governor. What makes it particularly interesting is that you have formal leaders, you have informal leaders, and then you have individuals who are perhaps a combination of the two. And how you interact with these various individuals and what position they hold and what authority they have is sometimes not exactly descriptive of the broad reach that they may have into various aspects of society.

The Deputy Governor started out as an administrative assistant to a governor of two times, back to the origin of the PRT program. He is very capable. He's exceptionally intelligent. And I think consistently over a period of time, State Department representatives and PRT commanders have seen that there was a potential in this person and perhaps a larger potential than what would have been immediately visible on the surface.

Fortunately for us, I think they had the wisdom to realize that some of the relationships that we were building as this individual developed a long-term relationship with PRTs and interagency teams were far more important than necessarily one of the day-to-day activities that he might've been involved in. You might say individuals started grooming him in a way and mentoring him to show him the potential of what he could rise to.

By the time I met him, he had already risen in the ranks in the governor's office. He had gone from administrative assistant to the chief of staff position, from the chief of staff position to the deputy governor's position. In the meantime, several governors had come and gone. But these administrative assistants kind of toil in the background and make the machinery of government run and they are there for a long period of time. If you talk to our State Department representatives, they will say that we are consciously developing a bureaucracy because it has always been absent in Afghanistan. These are the folks that really make the long-term sustainment things happen.

When I met him there were protests going on outside the governor's office. The local people are upset that the governor is taking a course of action which they fundamentally disagree with. The governor is very much of an outsider in the province, and he is really struggling with the fact of trying to move the province out of the age of agriculture, and really a lack of infrastructure, into some semblance of connecting it with modern society. But it's a huge cultural leap; it's a huge technological leap. He still has a lot of difficulties even coping with basic women's rights because it's an ultraconservative society, and he really winds up paying for some of his policies by having himself removed from office. He actually was laterally transferred to another location.

The stabilizing influence is really the bureaucracy behind the governance. One would think that, as he was removed and a new governor came in, that somehow there would be really a lack of continuity or things just would very quickly break down. Because in the society that we're used to, the senior executive or the senior leader is the one that really makes the major decisions.

The new governor comes in and the PRT and the State Department representatives continue to work with this him because the new governor comes in comes in with similar issues and experiences. During this time, one of our State Department reps is continuing to help this man in terms of working with him on the provincial development plan, working with him in an administrative capacity. One of the unusual events or one of the unusual conditions in Afghanistan is that men, typically they're men, in leadership positions, men in their early 50s or so, don't have a tremendous amount of formal education. For the most part, those that are educated got it from outside sources. In other words, they were in Pakistan for a period of time or they're essentially expatriates who have returned back to the country. Because, starting with the whole period around the Soviet era, a lot of the education systems started breaking down. So, for example, some of the line directors can't read or write. They're illiterate, but they're of the age where they have grown into positions of power by other sources. So, we continued to develop the capacity of the Deputy Governor and he held the entire government together during this period of transition.

What I'm trying to convey is the need for us to accept that some of these sorts of things that we're trying to do are long-term things. There is a desire to search for a silver bullet. There is a timetable that most of us are looking to march to, but this sort of a counter-insurgency effort doesn't march to that timetable. In other words, what are we doing in terms of long-term engagement, in terms of bridging the gap between the qualifications of the individuals who are in the current positions of leadership? How are we helping those individuals? How are we backfilling them with a younger generation so that as we move through this cycle of individuals who are either warlords or associates of former warlords that there's something behind them, that there is a development cycle of administrators or bureaucrats behind them to carry them forward? And that's the thing that we have been working on with either our own PRT programs or through USAID programs of bringing in training for these individuals who in some cases may be resistant to that training, and also simultaneously linking them up with partnered individuals from the United Nations (UN) development program, where you essentially assign a junior assistant who has the computer skills, the Word document skills, the PowerPoint skills to give some of the technical expertise to this senior leader who may not have it.

"...in my view, those sorts of things are not giving the American taxpayer very good value for the sort of governance institutions that Afghanistan is desperately lacking."

There is not very much patience, though, for this kind of human capacity effort. And so we continue to chase after construction projects, we continue to chase after development of the sort where we can see it rise up from the ground, take a picture, have a ribbon cutting ceremony, and

it sells well in the media and it sells well in the press. But in my view, those sorts of things are not giving the American taxpayer very good value for the sort of governance institutions that Afghanistan is desperately lacking.

Of all the things that I've come across as a dichotomy of what we're trying to accomplish between what we're doing and the effects that we're desiring, this is probably the most difficult one to grasp and effectively describe, which is why I think that, even though I've thought a lot about it, I still have difficulty articulating it very well. Yet perhaps it is the most important element of what we're trying to accomplish there.

"... it's very easy to discount an old frail-looking man in a pair of worn out shoes in a Shura somewhere in the outer districts of a major province because he doesn't appear to be wealthy, he doesn't appear to be somebody who's a mover or a shaker, he doesn't sit in the front row at the Shura, and yet, this man is the elder of his particular tribe. And I guess that's the hard part of what we do. We really have to be willing to talk with people. We have to, more importantly, be willing to listen."

It's very difficult to identify those people with the greatest potential for development because they are not characterized by the same sorts of descriptions that we would associate with them. For example, it's very easy to discount an old frail-looking man in a pair of worn out shoes in a Shura somewhere in the outer districts of a major province because he doesn't appear to be wealthy, he doesn't appear to be somebody who's a mover or a shaker, he doesn't sit in the front row at the Shura, and yet, this man is the elder of his particular tribe. And I guess that's the hard part of what we do. We really have to be willing to talk with people. We have to, more importantly, be willing to listen.

There was a fascination in Afghanistan immediately after the ouster of the Taliban with expatriates, western educated expatriates who returned, and were going to change the country. Unfortunately, their vision was not aligned with the people who had been there the entire time and suffered the deprivations of 30 or 40 years. And now, there is actually a backlash against these western-educated people who don't have the same interests and goals as their countrymen, which is manifesting itself, for example, in such policies as ministers cannot have multiple nationalities, they can't have multiple ID cards, so they cannot be an American citizen and a citizen of Afghanistan as well. That was recently instituted.

The more you get away from urban educated society into the outer districts, the more difficult this problem set becomes. And we spend a preponderance of our Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) resources on going after the bad guys. So, eight years into it, it's not unusual in some of the provinces for us not to have a solid understanding of who the tribal elders and leaders are. For all the effort that we have put into it, Afghanistan, in this regard, remains very elusive for us. Now, again, I'm talking about southwestern Afghanistan in the most rural environments. Certainly I think in RC East (Regional Command East), we have done a better

job of this sort of stuff. But, if you remember, this also lines up with the recent self-assessment on the part of the intelligence community who have identified within themselves the limitation that they have spent so much effort in looking for bad guys that they have missed assisting with the atmospheric or the cultural laydown of the country, which could have produced faster results over this period of time. It's simply not very easy for us; it remains very, very elusive.

We do exceptionally well with overhead full motion video. When it comes to interaction on the personal level, our human terrain teams, I think, are overworked and understaffed. We still have a mere smattering of linguists who can have a one-to-one conversation with someone. And all of those hurt us because no matter how much overhead full-motion video you apply, you're just not going to understand the human dynamics until you literally sit down for the proverbial three cups of Chai. And even when working through interpreters, I think a certain level of intimate, meaningful contact is lost because you can't remove this third person from a conversation that normally would be a one-on-one conversation.

I can give you one example where someone actually did a very good job of breaking down barriers, but it will not come as much of a surprise to you why that individual was very effective. Of the 12 PRTs last cycle, there was exactly one foreign area officer linguist on any of the PRTs. I was just fortunate enough to be the individual who had that person assigned to their team. It is incredible what an individual with that sort of skill set can do simply by walking through the bazaar. You just fundamentally get access to a different level of information when you're able to overhear conversations that your interpreter may not, for the sake of time, be able to translate for you or when there are two or three people muttering amongst themselves in the background while your interpreter is passing you information from the one-on-one conversation what you can actually hear. As far as a human sensor, our foreign area officer was just absolutely phenomenal.

I am a complete convert of the idea behind Admiral Mullen's plan of the AF-PAK Hands program³. I spent six months, perhaps, of my nine-month tour developing relationships with individuals, especially in the conservative Pashto south, where we finally went past polite trivial conversation and were able to call each other names behind closed doors. I think I might have been able to cut that time by a third or a half if I was able to have a conversation with them directly.

Afghans live in a very guarded society, especially to a group of outsiders like us. And when you add the cultural layers on top of that as well and you add the fact that you're having conversations through a third person, you are missing a lot of nuances of that conversation, then you begin to understand just how complex some of these relationships are and why someone with that kind of a skill set is just an incredible force multiplier on the team. But I realize it's a tremendous investment in resources. What access to resources do we have to groom not one but perhaps several hundred of those types of individuals?

It's a huge, huge, investment. And I think, perhaps, the reason that the military has been resistant to making that kind of investment up until now is that we all thought that this would be

³ The Afghanistan Pakistan Hands Program is designed to develop a cohort of Department of Defense experts in the culture and language of the Afghanistan and Pakistan region.

over several years ago. I don't think we really foresaw that we would still be here in 2010, not in the current condition.

The number one question of late I've been asked by friends, colleagues, even some of the journalists who come through and find out about my circumstances of being the first PRT commander who's going to return back for a second tour in command is: why would I want to do this based on some of the things that I told you here, about how difficult it is, how uphill it is, and how much we are, to paraphrase an old book title, "Strangers in a Strange Land"? In addition to wanting to have cultural experts and linguists, because I do think that if there is a Holy Grail, then that is one of them. Nothing convinces another person of your sincerity in working with them than your desire to learn their language and understand their culture and be able to talk with them through their own native tongue.

The other thing that I've come to realize is watching some of the dynamics amongst key leaders. These men have known each other for decades. While in western society, we don't think anything of doing business over the internet or picking up the phone and conducting business with someone we've never met. That is really a polar opposite in thinking to the typical Afghan, particularly the typical Pashto. You and I may do business for six months, a year, something like that, and I'll finally invite you over to my office or maybe I'll invite you to a company picnic or a barbecue and then we'll finally get to know each other after X amount of time doing business together. Typically in Afghan society, men will get to know each other slowly over a period of time. After they have drunk a whole bunch of Chai, after they have sat down and talked with one another about what may on the surface appear to be meaningless subjects, then six months or a year into knowing each other, they'll actually begin to conduct business. And in some cases, it takes far longer than that. Almost everyone that an individual considers to be in their circle of trust is either an immediate family member or a life-long acquaintance.

"If we seriously want to get inside that circle of trust, then we have to be willing not only to simply learn the language and understand the culture, but to engage with Afghans over a long period of time to develop some of those relationships."

If we seriously want to get inside that circle of trust, then we have to be willing not only to simply learn the language and understand the culture, but to engage with Afghans over a long period of time to develop some of those relationships. In a nine-month PRT tour, in my humble opinion, just about the time that the commander and his staff begin to cross the threshold of becoming effective with some of these powerful men, with these individuals, tribal leaders, they're on their way to rotating out. So, I'm hoping to leverage the fact of returning for a second stint and perhaps being slightly more effective in my second rotation than I was in my first, where I spent a preponderance of the time just getting to know people.

Building Human Capacity Within One's Own Team Leveraged Members' Expertise

I was reasonably fortunate because I think the folks on my team started pulling together from day one. I think maybe it's just simple human dynamics or maybe the way we approached the problem set between the interagency personnel and the rest of the PRT. In some ways, it is not rocket science. The Department of Agriculture personnel, State Department personnel, the USAID folks, they bring especially powerful skill sets and areas of expertise into the mission. There's no point in me trying to do their job for them or trying to do it better than they do because that will be counterproductive to what we're trying to accomplish. And conversely, whether it comes to security issues or long-range planning or CERP program, there's no point in them attempting to "meddle" in that portion of it unless it's just to get an overall better result because our folks are actually better at that. We emphasized interlocking areas of specialties and we really tried to create an environment where you don't just pay lip service to this, because at that point it becomes very, very transparent, but to really have a governance reconstruction and development working group, and that's how we approached the problem.

I do hear anecdotal stories where that tends to break down in certain organizations and it may just be that strong personalities are clashing in the civilian community versus the military community or between the Army and the Air Force or the Army and the Navy. I've been fortunate in that regard. Both during one of my initial commander's calls and also once we got in the country and got to meet our interagency team, I was very direct with our folks in communicating to them the magnitude of the task that had been placed on their shoulders. Eleven districts, 350,000 Afghans, 40 projects, tens of millions of dollars of funds rolling through our hands just on the CERP side, in addition to everything that was going on, and literally national objectives on the line. Even the most junior member of the team very quickly realized that they were not just a Soldier, not just an Airman, a cog in the machinery, but there really were very high expectations of them with this very, very small team, I mean, it's maybe 100 people when you count everyone. The per person dollar output or the per person project output or the per-person impact on the number of Afghans is really a humbling number. And I just hammered that point home where the expectations on us were so high from the very beginning that we couldn't afford to do anything else but to pull together, because otherwise, we had no chance of getting the job done. And it seems like, in hindsight that resonated with folks. I didn't try to give them a "one team, one fight" kind of a thing. Our junior service members are wickedly smart, exceptionally well educated, and they see through a lot of that kind of happy talk, to be perfectly honest, but they do all understand the weight of responsibility and that's where we started from, and we just built on that.

I had a very, very smart State Department team member. She had been there in one way, shape, or form ever since we reopened the embassy after the fall of the Taliban, so she had lived in every single one of the provinces except for one. She brought a tremendous amount of credibility to the job and it was her vision that good ideas would be measured against a litmus test of an overall plan in the province. If we failed to do that, then we would have haphazard stuff happening. This is not rocket science because the Afghan government expects all their governors to develop a provincial development plan. And the US government, in support of that, the interagency partners and the civilian partners and the military partners, developed a provincial support plan that essentially mirrors that.

In some provinces, the provincial development plan is very immature; ours was only in its second iteration. Some other places in Afghanistan, they're on their seventh or eighth provincial development plan. At this point, it's not much more than a wish list per district in the province with some overarching objectives that the governor is trying to work towards. In his case, it's education, it's healthcare, and then agriculture. Those are his three priorities.

First of all, we start from the governor's priorities, which are fairly congruent with what we're trying to accomplish ourselves, and the provincial support plan then highlights what are the priority districts that you're supposed to do. In our case there are three districts along Highway 1. Freedom of movement along Highway 1, the Ring Road of Afghanistan, is very, very important. So, the Brigade Commander says, "This is my priority here." We translate his priority and the governor's priority and say, "Okay, we are going to spend a preponderance of our effort on education, healthcare and agriculture, in that order. They will be the priorities." You take a systems approach to it. Where is there an absence of education facilities in these key districts? You essentially, instead of taking random ideas and throwing money at it, you actually do a level of analysis as you get started and say, "Okay, so what is my bedrock of development?" There should probably be a school. There should probably be, in accordance with the ministry of public health's overall national plan, some kind of a clinic at a certain level, whatever the population is, and, "What agricultural enhancement programs am I doing to either increase yield, give them an alternate cash crop to poppies, or just try to put food on the table for the average Afghan?"

We went through those three key districts. We looked at where the education centers needed to be, so there are three new schools that came out of that level of analysis. We looked at where healthcare was either happening in a tent or not happening at all. That resulted in a certain level of infrastructure development for those areas. And then the agricultural effort was principally based on bringing in improved wheat seed that will give them a higher yield and focusing on some irrigation project and Karezes.

If you're willing to take a step back for a moment and analyze the conditions that you find, take some guidance that already exists, you can really simplify what may at first appear to be a formidable, insurmountable objective, like, "How do I bring some sense of order to what appears to be a complete absence of infrastructure of services or anything like that?" I chose not to allow myself to become overwhelmed by the situation, but to take existing guidance with some very rudimentary analysis and come up with a plan of execution.

We are awash in money and resources, to the point that there is probably more money available in Afghanistan than can reasonably be put to work efficiently. Now, don't misunderstand. The need is unbelievable. I mean it will break your heart in some cases. I mean, you just have to harden your heart and get over that. But there is a finite amount of throughput that you can make happen, and let me explain why.

This is a perennial question, especially when I brief a Congressional Delegation (CODEL) visit or some staffers, and they say, "Okay, got it, you did 40 projects last year to the tune of about \$15 to \$16 million. What if I could write you a check and I delivered \$30 million? And what I tell them is, "I really appreciate it, but I don't think that you can ramp up throughput by much more than 15 to maybe 20 percent in a given year because there are a finite number of qualified

contractors that do capable work. They can increase their capacity, but you can't just put an infinite amount of money through and expect that it's going to be efficiently used."

There are hulks of buildings all throughout Afghanistan where less-skilled contractors were hired who didn't have any kind of track record, who were not registered with the government, you know, where you didn't monitor them doing a smaller project, but you allowed them to sign up for a \$500,000 project that was beyond their ability to execute. And so what happens where you have a well developed legal system and a contractual system in a nation where there's a court system that's able to handle this, well, you sue the contractor and you force them to complete the work. There's no such mechanism in Afghanistan. You just never recover your money because there's no way to compel this individual to actually do it. Occasionally, it's even difficult to identify an individual because they have no national ID system at all. So, who are you really talking to? Is this really the person that they claim to be? I mean just some very, very simple sorts of things.

What we have preferred to do, especially with a new contractor that has no track record, is let them start on a smaller project, allow them to do two or three things. We maintain our own database so that by the time he starts to bid on larger sorts of contracts, we have some level of confidence that he can execute this.

Other programs in other donor countries do not do this. There are very well-intentioned foreign nations that throw money at the problem, but they don't send engineers to do any quality control or quality assurance on the projects. And we have two- to three-year-old buildings which were so shoddily built that there are vertical cracks forming in the wall because bricks of different dimensions were mixed in, and so as they're now settling, the wall is shearing where it is standing verticle. There are structures, in the case of a latrine facility at a girls' school, where literally, within a couple of months of the ribbon cutting ceremony, the building had to be condemned because the roof was on the verge of collapsing on one of the children. Great intentions, tremendous amount of resources being expended, but it's just money thrown over the fence, not in a properly executed framework or properly monitored framework; it's counterproductive.

Another interesting statistic, this was recently in one of the national publications, that due to lack of oversight, it's estimated that something on the order of \$10 to \$15 million a day of donor funds simply just disappears on a daily basis in Afghanistan. Where is it going? Again, good intentions, resources being committed, but for lack of follow through, for lack of a process, it simply encourages graft and corruption. Simply applying money or attempting to ramp up dollars isn't the answer.

One more nuance to this issue, especially in the conservative south of Afghanistan - again, my experience is limited - you could certainly bring in a foreign contractor who has the capacity to work on this and suddenly boost your throughput of stuff. That foreign contractor is going to be faced with kidnapped workers, with sabotage of his equipment, and will probably double or triple the cost of the project because he's going to have to hire a private army to provide security for his workers. So, if you want yet another counterproductive way of trying to go about "solving the problem," just go in and try to bring in some foreign workers. It's just not very meaningful.

"...if you want to boost the amount of things that you're doing, be prepared for a slow steady investment of human capital, once again, before you bring in bag loads of money that will just disappear into the abyss."

All of which, as a bottom line, leads you to the fact that development, construction, much like everything else, takes time. And if you want to boost the amount of things that you're doing, be prepared for a slow steady investment of human capital, once again, before you bring in bag loads of money that will just disappear into the abyss.

PRT Story 3

We Built a PRT

I was activated for a deployment to Afghanistan and my boss chose me to be the commander of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). I asked the Colonel, "Why are you choosing me to go there?" because it was considered to be a dangerous place, but I have a Ranger Tab so he said, "Rob, you're a Ranger. You're going to be just fine." So that was it. He just looked at me and he said, "You're going to command my PRT."

At the time, there was a safe house, three or four houses actually, but doors had been opened between the walls and it was a combined site. It was owned by an Other Government Agency (OGA), an Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA) and the Civil-Military Operations Cell (CMOC) that would become the foundation of the PRT, but I was a guest. The CMOC had about 33 projects going on at the time, but my priority was to build a PRT. They needed a site, and the guidance I was given is, "You've got to be ready for it to hold about 100 people and it's got to be defensible." That was really about it. There was very little guidance given. I had to do reconnaissance of the sites, analyze them, and then present my command with options and my recommendation.

The CMOC in the province had scouted out four different sites and each site had its pluses and its minuses. The site that I wanted was at the airport for a couple of reasons. One is that the airport would give us an already built-in landing strip. Number two, it had an Artesian well that was putting out some really good clean, clear water. I proposed we build the site at the airport and then the commander approved it, but the problem was that we needed to make sure it'd been cleared of explosives in the places we'd need to build or operate. The local Afghan in charge of the airfield told me the explosives were gone, but before we could start construction I needed to make sure. I went to the U.S. Army and said, "I need you to send out a crew to make sure there are no explosives here." And the response from the Army was they couldn't do it. That set us back. That was a tremendous blow and it also told me a lot about, at that moment in time, the importance they were putting on the PRT. It just was not high on their agenda. So we were back to square one.

I was on R&R at the time when I got the news, and what happened next was that my crew (the PRT) got our Commander to the province because we had to get that PRT started. My Sergeants took him out to the site of what became the present PRT and showed it to him. He looked around and he said, "Yes, of course, this place is perfect." The first time around, before our efforts to secure a site at the airfield, we recommended that site and one of the Colonels that was at the headquarters said, "That site is presently owned by a warlord, and we don't want to be associated with him, so that site's a no-go." They shut that right down and said, "No good," and that's what prompted us to try for the airfield. When my commander looked at the site and said, "Perfect. Let's do it. We'll do it right here," we then started the process of getting a lease signed. That was a big deal, because it wasn't like someone could fax me a document that said, "Have the warlord or the governor sign over this piece of land."

We had to find who had the authority to sign the document and then a civilian leasing officer would have to come out to us and get the lease signed by the appropriate local authority. Basically what I did was I found this leasing officer and brought him out in my vehicles. We got

all the key players physically in the same place and that's how we got our hands on that piece of ground that we presently hold. But, legally gaining access to the ground was only the beginning.

The site is set at the back of a military base, and it had been built by the Soviets and used as an R&R location during their occupation. It had a motel type structure on it and next to it was a structure that I called the "hunting lodge." The hunting lodge was where the kitchens were, and it had picture windows overlooking the mountains. And there was a tremendous valley, the river valley, in front of those picture windows.

When we first got there, the site was a wreck. All the buildings were internally gutted, the pipes had been torn out, there was no wiring, the windows were all broken, and they'd been using the motel structure as bathrooms. Everything was a mess. Also, we had no bathroom facilities, no shower point, no electricity, and no water. We put together a plan for how we were going to do all this. We started drilling wells, we set-up security points and towers, and we started cleaning out the rooms one by one. I had a contract with a local to start making bunk-beds. We had to work quickly because there were 55 U.S. Soldiers coming from the 18th Airborne Corps to be our Security Force (SECFOR).

One of my NCOs hired local Afghan carpenters and they built us a plywood bathroom with two or three showers and two or three toilets. We built it over the old septic system for this hotel. My goal was that when the American Soldiers arrived, every Soldier would have a bed, we would have a bathroom, and we'd have a place where they could shower. And we managed to do it. The Soldiers came and slept inside the hunting lodge. There was a big room with a fireplace where we set up bunk-beds.

We hired contractors to build the walls around the perimeter and we started to fix the building. Each and every room was redone and repainted. We wired up generators and brought in large refrigeration units to store food. We rebuilt the kitchen in the hunting lodge and we started building a landing zone for helicopters. It was an amazing thing to lead; probably the zenith of my military career.

It was excellent; it was just wonderful to watch this whole thing come together. We were working 18 hour days, seven days a week. Then the 18th Airborne Corps Soldiers arrived and they started setting up SECFOR. And I looked at them and said, "Hey, guess what guys? Some of you are now going to be Civil Affairs (CA) teams." And they looked at me like I was a nut, and they said, "Well, we didn't train for that." And my response was: "I can double the number of missions I run out the gate using you guys." We didn't need all of them guarding our little fortress back there. Where we were going to make our money was out the gate. So we minimized the number of them guarding the base and we maximized the number of people outside the base. And we set up a Quick Response Force (QRF), we had our 34 Afghan guards with their AK-47s, we had our SECFOR, and I had my two tech teams and my Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) and that's when we really started doing reconstruction.

My understanding is that today the PRT holds some kind of Infantry battalion and it has expanded beyond our initial perimeter. They leased more land. And it's a pearl of a place.

Prioritizing PRT Projects Required Unity of Effort

When I first arrived in the province, believe it or not, with 24 American Soldiers, I was responsible for four provinces, which was absolutely impossible. But that's what it was like in the early days and, like I said earlier, there were 33 ongoing projects that the CMOC was working. One of the most interesting ones, which immediately captured my imagination, was called a pedagogy school. The pedagogy school was a school that trained teachers how to be teachers.

A school to create teachers was incredibly important because there was a shortage of teachers. More importantly, the idea that we could start training females to be teachers was very important in a very big picture sort of way. I mean, you have a totally male dominated culture, in which women are totally subservient to men. Imagine if we could shift that over time, where women could not only be teachers, somebody teaching little boys, but maybe someday they may end up running schools. Clearly this was building for the long-term.

There had been a school there built by the Soviets. The story was that because it had been built by the Soviets, the Taliban had come in and literally torn it down until there was not a brick left. All that was left was the foundation. I think it was symbolic. They wanted to destroy the educational system.

The engineer of the CMOC had somehow gotten his hands on the original blueprints from the Soviet era and the money for construction had been secured using OHDACA⁴ funds. The CMOC had gotten the money to rebuild the school brick by brick, the way it was originally built. When I arrived at the school, it was probably halfway built. I remember walking through the building. It was just a shell, but it was an ongoing project.

Our Civil Affairs Team (CAT) was responsible for the project and I would occasionally go out to see the project being built. But the most important thing about that project is that we actually brought it to closure and then we had a grand opening ceremony. The governor was there and my commander flew in and it was a big show. It was a big deal. The governor was so happy on that day. He spoke and there was a large, a very large crowd there. My commander spoke as well and it was just a wonderful moment.

You could probably go back there today and ask, "How many people have graduated from the school since it was opened? How many of them are females?" And you could see that that school has probably had a tremendous impact. I think that project shows the importance of having a plan for the long term sustainment; a school to train teachers was necessary before you could have more schools.

I finally started realizing that we had a problem when my state department person arrived. He brought a different perspective to our work. One time we started talking about our projects and our priorities and he made the case that our efforts towards schools was really not where the priority needed to be. The priority needed to be with the roads and he made a very good, strong case on why it should be that way because basically the roads were the key to starting up economic resurgence in the region. If the roads could be built, then the schools would come

⁴ Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid; a Department of Defense Program.

naturally, but without the roads there could be no development. The economy was almost nonexistent. So he made the case for roads and I became a believer as well, which led to the next priority project.

I'd heard that there were USAID reps in the PRTs, but I didn't have one, so I started the process of trying to get one. The first problem I had was I had to convince USAID that it was not too dangerous in our province. I started begging the embassy to visit, and they did come to visit and I showed them around. They said, "Okay, we can see us putting...a USAID person here." So I got my first USAID person and he was very good at what he did.

One of the first three projects he did was building a bridge. It was very simple at that time. The project I think was almost \$600,000. That was way out of my reach with OHDACA funds, but USAID had deep pockets, so they could actually come and build something like this. Now this bridge was very, very important because when you left the province and started heading for the border with Pakistan, the only bridge between the border was quite far away. There was no bridge across the Kabul River during that stretch of road, so this bridge was sort of midway between the one far away and the border. I mean the impact it could have would be tremendous to the other provinces because then people wouldn't have to travel all the way to the other bridge to go south across the river. They could just cross our bridge.

I rotated out before it was completed, but I'm pretty sure it was eventually finished. It was a joint venture with the United Nations and they very much wanted this bridge. The UN Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) was my partner in this and it was one of their top projects. I mean it had everything required from the Afghan side of the house, from the United Nations side of the house and obviously from the U.S. side of the house after we gathered the information that would warrant building this bridge. USAID just happened to have the money. So this was really three organizations coming together to build this bridge.

At the beginning there was no process to prioritize. We would have PRT commanders' conferences, and in one of them, they indicated that we should start working with the MRRD, that they had created a list for each province on the priority of projects. After that, it was much easier.

It's funny, because the first time we went to meet with MRRD, we showed up at their office and they were stunned to see us. They'd been waiting for us forever. We basically said, "Okay, now the next two or three days we're going to go out and seal these projects, and you show us which are the most important ones." Here's the tricky part. Sometimes what they show you is what they want to do for personal gain. We got a list of projects from them, but when we started analyzing them and started asking more questions my CAT determined, "Well yeah, if we build a dam here and irrigate these fields, who owns these fields?" Well the guy who is showing us the project owns these fields. So you had to be careful and you had to try to vet the projects as best as you could. You'd have to get information from the Afghans and then you'd have to do interviews of locals that are involved in that area to try to get a story from them and then the governor and see what his priorities are, and see how that project fit into those. And then meet with the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) because often they had already run this rabbit and they had input as well.

One time there was a warlord, probably the most powerful person in the province. He had been made an Army commander by the Afghan government, but he still had his own private army, his militia. I've spent more time with the governor than the warlord. The OGA and the ODA spent a lot more time with him, but he knew who I was and knew what we could do, and he came to me one time and he wanted to build wells in the desert. It appears that he had made a promise to a group of people that he was going to build them a village, but to build a village he needed four wells. He needed four deep wells. So he came and he kept on asking me about these wells, and finally one day I agreed to go with him and he could show me where he needed the wells. We did that. He took me out and he showed me where he wanted to build these wells. Then when I talked to the UN they said they did not want to build those wells for a lot of reasons. When I brought over an engineer who knew something about water, he made the case for us not to build the wells. That project was stopped because the UN had reasons why we shouldn't build these wells and my engineers had reasons why we shouldn't build these wells. Even though a warlord, a very powerful man, wanted these wells built, we built a case as to why it wasn't a priority.

Selfless Service Increased Trust in U.S. Forces and Hope for the Future

The price tag was huge just to feed, house, and provide equipment and resources for 24 American Soldiers. I told my guys, "It's costing about \$50,000 a day for us to be here, and that's why we have to make every day count." We had no time to waste. We had to do it in just six days a week. Friday was our day to shut down. It was their religious day. It would not have been good for us to be wandering around on a Friday, so we would shut down, clean the weapons, maintain our place, and just let the guys sleep in. We all ate a big breakfast, and the Soldiers would watch movies and just take the day off, but then the next day we would hit it hard. We didn't have much down time because there was so much to do.

One of the goals that I had for my Civil Affairs Teams (CATs) was that someone would visit every ongoing project once in a ten-day window. To visit more often would have been impossible because of the number of projects, but I wanted to monitor the progress of each of the projects so I could keep updated records of where each project stood. It was also important because the contractors were paid as certain percentages of completions were met and I wanted to keep that ball rolling because I figured I'd rather have the Afghans working on our projects than working against us.

I was not in a hurry to finish the projects. That was not my goal. My higher headquarters may have wanted me to bring the projects to closure, but that was not my priority. My priority was just to keep the projects going and show the people that there was hope that things were changing for the better; to the positive.

"...that's one of the things that sometimes in the PRT efforts we don't measure so much, the hope that we bring, because it's such a soft thing."

I think that's one of the things that sometimes in the PRT efforts we don't measure so much, the hope that we bring, because it's such a soft thing. It's not something you can measure with dollars. It's not something you can take a picture of when you're done, but the fact that you're there, that you're operating and that you're bringing much needed projects to a region is incredibly important because it creates light at the end of the tunnel. So that's one of the parts that we sort of miss sometimes when we think about these things.

I'll give you an example. When we lived in the safe house three doors down from the safe house was a mosque. My guards and my interpreters ("terps" for short) would go to the mosque. One time one of my terps came out and we were talking. He said, "I went to the mosque today and they are praying for your success. They're praying for your safety and they're praying for your success." Why? My guards were telling them what we were doing, "The Americans aren't going to bother the women. They're not there to steal our women. They're not there to steal our children. They're not there to spread another religion. They're there, what these Americans do is they go and they ask questions, and then they bring things. They help us." That's not something you can measure on a graph or chart or even put a price tag on, but it's where you want to be with capacity building, and it is priceless.

It worked that way in our dealings with the Governor; we had our interpreters with us, and we also had hired locals to be our protective service, and whenever we went anywhere they witnessed what we did and those stories were filtering back to the governor. He was very aware of what we were doing, and he knew what my agenda was, and my agenda was very positive. So that helped tremendously. Then I would come see him and we'd talk about the things that we were doing. I'd show him pictures of projects and I'd tell him about these projects. He would try to guide us toward other projects. So, for the governor it was a total win-win. He was just an older, wise, very wealthy man, and when we came to visit we would often eat together, and he knew that I had no hidden agenda. He was very open with me and we had a very good relationship. Trust and hope become the currency you work with as much as money to get things done.

PRT Story 4

Inspired by Media Reports, One PRT Focused on Women's Issues

I took command of the PRT when it was responsible for four provinces in the west of Afghanistan. We operated out of that PRT with less than 50 Americans. The totals vary because rotations didn't go into the country as a team. They were sort of rotated in and out depending on their specialty. So the numbers vary, but we had about 50 people – American Soldiers primarily and a few civilians – but we also had a 45-man security force that we hired from Afghan militia forces. The PRT was less than 100 people, covering four provinces.

Prior to going to Afghanistan, I was privileged to have several video conferences and conversations with the overall theater commander in Afghanistan. What set the stage for much of our PRT's activities was his sensitivity to the fact that women in Afghanistan were an underserved population. His wife was also very interested in the topic. There had been a number of articles in the United States and a number of people were concerned about the fact that women were being subjected to a lot of unpleasantness by their husbands and families and that the escape mechanism for many of them was self-immolation with cooking oil or kerosene.

In particular, there was an article in a magazine which stated that during one year there had been something in the neighborhood of 125 women who had chosen the path of burning themselves alive to escape unpleasant circumstances like forced marriages. The article had caused a lot of consternation, so the commander was particularly interested in engaging with the half of the population out there that happened to be female.

At the time, one of my provinces was considered to be a permissive environment. Therefore, I was blessed with having a large percentage of Civil Affairs (CA) people that were female. They had a lot of experience in the CA community – very squared away NCOs. I also had a Foreign Service Officer who was very interested in female issues in that area.

We were sensitized to the fact that, because we had the capability and the talent in the CA side of things with our females and our Foreign Service Officer, we were going to try to do something to fix all this. The first thing that I charged my CA people with was determining the veracity of the article in *Marie Claire* and some of the other publications where the numbers were very, very high. One hundred twenty-five successful attempts and probably an equal number of unsuccessful attempts to commit suicide, resulting in a lot of very, very damaged bodies languishing in hospitals.

There were some very, very difficult circumstances surrounding hospitals, in that they didn't have the capability to deal with the burn issue very well. We discovered that there'd been very little done over the past 300 years to improve treatment for burns other than to keep them clean and change the dressings often. The silver oxide type bandages helped with infection, but there's just not much you can do except try to cope with the infection and pain, so the first trip through the Herat hospital was a real eye-opener and a very traumatic experience for all of us who saw some of the victims of this self-immolation.

We quickly compiled a report for the commander that demonstrated that there were about 45 to 50 cases of fatal suicides from the female population in one province who used cooking oil or kerosene to burn themselves. A lot of this stuff happens in rural areas and is never reported, so we tried to tackle the problem as best we could.

Coincidentally, during the previous year, there had been another incident that raised the profile of the burning issue. A father brought his young daughter to the attention of an Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) patrolling the area because she had been burned in a cooking accident. This was not a suicide attempt. She was just a young girl, probably in her early teens at the time. The resulting burns had fused her chin and face to her chest. She was basically incapacitated. The ODA decided to make getting her some help their project. I'm not sure how this happened, but the Grossman Burn Center in Los Angeles became interested. Through that foundation, doctors took her to the United States and performed a number of operations on her, which returned her to fairly normal appearance. We had a very strong advocate on the civilian side in the Grossman Clinic and the Grossman Foundation.

At the same time we were working a lot with an ambassador and the president of a University to try to do something to help primarily the female population, but really anyone who had been burned. A lot of burning accidents happened there because of fueling issues, so it was not only women, but also men who were suffering a lot of burns and weren't being treated properly. At one Hospital, over about a nine-month period, we helped to get a burn clinic funded with, I think, the State Department's aid. I'm not sure whether USAID built it or not, but it was completed during 2005.

"Instead of focusing on the easy part, which was interfacing with the male population—and consequentially ignoring females...we were able to break that trend thanks to our talented female PRT members."

In summary, we decided that we would direct a significant portion of our activity toward the female part of the population. Instead of focusing on the easy part, which was interfacing with the male population—and consequentially ignoring females— because of the cultural issues with American males dealing with Afghan females, we were able to break that trend thanks to our talented female PRT members.

We also did several other things for Afghan women. We built two schools for girls in two provinces. We also built a women's center; it was intended to be another women's school, but we could not get enough teachers to come to the school, so the Women's Ministry took it over for a vocational training center.

The governor of one of our provinces was instrumental in getting a great number of the young girls to go to high school and in getting women educated at a University. While the governor

was a strong believer in the traditional role of women in Afghan society, he also was broadminded enough to allow them to get a significant amount of education. And he encouraged it without compromising his very traditional beliefs. We were able to work with him and encourage him in certain ways to participate in trying to remedy the issues with women. But there was always sort of a glass ceiling in his mind about violating his closely-held principles regarding the traditional role of women. We made some progress in that regard, but women were still not able to drive. Even war widows, with no way of earning a living if they had to walk to work, were not allowed to drive. The burqa was also far more prevalent in our provinces than it was in others.

All that aside, the PRT females were given access to the leadership among the female population. We were able to stage several meetings and the PRT females with proper cultural headdress were always allowed to interface with women outside of the PRT. Our primary person running these female initiatives was an E7, one of the finest NCOs and one of the keenest minds that I've ever encountered in the CA community.

Although we looked for some evidence of it, there was no established civil court system in province. All legal issues were dealt with in what was basically a religious court system run by the mullahs (Muslim religious leaders). Therefore, we discovered that women could be thrown in jail for not having a proper dowry or for having disagreements with their husbands. Basically at the husband's whim, a woman could be imprisoned in Herat and certainly out in the surrounding areas, for being difficult or for not coming with a proper dowry or whatever. It was pretty ad hoc and very uncomfortable for us to observe.

Our E7 decided that she would take a look at a prison system for women. After she and her team came back from that experience, they expressed a great deal of outrage about what they'd seen. The men's prisons were bad, but women's prisons were especially unique because they weren't funded as well. The hygiene and the health issues for women locked up with no access to any kind of health care or anything else were just rather amazing. Although I never was able to go in myself because the system didn't allow men inside the prison, I could see the shock on the faces of the people coming out. Every time they came back from that prison system, they were disturbed and angry. So we made the prisons an issue and began trying to gather resources to help a little bit by cleaning up and providing some basic health care materials and feminine hygiene products for those that were locked up. What made it even worse was that in that system, when the mom went in jail, all the kids went with her. We had to be very, very careful applying medicine or anything else to the mom, because she felt the obligation to treat her kids the same way. If a woman had some kind of a health issue, and she was given some medical assistance, she would distribute it to her kids who were in jail with her.

We did not fix it by any stretch of the imagination. When I left, the system was still pretty arbitrary. Women were still being thrown in jail for things that we would not consider crimes. But the issue became a particular focus as our tour went on. We were deeply engaged in that process the day we left, trying to bring cleaning materials and health items into the women's prison system. We worked to apply pressure on the provincial government to realize that a more modern society provides better prison conditions, particularly for the most vulnerable people in the society. We let them know it was not buying leadership any goodwill in the surrounding world. The burn issues and the issues that were being raised by the way women were being

treated were, to put it mildly, bad optics. But we saw it as our duty to try to engage with the provincial government and to rectify that situation.

The bottom line and the critical lesson learned from that experience is that the females on the PRT have a very huge role to play in a COIN (Counterinsurgency) fight. The population of Afghanistan is made up of both males and females and we need to turn the whole population away from war and toward a peaceful and productive life, so the role that the PRT females play is huge. As a trainer, I like to pre-sensitize female Soldiers. There are big missions that they can accomplish and a lot of positive things they can do in a COIN fight to help turn the population away from the insurgents and towards the central government.

Working with Nongovernmental (NGO) and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO) Supported Elections

We had a very robust relationship with UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) based on a couple of factors. The UNAMA regional rep had been there for approximately twelve years at that time, all during the Taliban period. We looked to him for his institutional knowledge of the provincial players. Although he had a very definite bias, he acted as a very honest provider of information to us about the players and who we should engage with.

The UNAMA regional office in our province was a very political place, but they were also a very beneficial friend for the PRT because they provided neutral ground on which we could hold development meetings and engage with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations that weren't particularly motivated to deal with the U.S. military. We tried to coordinate our activity with NGOs and IGOs (Intergovernmental Organizations) so that we didn't step on their toes or get in their way. We attempted to take on the difficult stuff that they couldn't do on their own, such as security.

UNAMA also engaged us during the election process. The first nationwide elections were for the People's Assembly and the PRT did a lot of work helping the United Nations (UN) get support for the elections. In four provinces, we spent a lot of time and effort supporting the election commission and the UNAMA effort to get the elections up and running and the infrastructure in place. We tried to provide some financial support when we were able to and other forms of logistics support. We couldn't provide much in the way of security because we weren't allowed to be within 100 yards or so of any polling place, although we did try to provide an element of security for UNAMA personnel involved in setting up the elections when we were able to. We also provided local expertise in conjunction with the UNAMA district and provincial offices to try to get these polling places set up so they could impact a maximum number of people.

During the election process, it was determined that because there hadn't been a legitimate census in Afghanistan for decades, we were likely going to wind up with a larger number of voters than was anticipated. This was probably due to a combination of a higher birth rate and survival rate than anybody expected among the local population and also a lot of Afghan returnees. I think in our province alone the number of registered voters was 125% of what was anticipated. In observing the process and spending a lot of time with the UNAMA people that were overseeing the elections, I came away feeling pretty good about that election being an honest exercise in democracy.

The PRTs Built Trust and Established Credibility with Those in Power

When we deployed, PRTs were a new concept and the central government of Afghanistan was having a very rough time pushing any central government influence out. This was particularly true in areas where they didn't feel a crisis was afoot, like western Afghanistan where it was relatively quiet. Ismail Khan had been the Amir (commander or general) and was also a good friend of President Karzai's for about 25 years, so he was the natural choice to be appointed as Governor of Herat. Ismail Khan ran with it and expanded his influence down as far as he could into the society.

The previous PRT commander had a good relationship with Khan. He tried to keep that relationship very focused on himself and Ismail Khan so that they could speak with one voice.

There weren't a lot of other players engaging with them so that he could keep the message coming from the Ambassador and the Task Force Commander as pure as he possibly could so there wouldn't be any misunderstanding on Ismail Khan's part about how things were supposed to go.

There was a language issue, of course. I was blessed with a Level II interpreter. He was very smart and very adept at both Pashto and Dari and a longstanding friend of Ismail Khan. We also had a Canadian-Afghan citizen that worked at the PRT who was fluent in Dari and Pashto.

From the top level, the dialogue was not always productive but with the help of these people and connections it was always constant; we always had an opportunity to engage with Khan. I think, at some level, a friendship developed between me and Ismail Khan. I was called from the PRT many times at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning to meet with Ismail Khan at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs guesthouse or his office or every once in a while at his compound, which was about a block or so away from us at the PRT, to engage in some issue in another province that he thought he was involved with.

Our Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) out of the State Department were also helpful in managing those key relationships. Once our first FSO rotated out, she was replaced by one of the former hostages from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and a fluent Dari linguist. He had a great deal of experience in that part of the world. He could converse with the locals as a local would and had the cultural sensibilities to be very effective.

At the ministerial level, our relationship was also very good with the representatives of the central government in the province. We tended to engage with them directly. But like anything else, including my relationship with Ismail Khan, uniform relationships were probably more important. My Guard Force Commander and Ismail Khan's Guard Force Commander, personal bodyguard, were brothers, and so in spite of the proper protocol of going through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to engage with the governor (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs technically was supposed to be the gatekeeper for the governor), I was able to circumvent all that. I did have a good relationship with MFA, but they probably had a certain amount of resentment of the fact that I had direct contact with the governor and utilized it whenever I really needed to rather than wait for days to get an appointment. I could arrange one in minutes if I needed to.

"You try to identify the power players and work with or through them as much as you can."

You try to identify the power players and work with or through them as much as you can. Ismail Khan had a very powerful supporter by the name of Hajji Abdul Bakke. Bakke was the Ministry of Transportation representative in Herat but a larger-than-life character who had a lot of money and was rumored to be one of the people that helped Ismail Khan escape from prison in Kandahar during the Taliban era. When I had to have difficult conversations with Ismail Khan about any particular issue, I normally engaged first with Hajji Abdul Bakke to kind of warm the situation up and get the ugly stuff out of the way so that I could sit down and have a reasonable conversation with Ismail Khan, once he had been sensitized by his confidant. Hajji Abdul Bakke was able to tell Ismail Khan exactly what I needed to have done and exactly what my opinion was – or more importantly, what the central government’s opinion or the Task Force’s opinion was about something where we had difficulties with him. That relationship proved to be very beneficial.

Khan had a very strained relationship with UNAMA because UNAMA did not feel that Ismail Khan was the answer to Herat’s problems. Some of what I believe about that relationship is pure conjecture, so I’m going to spare you that, but there were some people there who were, in my humble opinion, actively working for a regime change in Herat. In any event, our relationship with UNAMA was solid. We had certain security responsibilities to assist them in evacuating if need be, and we worked with them on a daily basis. They were also very kind in allowing us to travel using their aircraft because in 2004 there was really no way for us to get around quickly.

Down at the district level, everybody was always glad to see us because we were the new kids in town and we had money. Potentially, we had projects for them and that sort of thing, so we had good relationships down at the district level. We would typically take a break every once in a while as we moved around our four provinces and meet with local villagers and it was an interesting experience for both of us. We learned a lot by talking to the people out there on these inspection missions; we did engage with the local population a fair amount. Relationships are how you build trust and the projects are how you build credibility. Back in 2004, the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) had just come into being, and so we were able to have some discretion about how we approached things. There was no USAID rep on the PRT. We had local national engineers to supervise our projects, but nobody from the U.S. government to apply funds in the form of USAID money or anything. The PRT was supposed to be the overseer for all this stuff going on in the provinces.

Even as we got on the ground, there were a lot of efforts ongoing with implementing partners of USAID with virtually no oversight. Very quickly, we, as PRT members and also as U.S. taxpayers, saw that there was difficulty with various construction projects that we had immediate access to. We could see that the workmanship was not what it should have been and that progress payments were being made without progress inspections because USAID just didn’t

have any resources to keep up. Their implementing partners were of varied degrees of quality. I'll just leave it at that.

We tried every opportunity we could to oversee and advise USAID as to what we were seeing on the ground. But frankly, there were a lot of things going on in the four provinces that we had no visibility on. We might get invited to an open house on a project that was within 100 miles of Herat province someplace that we didn't even know was going on because it was being done through some implementing partner who had contracted to a local national contractor. We never really were able to bring that under control. We tried to engage with the official that was primarily responsible for USAID in Afghanistan at the time, but she had virtually no resources in the west to monitor projects. This was before we started putting a USAID rep in the PRT, so that's a good change in the manning structure. Our Foreign Services Officer helped some, but she was not aware of everything that was going on either. I can think of several instances where we were invited to open houses for openings where we were completely unaware that it was a USAID effort. I can think of water projects for which we were sort of given a command performance to go to the open house without having any idea or oversight on the project whatsoever. Based on my conversations with PRT Commanders who come for training here at Camp Atterbury, I think this may be a condition that still exists in some parts of Afghanistan; money gets deployed through implementing partners without what we would consider proper oversight because of resourcing issues.

"I think one of the biggest aids to help the PRT build trust and gain credibility today is the way we build and train the team here before deployment."

I think one of the biggest aids to help the PRT build trust and gain credibility today is the way we build and train the team here before deployment. The difficulty in 2004 was that PRTs were brand new. I remember looking at a wiring diagram showing 125 Americans on a PRT. As I got closer and closer to the event, I realized that it was going to be a fraction of that number of Americans on the PRT.

Another thing that was particularly difficult was that the Security Force (SECFOR), our key enabler, was on an independent rotation cycle. They are the guys who get you out and get you where you need to go to do your job. My first four or five months in Herat, I had some seasoned professionals from the 18th Airborne Corps Artillery who were very wise about how to operate there. Then, I was blessed with a bunch of boys from the 34th Division. They later became superstars, but the first couple of months of that transition period were rather chaotic. They were not properly coached for their first deployment and as a result, they had difficulties with communications and with conducting convoy operations. As a result, the CA people and the PRT staff wound up training the second rotation of SECFOR about how we do business. That was a problem.

Another problem was that the Foreign Services Officer was on a career rotation cycle as well. So the team had to be rebuilt several times. I've talked to contemporaries, PRT Commanders, who had exactly the same experience. That, in varying degrees, there were these transition

periods. In chaos, there's opportunity for the locals. The local national staff on the PRT and the government people and everyone else could recognize when those seams and those chaotic periods were going on, and of course they would say how the old Foreign Services Officer promised me this and the former PRT Commander promised me that, and the SECFOR guys didn't operate this way before; and why are they operating this way now? There was all this just constant churning. The way we're doing it now, building a team here at Camp Atterbury under the 189th Infantry Brigade, I would have absolutely loved to have had this opportunity prior to deployment.

I don't think it's an institutional problem that in 2004 we weren't as developed and as sophisticated about putting PRT teams together as we are now. Over the past couple of years, this program has gotten a whole lot more sophisticated, a whole lot more on-target, and the 189th is extremely sensitive to capturing experiences people have had and implementing training to take care of any deficits. Probably the most critical piece was the interagency activity. As an example: What's the Foreign Services Officer's role and responsibilities? That was very unclear in 2004, but we learned it on the ground. The fact that those teams weren't built in the United States and then deployed made it very, very difficult. The way it has been done now is infinitely superior. I suspect that PRTs are not going to be just an Afghan and an Iraqi phenomenon. As we build these teams for a future deployment to other areas, bringing the expertise in early is critical.

PRT Story 5

Working through the Local Government to Develop Water, Sewer and Garbage Projects Helped Sustain It

My background is that I'm a former Army officer. I worked in civilian industry for over a decade. I'm an engineer and project manager and then I went back and studied engineering for developing communities, so I've kind of taken off in a mid-career change and I'm working in development. So this was kind of a good culmination of all of my background and experience here as the field program officer.

I think a good example of capacity building was a program through USAID called the Municipal Strengthening Program under the Democracy and Governance Office. There was a group called ICMA⁵ that was hired as the implementing partner and they were working in the municipal government, so they actually had Afghan mentors that were working there with the mayor and his staff to help them provide services.

"So often the military can go in and build, but then they can't train people to maintain whatever they build."

It started off small. They put in a basic water distribution system. There had been a basic water distribution system before, so they kind of repaired it and got it going again. It wasn't a huge capital expenditure. It wasn't 100 percent coverage either, but it was functioning. Once it was working, they helped the mayor's office to collect taxes so that it could become sustainable. So often the military can go in and build, but then they can't train people to maintain whatever they build. That was the good, unique part about USAID, they set up those services and they were training Afghans how to collect revenue and manage it.

After getting that underway, we wanted to provide sewage collection and treatment and also garbage. The problem that we were running into is they had a very small budget and those projects needed a lot more infrastructure. These other programs were going to be beyond the budget so I approached the PRT to use CERP funds to help fund these other projects.

That was in process when I was leaving the province and then when I moved to another province, a similar project was also being set up. It was the exact same kind of thing; we approached the PRT there to fund the infrastructure. For the sewage treatment, you needed settling ponds and for garbage collection, you need transfer sites, collection vehicles and a municipal garage for the vehicles. It was all very low-level, very basic; we were actually going to get three-wheeled tuk-tuks to use as collection vehicles.

⁵ ICMA (International City/County Management Association) is a nonprofit organization that provides training and assistance to local governments in emerging democracies.

It was a stepped program, just small steps like that, and it was building towards a sustainable system. At first, you would have a transfer station. And you keep filling those up because they're very close to town, so you could use these small vehicles that get good gas mileage, and then after maybe five years or so, as the transfer stations fill up, then things get moved to a dump that's further out of town.

We weren't building everything from top to bottom all at one time; it was phased. At first, we would build the transfer station and then if everything's going well and they're collecting taxes and revenue, we could eventually build a proper dump.

That's one of the good things about USAID; we're legally mandated to do everything properly to meet environmental laws and standards. I think these were all great steps towards setting up and extending the reach of the government, providing government services, and doing things to meet and help the environment and the people. I think it was a very visible effect. It's not 100 percent done right now, but that program was, I think, a pretty good success and it's been expanded from 10 municipalities to 30; essentially every province now.

The unfortunate thing that happened was that the mayor was assassinated and then a month or two later, the municipal building was attacked and there was a huge fire right downtown. The ICMA staff all made it out alive, but several people were killed and a lot of things were destroyed. In essence, the program got started, it stopped because of the attacks and loss of the mayor, and then once the program started again, they were going to have to get more money and funds to start ramping that up again. That reinforces the fact that, with everything in Afghanistan, there are many unexpected challenges.

"That's how it's done if you want to get it right; you do it all within the context of the local government."

That's how it's done if you want to get it right; you do it all within the context of the local government. There are a lot of NGOs that support schools or clinics and things like that and I appreciate that because there's so much need. But at the same time, that's never developing capacity of the government; if those NGOs ever leave, if those donations ever quit functioning, those schools and clinics and things may not stand up on their own. So I really love that model. I mean, it's working through the government and they're getting the capacity development and everything. That's the way it should be.

Inter-Agency Personnel were Co-equals in Theory, But Not Always in Practice

I think the idea of using Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) to fund infrastructure and then using USAID for the capacity building, whenever we could do projects like that, was a natural fit because USAID couldn't manage the construction as well. Because everything is so decentralized in Afghanistan and with the PRT right there in town, it's much easier for them to keep tabs on that type of stuff. The Inter-Agency partnerships can work well because we balance each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Unfortunately, no matter how much team building you have, I think it all comes down to individual personalities and how open people are to working on things. I mean, everybody understands what the PRT model is, that you have a military commander and you have representatives from State Department, USAID and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and they're all supposed to be co-equals, but it's different in practice. In trying to make those relationships work, I think you just have to pick your battles and things you're passionate about.

Like when I was with them, I wanted people to call me by my first name, but you almost take a step down if you do that. If I insisted that people call me ma'am, I'm sure they would have understood that I was at a higher level, but I wanted to have a close relationship with people. I wasn't so concerned about the customs and courtesies and things like that. I just wanted to be approachable so that people were more willing to work with me. Because, the more I knew about what they were doing and the more they knew about what I was doing, the easier it was to find ways where we could overlap like that.

"We were all very much in our own little silos, and it's really hard when you're one person. Well, actually, I was two, because I had a USAID Afghan worker with me, but you still rely on the military for getting out and your security and everything like that, so they're kind of always in charge."

It's sometimes hard to build good rapport with military organizations. We did not have a close relationship to the level that I would have liked it. We were all very much in our own little silos, and it's really hard when you're one person. Well, actually, I was two, because I had a USAID Afghan worker with me, but you still rely on the military for getting out and your security and everything like that, so they're kind of always in charge.

You can make yourself as open as possible and people don't always take the opportunity. I wanted to work even with them, but if they put all the civilians in one room, and we just didn't interact with them, it's hard. I would have preferred to sit with the Civil Affairs (CA) Detachment and kind of be in the middle of all of that, but I didn't reach the level of integration with them that I would have liked.

Because we in USAID had our own money, it actually made us more distant. The USDA rep did not have access to any funding streams, so he had to work with CA to try to get money. But I had my own money and I had my own projects, so I think they saw me as a separate entity that they were just tasked to bring around with them, like when I needed to get out or when I had visitors or when we had things that we needed to get out to do.

"Someone actually said to me once, 'Because of what we have to do for you, it's a diversion from our PRT mission,' and they saw the PRT mission as spending and monitoring CERP. They didn't see it as a bigger interagency effort."

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If I got the chance to do it all over again, I think I would ruffle some feathers and really fight for those types of things. Instead of asking for it and asking for it, I would just demand it. I’d demand that we all sit together; that we work together. I think that you can overcome the biggest obstacles to doing good capacity building just by getting everybody to work together. Just to give you an idea, our implementing partner was based out of a large province and in order to bring an expatriate down, there are flights three days a week and they would fly into a Forward Operating Base. In order to go get these people, we had to get a convoy, a combat patrol or whatever you want to call them. We’d have to drive over and pick them up and bring them to the FOB and stay overnight and then do that whole thing to bring them back.

It sounds really easy—come visit us for a day—but it is actually a complex thing to do because I have to go through booking all the flights and hope there’s no bad weather and everything always goes wrong. To have somebody down to the FOB for a day is a big deal and I brought this guy down from ICMA. The whole purpose of the meeting was to brief the commander on this CERP project. The guy from ICMA had done the statement of work, he had everything, and it was kind of like bringing it to the commander on a platter, saying this is a great success story. We could all work together on this, but we could not get 10 minutes of the commander’s time to talk to a guy who flew in from Kabul despite the fact that we’d given a week’s notice and all this kind of stuff.

So that was kind of a common problem I had with dealing with the military, is that I just didn’t seem to get the support in return, even when I was doing it all and laying it all out for them. On things that required even closer working and collaboration and information and stuff like that, it was even harder.

That guy did get back down a little later, but then, all of a sudden, the mayor asked for something and the contractor was on vacation and then the commander went on vacation. So it was something, but it took months and delayed everything because he didn’t meet with him when we had him there the first time. But I think my greatest success came from working together with the other parts of the PRT.

But just the fact that we actually talked and worked together on some projects, USAID was doing roads and working and coordinating with the military.

We had some other good interactions like that, and I would say that's my biggest success, was getting the PRT to actually work with us.

We did the same kinds of things working with the State Department rep. An example is with reconciliation—there's a lot of talk right now about reconciliation, but that's already been done once in Afghanistan. State had a program that was called the PTS program. It was a small-scale program; I really don't know that much about the specifics, but when I arrived there, my State Department colleague was the director of the PTS program and he was working with reconciled fighters. So I'd actually had dinner with former Taliban guys, and I got to meet them several times. I dressed in western clothes when I was on the FOB, but when I went out with this PTS program to meet these former fighters, I covered. So just imagine being an American woman and talking to former Taliban commandos.

We ended up doing about \$250,000 with USAID money directly with the former combatants themselves, doing some livelihood training for them. We bought school uniforms for the kids. We did some training for widows of former combatants so they could improve their livelihood and standard of living. We did kind of a handout thing, but some of these guys would come in to us and so we'd do a big ceremony and we had tons of news coverage. We'd give them a wheelbarrow, a shovel and a pick and a few hand tools and a huge bag of rice and oil and some beans.

These guys could wheel this food home and have some basic tools and go out and get a job or find some work. I mean, even the smallest thing like that can go a long way; these projects cost \$6,000 or \$7,000. I think sometimes those projects are way more valuable than a \$40 million government complex.

But anyway, USAID funded some stuff with them directly, even though it was a State Department idea. So we did have relationships within our PRT depending on people's interest level to work. USAID could fund some of this and CERP could fund some of that, and so I think the more we all worked together, the more successes we had.

"...their hands are tied with CERP. They can't fund many of the projects they want to fund because they always have to talk in terms of "How is this emergency response?"

It's not that USAID is better or worse than anybody else, but USAID is a development organization and I think the military has often been just about spending the money without any thought as to how effective the money is. They can't monitor and evaluate their projects with the same level of technical expertise. But their hands are tied with CERP. They can't fund many of the projects they want to fund because they always have to talk in terms of "How is this emergency response?" And I think the fact that we're still spending CERP eight or nine years later is kind of ridiculous because we're not in that kind of a mode anymore. If we're trying to move development, I wish that the military could kind of expand their vision, in that sense.

And USAID and the military can still all have different, although somewhat complementary roles, but we need to allow the military to see and do the bigger picture and they have to improve how they monitor projects and evaluate them. It just seems that the Commanders are only graded on how much money they spend and not on effectiveness.

"I'd like to see the mentality of all of that changed and for all of us to slow down spending. It's more about impact. The small things were much, much more effective in changing people's lives and perceptions. If you're so poor that you can't even pay the taxi fare to drive on that road to get into town, how has that road changed your life? But if somebody comes out and does a small program in your community or helps the Afghan government actually do that program in your community, that's much more effective and changes people's perceptions a lot more."

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Now that I'm back here at Camp Atterbury helping to train PRTs, it's been huge. I mean, I'm probably going to have more impact now on military and CERP spending than I ever did while I was in country. I'm hoping that I've reached out to some people and that maybe it'll drastically change their thinking.

Skilled Interpreters Helped Build Capacity

I was super lucky in one province because I had an Afghan coworker, whom I mentioned. He was fantastic. Because he'd stayed there, he knew all the people; he had everybody's phone number, he knew everybody's background, and he knew everybody's history if I needed to talk to anybody. He knows USAID; he knows their programs. I'd be like, "Oh, call the mayor and talk about this," and he could easily call them up. And so I had a built-in relationship, and every Field Program Officer (FPO) that comes to the province has it because of him. He's a big asset. He greatly improved my effectiveness, especially in cases where I could not get out. I endangered some projects if I came to visit them because I had to come with a military presence, so many times I would just send him out alone and have him check on those sites.

It was a great system. I had my Afghan co-worker, and the commander had a dedicated interpreter who stayed for, I think, close to four or five years. He left when I was there, but they picked somebody to replace him who'd already been within the PRT and was groomed for the

job. Likewise, the CA detachment had dedicated interpreters and there was one guy who worked with the medical and another guy who worked with the USDA.

There was a lot of capacity building that was done with those dedicated interpreters. It helped with their interpreting skills because they learned all the agricultural stuff so it increased their vocabulary. They knew about our programs and with that knowledge they became the continuity. Even with the PRTs rotating in and out, building up the Afghans made all the transitions go smoother not to mention the day to day execution. I thought it was a really good idea.

And then when I moved to another province, there was not a USAID Afghan worker there in the same type of position that my co-worker was working. I don't speak the language and the PRT had a floating pool of interpreters. Someone from the PRT would pick them up in the morning and they would sit in a room. Then, if you needed an interpreter, you were supposed to go in there and pick one of them and have them make a phone call for you.

It was nearly impossible because I would have to sit down and I'd have to pick you out and I'd say, "Okay, this is how the whole program is and this is how things work, and then could you call this guy and have a discussion about this topic?" And so I was always cold calling people, I didn't have a relationship; I didn't know much of the history or background of any of those people. If anything was lost in my description of the project to the terp (slang for interpreter), a lot of miscommunications could take place.

Combining Efforts Produced a Greater Understanding and a Common Goal

When trying to figure out what projects to do, there are two aspects to consider. One is what the PRT as a team is working and talking about. We also need to work within the government and consider what they want. I think if we get the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) processes in place, the standard is using what they call a project nomination form. That happened in one province since I left country and I like the idea because there's community structures in place, there's community development councils, that's part of what the Afghan national government is working on. Because development is top down and bottom up, it takes some of both to help identify all the needs and priorities.

I like that project nomination form because if you want something, you've got to bring it through the appropriate channels. And if you do that, the Afghan government can vet all these projects. You know, you just meet with the governor; you just hear what the governor wants. He's elected and he's not always from that province. He often has ulterior motives.

But if you actually get projects that come up using a project nomination form and the PDC process, you get the paperwork to approve it, to see who is actually requesting it, then you can look across all the sectors and I think that's a great way to help prioritize those things.

One of the things that I did not like when we went to the PDC meeting, the Commander said, "Give me your Top Ten," and the only thing he ever saw was the Top Ten most expensive things they could possibly come up with. And so the Top Ten list of the PRT was always the ten most expensive things. The attitude seemed to be, if you're only going to do ten, well, this is what we want. We want roads and major buildings and stuff. But it was never \$2,000 to have a kids' sports day—that's just one of the things I got financed; we did one for boys and one for girls.

With USAID money, I had flexibility to do a lot of small projects like that. We helped give additional money to fund the national solidarity program and help communities with their block grants.

I did not see the PRT using NGOs to the extent that USAID was using NGOs and I think that was kind of like a mind block for them. I'd approach that PRT and I'd try talking to them about doing that same type of thing and they said, "We don't need to hire somebody. We can do it ourselves." They had \$50 million during the nine months that they were there and they had four engineers, but engineers cannot design an agricultural program or a capacity building program for the government. My feeling is they often saw it just in terms of things they could build and it wasn't people or relationships or other things like that. They were just looking at infrastructure all the time. And I said, "Look, if you gave out a \$10,000 grant, you can't manage them with four people," I don't know if that was one person that I ran into or if that's the military mindset.

I even see it now at Camp Atterbury as a trainer, and it's unfortunate. Military members of the PRT don't actually interact with civilians until the final week of training. The civilian trainers have been trying to fill in when we can, to be a presence or be here to help them, but military are very much used to doing things on their own the way they've been told. I don't know if that's everybody or if it just happens to be the people the luck of the draw put me in there with, but it can be very challenging at times. They just seem to see it as "This is what we do." And they said, "We can hire a contractor to build a road," but, for some reason they'd never think to hire an NGO to carry out a tree-planting program or a women's livelihood program.

In my opinion, bringing in the Agricultural Development Teams (ADTs) has helped. The PRT, like everybody else, knows how to write a CERP package to get a road approved, to build a bridge or a school. And then as the ADT teams came in, they didn't fit in that mold. They were trying to find agricultural projects and so they were actually hiring NGOs to do work with them and for them. And I think, you hear a lot of times around the military that, "Oh, NGOs don't want to work with the military," and one of the scenarios that we're planning for this final training event is actually based on a real meeting that I had.

When I was in one province, because they were poppy-free, they'd gotten very little agricultural money. When I moved to another, we had an ADT team there and then we had our USDA rep and then there were a ton of USAID agricultural programs that were going on there. It was a very different atmosphere and there were a huge amount of USAID partners there and ADT but they weren't really working together. So I decided that we needed to get everyone together at one time. I knew it was going to be a huge pain to get everybody together to go through all the clearances to get everybody on base and everything, but it was important to get everybody that I could track down to that meeting.

I went after everybody that I could find; anyone concerned with the agricultural sector. The ADT team was invited and USDA and NGOs and IGOs (Intergovernmental Organizations) and everything. To show how much we needed to have a meeting like this, there could be two guys, both USAID agriculture partners, both working in the same province and neither knowing what the other was doing. It was very social. We sat around for probably an hour or so while I got everybody on base. Everybody gave a presentation about what they were doing, everybody asked questions. All the NGOs there were willing to take CERP money; in fact, many of them already had. I think it was a big transitional shift that everybody thinks that NGOs won't take

your money or work with the military, but they do. The PRT was invited to the meeting, but they didn't attend, but our ADT team was just like, "Oh my god! That was so fantastic!" They're like, "My god! If somebody would have done this for us nine months ago when we got here, it would be so different." Because they'd been trying to create things, like everybody who comes into country, they always talk about knowing who's in your battle space but they never got together with them.

And so what I'm hoping to do with the training scenario that we're doing is just that. That when you get into country, find out everybody who's working your battle space, in terms of a development perspective. And if you track down all those people, find out what's been successful, look at their current projects, look at their past projects and talk to your neighbors, like what are they doing in the province over there or anywhere else that has a similar agricultural basis as you. Even if they're not a neighbor, there are still so many things that can be done.

But there are just so many things that if they're good, then continue them. Even if USAID is doing it, you can still fund it. Chances are, if you offer these guys more money, they can probably expand it. So my hope is to have a big change of thinking with the PRTs through that scenario. And the more we think about that and all work together, I think it is going to be critical.

It's like what the military calls Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB), but nobody thinks about it that way. The military comes in and the mentality is like, "I'm CERP, I'm doing this." They don't even realize there are Afghan national government programs that are going on. I've tried to tell people about the national solidarity program and other programs like it. I've told military people about those programs and found that they're unaware that the Afghan government actually has money and funds to do things themselves. The first thing is that you have to find the people and the programs that are working in your battle space. You have to talk to the other guys (like USDA) and ask who they are working with. If you don't sit in the same room with all those same people and make it a team effort, everybody's in isolation doing their own thing.

Even here at Camp Atterbury, we talk a lot about what a PRT is in theory, but the folks we're training want to know practical things. They're like, "Don't tell me about USAID programs in general. Tell me exactly what programs are operating in my province. What does that mean to me? Who does them? Will they work with us? How can they work with us?"

When I've had a chance to meet with people and talk to them at that level, it's been fantastic. That's the way a lot of our training scenarios are set up, so I'm really hoping that we get some good actors and pull these off. You know, they're all told "The Afghan government needs you; you need to help them run their government better." But I've found out they don't actually get a lot of training. I could be wrong, but if you haven't been taught a lot about the sub-national governance in Afghanistan, how can you train and mentor them to run a more effective government in the province?

I like that whole idea of the project nomination form and training these new PRTs in best practices. In two provinces, three PRT commanders ago, this guy started a program where instead of the PRT doing the contracting and paying for things directly, he brought in the local

government and said, “You’re rural development; I’m going to contract with you and you’re going to subcontract to the builders.” In doing that, you teach the locals transparent contracting processes and you’re building the capacity of his engineers. The PRT is still doing the exact same things it’s always done—doing our checks, making our payments—but we’re involving the Afghans in selecting the contractor, teaching them that whole process, making it transparent. If you’re the ultimate recipient of the road, you’re included in selecting the contractor. This PRT commander developed this whole process and they’ve been using it for several years. And even though it’s been briefed at other times, it doesn’t seem to have caught on, so we’ve been trying to spread the word about those types of things; what we call best practices. It seems so hard to find a place to put all that and manage it, so we’re trying to use these training scenarios to spread some of the best practices and things that we’ve found and seen.

When you bring everyone together there are great synergies that you can create. The ADT team was working on grapes because that’s a huge commodity in the area and CERP funded grape trellises. Before this program, the locals would actually just mound up dirt and the grapes would grow in the mounds. And so by trellising them and growing them up, you could increase the yields; you could get them up off the ground, which saved a lot of the rot and pest problems. They could treat them for bugs and things without using chemicals.

At the same time, USAID, through Mercy Corps⁶, was working on a program to help restart a defunct factory. The owner of the factory had tried to get restarted after the Taliban were kicked out. He spent a ton of money trying to put a juicing line in and he was never approved to make juice. So he spent all this money and then refused to spend any more. The factory had been sitting idle for years and everybody had tried to get it back. Well, USAID and Mercy Corps helped get him certified and set up to package bulk raisins. Then, once they had somebody who could package them, they found international buyers for the raisins.

CERP was already subsidizing these trellis posts – they should have cost \$12, but subsidized people could buy them for \$3 – and yet no one was using them. ADT did some demos for a group of farmers, got them to start using the trellises and then the next group of farmers were buying posts, and so the subsidy would be less and less as the technology and the word spread. It was especially helpful because with the factory and international buyers, the farmers knew that somebody’s going to buy their raisins now and pay them a better price.

Mercy Corps could also form Farmers Cooperatives (Co-Ops) and I was trying to get CERP to fund physical collection stations because if Mercy Corps didn’t have to spend that money on the infrastructure once again, they could spend more money on developing more Co-Ops.

Also at the same time, I was meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and I found out they had gone to this agricultural fair. They showed me this brochure about this guy who was starting the first juice factory in the country.

So I talked to the owner of the juice factory, and I said: “Well, what about if we get some Co-Ops organized, would you be interested in buying some pomegranates?”

⁶ A nonprofit organization based in Portland, Oregon.

The juice factory was a different USAID program, so that was something I wasn't even aware of. My own agency was doing that and if I hadn't met with the Chamber of Commerce, I might never have found out. So much of what you learn about is based on how much you get out and how much you talk to people. It's all about networking. Even within USAID, we have plenty of problems of communication.

The PRT did a similar project there where they teach people how to sort and package fruit for sale. So you could sort and package your top quality fruit for sale, for consumption, and then you could take your second quality stuff, haul it off and have them turn it into juice.

It's radically changing. It's beyond subsistence agriculture to actually creating a whole value chain. And it took bits and pieces of everybody working together to do a collection of smaller projects. But by getting and meeting and working with those teams really well, you create those opportunities.

The ADT team that I worked with was fantastic. Those guys were great, and they were working in multiple provinces, so, once again, you weren't just getting isolated information. That's a lot of how I learned what was going on in the other areas.

But that was just another great success story of something that was going because everybody worked together and then there was something else falling right behind, kind of building on that same success. The contacts I made during my tour, I passed it on to everybody and I'm hoping that that kind of stuff is still going on.

There are so many little ways that we can build and work together to make real change, rather than just a cash-for-work program; to clean out a canal that fills up again, and then we've got to pay them again and all we've done is create a welfare state. And they think that that's going to bring peace—it's counterinsurgency, you're employing the working age males. But at the same time, you've got to do more than keep them busy. You've got to keep them busy doing something that's eventually going to make them sustainable.

And we have to focus on the women too, because if women get better educated, they have healthier families. If they bring in money, that money stays in the family. I mean, if you want longer term success 10, 20, 30 years from now, you've got to look beyond just this season and how are they going to be sustainable. Which is why I think that big shift from emergency response to development is needed; there has to be a bigger spectrum of thinking within PRTs and the military.

PRT Story 6

The Greatest Risk was in Not Building Relationships

Imagine the makeup of a dream PRT. You know, a Commander, an Executive Officer (XO), and the Civil Affairs (CA) leadership being top drawer. Imagine a PRT Commander who's a submarine commander who's got his MBA and is charismatic. A great speaker, he draws people to himself and he can motivate just by simply being that type of person. He has that gift. The XO was a doctor in real life. The two main CA people, one is a movie producer in real life and the other is an executive with a major oil company who also has an MBA. And I've got an MBA from my previous life. The MBA gives you the ability to kind of analyze problems and find the solution kind of quickly, wade through all the extraneous stuff and make decisions without complete information. The USAID person at our PRT had a couple of decades of foreign experience. Our State Department person was also very seasoned and experienced. I was real excited to be part of that team, and I thought we could do so much with regard to capacity building because we had all this talent.

Our province was unusual. The PRT was not co-located with its provincial government. It was quite a ways away, so we couldn't interact with the governor and the provincial level staffs very easily; only once a month when we'd have to fly there. But we had a district Governor and other miscellaneous Afghan government workers just half a mile away at a district center. We would interact with them every now and then, but my plan and my hope was to convince the PRT to come up with some kind of consistent time to meet with them. Capacity building takes time and there's never enough of it. If we're supposed to do capacity building, let's spend some time consistently with the district governor or the health person or the education person.

My idea would have been to assign some very talented individuals to mentor them consistently. The Afghans could either come to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) or we could go to the district center. I laid this out as clear as I could, and I was told: "Well, it's just too dangerous to try and do something like that consistently...if the enemy detects a pattern in us going there..." and all this stuff. I thought that was very unfortunate, because it was such an opportunity for consistent one-on-one mentoring and to build relationships, because capacity building is about relationships and trust, also. But I was overruled and life went on and there were random visits where you'd have a topic and it would be very focused and then you'd spend maybe an hour engaged with these people and then come back to the four walls of the FOB.

That was an idea that didn't really work out, but I think any PRT could devote a portion of their time to some kind of consistent mentoring. That would be some advice that I would have for the people that are making those decisions; make that an explicit requirement. Work with the Afghans in a consistent manner where you set up a schedule. I know there are USAID programs that hire people to do that. They're not sending dummies over to be PRT Commanders, and most of the other people that are over there have great talents as well. When I went for USDA, it was like a nationwide call who wants to be on it, and they probably got hundreds of people that wanted to go and they picked a dozen. Most of us had something that we could offer.

In my case, I did capacity building for four years with Indian tribes. Granted there's a big difference, but the process is the same. You work with them hand-in-hand. You're very open with what you're doing and what they're doing, and you work together to solve problems jointly.

And you lay it all out. This is what we're trying to do. Let's figure out how to do it together. Instead, if they're down there and we're up here in our FOB, there's a disconnect. That's one story that had a sad ending in my case. If it's just about projects and spending Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) money to look good – sadly, I've seen people who are so excited about it, "Oh, I've spent \$60 million in CERP. I have a 95% obligation rate" – what have you accomplished in terms of the Afghans being able to manage projects and work with budgets? Granted, there's corruption and all that other stuff, but if you're they're sharing a desk and everything's open, I think you can control that.

We Had to Develop the Local Talent

I'll follow that up with a success story. I don't speak a word of the language. I'm terrible at language. You know, some people's brains are good at some things and absolutely have no capacity on others. Well, I've no aptitude for language.

There were cultural advisors and interpreters on our PRT, but one of my colleagues at another PRT was able to hire some Afghans to live and work with him on a daily basis. Right away, that was my number one priority because I could see the benefits of having people that I work with consistently. I advertised for the position and hired two young Afghan men who had degrees in agriculture. They had worked for some Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and had terrific personalities.

They lived on our FOB and daily we worked as a three-person team. We picked two projects – I'll describe those two as success stories – that were pretty complex and could have derailed at any point, but they knew there was no way I was going to give up until these projects were successful.

I think opportunities to hire Afghans – and I have other colleagues that have done that – are just an amazing way to build capacity. I know it's one-sies and two-sies, but if it could be institutionalized that every American is paired up with an Afghan or two, that would have a ripple effect. If we're sending more and more civilians, that's more Afghans that'll have that exposure, and that's capacity building at its most basic level; having colleagues working daily together to solve the complex problems that are over there.

Another small success story, this probably doesn't amount to much, but it has to do with the whole social aspect. I did two English lesson classes. You may wonder: "How did I do that, not speaking the local language?" The interpreters spoke enough English that we could communicate and then we would read the New York Times or some real highbrow publication. I would print it out and they would read it. I would listen to them, correct their pronunciation and we'd work on vocabulary. I did a much more basic class with the Afghan National Army (ANA). I'd have my higher level class with the interpreters on their FOB and then the ANA class where we would do just basic vocabulary. That's a form of capacity building because it's improving their English, but the social component is also really important to capacity building. Maybe that's not a textbook definition, but I think it's sure an important part of it. If we're building up their skills and abilities to function and have a functioning government, a lot of things are shared in informal settings.

I just wandered into that project. I didn't know I would teach an English class, but people were asking me, and so why not? I was the USDA guy, so why's the USDA guy teaching English to the Afghan Soldiers? They have a need. I spent way more time with them than the U.S. Soldiers that were training them to be Soldiers. But, I had a daily consistent time with them. And we talked about all sorts of other stuff as best we could. I see that as some kind of transfer of skills and information in a subtle way.

Relationships Between Afghan and American Soldiers Could Have Been More Meaningful

This segues into a story about an opportunity for capacity building. These ANA Soldiers lived on our FOB. Inside the four walls of the FOB, they had their own separate compound. And even though it was inside our FOB, there was very little interaction between those Soldiers and American Soldiers that might live 50 yards away in separate barracks.

So my idea was if we're building up and training the Afghan Soldiers, why not take half the Afghan Soldiers and put them in an American barracks. And then take the remaining Americans and put them in with the Afghans. At least have them share living quarters; all kinds of informal lessons can be transmitted in that way. What an amazing experiment it would have been to see. If we're talking about capacity building, it takes time and trust and all that. And living together – I mean, it's fraught with conflict and other issues – but I think everybody eventually works it out if they want to survive. They're uncomfortable anyway, so why not be uncomfortable just mixing all together and have them share the misery? But I was told no, that that was too complicated; there are security issues. Well, we're all living in the same FOB! If we're worried about them, gosh, I need to hide under my bed because they could walk over to my little B-hut⁷ any night. I'm not scared of them. I teach them English every night. They've got guns, so it was just somebody's kneejerk reaction. "Oh, it's too dangerous; there are security issues." Capacity building could really be ramped up if people would be more open minded.

We Saw the T.E. Lawrence's 15th Article in Action⁸

When I worked for the USDA in Arizona previously, I was assigned to work with a regional nonprofit organization, and given that I was in western Arizona, there were five Indian nations in my region, in a huge three-county region. I was told to build their capacity along with the capacity of rural governments. We had three very rural counties, maybe a dozen cities. Bullhead City, Havasu City, and Yuma were some of the cities in this region. But in any event, I was kind of a glorified grant writer and fund finder, but the point was not just to write grants and find funds, but to bring my partners alongside who were working with regional nonprofit organization and teach them how to do those tasks and eventually remove myself out of it so that they could do more of that on their own.

I'm very familiar with capacity building because that was my job for four years before I went to Afghanistan. It takes a certain personality to enjoy that kind of work. Most Americans, most

⁷ A semi-permanent wooden structure used in the place of a tent.

⁸ T.E. Lawrence, Article 15: "*Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them.*"

high speed type people that like to get work done feel kind of disappointed when they slow down and work with people that need a lot of help to function at that level, but I kind of took to it. It was interesting and it was enjoyable because I could see the progress that people could make and eventually solve their own problems.

I guess I was qualified to work on a PRT in Afghanistan, except from the get-go, all I heard was, “You’re doing capacity building. You’re going to do projects, but you’ve got to link the Afghan government into everything you do.” I certainly got that before I went over there. The USDA comes to Afghanistan with the PRTs without a budget. It’s just a person with a brain and a heart who wants to do good work.

We can tap into CERP money if we make a case to the Commander. And the rest of the interagency team could convince him that our project is valid and could have the desired effects.

Some of the main sought-after effects now were jobs for people, dealing with the lack of education and having the Afghan government function. Building roads and improving the agriculture sector are two things that everybody talks about. Agriculture is 80% of the economy, but it’s just a footnote in most conversations. If you look at the budget, look at where somebody spends their money, you can tell where their heart is. You know, there’s really not all that much going on with CERP when it comes to agriculture.

I didn’t have a specific agriculture budget, but I knew that USAID had money. With the help of the PRT—the idea came to me from one of the CA leaders—we decided to try and do a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)⁹ type program. He knew about it from history and how successful it was in the United States during the Depression. I did my graduate work at the University of Idaho and the theme of my dissertation was conservation corps type programs and how many benefits they produce: education, training, conservation work, jobs. Our idea was that this was the ideal way to have some of those desired effects now, but also to train the Afghans for the future.

It was like some kind of bolt out of the blue that he would happen to bring this topic up which was near and dear to me and I actually knew something about. The rest of the PRT said “Yeah, let’s give it a go.” From that point on, I channeled all my resources into making that a reality. From the very beginning, I had meetings with people at every level of the Afghan government, from villagers to the district leadership to the provincial Governor to the minister of agriculture to let them know about the idea.

Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas. This is something that worked in our country in the ‘30s when we had millions of people out of work, we had terrible conservation issues—the dust bowl—and we needed to plant trees. So this is how we did it. The government invested in giving people jobs to plant trees and build roads and parks and stuff. And it was around for nine years until WWII put our focus elsewhere and our economy recovered.

⁹ The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program. The CCC employed young unemployed men as manual laborers for the conservation of natural resources in rural United States.

Everybody got it because it was such a no-brainer, like all these things are going to happen in Afghanistan in your little province and this district. We did it at the district level, which we thought was manageable. Also, we made sure that everybody knew that it was a “pilot” program, so from my perspective, there really was no downside to it. We hit a few bumps along the way, but we involved the Afghans every step of the way. And we made them feel like it was all them; we just had the idea and we were kind of behind the scenes a little bit, but we really were letting the Afghans run the whole thing. The PRT contracted with an Afghan NGO that had like 250 people on their staff and all but three or four were Afghans. So we had their expertise. Between the time we had the idea, when we got \$670,000 in CERP funding to do this, and then a few months after that, the participants were living in a camp just outside the FOB and they were starting to get this huge 200-acre field that was just nothing but dirt and rocks ready to plant 60,000 trees.

The program ran its full year. They hired teachers, a mullah (Muslim religious leader), cooks, and everything. It was a turnkey operation. We left no stone unturned. My two Afghan colleagues were involved intimately in every step and the district governor and anybody that could have an interest in this was involved. That’s capacity building. Very peripherally, the PRT and me were pushing from behind and making sure all these things were still happening, but they’re doing it.

We proved it could be done. It was successful in all measures; it met the benchmarks that we wanted to hit. Will they be educated? Well, we had teachers for them every day after work. They’d come and they’d sit in the classroom where they’d get reading, writing and arithmetic and stuff. Would there be training? Well, there was a training component both in the field and in the classroom. Would they get work done? Well, they planted the 60,000-tree forest. It’s going to eventually grow and that community will have that resource.

"...when it comes to capacity building, anytime anybody has a bright idea, it's a bad idea unless they consciously figure out how to eventually turn it over to the Afghan government."

Everything we set out to accomplish happened. There were a few bumps along the road, but basically this became a model for how to do this. And the goal is not just to do it one off. We pitched this to the Ministry of Agriculture early on and we let them know this is a model that can be used in any given district, maybe even anywhere in Afghanistan. Once you have some funding in your budget, you can do this. And your Ministry of Agriculture can task your provincial agriculture departments to set these up in a province, because you have kind of a cookbook now on how to do it, all the components. But for the funding, they were highly interested in doing it. It’s an idea that’s waiting to explode. To have this kind of new deal for Afghanistan do these. And so when it comes to capacity building, anytime anybody has a bright

idea, it's a bad idea unless they consciously figure out how to eventually turn it over to the Afghan government. That's the moral of the story.

The only other project I was able to start while I was there was a District Agriculture Learning Center. It was a small building with some land out back, just like you'd find in a rural county in America. This is a place where farmers and ranchers could come and learn about new techniques, things they could do to do their job better in their field. In the U.S. we have extension agents that go out and visit farmers and ranchers, but in Afghanistan, it's pretty hard to really reach all those people. So we located a facility that's an Afghan facility, not a coalition or NGO building, and it's clearly labeled as such. We knew, too, that it would have to be simple, but comprehensive. We laid it out so it had fields out back, a classroom, and an office for the government employees. The location was also close to the nearest village where people would come for supplies and equipment. We put a little sleeping room there so people could stay overnight if they had to walk a long distance from their village to the center to take a class. Clearly, this will be an Afghan facility to anyone looking at it and they'll be able to say that their government is doing something to help me, the poor farmer, instead of all these handout programs.

"...the capacity building comes not so much from the center itself, but from Afghans being involved in everything from the conception to actually working there and we had a plan to eventually turn it over to their government."

That was the same approach as with the conservation corps project. We designed it so that these could be done and run by their government. A cookie cutter approach, but you could repeat this any place with just the bare bones. We figured that the stuff that they grow there could eventually be used to support the staff that worked there. Again, that was just a simple idea, but the capacity building comes not so much from the center itself, but from Afghans being involved in everything from the conception to actually working there and we had a plan to eventually turn it over to their government.

If I get the chance to go back, I think I would be even more aggressive than I am now and just on the verge of being obnoxious about it. It's so important and maybe some people get it, but those that don't shouldn't get a pass. Somebody should hold them accountable. We've got to help develop the Afghan government. You could do so many projects and spend so many millions of dollars and accomplish little because it's just a treadmill that's going to keep going forever. Let's have a moratorium on new projects. Let's get caught up on everything that we've funded so far. Let's intimately involve the Afghans in everything we do that has to do with getting a school built or an Ag project launched. Let's articulate that "You will work with the Afghan government." I mean, you have to in everything you do.

PRT Story 7

I'm a mobilized Reservist. I was recalled to active duty after a 10-year break and I was with the first joint PRT teams that went out to Afghanistan, the combined Air Force, Navy, Army and Inter-Agency teams.

Initially, the PRTs were Civil Affairs (CA) guys led by an active Army Colonel, but then they decided to build these joint teams, which is what we're using now. I deployed with the first team and was trained by the 189th, the unit I work for now.

My first deployment to Afghanistan, I spent 13 months in two provinces. When I came back, I remobilized and was assigned to the 189th. We train all the PRTs, so I'm a graduate of the early program and this is my fourth PRT training rotation.

I'm the chief of plans for the brigade, but my primary focus is working on the Command Post Exercise (CPX) and the Culminating Training Exercise (CTE), or what we used to call the Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX), the validation exercises for the PRT Commander and staff. All of us on the 189th staff try to take our experiences and put them to work giving the current PRTs the best training we can give them.

The training that I got was good, but I think since then, as the Army matures, throws more resources at it, and as we come together, the interagency team, the training gets better and better.

Where the Road Began, the Insurgency Ended

Our PRT was nested with 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry of 3rd BCT, 10 Mountain Division, and we were the first joint team there. We were stationed at a Forward Operating Base (FOB), and we were there for the start of an operation which was probably the largest kinetic¹⁰ operation they had had since Anaconda.

We saw the surge of kinetic forces come in. The idea was for the Maneuver units to come in and stabilize the area so we could get on with capacity building. Between the Afghan Army, our Army and the Marines, there was probably about two brigades worth of kinetic guys moving around. During that time, we did some shaping stuff, but for the most part we came in on the tail end of their missions once the area had been stabilized. Then, after that, most of the Maneuver guys kind of pulled out and we were back to what we called capacity building.

The Battle Space Owner at the time was a sharp guy who really understood the fight. He sat us down and said, "Hey, guys, this is your main effort. You've got to get a road built. The previous PRT had already tried to build a road, but they really did not have enough money to do it and they had not decided how to go about getting everybody involved in this."

We had some engineers come down from the Afghan Engineering Department (AED) and we basically walked every mile of that road and said, "What's it going to take to build it?" We

¹⁰ Kinetic operations involve the application of force to achieve effects. Non-kinetic operations seek to influence the target audience without force (e.g., by providing humanitarian assistance or through electronic or print media).

looked at every culvert, did a very good assessment of it and went back and said, “Hey, we need about \$5 million.” They went out and they actually came back with \$6 million. Maybe it was luck, but I’d say we had the right people there at the right time. We had some retired engineers from AED and a couple of guys out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. To fill out this team we had two Navy Seabees and a couple Civil Affairs guys that had some project management knowledge.

We put together what we thought was a very smart bid to build this thing because we said: “We don’t want to just build a road that connects these two cities. As we come through these towns, we want to do some capacity building. So when we build this road, what else can we build? Can we put a micro-hydro electric project out there? Can we put a cricket pitch (playing field) out there? What other things can we do with this road?” As we pushed this road through this very contentious valley, we wanted to get buy-in from the people. So how do we do that instead of just hiring an outside contractor—which we did—how do we make sure that the Shuras have bought in; how do we make sure that the district governors have bought in? We spent a lot of time planning this and we pulled a lot of guys in. We had a USAID guy there who had a lot of development experience and a lot of good ideas.

The two key government officials were the two district governors. One was the son of a very influential tribal elder from the area who’d gone and become educated and came back, a very effective governor. The other guy was a much respected Mujahedeen fighter. Those two guys were responsible for the two most contentious districts and we worked very closely with them. What we said is, “Look, as this road comes through, it’s great economic opportunity for you, but what we want to do is as we go down and build this road, we want you to help us bring the Shura and the government officials in. And as the road moves from place to place, we want to make sure we’re hiring the right people.” Essentially, we got with the two local governors and we started doing this rolling Shura; working from one end to the other.

The PRT commander was absolutely the right guy at the right time for the job. He was a former Navy Blue Angels pilot and had been a spokesman for them; a very charismatic, articulate guy. The Afghans really liked him. He and the governors would bring all the tribal elders in and say, “This road’s coming. We’re going to hire a lot of your men as labor; every fourth employee will be a woman to fix food. We’re going to try and use as many local materials as we can and you’re going to help provide security for the road,”

As we’d roll through, we would come in and hire local workers. We had the two respected governors that would come in and help us do that. Then we would come in and try and put an Information Operations (IO) theme behind it, “This is your road, your bridge, your people, not ours.” If we had to build a bridge or something, we would try to name it after a local Afghan to get the locals to see this road complex as theirs.

The contractor we had was pretty good and that helped us to stay in the background where we wanted to be. We gave some technical expertise and did a lot of QA/QC (Quality Assurance and Quality Control) but really tried to let these guys do the work and let it be their road. And the IED threat went way down.

Bottom line, we had the right Afghan government officials, we had the right amount of money and I think the PRT and the Maneuver unit that was there were very well nested. They supported

us and we supported them. We could not have done what we needed to do if we didn't have the Maneuver guys working all the security atmospherics for us. The battalion devoted an entire Infantry company to securing that road and they also had a lot of buy-in from the Afghan Security Forces because they did a lot of local training.

Success is all about having the right people at the right time. It's having a commander with the right vision, having the resources, and getting government and local buy-in. I mean, you can build a lot with \$6 million and we did, but having the understanding of the IO fight, the strategic communications, is key. You could build a road, but if you don't put placards out there that show a young Afghan out there with his rifle saying he's serving his country, it's just a road. You've really got to sell the road to the people and what the benefit of it is.

Another thing that shows how to get local support and buy-in was the cricket field. That was hard to do just because there's not a lot of flat land, so you've got to find a piece of flat land that's not owned by three different guys that claim they own it and you have to get the Shura to come and agree. But if you put a cricket field in a little town, then it becomes their identity. It brings them together. It's a part of the IO, and then the CA teams come behind and give out cricket balls and bats. It's a good thing. More examples were the micro-hydro plants that went in there and putting in a little market area or bazaar area as part of the road.

Through it all, we never told the local government what they had to do. In planning and execution, our thought was always that we're going to let the Shura and the government tells us what to build.

"You have to understand that you're going to execute your predecessor's plan and you're going to plan for your successor."

Going in, we didn't have any idea that we'd have to do that project; back in those days we had very little contact with the guys on the ground because it was new. We've changed a lot of that now in how we train the PRTs and how we do the Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS). The new commander going downrange actually meets his counterpart and they walk the terrain together. The commander gets to see the major projects and that's important because the incoming PRT will execute the out-going PRT's "build" plan. Makes sense because you can't go in there in the time you have on the ground plan and execute \$50 million in projects. You have to understand that you're going to execute your predecessor's plan and you're going to plan for your successor.

Even while this road was a work in progress, we saw businesses spring up. With this new road, a guy that normally would not go to market could drive in a Hilux with all his brothers and go to market. So, we saw a lot of the capacity building, and we saw the effects of it.

The follow-on was to eventually build more roads, and they're doing that now. There's an expression that goes something like this: "Where the roads end, the insurgency starts," and I think that was certainly the case with our road.

But the key is in getting everything to work together. I guess we call it whole government, but that's the trick. And I think part of that's training the right people, getting the right training back here, bringing the right team together and then properly resourcing the effort.

Forming and Training the Tribe Increased the Probability of Capacity Building Sustainment

I think the best thing about our training model for Camp Atterbury is bringing in the Inter-Agency (IA) partners to train with the military members of the PRT. We used to always link the IA members with the PRT they would work with downrange, but with the "civilian surge" we're seeing, that's not always possible. But regardless of whether or not they will work together in theater, we pull folks together as soon as we can and we call it forming the tribe. We think it's real important. The tribe starts forming at the PDSS. When the PRT commanders first get together, they go downrange. And then, as a team, we bring the key leadership in, and eventually, we bring in the IA people.

IA civilians are really only here for three weeks. When they show up we give them a little in-brief and then after that we have them go live right with the PRT. Our concept is that they're living in a barracks and the PRT commander is here and right next to him are his IA guys, because that's how they work downrange. That's how they do the planning and everything. So we start building that on the front-end.

We give them about six days of combat survivability and then we put them through a week of, I guess if you think of crawl, walk, run, we give them the walk part of how to plan. This is Civ-Mil, this is how a team builds, and this is what you do if you get an order. And once we do that, then we put them through a Culminating Training Exercise (CTE).

They kind of bond and they understand that when the PRT commander goes down to talk to the governor, he turns to his Department of State rep that does that sort of thing for a living. Likewise, the USAID reps there are talking about development; they know how to manage these projects and how to manage the money. Or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) rep who knows if things are working correctly in the way the locals grow or manage crops and livestock.

So the PRT Commander has got that team, and I think if you can get them thinking "team;" it's not just "me," or, "What can my staff, the S2 and S3, do?" He starts thinking about what these three representatives of our government do for us. That's our approach; it's not a military action for us. It's the whole of government going after these problems in Afghanistan, so that's what we try to do by building that team. And I think we do a pretty good job of that by getting these guys in here, working it, putting them through the culminating training exercise where we actually give them problems where they have to go interface with an NGO. And maybe the right person to interface with the NGO is not the PRT commander, but it's the State rep or the development guy. We carry that concept forward in the way we set up and run the CTE as well. The people that run lanes are military people but there's also an interagency person on the lane too. These are contractors or somebody that's brought back from theater, so when the PRT's go out take part in a PDC (Provincial Development Committee) lane, they have role players that have done this before.

As an example, we're going to do a gender engagement this time where the PRT has to go and they get a mission to go talk with a women's Shura, so obviously the guys aren't going to go there, to pull their people in. And to control this lane, we have one lady that has actually done a lot of female engagement in Afghanistan. That's the interagency bringing their expertise to the front for us and helping train our team.

When we go out there and do these lanes, there's a military guy that talks the Counterinsurgency (COIN) part—was it a shoot or no shoot situation—but then the lead part of that After-Action Review (AAR) is an interagency expert who stands up and says: “Hey, I was a State rep and let me tell you how it is and this is what you want to do and this is what you're going for.” So they have really helped us.

We do our three weeks of training with them, but their expertise has allowed us to really prepare our formation. And bringing that back, they put a complete flavor on it and I think the AAR comments from PRT commanders and interagency people is, “Hey, that blended CTE that you do was the best stuff we got when we were here, ‘cause, really, you've recreated Afghanistan; we get to do it here before we have to go do it downrange.” That's pretty good; we'll call that a “sustain” for us.

But here's the other part; we can build capacity—we can build infrastructure—but the government capacity to fill that infrastructure is a challenge. And a lot of times, a CA captain on the ground doesn't understand that maybe they're not going to be able to support or sustain that. We're doing a lot better job of that. I think in the early days of building capacity, there were a lot of guys putting stuff up. But now, there's a pretty extensive vetting process just to put any project up. It goes to the taskforce. They're looking at it and making it sure it's not being double-tapped. And you really have to watch that.

You want to be careful to not build a road that's already got money being allocated from another source. There are three or four different organizations out there that build roads. The AED builds roads, USAID builds roads, the National Solidarity Program, which is kind of a work for food program, builds roads. And Afghans are shrewd. They let three different guys build that road for them, so you really have to work. The military guy on the ground can't see all of that going on – somebody else has got to take that fight for him. He's got to send the information up; there's got to be a smart guy at brigade, division and embassy level that's going, “Hey, whoa, we're double-tapping this.” That's where the IA folks can make a big difference.

I think we need to try to sustain this interagency stuff that we're doing, because the civilians bring a lot to the fight, not just in the PRTs now, but also you've got civilians embedded at brigade and division. You've got to get the whole government after this thing. And as a fighting formation, which is what we are, we're doing this nation building, but if we're going to do nation building, that mission falls on our nation. So we've got to get those guys involved because they just bring a different level of expertise.

"...we've got to focus on getting those interagency people embedded with our people, to keep forming the tribe; support those guys, understand their needs and let's communicate. I think that's how we win the fight over there."

When you bring in a hydrologist and you stick her in the desert and she shows them, "Hey, we've been growing stuff in Arizona for x-number of years." The Afghans already know how to do it, but sometimes the IA can talk on a level that an Infantry guy just can't get to with a farmer. The Soldier is just a guy going, "Why are you digging that hole close to my position?"

Bottom line, we've got to focus on getting those interagency people embedded with our people, to keep forming the tribe; support those guys, understand their needs and let's communicate. I think that's how we win the fight over there.

PRT Story 8

Solutions Were Found by Valuing Different Perspectives

We train PRTs for their deployments to Afghanistan, one cycle every 9 months; five months between cycles and four months of training. My favorite story to tell right now is right here on the training base. We just finished maybe a week ago going through the Command Post Exercises (CPXs), for 13 PRTs and the National Guard battalion that provides the security forces for all the PRTs. The training program is a four-day CPX; we do four iterations of it and there are two, three or four elements in each CPX. So, in total we brief an OPOD (Operations Order) four times. We go through the different sets of scripts with all these different people, then you undulate the thing and they're briefing a concept of operations or whatever they're doing, and then the After Action Review (AAR). The 189th serves as exercise control, but the higher headquarters for the PRTs is an acting Brigade Combat Team (BCT). So when they brief their order, their commander is the BCT commander. The BCT S2 and S3¹¹ are the staff briefing the order, and they're going through their order very methodically, very militarily, you know, boom, boom, hitting Intel, weather, its affects on terrain. They talk human population and some of the dynamics that are today's a little bit more modern view of the S2's role and in true OPOD fashion, very rigid, strict format, discipline, timeline, everything's on track. Then somewhere in the concept of the operation, an Inter-Agency (IA) representative, who's actually a contractor I think, but it doesn't matter—he was a U.S. Department of Agricultural PRT member in one of the provinces until very recently—gets up to brief.

He's role-playing the agricultural representative (Ag Rep) in this OPOD brief, and he gets up there and he starts briefing his first line and of course he talks a little slower than the S2 or the S3, soft spoken, sort of gentle. Talks a little bit about why they're in Afghanistan, which has nothing to do with the OPOD about we're going here to do something or whatever, but he's got a little more of the theory of the mission of the Department of Agriculture. Then he goes to his second slide, and he opens his second slide with the words, "I'm going to suspend reality for a minute and talk about spaceships." You see every Army guy in the room has sweaty palms and is rubbing his hands on his legs. The Commander is looking at the S3 like "who is this guy?" and "what is he doing saying this?" Everybody's getting nervous, and I'm just leaning back in my chair laughing. Not everybody, but most people are getting nervous. I lean back in my chair and I start smiling because I've seen him do this in a briefing before. About three minutes later, the Ag Rep finishes this circle; he talked about putting a spaceship on every lawn in America and he equated that to putting running water in every dwelling in Afghanistan. He said all we have to do is just put water in every house, but to them that's like putting a spaceship in every yard. To us that looks ridiculous.

They think water in every house is ridiculous, so when we say we can help you get running water in every house, we might as well tell the Afghans we're going to put a spaceship in every yard. You see the mumblings, and the commanders are telling the S3s, "We got to cut this guy off. This can't be. We're not doing this. When we brief this again, that's not happening." I told the PRT commanders and the training commanders, I said, "Look, this is exactly what we need to do

¹¹ The S2 is the Brigade Intelligence Staff Officer and the S3 is the Brigade Operations Staff Officer.

because you're going to go downrange, and you're going to have the undersecretary of something coming and it's a big deal. Four star equivalent or higher, whatever, huge, extremely powerful people in America come out, and they come to this place. You're going to rehearse what you're going to say and the Ag Rep, or some other IA Rep, is going to get up there and talk about this water purification thing he wants to do and it's a ten-year project and how it's going to reshape the way they can farm again here or whatever they're doing. You're going to rehearse it and the IA Rep will be on script and the brigade commander's going to fly in and rehearse it and the IA Rep will still be on script. Then the one-star is going to fly in and you're going to rehearse, and it will go just like before. Then the Undersecretary's going to fly in and the IA Rep is going to say, 'Let me suspend reality for a minute and talk about spaceships.' And in your mind, you're thinking there's no way this is happening to me, but in reality you've got to calmly smile at the chain of command and go, 'Yeah, we talk about spaceships,' and act like you're completely on board because the minute you shut that guy down, you lose that way of thinking. Anybody who didn't come in uniform is there because they think differently. The minute you shut them down, you've lost them. You might as well send them home and ask for a new guy. Some from the IA are a little closer to us, a little more like us in the way they think and talk. There's a little more structure to the way we'd see things in the Army, and it's a little more what we would call natural, which is probably not natural.

As an example, the law enforcement professional we had was a retired cop with 35 years experience. He was counter-narcotics, counter-mafia out of New York City and really understood criminal networks and what motivated them; a far different way of analyzing information than anything the military does. It's not just the experience a guy like that brings; we can learn different ways to think. This guy, completely different world, 56, 57 years old, you know, counter-mafia, counter-international drug trafficking problem solving.

You get all those people in the room, that's when you start to shape, in this case a province, but that's when you start to shape a place, a thing. You can create an effect because you're seeing the problem through all those lenses, and you're going to see solutions through all those lenses, but you can't stuff anybody in a box and sit them in the corner, which is kind of the traditional military way of doing things: "I don't like what you're saying; stop saying it now."

"Once you dismiss them, in some cases, you will have dismissed them for the duration of your time, and that's not helpful."

Once you dismiss them, in some cases, you will have dismissed them for the duration of your time, and that's not helpful. So, the spaceship story is one of my favorite ones to tell because you're going to see it when you go down range. I guarantee to be a fly on the wall in all the rehearsals and the guy's got a complete line that's exactly what every military commander wants him to say and then when the VIP sits down he suspends reality and starts going on this wild tangent and you've just got to smile and nod.

Let me turn that around a bit. We had a woman from the State Department here earlier giving a briefing to just the senior PRT leaders on how this integrated team is supposed to work. One of the PRT commanders wasn't buying it and said something to that effect: "I get that it's an integrated command team and we're all kind of equals, but aren't I kind of the head of all the equals?" Her response was: "How do they say it? You're not stupid, but you [may be a jerk]," or something like that.

From that stage she said that to one of the PRT commanders in a room full of 150 people. I thought, how great for this lady to say that to an Army Commander because she was exactly right.

At the end of the day, are the military leaders responsible for the Soldiers and the equipment to take these IA guys out to accomplish their mission? Yeah. Can you say, "No, we're not going out there today because MEDEVAC is red and accomplishing this mission is not worth that risk to my formation"? Sure. But if the IA Reps' voice isn't heard in the process that defines the priorities, then you've failed, and that's where it needs to be an equal voice. So, the only place that he's the head of the others, in my opinion, and I'm an Infantry guy with gray hair talking, the only place that his opinion counts more is in the force protection of his Soldiers of his formation, the warriors or troopers or whatever we're calling them. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen who he commands, the State dude isn't going to have a vote in that.

But in the province? No one's vote is paramount, and that's why there are challenges associated with unity of command and who is in charge. For whatever reason, in the different military organizations that are over there, people like to have their toys, and they like to be in charge of their toys. And as long as you're fixated on which are your toys, I don't think you're really contributing to the long-term success.

I guess we're almost back to the spaceship story. We put a lot of energy here into making sure that the PRT commanders understand that they've got these three interagency people at each PRT: State Department, USAID and Department of Agriculture. So, make sure they have a seat at the table. Make sure their voice is heard. You can't stuff them in a box and they've all got to sit at the table, they've all got to shake that out or else you're going to have all these divergent paths. We talk a lot about that here and how to build an integrated command team and don't just be inclusive of yourself. If you don't live on the Forward Operating Base (FOB) with your Maneuver battalion, try and move there or see if they'll move to you. Going to a target meeting once a week at their FOB, that's okay, but when you live together and when you're sitting in the Dining Facility (DFAC) two or three times a week, you're just going to bump into each other. You can really start to create some synergy when you do that. In the same way, moving more Afghans onto the FOB, that's a good thing. It's uncomfortable, I got it, but they're part of the team too and you can learn a lot from their perspective. So you'll probably always have issues with who's in charge, but you've got to be working together to solve the problems you face together.

Unity of Effort was More Important than Unity of Command

Prior to my current job, I served as an S3 and Executive Officer (XO) of a Cavalry Squadron in Afghanistan. One of the things I use in training folks now is this story of failure. It wasn't in

my battle space, but this was in the same province. But as happens everywhere, adjacent units share information and I knew my counterpart there and heard this story.

So, you've got a Maneuver Battalion who owns battle space; they're primarily responsible for the land that is a province and security in that province. They've got a staff officer, the S9, who manages a lot of their projects as a part of the targeting cycle. He keeps track of all these things and they're pretty well nested. Maybe by today's standards they'd be average, but for then they were leading in nesting under the governor's intent and making sure the local government was involved. They'd fly the governor in to different events and ribbon cuttings and good or bad, they'd bring the governor in to help solve problems but certainly to let the people see the governor when the schools were working and things like that.

The finance guys come to the FOB, I don't know, once a month or something, and the S9 is getting all this money from finance because he's got his book out and got all these bills and contracts he's got to pay. There's also another unit on the FOB that works in this battalion's battle space; it's a Route Clearance Package (RCP). This RCP, led by a lieutenant or maybe a captain, is working from their FOB and clearing routes, looking for IEDs and stuff like that.

Anyway, while the Battalion S9 is drawing money from finance, he sees the RCP money guy drawing out like \$10,000 and he's like, "Man, what the [heck are] you doing with \$10,000?" And the engineer says, "We built a school up in something-or-other district." I forget what the district was, but it doesn't matter. And the S9 kind of says, "What'd you do?"

"We built a school."

"Where'd you build it?"

"Something-or-other District."

"You can't do that. The governor told them no. That district isn't listening to the governor and he told them they wouldn't get any development projects until they started supporting the government. "

"Well, we already built it, man, so now we're going to go pay 'em."

Now, of course they paid them because they built it, but the governor didn't support it and there were never teachers or books – all the things you know that create icons of failure. But the largest failure was the disconnect strictly within the U.S. Army. We all speak exactly the same language, same acronyms, same everything, and we can't even communicate amongst ourselves to say, hey, whatever you do, don't build a school, don't build anything in that district because the governor is trying to shape them to support the government, which is kind of a big way of shaping them. You can support the government better if you just didn't give them anything; keep going there to talk to them, but offer nothing until they sort of start following the governor.

That story of failure of unity of effort, it's the failure of "handshake-con." I'm sure I had some of the same issues in my battle space, I just probably didn't know about them.

We need to do whatever it takes to undo that, to create unity of effort; I guess unity of effort is more important than unity of command, but unity of command facilitates unity of effort. A

province is a good size piece of terrain to study in Afghanistan. How do you create unity of effort in a province? I don't know. You've got different military organizations operating in there, not to mention all these Inter-Agency and NGO people, and other people running around. Everyone wants to get on the ship and row, but you've got to be rowing together, unity of effort, if you are going to get anywhere. It's even harder when you don't have unity of command, but that's what we have. I don't know the answer to that issue. Someone bigger can figure that out.

Linking the Elders to the District Commissioner Connected People to their Government

Anytime anyone walked by and said, "Hey, we want to do this in my district," I said, "Man, I can't give you anything." The way it works in Afghanistan is people talk to the Elders and the Elders need to talk to the district commissioner. When you link the elders to the district commissioner, you find success. Here's how that works. The Afghan people always trust their elders or almost always trust their elders or else they migrate their elders away, but they're going to continue to look to their elders for answers. The district commissioner is emplaced by the provincial governor. The provincial governor can move him or fire him pretty much at will. The provincial governor is appointed by Karzai and will be removed or fired by Karzai at will.

So the linkage from the district commissioner to Karzai is pretty true. There's an acknowledgement that you're my boss and you can fire me or you can make me not do this anymore and the linkage from the population to the elders will always be true, at least for the foreseeable future. So if you can find a way to link elders to the district commissioners I think you've connected the people to the government, and then you've just got to get rid of some of the corruption. They say what levels of corruption and what's acceptable, I don't know. I don't know how much I buy that, but you've certainly got to taper it and continue to taper it until it's gone. I guess we could probably do that ourselves, but at least taper it to the point that it's hideable, which I think is where we are in America I guess. Anyway, there's far too much corruption, but as you build that linkage between the elders and the district commissioners, which isn't that hard because they really want something, but they're very local people. It's not like they're traveling to the city. The District Commissioner is only an hour away if it's a real remote place. So you just get him there. Drive the district commissioner there and say, "Hey, look, they want something." Then make sure he produces it and they're going to go back to him next time they want something, and ideally you can help that linkage.

Here's an example of how that can change, but it's still the connection to the Elders. There's a town where the 30-something-year-old males told their elders, "Stop, you're no longer running the Shura." These "young Elders" used to tell us about the "old Elders": "We told them sit on the curb, and they'd stroke their beard like this. Just go sit there. There's nothing for you here." They did this because the 30-somethings saw the potential of the future. The 40-somethings or 50-somethings were still lining their pockets through the contracts because that's what you do when you have power in Afghanistan. You take yours because it's going to be short lived. That's kind of the mentality over there. So, the younger elders said, "Hey, you guys stop. We're voting you off the island," and they sat on the curb and pulled their beards while the younger ones pulled in more contracts and stopped cheating, which made for cheaper projects, which made for more progress in Orgun-E, and that's what I think from what I can figure out is why Orgun-E is turning faster than other places because the elders aren't on the take. When you see that, again, I guess that's a metric of success.

Afghan Youth were Paid to Broadcast from a Radio-in-a-Box

I think about Information Operations (IO) as how you want to shape a society through language. I don't know if that's a doctrinal definition, but it's how I see it.

There hadn't been much coalition activity going on in our province when we got there and we put a troop in there, maybe 80 people. They were partnered with an Afghan Kandak (Army battalion) and there were Afghan police there; we had plenty of partnership, but it was just kind of a hard nut to crack.

One of the things we came up with was the Radio-in-a-box. I think they cost like \$3,000 to buy one and then you pay two Afghan kids about 500 bucks a month total to run it. It's very affordable when you talk money in Afghanistan, but the effects were just astronomical. And you really didn't have to give them a lot of guidance. They've got kids that have gone to school for broadcasting, so they know what they're trying to do, you give them the equipment and pay them to use it. It's kind of incredible, and yet it's one of the most powerful tools out there.

The district commissioner would use it, there was music on it, and these two kids would tell their story. They'd get fan mail, a trash bag of mail every day, and marriage proposals, everything. Like a pop star in America. And my absolute favorite, the best evidence that they're successful is they'd get letters from the Taliban threatening them and telling them "You'd better stop, you'd better stop--people are listening and you can't keep doing this." Think about that, the enemy is telling you you're being effective.

They were very satisfied employees. I don't know the life expectancy of one of those guys – the threat was against them, no doubt – but they were celebrities. It allowed the district commissioner to come in there, do a radio address like the president here does, just whatever you want to do. If we're losing in Afghanistan, I'd argue we're losing in IO and the Taliban is able to spin a story in minutes where it takes us days.

Really, there are certain levels you have to go to for approval to say certain things, but the fact is when you're doing combined operations with Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) and something happens and you see something and you bring that ANP guy or that ANA guy or you bring that Afghan back to your FOB where he lives anyway and you walk him into the radio, and he gets on, and I don't know what he's saying, but I know he's talking about what we just did out there, and he's saying something to the effect of, "Here's what happened. The Americans and the Afghans were out on patrol and these bad guys came in and shot these civilians. The Americans tried to help with medics. The Afghan army brought these wounded civilians back to the FOB and the American doctors are working on them."

So, literally as fast as you can recover to the FOB, you've got an Afghan telling the story on the radio—the preferred method of hearing things locally—and you can completely win the IO war. And you don't ever really know what the guy said into the microphone.

We monitor it with terps, but you knew he was telling the right story or close enough to the version of exactly what you saw that you almost don't have to worry about that incident being portrayed in a negative way.

I'm certain they're still using radio in a box effectively all over. You have got to secure it, so it kind of needs to be where a FOB is or something; I don't think you'd stick one on the side of the street. I think it'd be blown up pretty quick. But Radio-in-a-box is very effective. It can be a huge success story for pretty much anything you want to do because it allows you to win the IO war just as fast as you can walk up to it and you never need an American to write a script for it or anything. They know what they're doing. If you hire the right youngsters, they want to see Afghanistan grow.

Consequence Management was Used to Shape and Maximize an IED Event

My favorite soup to nuts IO story happened when ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) identifies these three guys putting in an IED, plain as day, no doubt. We watched them for a while. They were putting it in next to a house, so we let them finish, and then when they got in their car and drove off, we had to pick the place we were going to initiate the Close Air Support (CAS) to attack this vehicle. The air strike rolled in and it was a perfect strike on the vehicle and we had forces there quickly because we'd been watching for so long, we'd already spun up a Quick Response Force (QRF) to head that way. So, we had guys there pretty quick to secure the area, Route Clearance Package (RCP) came in, pulled the IED out exactly where we watched it go in, the dirt was still fresh and everything. The whole thing took about an hour from start to finish.

The number of things that we spun off that hour was absolutely ridiculous. The CAS used a 30 millimeter on the vehicle, so you could still see the vehicle pretty clearly. You could certainly see the people inside, and all the secondary explosives that had gone off, all the weapons were still in there. Everything was pretty charred, but there was a mine hole from inside-out through the roof of the vehicle where something had--another mine, another IED--had gone through the roof of the vehicle when a 30 millimeter had hit it. We could see a lot of 30-millimeter holes going in and one monster hole coming out the top.

We brought the vehicle back to the FOB and put it in the motor pool area. Our law enforcement professional walked an Afghan Intel specialist from the National Directorate of Security (NDS) through a kind of forensics analysis on the vehicle and took him around and said, "Okay, you want to do this." The guy would try and do that. So, we used it as a learning tool for the guy to kind of investigate a crime scene.

We made a huge billboard just off of a regular battalion plotter, and laminated it and put it up on boards and plywood. We towed the vehicle out there like we do with a Soldier's vehicle back home when there is a DUI or fatal car crash. So we had the vehicle sitting there with this billboard we made, right on the side of the street where this whole thing happened.

So on site, we had the Afghan Army out there with this vehicle and billboard explaining what had happened. We did a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) out there too as we started to get this group coming to see what the deal was with the vehicle.

So we've got Afghan doctors, female doctors or medics out there. All kinds of good things: the District Commissioner's out there telling a story over and over and over about how the Afghan army did this and how the Americans helped us and this is what our government is doing, this is what your army is doing and they're learning with the Americans and there had to be eight great

things that came from that and nothing negative. It was quick on the turn. I think it was 36 hours later we're doing the MEDCAP with the billboard and the towed vehicle back out there and the forensics.

We knew we had to deal with the consequences of this, so that was like a battle drill for us. Pretty much everything is consequence management. If you can spin an IO message quickly off an event, it doesn't even have to be a bad event. You can take a good event and have the same – if you treat it as consequence management, you go through the same processes. It's about who you're informing when, how you're offering that information to them and there's so many – when you get good at that, you can really create effects faster and you can call it an IO battle drill instead of a consequence management drill. It doesn't have to be a negative thing to use to apply consequence management to it. It's about maximizing your accurate information in a timely manner and then, boom, getting there and how you're communicating.

So, that IED in place that night was very effective for us in multiple ways. The NDS guy learned from the investigation, the Afghan army got a lot of credit just for working with us, the Afghan government got credit.

PRT Story 8

First, We Had to Build Our Own Capacity

As I see it, the problem with trying to do capacity building is we have so many different organizations each fighting for turf in Afghanistan right now that we're stepping on each other in terms of access to battle space, in terms of access to information, in terms of inability to share and communicate, and inability to use common systems and themes, that we're having a hard time building and sustaining capacity.

I'll give you a for instance. I was in Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters and somebody heard my name because I was getting ready to fly over here. And this USAID person comes running up to me and said, "Hey, I hear there's interesting programs going on in your province." I said, "Well, absolutely." He said, "Well, can you tell me about the Provincial Development Committee, the PDC?" That's the number one development capability, and a USAID guy didn't know what that was. So we're all laughing 'cause we think it'd be kind of common sense, in terms of developing capacity. At first you have to draw the baseline of what is it that people are supposed to know so that we're all on the same sheet of music. And just the fact that he, as a USAID rep, came up and was asking me what the national program is, that seems problematic.

I don't think we've done a good job at the U.S. Government level, between Department of State and Department of Defense, to say here are the skill sets each group should bring to the table. If you don't have those skills, let's prepare folks before they get into theater. Before we (U.S. Military) go into theater, we know what our jobs are theoretically supposed to be and we prepare ourselves. It seems like some of the U.S. government players haven't quite got there yet.

This isn't meant to point a finger at any organization. I think the lens that we've been measuring ourselves under for the last couple years has turned, and for the better. A lot of things that I'll mention are because people are looking at the bottom of the Coke bottle and measuring themselves against something that probably briefed very well at a congressional delegation but didn't measure the true meat on the ground.

"The PRTs are a Civilian-Military partnership. I think it's the way of the future..."

The PRTs are a Civilian-Military partnership. I think it's the way of the future because we Army guys, knuckle draggers, aren't designed to be development and governance experts. If you don't get the right skill sets to the table at the right place at the right time, then you're going to miss windows of opportunity and we're going to be stepping on each other. Without the right civilian experts, the Army guys are doing things that they're not best suited to do and that puts somebody else into kind of a corner and then the whole thing is not being well recognized in terms of organizational input. There's a lot of frustration with people not using common sense in how you prepare folks to go in.

I know USAID is struggling with this issue. They're underneath State Department and they've gone to a contract model where they're bringing in one or two contract folks, and those aren't the standard classical development experts with 30 years of experience. But we've got to really prepare ourselves the best we can.

We train Army units to go in to do Army tasks; you would think that USAID and State would have a very similar kind of model, so everybody comes to the table with a clear, crisp understanding. That's where I think we need to improve capacity building on the U.S. government side. And then all the things that kind of fallout from that: using the same systems, using the same tools so that we can communicate and share the same expectations. If an Army guy's got to go into CIDNE¹² or do a SITREP (Situation Report), then you would think that all the other organizations would do the same thing so we can share information. That's not in play now. Our civilian teammates will say, "I don't work for the Army." We understand that, but we're all on the same team so we have to prepare better to work together better. That's what I think is the biggest issue on the U.S. side of capacity building.

Capacity building on the Afghan side is really where we, as a U.S. government, don't bring a unified message to the table because we have so many different organizations that want to talk to somebody, like the governor of a district, for example. You have the PRT who wants to talk to him; you have the Agricultural Development Team (ADT) that wants to talk to him; you have Corps of Engineers that wants to talk to him; and it goes on and on. Then you've got all the H's: the HUMINT Collection Team (HCT); the HUMINT Augmentation Team (HAT); Human Terrain Teams (HTT). I mean, everybody wants to have a conversation with these key leaders and we're not unified on our messaging. Everybody has a different perspective. The taskforce commander and I have different messages that we want to communicate to the governor, but we need to be in-sync and in line.

To fix all that, what we've done in our province is that we've created a team concept. Every week on Friday mornings we have a meeting with the team, the leaders of the PRT, the taskforce leaders, the ADT, and ancillary support guys like ODA, ODB (Operational Detachment Bravo; SF company headquarters), OGA (Other Government Agency); whatever the right mix is depending on the topic. We'll come in and we'll brief on five lines of operation. This is designed to get all the resources in the same boat rowing forward. Because what we've seen is people are rowing off on different sides expending energy and resources and we're not aligned in our consistent message, our consistent themes. Some of the support guys, like us, we don't have access to all the helicopters and that kind of stuff, but we've convinced the taskforce commanders to help us in terms of what we're doing.

To the average Infantry unit coming in, if you say COIN (Counterinsurgency), they get all nervous 'cause that means they can't go knock in doors and kill people. Well, my perspective is different. COIN is going to give your guys the ability to kill the right person faster, better and cleaner because we're going to help create an environment where the locals are telling us where the guys are that shouldn't be there.

¹² The designated reporting tool and database for CENTCOM.

In terms of our cultural differences, I equate it to my family in the Bronx. In the Bronx, everybody knows who's supposed to be in the neighborhood. If somebody from outside the neighborhood comes in there, you quickly can see that they're not part of that organization. We've got to be very careful about helping give the right guys the tools to be successful in Afghanistan.

Now, are there guys who are milking the system? Absolutely. Is there corruption? Sure, we call it corruption, but everything here in the States is black and white. Over in Afghanistan, it's all grey; it just depends how far into the spectrum of grey you're allowed. We call it profit; they call it the cost of doing business. We've got to prepare ourselves to be able to operate in that environment.

"We've got to build our own capacity so we're smart on the U.S. government side..."

That was just a long way to get the fact that there are two capacity building efforts. We've got to build our own capacity so we're smart on the U.S. government side – we're speaking with a consistent message – and then all that energy and resource has to be focused on creating sustainable and tangible improvement on the Afghan side. We have to. If not, we're not doing anything but creating an economy and government totally reliant on us.

We haven't fundamentally addressed the root causes of instability over there. We've asked the question: "What do you want?" Not what do you need, but what do you want. If you do that, you haven't done anything to build systemic improvements to capacity or development or governance.

Learning from Locals Improved Capacity Building Sustainability

That's the frustrating thing; they'll be polite and they'll accept what we give them. But then they'll say to us, "You guys have wasted a lot of money. We'll take all the stuff you want to give us, but you haven't helped us by listening to us." That's the one thing that we've tried to do with this team concept is kind of turn off our Western ideals, put our sunglasses down, and try to think along with our partners. We literally partner now with these Afghan leaders. It takes a long time, it takes a lot of meetings, but it's the only way for systemic, sustained change to occur.

And they greatly appreciate it. For instance, before I came over here to help train this next group of PRTs, I went to the governor and the senior line directors and I said, "What would you recommend that I do to help prepare the incoming PRT to take over?" Our maneuver guys are RIPing (Relief-in-Place) out now and the ADT just RIPed out and we're (the PRT) going to be RIPing out about four weeks after that, so there's a big turnover and turmoil and they're very concerned about that.

“Nobody’s ever asked me for that kind of input. Nobody’s ever asked any of us how we think the U.S. Government could do things better, faster and cleaner.”

The look that I received back from these four or five leaders was strange. I mean, I’m thinking, “Did I say something wrong in terms of not clearly communicating?” I asked the governor, “Sir, what’s the problem?” He said, “Nobody’s ever asked me for that kind of input. Nobody’s ever asked any of us how we think the U.S. Government could do things better, faster and cleaner.”

That’s the mindset that we’re really trying to focus on. Rather than us being the Marlboro Man and coming in with our billboards, we’re thinking about what they really need in Khost. Even though what works well in our province may not work in another one, we’re still trying to share our model because some of the things that we’re doing with this team concept helped us take some steps forward, which is a lot more than we can say in other places.

I think we, the U.S. government, can do a much better job before we deploy as a way of getting ourselves ready to help with capacity building, because we don’t lack resources over there. I mean, there are a lot of people who are all bumping into each other. The idea is to get ourselves streamlined, communicate well, have a very consistent message at the national level and then down through the provincial level; that’s what we’ve got to be better on. Then, once deployed, it’s a province-by-province analysis, to see what we can contribute.

Implementing the “Teach a man to fish…” Principle Promoted Sustainability and Self-Reliance

Trying to define the capacity building thing, it should be capacity/capability. People use those terms interchangeably, but they’re a little different. Capacity is having the opportunity to do something. Capability is having the skill sets to be able to do it. That’s where we’re expending a lot of our PRT energy. You open an environment through capacity and you build the skill sets, the capability, for the locals to do this or that on their own. This is the “give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for life” analogy.

I tell that story to them. In the Pashto culture, they’re all about proverbs. So when you share that back with them, it demonstrates that you know how to operate within a relationship kind of environment and they enjoy hearing kind of the Western version to the same stories that they have.

What we really need to do is teach the fishermen how to fish and give them a fishing pole, rather than keep throwing fish at them, which is what we’ve done for a long time. In the past, the model to measure the PRTs has been how many kilometers of road have you built? How many schools have you started? How many of this and that? All that briefs very well on a PowerPoint slide to the CODELs (Congressional Delegations); I can put a point and a line across and they can say, “Oh look, we’re making progress because we built another 22 schools.”

What they don't see is that the schools were built in the wrong places, they didn't include the Director of Education or the Ministry of Education in the planning process, didn't include the governor, didn't include the village elders. Now all we've done is we've really angered some people. Maybe this village didn't want a girl's school. They're not ready for that yet. Instead, they could have used a health clinic to help women, children and males, but we didn't go in and ask them.

We went in—I use the term Marlboro Man as the iconic Westerner—saying, “Here’s how we should solve your problems for you,” versus kind of taking a step back and thinking and kind of listening to what their input was. We’ve tried to change that model. We have monuments to U.S. government effort; we have a judicial complex that was built but was unsustainable by the Ministry of Justice. Not too far away is a hospital under construction that’s unsustainable by the Director of Public Health right next to a government complex that’s unsustainable. It’s been completed for a couple of months and the government won’t move in there.

This is what we struggle with because when the PRTs are measuring themselves against how many brick-and-mortar efforts they do, they don't go to the Ministry of Justice or the Director of the Interior, or the Director of Public Health, or the government and say “what do you need” and “is this the right kind of tool to get us there?”

It comes down to prioritization, not because money is limited, but the trick is to be able to do quality work that the people really need. I can give you lots of examples where we did that, but they're not big construction. CERP, the Commander's Emergency Response Program, turned into a development program. So rather than having the battalion commander with a couple hundred thousand dollars that he could quickly use to address instability at his level without a hierarchy to say yes or no to a project, it was taken by USAID and other organizations and it became multimillion dollar development efforts because they didn't have a funding mechanism.

The smaller wins are going on at the company commander level and with a Civil Affairs guy where they have been able to identify the root cause of instability or at least connect an Afghan to an Afghan. One of the things that we're fighting is that the cultural structures of the Pashto portions of Afghanistan are broken. The tribal elders that should have control of their tribal members don't. The last 40 years of fighting has put a break in there, so we at the PRT are trying to connect the tribal members with their tribal elders, and then the same thing from a tribal elder to a district governor. We Americans vote on a one-on-one basis. In Afghanistan, you talk to the tribal elders. The district governor shouldn't talk to a whole wealth of people; he should talk to the four or five elders because they represent their people.

Where do we find successes? When operating in villages, we'll help connect the people back to the tribal elder. It's not because we come in as the PRT or the Task Force comes in and does that, it's because we are using the system, which is theirs; they own it, they know it. It's just been broken, and we're reinforcing their existing system rather than creating a side-by-side structure called the U.S. government.

Considering the Down-Stream Effects Boosted Accountability

Water is an absolute critical resource in Afghanistan. Our province is very agrarian and we have more water on average than most people.

The diversion dams are how they share water. If you asked a village what they needed, they would say, “I need a diversion dam.” If you go out and build a diversion dam immediately, what you’ve done is taken water away from the downstream areas.

The other problem with that old way of doing things is that effectively you’ve said, “Okay, we’ll come in and we’ll build it for you”; we don’t do that anymore. We now go up to the director level to get the Director of Irrigation onboard with any kind of diversion dam issue. We help him do a watershed management study to make sure that if you pull water off of one spot in the wadi (valley or dry riverbed) or the creek or river, you’re not degrading downstream.

We help connect the tribal elder to his district governor. We don’t go in and do the building anymore. We help by supplying material to those elders who want to put in sweat equity to do this right. It’s very much like Habitat for Humanity. Making this connection between Afghans at the village level and Afghans at the District and above takes two or three months. It takes a lot of meetings, a lot a chai, the whole nine yards, but when it works, it’s very successful. It’s human nature; if I have something in my backyard, like a deck or a pool, I’m going to take care of it because I want it; it’s for me.

If you go down to the local level and you find the right thing that’s causing instability and then you connect them to the people in their government who can fix the problem, there’s nobody that’s going to misuse the system inappropriately. I mean, everybody’s going to take their cut along the process –that’s that grey spectrum I talked about – but now the village is going to take care of it. Their folks are going to get paid because they’re going to be doing the labor, they’re developing the plans, they’re developing the infrastructure with the Director of Irrigation and all we’re doing is facilitating this mechanism to work.

To help us in managing the process, we’ve created a project nomination form – we call it a PNF. It’s been so successful that the Director of Economy (he runs the development process in each of the provinces) just rolled it out as his process, which is exactly what we want. It’s not a PRT process, it’s not a U.S. government process, but it’s the Director of Economy’s process; an Afghan process. What he did is he gave a one-day seminar to all the provincial leaders and then he educated all the district-level governors and their support staff about how to use this tool. He’s not going to be willing to look at entertaining any additional development projects until it goes through this project nomination form.

That form is just six pages of how to think through a problem holistically. Before you do it, is there a plan? Is there a cost estimate? Who’s going to own the sustainability? Everybody puts their thumbprint on the back of it, all the way from the tribal elders to the district governor, so everybody has bought into this thing. It’s a great tool because now everything is up on the table. Then what we do is we fall into kind of a donor model. The Provincial Development Committee (PDC) is where all these projects get funneled up to and then they vote on it, say yes or no, and then it moves into a donor bidding environment and the PRT is one of a multitude of donors that can help.

Again, because we’re not going in there and building a dam, because we’re not going in there and doing the district governor’s work and we’re not doing the Director of Irrigation’s work, but we’re facilitating them – we’re calling them to meetings, we’re making them come to the table – the process is working much better. And, again, the only reason why this guy is going to protect

what was built is because it's his. It's going to support his people, so the mechanism is now kind of reinforced in that particular spot.

Previously, the PRT or U.S. government built 25 of these diversion dams and the Director of Irrigation skimmed money off the top of each of them. Now we've got 25 of these dams that are falling apart because by the time it got subcontracted out, the guy had one-third of the money to build it, so he's just putting rocks out in the middle of the stream. Those broken dams are now sources of instability because the locals see their government and the U.S. government as unable to help provide for their needs. Versus going in, taking a little time, a little due diligence and making sure the right people are aware of it. That's the dichotomy, that's the old lens, which is you build 25 diversion dams, check; looks great on an OER or NCOER (Officer or NCO Evaluation Report). This new lens, it says people and projects are connected to the Afghan government. That may not brief as well, but it's much more sustainable.

Transferring Project Ownership Empowered the Local Government

Another example is a road we built that is 101 km long. We're paying \$130 million for 101 kilometers. Do the math; it's like \$1.2 million and change per kilometer, so it's a lot of money. We didn't include the Director of Public Works, the guy who owns the road and who's going to maintain the roads, in the development process or in the plan to put the road together. It was done with U.S. government help. So now you've got this Director of Public Works out here with this huge construction project coming through and it's a U.S. government project that's been subcontracted to an Indian firm that's sub-subcontracted to some South Africans providing security and they've just been told that they were paying the Taliban and Haqqani¹³ one million dollars for security. You can't hide this. In terms of, "Yeah, okay, thank you for the road. We need the road, but you didn't include me, the Director of Public Works. I've been building roads for 15 years. I'm the guy who has to sustain it afterwards. There are some things that I can tell you about wadis and 50-year highs and all this other stuff." None of it was ever of interest to the U.S. government in terms of preparing it.

That was bad. The good news is that now we go to what we call the Fab 4. It's the governor, the Director of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (RRD), the Director of Economy who owns the PDC, and the Director of Public Works. Those four are folks that we bring in for all of these large projects now. We had a series of meetings with them, and we said, "Okay, this isn't our road." And they started to protest: "Oh no, but the U.S. government..." We remained adamant, "No, no, this is your road. The U.S. government is just funding it." In this case, we forced the responsibility back on them, so they went on the radio and television and said, "This is our road now. We don't want the people who have problems along the roadside to come to the PRT or the contractor. Don't do that. Here's a form. You write your name on it, you write your issue on it, you get your tribal elder to put his thumbprint on it, you go to your district governor and put their thumbprint on it, you bring it up to the director of economy's office or my office as the governor and we'll talk about the issue." Overnight the people that said, "I'm going to oppose this road to the death because it's going through my land," went from a bunch down to about zero.

¹³ The Haqqani network is an insurgent group that is closely allied with the Taliban.

This is how you develop sustainability in projects. Put it on them, give them the tools, give them access to the radio and the television, help them in terms of structuring the message and then help them in terms of how you would do project management or program management kind of one-on-one, how you would do conflict resolution. They know how to do it; they just need to kind of be structured and helped out. Since we started doing this, we've seen the construction along the route increase tenfold.

Another difficult issue that we have to address is the implementing partners for the US. As an example, USAID is struggling with how to manage their contractors. Many of the USAID people working in Afghanistan are contracted, so they aren't program or project managers. They are allowing their implementing partners to do things that they want to do outside of what we're asking them to do. As an example, if they were implementing projects using our model that we established with the Fab 4, it should be pretty hierarchical. If I work for you, and you say I need to do these three things, X, Y and Z, I should say, "Roger, here's how I plan to implement those." That's the way it should work. If I as the implementing partner say to you, no, I don't want to do X, Y and Z, but I want to do A, B and C, you should be able to say, no, no, X, Y and Z is what's important. But, no, these implementing partners because they're really out there without a lot of management oversight are saying, "I can't do that for some reason, but I want to do A, B and C." This has an effect on messaging, as well. You have implementing partners going out there and trying to create relationships with the same district, the same tribal and the same provincial level, that's not in line with what we're trying to ask them to do, and so that's an extremely frustrating situation where we (U.S. Government) seem to be sending mixed signals. On the side of capacity building, we've got to be able to structure ourselves and put ourselves into our own little boxes. Hey, I work for the taskforce commander, right, Colonel so and so says to jump, we say how high, and he works for CJTF and CJTF works USFOR-A (U.S. Forces – Afghanistan), right? The implementing partners don't have that same structure and that same kind of project management skill set. When they're out there doing their own thing, on a different path so to speak, it just adds turmoil to the relationships we're trying to build. It's not only USAID, but because USAID doesn't have enough of their own development experts out there, they contract the Field Program Officers (FPOs) in the PRTs and now you're just stepping away from the model even farther to get to an implementing partner. It's really based on relationships, how able are these folks who are not military to work within a military organization and how willing are they to create relationships with their Afghan partners? Some of them are very, very good; some of them just aren't so good.

Working Holistically Allowed Everyone to Contribute in the Most Positive Ways

Systemically, USAID is struggling in terms of how to implement their programs inside of Afghanistan. USAID has many programs and that's part of the frustration. I mentioned the story about the USAID guy who didn't understand the development structure. If you ask some of the PRT USAID folks of what's going on from a programmatic perspective and then what's going on in our province, they're unable to articulate that information, which is very frustrating. If USAID has seven or eight areas—health care, education, infrastructure, etc.—that they're focusing on, you'd think that they'd be able to identify those at the Afghan national level and locally.

We don't even do that on the U.S. government side. We can't tell you because CIDNE and some of the other tools haven't been used well and we're unable to access our own information, so we're flying blind. Many times you talk to local Afghan leaders and they'll ask "What has the U.S. government done for me lately?" I'd love to have a sheet that said, well, in your district, I've done these 140 projects over eight years. But that information is not available or not easy to get and that's on the left-hand side of capacity that we don't even share our own information well.

Quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) of the construction going on is absolutely critical. The contractors in Afghanistan are not Western-minded, so they don't think about the next job that's going to come up, they don't think about making a profit, a manageable profit, and then hoping to get the next project, the next project, the next project. It's all about what can I take now. What they're used to doing is a resource grab. If I see a project for a million dollars, I don't even have to know what I'm doing. I'm just going to bid and if I win, then I'm going to figure out how to do it. If nobody's over my shoulder watching me, then what I do is I subcontract it two or three times and by the time it gets down to the guy who's actually doing the work, everybody's taken 15, 20 percent off the top and the guy has no money left. So he doesn't have a lot of capability to do quality work.

The higher-level issue was lack of quality construction. So we went and developed a holistic plan where we went to the engineering students at a university. We started to train their engineers in a fifth-year program about how to do best practices, in terms of engineering. We bring all the contractors in once a month to do contractor training; for example, here's the best way to pour concrete. But this contractor training is also an avenue for the senior leadership to talk to all the contractors in there. We try to do as many things as we can to give the tools and skill sets to the leaders, rather than the PRT doing it all.

We do joint QA/QC missions, because the Afghan guys have a monitoring evaluation team that's supposed to go out and do it. But they can't get out there, so we bring them with us, in terms of rolling outside the wire or flying them over bad spots to get to places. We're training them. We're bringing them into the fold. We're giving them information. We're sharing all of our QA/QC reports, and they do the same with us. We come down to joint decision making.

I could easily, as the PRT guy, come in and say we're firing this contractor. But that takes away the ability for the director of RRD or Economy to have the skill sets to do the analytics behind it; to understand really what's going on in terms of cultural perspective and come together with us as a partner and make a joint decision. We could do that all day long, "You're fired, you're fired, you're fired," but what we haven't done is give the local in charge the skill set to be successful.

It's a long process. In many cases, we Westerners, the Army, we see a hill, we take a hill. That's what we do. With the Pashtun, it doesn't work that way. You've got to be more like: I see the issue, I've got to think about it, I've got to talk about it, I've got to go to the tribal folks, I've got to go to the district governor, I've got to get all the information and then I've got to make a decision.

We're doing that with schools. We picked schools as our first issue. We've got six schools that are ready for turnover. Two of them were never coordinated with the director of education, so the teachers and the support staff were never identified, that was one of those monuments again.

The other four schools, we're ready to turn over and we should be doing that shortly. We have five schools that were so poorly constructed that we can't swallow more money being invested in there because we think the schools are going to fall down. We're trying to create an environment where leaders will join us in getting a bulldozer and knocking it down, canceling that contractor and bringing in a guy who's going to do quality work. You can't do that without training the contractors, without giving them the tools to be successful, so that's what we're trying to do. We've been working on this for about five months now and we're ready to turn over schools that are complete. We're developing a jointly, agreed-to solution to deal with the ones that are poor quality. When we fire a contractor, it's going to be in the governor's office and everybody's going to sign their thumbs to it. We're putting this on the radio and television so that everybody can see kind of what's going on. That's our holistic approach to quality. Rather than just the PRT going and saying that's bad quality, you're out; we take a long time to develop the right relationships, to give the right information, to share the information, to be transparent, to share the risks, the whole nine yards.

That's that holistic approach and the other piece is the transparency. I can go to the director of education with a list of all of our schools, the status, the contractor, the phone number of the contractor and so we sit down and call these guys and bring them in, one by one to talk about it. Again, I could easily call that contractor and then say, "You're fired," or, "Congratulations, you're doing good work," but it doesn't do me any good. I'm not building up any kind of capacity in terms of how to manage contractors going forward if I don't get the proper Afghan officials involved. Shared responsibility and shared accountability; now the contractors are saying, "Hey, listen, you guys are holding me accountable for the first time ever." When we tell them, "Your contract says X, Y and Z," they say, "I didn't read the contract." We're going back and helping them understand what contract law is.

In Afghanistan, there are 16 contract laws, which every contractor is supposed to understand. When they sign a contract with the U.S. government, they don't read it, they don't care about it, all they want to do is get the money and then subcontract it out. We've created an environment for the Director of Economy to come in and talk to the contractors about their responsibility. We did that over a couple days and they brought all the contractors in and we talked about it. It's to the point right now where the Director of Economy has asked us, "How can you help me go to GTZ," which is the German version of USAID, "And all the other NGOs and everybody else in the province and help us help them understand what we're doing so that they can support us like you guys are doing?" Because, if we have GTZ and NGOs out here doing whatever they want to do, then we've decayed that foundation we're trying to build. Again, that's on the left-hand side of the capacity. Now we're bringing not only the U.S. government, but everybody else playing in the, we call it the Bowl, together to talk about this. We've got to build these little steps; these little building blocks have got to come together for these guys to be successful.

It's hard but you've got to talk to them, so that's what I do, right? The PRT commander's job is to work at the governor level. My job, as the deputy commander and the CA guy, is to create all those relationships, so it's a lot of long days. It's me going to the taskforce commander at O5 to O5 level and say, "Joe, listen, come on, I know you want to do the right things, and I know you think you're doing something right, but you going in and solving a problem at that level is decaying the governance piece that we're trying to work on. Tell me what your issues are, and

I'll help you do that.” The days when CA was just four guys running around in a truck are done for what we do now.

We've taken CA and we've directly cut them down to those company commanders. So now there's a CA guy who's side by side with a company commander who's doing the governance and development mentorship with that district governor and that company commander. And the other thing is, that guy has a direct link to me at the CMOC (Civil-Military Operations Center) so if he has a problem, then I can come in to go talk to the taskforce commander. But the other thing is it gives USAID, State Department and the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) a direct link into what's happening in the trenches.

That visibility has gone a long way for us to understand truly what's going on in our province. What we're trying to do now is get the ADT to carve out one of their guys, the agribusiness development guys, because that's the way the model is, right?

Give that maneuver commander all the skills and resources he needs to be successful. So if he sees a problem, he's not going to try to jump in and fix it right away. He's going to work within the right processes, in terms of governance development or agricultural or information operations or whatever the line of effort is, to create the right environment.

It's slower, but it's the right way, because if not, then everybody's going to keep coming back to commander so and so, give me, give me, give me, that doesn't work. So that's another model that we've done very successfully inside the Bowl.

Again, that gets back into that collective decision-making. Nobody's going to tell the Maneuver commander how to fight his fight. All we're going to try and do as Civil Affairs guys is give him another perspective of the battlefield. If you do a night operation or somebody comes into your battlespace hunting an HVT (High Value Target) and does something, there's going to be some repercussion in there. Somebody drags a body out and leaves it in the street, that's going to be an issue. We can help by going to talk to those tribal elders as a Civil Affairs guy to give them the perspective of what happened and why. That's a part of this whole process down there, as well.

Accepting Responsibility for Mistakes Deconflicted the Potential for Serious Consequences

We have a lot of tribal issues. We have 32 different tribes in our own little province. We have the Mangal and Nichhal who have been fighting each other over land for a long, long time. We bombed one of their checkpoints. They were fighting each other on top of the hills and they had a heavy machine gun and a couple of other things and we bombed and killed one guy because we thought they were bad guys. That's an easy mistake to make because no one's supposed to have heavy weapons and the bad guys like to travel in the conflict areas. The taskforce commander went right to the governor, called in the tribal elders, and said here's what happened, we did it, and we're not denying it. Let's talk about how we go ahead and work on moving ourselves forward. Immediately deconflicted the process, accepted responsibility where it was due. We worked within the cultural confines and brought the right folks in. The governor was onboard with this, as well, because it's a tribal issue. He's a tribal elder, not only the acting governor. And so these issues are examples of how we deconflicted problems and mistakes through our one-hour battle drill.

This story highlights why we need to get an accurate story out in that first hour. I mean, the bad guys are by far overwhelming us on the Information Operations (IO) campaign. They don't have to come anywhere near the truth. We try to be Western in our ideals, to be truthful as much as we can, and assume responsibility. Similarly, we go to our Afghan leaders and we ask them to do things that are very difficult for them. If something bad happens, say the Afghan commandos went and did a raid and, in the battle, handover didn't go that well that morning and there's a dead body in the village. We've asked the governor to go on the air in support of our actions. That's very difficult in any culture and he needs to maintain his ability to be a tribal elder and be somebody that people will trust and come to, rather than be a spokesperson or mouthpiece for the U.S. government. We're always kind of struggling around how to get information to the right place at the right time.

Giving a District Governor a Radio-in-a-Box Helped Transform a Dangerous Area

Again, the holistic approach; we've got Radios-In-a-Box (RIABs) that we've pushed out to many of the Combat Outposts (COPs), so the district governors and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) security could actually come there to put out messaging. We're training them on how to be very consistent in their message, and some of them enjoy getting on the radio and talking. We, CA and PSYOP guys, are giving out little hand crank radios to expand the messaging capability. They're not only hearing the Taliban in the back of a truck with a loudspeaker, because they have that too, but they're hearing from their leadership, not from the U.S. government.

There is an area that has been isolated for the last couple rotations and it's a bad guy haven. It's on the superhighway of folks coming in from Pakistan. As part of our holistic plan, we set-up a RIAB in the district center that the district governor and his ANSF leadership could use. We also moved a battalion of Afghan National Army (ANA) in to support him, and installed a new police chief. We went up and trained them on messaging capabilities and now they're on the radio a couple of times a week transmitting to their people – again, this in the number one most populous district in the province – about what he can do to bring help to the table. He's briefing agriculture things, he's briefing the fact that there are more ANA there now. He actually went out and did a dismounted patrol to the bazaar which has never happened before. He had his first Shura, the first Shura in this district in about three years. This is his ability to communicate his message. It's not the U.S. government out there. It's him and his folks just using this radioing messaging capability. Now people are tuning in during the times that they know he's going to be on the radio. And the same thing with the ANA leadership, they get on the radio and talk about security, "Hey, we did this many raids last night and took this many IED emplacements off the street." The police chief is out there talking about what his guys are supposed to be doing and not doing.

Facilitating Systematic Progress was Difficult in a Dynamic Environment

One of the first things you've got realize is, again, and we've talked about the U.S. government being consistent, we talked about everybody wanting to talk to the provincial governor. You've got to remember the guy's got a job to do, which is run the province. If we have all of us trying to get just an hour of his time, it's six or seven hours a day in meetings and he's not going to have any time to do what he needs to do. In the Pashto culture, they are too polite to tell you otherwise. "Of course I'll meet with you," and he doesn't tell me that he just met three hours

with the taskforce commander and two hours with OGA or ODA. He doesn't say that because he's not going to come out and say that. But now we can say, "Hey, we're going to go speak to the governor on this day. Is there anything I can ask, are there questions I can put to him that I can get back to you?" And so what we've done is we've tried to minimize seven different folks from different organizations trying to get to the provincial governor and all the line directors. We're trying to be more consistent in these kinds of engagements with these key leaders and that's gone a long way.

The other thing is we try to tell them, "Hey, listen, if you don't have time to meet with us, it's okay to say, 'I'm busy today. Can we meet another day?'" Again, culturally, to them, that's an affront. They would never say no to us, right? And so only through our relationships can we have the confidence and say, "Listen, Director, I understand you're busy. If you're too busy to meet today, please let me know and we'll schedule around you." Just the fact that we're recognizing that they have a job to do and that they're busy and they're professionals goes a long way in supporting that relationship. And then you do the things that make them valuable. You give them information; you give them the decision-making capability. All that kind of stuff, culturally, puts them in a much better spot. So that's on the Afghan side.

On our side, again, this team concept is designed to make resources available to support the Inter-Agency members of the PRT because they're one or two individuals working inside these big military organizations. What we do is we brief these slides and the State Department rep working governance issues talks about what she wants to do, what her issues are, her tasks that she needs help on and then what her end state is. As she briefs this each Friday, we all try to think about how we, collectively, can help get her the right resources. She needs to get to a particular area. We're not moving a convoy there, but the taskforce is, so we'll fly her into their COP and they'll hop on that convoy and she'll be able to move out. That's the way we bridge those cultural differences within our own organization.

It is the same thing for the USAID rep on the PRT. At the PRT, we run two convoys each day to do two different missions, but, in some cases, we should really be doing four or five missions a day. We just don't have enough capability. So we'll find the right resources to get her to the right place to do what she needs to do to be successful.

The other way we work is we have to sit there and explain in very clear language what the military can and cannot do. We're not a do all, be all kind of thing. We come with certain skill sets, and we have certain gaps, and that's why we bring them to the table. We're always asking USAID or State what are you trying to say to whom and to let us help craft the message. If she has to go brief the brigade commander, she should speak in certain Army language that he'll understand very clearly rather than kind of think around and be all creative and use big words. We're not a big word kind of organization. If we're very clear in our messaging, we'll get a much better response.

If you take a concept that comes from somebody who worked in Africa for 15 years as an NGO or something and you try to turn that and plug that into an O-6 or a taskforce commander, there's ways to do it well and there's ways not to do it well. My job is to help; not to change the message, but to help her craft the message so it's well received. We've come full circle a couple times on how to do that.

Infantry company commanders went to school, went through their basic course, went to Ranger school, were platoon leaders for a little while and now you're asking those who've been trained to do Infantry tactics and battle drills to be governance development experts. We've got to bridge their levels of understanding and capabilities, as well. Again, we do that with our CA guys down there and I go on a road show and I can help these guys to be successful. That's what we really have to do in the PRT is take a look at a problem and create a solution and then present it to the right guy to be successful. We do that over and over. Every day we do that.

We're making headway, finding success with the method. It's a pretty dynamic environment right now, but despite all that, we're making systemic progress. I mean the stuff that we're doing is helping in terms of the quality of life inside the province and governance by the locals. The kinetic¹⁴ guys are taking bad guys out every day. Unfortunately, it's just kind of a self-sustaining environment right now, being near the border of Pakistan.

But when we find a toehold, we have the ability to kind of create a little bit of an ink spot and kind of expand that. And then, at some point, the two ink spots will come together and then you can kind of move that forward. We're making progress. We're changing the mindset. Again, which is this shared information, this shared decision, the shared responsibility, and that's going a long way to give Afghan leaders the tools to be successful in the eyes of their own people, and that's gone a long, long way. The fact that we ask them how best to train incoming units was just fundamentally a change to them. They weren't used to having that kind of input to any kind of decision making. Again, they appreciate that because it is really what we need to do is get these guys the capabilities to fill the capacity void so they can be successful going forward.

Helping to train this next generation of PRTs, the folks that will replace us in six or eight weeks, I try to focus on all the things I just talked about: the holistic approach, the shared information and transparency. Until we demonstrated that success, we were on the outside trying to look in. And now we share resources, we develop Concepts of Operations (ConOps) together, we do missions.

And I've got to do the same thing with the incoming two commanders, right? The only guy in the PRT who's ever been an active duty Army officer was me. And so part of my job is to put that hat on and go out to these new taskforce guys and say, "Listen, here's a model. It's worked well in these areas, but here are some areas that we can kind of modify and tweak as you guys are coming 'cause I know that you guys have a different skill set, mindset, and the whole nine yards. Let's figure out how to do it. I met them on their PDSS (Pre-Deployment Site Survey). When I get back after this training, I'll go right back into starting to get those guys kind of up to speed and it'll just progress. Three weeks with them and then three weeks with their incoming PRT and then I'll be on an airplane at the end of March getting out of there.

We're trying to ask the taskforce and the incoming PRT to not make the same, not mistakes, but not go through the same learning environments that we went through. It's going to take some time because the incoming BCT (Brigade Combat Team) is very different from the outgoing BCT, so we have to work within the confines of what their expectations are to be successful. Organizational change is always fun to kind of manage and watch, but I think we're making

¹⁴ Kinetic operations involve the application of force to achieve effects. Non-kinetic operations seek to influence the target audience without force (e.g., by providing humanitarian assistance or through electronic or print media).

progress. On their PDSS, we talked the new commander through our process, and he's at least willing to listen to it right now. And the outgoing commander gave us some great plugs by saying, "Hey, this model's working. It's a little slower. It doesn't give the 'see the hill, take the hill' kind of mentality, but we're actually building that long-term sustainable change, which is what you need to do or we're going to be here for the next 20 years in Afghanistan."

"If I was to invest more, I'd do it on this side of the pond, rather than try to get over there and do it."

With regard to pre-deployment training and preparation, the thing that I can't overemphasize is relevancy. We're not in Iraq so you can't take an Iraq model and drop it into Afghanistan. We shouldn't be running around in M1151s (a version of the HMMWV), 'cause if you're driving a 1151 over there, you're dead in many cases. The civilian agencies, we've got to figure out how to best include them, on both the left-hand side of the capacity and on the right-hand side. We've got to emphasize the interagency communication, the skill sets, the tools, all the things that I just talked about that we're not doing well in theater right now. We really have a chance on this side to get this thing right. It's going to take some time and it's going to take some hard work, but if you want to invest some money, it's not a loss of resources over there. I mean, there are twenty-something-thousand people sitting at Bagram Airfield (BAF). That's a lot of people sitting there trying to get a latte every day. Versus taking those resources and putting them in different spots where they could be more applicable. If I was to invest more, I'd do it on this side of the pond, rather than try to get over there and do it. But it's going to take some time so you've got the interagency to understand how their model fits, you've got to get the communication tools right, you've got to mandate the program and project management that's supposed to be going out there. I would just say relevancy and do the right training before you get over into theater. State Department, USAID, USDA, they need to do the right training, too.

CIVIL AFFAIRS

Civil Affairs (CA) units work with civil authorities and civilian populations to lessen the impact of U.S. military actions and presence during war, contingency operations, and times of peace. Their expertise lies in understanding civil-military operations and relationships in the context of local cultures. Within the framework of Capacity Building, CA Soldiers and units help translate military capabilities into civil works projects and infrastructure development. They are involved in all aspects of Capacity Building from assessment and needs analysis, project design and execution, and contract supervision. These duties require CA Soldiers to bridge the gap between military commands and civilian organizations within host nations, and with coalition partners and non-governmental agencies. The active duty CA Soldiers are found in the 95th CA Brigade, which is a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and in support of Special Operations Forces, geographic combatant commands, and the U.S. Department of State in overseas embassies. The General Purpose Forces are usually supported by Reserve CA as a unique blend of Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel. The U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Command (Airborne)—USACAPOC (A)—is the parent headquarters of Reserve CA and PSYOP units.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 1

Providing Security and Supporting the Locals Temporarily Restored a Market Area

I was a team sergeant for the Civil Affairs Team A (CAT-A) for the forward team. Our plan was to get the Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) team into a small town because the last time a U.S. force was in that town was about three to four years ago. And when they were there, they were attacked and they had run out of ammo. After that, no other U.S. force had been in that area.

The plan was to go in there with the ODA team and establish a foothold with the U.S. forces and try to get a civil assessment of the vulnerabilities in that area. We got with the ODA team and started planning to move out to a district. The initial plan was for it to be a 30 day mission. We were stationed in the Afghan National Police (ANP) compound with the ANP commander and the district chief. There was no Afghan military in the area.

There used to be a bazaar right next to the ANP compound. When we got there, this bazaar was closed down. It was a bazaar of more than 20 stores and it was just a complete ghost town 'cause they were saying the Taliban had threatened anybody who would open their shops at the bazaar. The influence of the Taliban in that area was very strong, to the point where people were scared to even open their own shop. They were basically running their shops from their homes and that's why the trade and the economic establishment of that area were not strong.

We sat down and had a Key Leader Engagement (KLE), a Shura, with the district chief and the ANP commander and we established our intent in the area. We sat down with them and told them what we were planning to do and why we were there. The main goal that we wanted to focus on as soon as we entered this town was reopening this bazaar so this town would again be a functioning town when it came to economics and trade of local goods.

To be honest with you, we thought we were going to be received in a hostile manner, but they welcomed us with open arms. They were very happy. As a matter of fact, the district chief told us, "We've been in the darkness for so long and now the Americans have come and we see the light." Those were his exact words and they were very, very happy and excited.

Also we had brought with us about 15 tri-walls¹⁵ filled with Humanitarian Assistance (HA)—medicine, food—all this stuff that we were planning to go through the district government to start handing out to the local people. By doing so, we were going to establish the credibility of that local government to begin to minimize the influence that the Taliban had in the area. When we had the Shura, we talked to them about our plan. They were very open, very willing to help us out. They were very excited and motivated.

Within the next 5-10 days, you started seeing small shop owners coming down to the district center to see the Americans. We had coordinated with the district chief to go talk to the village elders of the nearby towns to come meet with us in the district center. After a week we had a

¹⁵ Very large cardboard boxes containing multiple small shipments.

Shura and a KLE with the district leaders and the district elders. They came over and they were also excited to see us.

The local people saw the Americans there and our presence itself was enough for them to get brave and come out. After that we started doing patrols with the local police and the police presence was also a motivator for these people to come out. Most of the information that came to us was basically village elders walking up to the district center and sitting down and drinking tea with us and talking. Most of our Intel came from them.

After that I would say that within 15-20 days the bazaar was up and functional. And this was without much effort from the Americans when it came to providing generators or any kind of defense. Basically after that, the police were conducting their own patrols in the area and every morning the bazaar was open and the bazaar was closed at around 1700. I think that was a success when it comes down to the economic portion.

At the same time, we had started doing small clinics every Friday. During the first two weeks the lines for the clinic were very small because people were afraid to be seen in the bazaar area because everybody in the area knew that the U.S. forces were there. I would say that it took us at least a good two weeks of being in that district before our clinic lines were humongous. But then we had people lined up, like over 50 to 100 people every Friday. We were able to see everybody.

"One time we were attacked while we had the clinic open so we had to shut down and try to defend the base. But that didn't stop people from staying. People still kept coming. That did not stop them. They were motivated; they wanted a difference. They wanted change and we saw that."

One time we were attacked while we had the clinic open so we had to shut down and try to defend the base. But that didn't stop people from staying. People still kept coming. That did not stop them. They were motivated; they wanted a difference. They wanted change and we saw that.

The only downfall was that there was not a follow-on force coming after us. We were gonna be there for 30 days and we were moving out. We provided a band-aid fix, and then we moved out.

Services were Provided through a Local District Chief

We developed wells for the villages. We put at least six wells in six different villages. We built a Karez, an irrigation system. In one month, we did all this. So these people were happy to help us out and give us information. They were openly out there helping us out.

We did everything through the district chief. We wanted to establish the credibility of the district chief because the Taliban had so much influence. Our goal was to establish the government in that area. We wanted the people to see that the government was working with

them and the government was bringing this help and this aid to them. When it came to the wells, we went to the district chief and the village elders for them to provide workers. We were offering the work, but it was going through the district chief. When they came, they were being paid by the district chief through us. The district chief was the face of every project. It wasn't the Americans handing out stuff; it was the district chief with the help of the Americans. The Afghan government was providing all these services.

I would say all the wells were a success, although there will always be a small portion of corruption. This one time, the district chief had told us that he had constructed a Karez in a town so he wanted the money for him to pay his workers. We decided to go out to the village to inspect it prior to paying him. And when we got there what we found was a Karez that was constructed a very long time ago. He was basically trying to pocket that money and I confronted him about it. He apologized and everything. He was caught. In these areas you have to expect a small portion of corruption. These areas are out there in the middle of nowhere. No roads leading to main towns. These are small places. But after that he apologized to us knowing that we'd been there. This was like almost five days prior to us leaving and he knew that he had messed up with us because we were there for over 20 something days helping him out and then he tried to get us.

Honestly, I don't know what happened afterwards in the area. After thirty days, everybody pulled out. There was no U.S. force, nobody, just the Afghan forces left. Everybody pulled out. We had to conduct another operation in another area.

Working Alongside Villagers Built Trust and Reduced Opposition

After the economic development in our previous province we went straight into CDI, which is the Civil Defense Initiative. The Taliban had more influence than the government in our new province. The plan was to establish a civil defense in each town made up of civilians, not military; a civil defense, like a small community watch in each village. That was the initial plan. The ODAs were supposed to go in and embed themselves in villages. My team's mission was to be at the Joint District Coordination Center (JDCC). That's where USAID was, Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture and the 82nd Airborne Division. Our main goal for the CA team was to begin developing a plan to promote the district chief. The main goal was to develop jobs, start building agriculture; start building stuff that was productive for this town. Some of the things that we were able to do were to get some meds and begin building a small clinic at the JDCC. We also started working with the Department of Agriculture. They were conducting irrigation and pruning of pomegranate orchards. They had hired workers for the pruning season. There were 3 teams of 40 Afghan workers and they were in the fields pruning these orchards to give fruit. They were out there providing jobs.

Many of the villagers came to the JDCC to talk to the district chief. Through the district chief, we did the same thing that we did in a district, previously. All the projects went through him and he was the face of everything. So when it came to the villagers having information on the Taliban or where an IED was, where this was, they were coming. And what that did was it established the credibility of the government and of the teams embedded in these small villages. In the beginning, these teams were not received very well or too openly. After a while they started getting Intel from the village itself, "There's an IED being placed here. There's a person here placing this."

In small towns, you might have a community watch but some of those guys might be Taliban because this area is so full of the Taliban forces and the influence that the Taliban has is very strong. This is an ongoing fight, but I would say that there's success in this story. There's success because U.S. forces were able to embed themselves into these villages. These are the same villages that didn't want U.S. forces there and now here we are working together, pruning these orchards, doing joint patrols. They're working with us now to a certain point. The village elders came to tell us that they would work with us and to ask what would happen when we pull out. This is one of the priorities in Afghanistan now. When we were pulling out, there was already another team transitioning in. There's no continuity in that I know of as of now. But there's a team in another district. I was there for 30 days. I pulled out, but there's another team there now and they're continuing the same process. And it's the first time they've done that in that area. We were the first ones to establish the CDI.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 2

Projects Had Little Lasting Worth if Locals Could Not Sustain Them

I was deployed to Africa in 2008. When we got there, my team leader and I went on a trip around the country to check on projects that had been submitted by the team prior to us. We went down to a town in Mauritania to check on the progress of a fire station that was being built. When we spoke to the mayor and the local Wali (holy person), they told us that although they were glad it was being built, they didn't know how they were going to be able to operate the fire station without fire trucks or vehicles to move any of the equipment that they needed to put out fires. They were going to be able to open the fire station, but they weren't going to be able to do anything with it. They had the firemen and they had the building, but they didn't have any of the equipment that went along with it. They didn't even have tables or chairs.

The team before us had never gotten word from those guys that they needed that stuff, so they had never thought of providing the equipment. We called Germany to report back to the Special Forces group we worked with and started talking to them about how we could go about getting fire trucks and vehicles for this fire station. In talking with the group back in Germany, we discovered that they had an excess property warehouse in Germany of Army supplies that were no longer being used. We got in touch with the lady in charge of the excess property and she sent us the forms that we needed to fill out to order equipment from the warehouse. We identified all of the basic supplies that they would need to run the fire station and we put in the proper paperwork. The group back in Germany scheduled a boat to ship the equipment down to Mauritania. When the fire station was complete, we were able to open it with all the equipment in it. We got tables, chairs, desks, typewriters, picks, axes, and two fire trucks. The trucks were Army fire trucks that they had used on posts in Germany.

When we left, they had a fully functioning fire station. In addition to getting the equipment for them, we also planned a well project that would feed that fire station directly with water. We put in the project nomination for the well and got it approved, but it wasn't going to be built until the next fiscal year.

Lesson learned is that you've got to look at a project from all aspects. You have to consider all of the different components required to sustain a project. Okay, they need a fire station, but what do they need for that fire station to work? We wanted to build them the well because we knew that they had to take the trucks all the way over to their well on the opposite side of town to fill up the water trucks as opposed to being able to fill them right there at the fire station.

We had a similar set of issues with a clinic being built in a little town in the middle of nowhere. The team before us had put in a project nomination because the town had no healthcare system. Basically, if you caught pneumonia, you could die. There were no roads in the area and you had to drive through the desert for an hour and a half in each direction to get to the next town. Their government will only put a doctor into an area that has a clinic. The only ways to get a doctor to that area to help those people were to build a clinic or to bring our own doctors. We were only going to stay in the area for six months, so providing our doctors would not be the long-term fix that they needed.

The clinic was about 95% complete when we got there and their government was going to send a doctor, but they had no way to supply the clinic with any medical equipment. If there was a problem that the doctor could identify and say hey, we need to get this guy to a hospital, and he's got three hours or he's going to die, he was just going to die because it would take over three hours to get him out of there. They didn't really have any transportation other than one car that belonged to the mayor.

My team leader came up with the idea of trying to get equipment that could sustain life for long enough to get the person to the hospital. We talked to the doctor and to our medic about what kind of equipment they would need to do that. We got back with Germany and went through the excess property thing once again to get tables, chairs and a treatment table, the kind that's got the white paper over it. I think we even got a typewriter. Then we went to the local capital and bought your basic necessity stuff, like gauze and scalpels. We also ran a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) in that place at the same time and the excess medicine that we didn't use went to the doctor as well. That helped stock the clinic for at least a good three months. We started to try to figure out how to develop a plan to resupply the clinic, but there was a coup in the area after we left and the plan was never completed.

"That was yet another lesson learned; if you're going to build something, make sure that you have all the resources, or the country itself has the resources to do anything with it."

It's great to build something, but unless you sustain it, it's worthless. There was a school that that the U.S. Army had built in that country three years ago. It became a warehouse because they built the school right next to an existing school. The mayor said that the new school was intended to be their high school equivalent, but there weren't enough children to fill two schools. Plus, the government allocates teachers based on how many people there are in the town, so they weren't going to get any more teachers for the new school. But, they built a school and it was being used as a warehouse. Whose warehouse? We have no idea. Because we'd already handed the school over to the town, we couldn't kick whoever's stuff was in there out. That was yet another lesson learned; if you're going to build something, make sure that you have all the resources, or the country itself has the resources to do anything with it.

There's only one thing in my mind that you can build that's going to be used on a daily basis regardless of the area and that's a well. A well is the only thing that's going to get used every day and get used for exactly what it's supposed to, and its resources are as deep as the well goes. Once it dries up, that's when you can't use it anymore. But that's about it. For everything else, the Army or CA really needs to come up with a plan for how to resupply these places.

Continuity of Forces Was Necessary for a Long-Term Fix

The CA guys that had gone there before us had done a very good job in establishing rapport. When we did our handoff with them, they pretty much took us to every town they'd been to and

introduced us to the mayor. So right off the bat, we had a pretty good working relationship. Since those guys had a good working relationship with them, they accepted us pretty well. There were a few towns that we went to where we were the first ones that had gone there, but overall they were pretty receptive to us coming in. They definitely wanted to see their country succeed, and they knew that we were going to help them in doing that. So they were pretty good at accepting us.

Where they weren't happy with us were the places that had problems. For example, one village wasn't too happy with us because of the fire station that got scrapped. A previous team had hired a guy to build the fire station, but I don't think he had any intention of actually fully building a fire station. It seemed like he only did enough work on the fire station to get his next payment. The project ended up being scrapped completely because by the time the problem was identified, an NGO who had hired the right guy had already built a whole other fire station. It wasn't us who did that, but it was our stamp. It was a CA stamp. Once you put that American flag on anything, you've got to make sure that it works, because if it doesn't, they're not going to accept any more Americans in that place. And that's not just the Army who causes that and reaps the effects. I mean, you've got NGOs out there doing good things, too, and if they're American NGOs, their throat was cut just the same as ours was by that debacle. If they do something poorly, we feel the repercussions of that as well. Once you get that American flag on something, you've got to make sure it works, especially when you're starting to build trust and everything else with people.

"Once you get that American flag on something, you've got to make sure it works, especially when you're starting to build trust and everything else with people."

In my opinion, CA teams cannot accomplish what we need to accomplish in a particular country in a six-month deployment. You need to be there at least a year. If they're going to do six-month rotations, the way they should do it is that I go there for six months with my team. Then a team comes and replaces us for six months, and then we go back and replace that team for six months. Then that team comes back and replaces us for six months. That way that team and our team have continuity within that country. We would know all the people, know the system, know who the good contractors are and who the bad contractors are. Unfortunately, we don't really do that now. I think a lot of that has to do with Afghanistan and Iraq, of course, and people rotating in and out of there. I mean, we're just in too many places at once at this particular point in time.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 3

Building Human Infrastructure First Improved Continuity with the Local Government

The initial capacity building that we were working on was human infrastructure. From there, we also worked the development of the physical infrastructure of that area with the intent to create better living conditions for Afghan local nationals.

When we first arrived, the non-ministry positions in this area—elected officials, not appointed officials—were already full. So the government in the area that we were in initially was working very well; people for the most part were pro-GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan). Security issues were minimal too; some areas were worse than others, but it was mostly just small insurgency groups and cells.

Initially the whole team stayed together in this one area and we worked together. The first 45 days was spent conducting assessments, getting atmospheric, figuring out the lay of the land. You read all your information going in, but of course you need to get the ground truth for about the first 45 days. We spent time figuring out who was pro-GIRoA and which areas needed the most capacity building. Then we actually started executing projects, infrastructure building, or engaging with human infrastructure.

An example of our initial work was finding a village elder who was pro-GIRoA, but who wasn't recognized by the people as much. We would empower that individual with capacity building because he was already trying to work with the government. A lot of problems we found there were problems with the lines of communication between a small village and the main village in a district. As soon as you link those guys up, and it could be something as simple as the guy had a cell phone and just needed the other guy's number, they can begin conversing about their problems. You became more of a liaison for the capacity building. You had to get it jump started, but putting an Afghan face on it was the most important issue. Our work executing the stuff was behind closed doors.

As an example of the things that we did to empower the Afghans, we got a judge and we built a courthouse. It was the beginning of a local judicial system and it got running pretty fast. Capacity building could be executed better in areas with fewer security problems than in some areas where we know security is so poor that we can't go in. We based everything off the laws of that country. The government of Afghanistan has already established laws, so empowering lawmakers to fill these positions was critical. We just kind of got the ball rolling.

What made our assessment better was the continuity we had with the two Civil Affairs Teams (CAT-As) that worked this area prior to us. We had two rotations of a running assessment that was already executed. All we had to do was update that stuff using an ASCOPE¹⁶ methodology. For instance, we had a guy filling the position in the Ministry of Communications, but he did not have infrastructure that was very good. We built him an office and then, boom, USAID came in and brought Internet capabilities into the district government. Stuff like that, although small,

¹⁶ A Civil Affairs doctrinal tool; Areas, Structures, Capabilities, People, Events.

makes a big difference. Putting Internet equipment in there empowered the Ministry of Communication; it showed the people that their local government is trying to do something to improve their well being. This obviously falls within the intent of a Counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy and helps to deter insurgency in the area.

Another thing we did was work to increase the ministry positions being filled. The other districts, there were seven in our area, had very few ministry positions filled. So we would go to these locations and identify that as an important element of capacity building. We can build all kinds of buildings, all we want, but we have to affect the population through the human infrastructure. These guys need to be empowered in their positions. So you help fill the position and then from there you can start doing projects that the new bureaucrat can monitor after we leave.

Starting at the Center of Gravity Allowed Expansion of Reach and Security

Let's say we wanted to engage such and such area. You have this center of gravity where there is economic stimulus and human infrastructure, we want to expand that. Kind of like an ink spot on paper. We move out to the peripheral areas and try to develop a new center of gravity.

We identify problems in need of a solution; they can be really basic things. A lot of areas don't have schools, they don't have a clinic, and the road networks were really poor. It could even be as simple as a quick impact humanitarian assistance distribution. Whatever we identify, the process is always the same. It has to begin with Key Leader Engagement (KLE). Basically in a nutshell, we sit down and do a meeting. From the KLE, we find out who the village elder is and what he sees as the shortcomings or needs of his village. Following the KLE we would actually then go conduct an assessment. Obviously we would not promise anything to these people, but we know that, based on a crude assessment of that village, they need X, Y, and Z. Then we can go back and do our homework to find out hey, this village elder, he's pro-GIRoA, he's a good guy, do we want to help this guy out? Is the village playing by the rules? So on and so on.

Let's say in a perfect world that he is pro-GIRoA and the village has little to no insurgent activity, we'll move in that village and execute projects. From there we will try to work hand in hand with this guy. We'll execute a project that he needs almost immediately, such as building a well. Something small like that we would execute with bulk CERP almost immediately. Based on the cost analysis for that location, every location was different, but basically the rules of the CERP funding is hey it's \$5,000 and under, boom, we can approve that project at our level. It was a great tool. When the project meets the criteria, you don't have to go through the process of doing all that paperwork.

From there the contractor would move in, based on security in the area. He would execute the project and provide us with periodic updates. It was tough for us to personally check on all the projects with just four people on our team, so in some cases it meant empowering that contractor to take pictures and update us with them.

When the project was complete, we would move to the village and conduct another assessment; gather atmospheric again, and conduct a key leader engagement. We'd leverage the project for a *quid pro quo*. We gave you this project, now we need information, we need your support. If there was insurgent activity, they were pretty up front with explaining why there was insurgent

activity in their village, whether it was civil vulnerabilities or whether it was something else, they would let us know pretty much 90 percent of the time unless that guy had another agenda.

Our experience in Afghanistan is that the people are sick of fighting. They want security, they want economic stability, and they want capacity building within their country. Unfortunately, Americans are very impatient and this stuff takes a long time. We're very good at what we do in the areas we're working, but we had one team for an entire province. We traveled it as much as we could, we did a lot, but you can imagine if we had two or three more teams, how much we could have done.

One of the best things we were involved in was increasing lines of communications through road networks. Working on roads was very expensive; the projects were a little larger than what we normally would want to do, but we found that we were the only agency that could get them done. Other government departments just didn't have the manpower or the rules for using their funding were too stringent, or because of the security issues, they didn't have the capability to travel from one place to another. On the other hand, we had the security capabilities to travel.

In Afghanistan, the terrain is extremely restrictive. You need a mountain pass to get from point A to point B. The Taliban know this and they restrict a lot of key passes. We were really expanding the capacity of the peripheral areas by providing road networks from point A to point B because without good roads, the district that's on the other side of this pass never has any communication whatsoever with the main district area where the government is located.

Obviously, the enemy Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP) is improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along road networks; that's common sense. The problem is that they don't want to blow up Afghan civilians because the Information Operations (IO) campaign for that is just terrible; they're killing their own people. That was a double edged sword for them as far as trying to restrict our movement. We were mitigating all that; we had the capabilities to build protective measures for critical infrastructure in areas where security was poor and we could provide, for instance, guard towers, and barriers. Something like that where you could protect something that you spent millions of dollars on as far as infrastructure to put security forces within this area to protect so they would not IED the location. So not only did we build a road, we expanded operational reach or that line of communication from point A to point B by building protective measures for critical infrastructure in many locations.

You can appreciate the importance of opening a road to the center of gravity from district to district when you see the disparity in the quality of life. The district center, the one we were in, the bazaar had 12 cell phone shops. In Afghanistan, a cell phone is like a commodity, it's a need. Contrast that with an outlying district where you couldn't build any concrete structures because the Taliban would tax the concrete coming in and consequently they didn't have a bazaar. So by opening those lines of communication, the roads, you can help the guys that are so rich in our district connect with other districts and improve everyone's standard of living through trade.

Promoting Saffron had the Potential to Replace Poppy Cultivation

We know that poppy funds the Taliban and the insurgents in Afghanistan. In most of Afghanistan, the economy is based on agriculture and the people are farmers. Many of the

farmers grow poppy, not because they want to fund the Taliban, but because they're looking for a source of income for their families. The Taliban could tax the farmers, but instead they interdict the second stage of heroin production to sell and export it to other countries.

We need to find an alternative to poppy, but that's hard because it can be so lucrative. The standard plot of land in Afghanistan is a 40 by 50 meter area, basically 1/5 of an acre. At current market rates, one plot of poppy will sell for approximately \$660.

The government of Afghanistan has made poppy cultivation completely illegal, and what we were finding was Afghan Security Forces were taking the lead and eradicating the poppy. However, the Afghan way of eradicating poppy is to go burn it. Well now, you're a farmer, you've got a family to support, a wife and kids, and we burn your poppy; now you have no source of income. And we've made an enemy out of the farmer. The farmer's going to pick up an AK and go hey, I need to fight; Taliban will pay me now.

What we were starting to do as an alternative to poppy—and to give this farmer a source of income besides fighting—was introducing saffron. Saffron grows very well in countries like Iran and Spain. However, with the trade embargo, Iran cannot export any saffron. It's the most expensive spice in the world and the climate in Afghanistan is very conducive to growing saffron.

Saffron in the first year could yield about \$700 per plot but by the second and third year it would easily yield \$2,500 to \$3,000 per plot. All we had to do was buy the bulbs, which we were already doing, and train the farmers about planting this saffron. Once we do that, it will spread on its own. In a non-kinetic¹⁷ manner, saffron will eradicate poppy in the area and potentially all of Afghanistan. It's the complete package because you're providing the seed, the training, the materials, and the contractors will buy it back. So there's no investment downside for the farmers whatsoever.

We engaged some really important people in Afghanistan, village elders that controlled large areas of land through a key leader engagement, and said, "Hey, we have this product. I know you can't grow poppy anymore. You're a businessman; you want to make money, that's why you own all this land. Hey, why don't we start growing saffron?" However, the planting season for saffron isn't until July, so we won't see the first crops introduced in large areas until July and they'll start growing it in the fall. But we believe saffron will completely eradicate poppy in Afghanistan. Now it might be five years down the road, but based on the research our team did, we think this will work.

In addition to providing packets of seeds, we provide the food for eight to ten individuals for eight months; assorted seeds of pumpkins, watermelons, things that they would actually eat. So we're saying "We're destroying your poppy crop. However, we're giving you saffron plus this other food for you to sustain yourself until you're able to sell the saffron." They were hybrid seed kits from Europe. They were already treated so that they did not need pesticides. The quality of seeds had a 95 percent germination rate versus Afghan seeds that had germination rates of 20 percent at best.

¹⁷ Kinetic operations involve the application of force to achieve effects. Non-kinetic operations seek to influence the target audience without force (e.g., by providing humanitarian assistance or through electronic or print media).

Another advantage for us in giving them seed kits of pumpkins and watermelons is that those are plants that grow along the ground unlike corn or wheat, so they don't provide concealment to the insurgents.

Each kit is in a small box, easy to transport, easy to distribute, and they could feed their family for eight to ten months; a ten person family. The kits had illustrated instructions (with arm lengths and two fingers deep) to show the farmers the best way to plant the seeds. That allowed us to get around the high illiteracy rate and ensure the crops would grow.

USAID introduced us to the contractor who could bring these seed kits to the table and we started working it with them. It was actually two contractors, one foreign and one local. The foreign contractor provided the training and expertise, but the local contractor was trained and it was his business. So it was an Afghan business we were empowering. This foreign contractor was kind of mentoring him and showing him, hey, this is how you do this. They had already been working together for about a year or so, and it was great because when we conducted a key leader engagement with somebody that owned a lot of land and we wanted to have them agree to do this on 30 plots of land and an Afghan face was telling them hey, this stuff works. We can talk about it all day long, but until he applies it, grows it, gets income from it, it's all hearsay. The actions are louder than words.

Unifying Efforts Empowered the Local NGOs

We had NGOs working in the area; some of them were funded by the Dutch, some of them were funded by the Germans, but they were Afghan nationals with great attitudes. However, they would do projects just to do projects; most of the time they didn't even know where the projects were located. To help these NGOs become more efficient and to get some unity of effort, we had meetings every Wednesday with the PRT and the NGO's. But remember, they were local nationals and in the Afghan culture, whenever you had a meeting you never put on the table the reality of things. They would always tell you how things are great and everything's going well, how we work well together, but they just don't have that appreciation for the reality on the ground.

What we were trying to do was have them bring us GPS coordinates of exactly where they were building wells. Because we would go to villages that would have three or four wells and some other villages didn't have any wells, whatsoever. But for them, because of the Taliban, it was hard for them to go out with a GPS and tell us where the well was. So we would ask them "where is this project located". "Oh, it's in village X somewhere in there;" they didn't really know. It was challenging because they didn't have their own security. They had two local national guys on a motorcycle going to some village that might have Taliban, might not, and build a well there, just because a Malik (chieftain) asked for it.

Another way we tried to unify effort was every Thursday we would have meetings with everybody that goes to the Shura and then some days with the Malik Shura. So in those meetings, it was called the developmental Shura and everybody could go and ask for projects. The district chief would gather these requests in the official district paperwork and then they were supposed to scrub it to make sure they didn't have any projects built in there already. We could then bring the scrubbed list to the Wednesday's NGO and basically say this guy needs this project in this village, who'll take it? As best as we could tell with a map with points marked on

it where this project was built; it was a challenge. Some of those guys weren't going out to those areas. There's no way they had an assessment of those villages. They didn't know the population and they didn't know their civil vulnerabilities. It all goes back to having the security capability to go out, look at the area and execute the capacity building projects to win over the people and empower GIROA.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 4

Coordinating Efforts Before the Operation Helped Sustain Trust During the Aftermath

There was an operation to clear a whole village, a Taliban stronghold. During the planning process prior to the clear, one of the things we identified was the potential for a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). We met with the PRT Civil Affairs (CA) team and, talking in generalities due to operational concerns and security, discussed how we could handle the IDPs. We talked through their plan, helped them come up with a plan for how they would work with the Afghan government to deal with a large number of IDPs, and identified all the specified and implied tasks. The CA team leader then met with the Afghan government counterpart that covered disaster management and talked to them about their standard operating procedures (SOPs) and what plans they had in place. Fortunately, it was the time of the year when they were starting to look at disaster preparedness for flooding. So, we were able to ask our questions under the guise of "Hey, what are you going to do if you get about roughly 1,500 to 2,000 civilians displaced from their homes due to floods? Where would you hold them, provide security, shelter, food?" We had that piece already worked out prior to the clear, so we knew what their capabilities were.

It ran pretty smoothly. I think it was because it tied in to the time of the year when they were looking at how they would handle displaced persons. They had an area, a proposed site for a soccer stadium that was large enough that they could set up tents. The Afghan National Police (ANP) provided the security. They had UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission – Afghanistan) there providing a lot of the food. They used buses for transportation from the village down to the site. They'd already been talking about some of these things, anticipating the flood season coming on, so they had already worked through a lot of the problems. The biggest thing for us was trying to get them spun up and find out what their capabilities were without giving away that there was going to be a large operation conducted there; figuring out what they could do while still trying to maintain Operations Security (OPSEC). If we went in there as the CA guys that work with the Special Operations Forces (SOF), it would raise a lot of questions about why we were asking some of the questions we were asking, so we worked through the PRT CA team and they were able to work through the ministry that was doing the disaster management.

One of the things we identified during the clear was, because this had historically been a Taliban town, there was a need for the Afghan National Army (ANA) to establish rapport with the villagers. One of the ways we identified they could do that was through humanitarian assistance (HA). After the clear, we went out and started doing the HA distribution, ensuring that it was coming from the ANA. When the villagers got it, it was an ANA Soldier handing them the bag of rice or the bag of wheat. Another way that we were able to use the HA was for security. The Company Commander determined that where the only north-south road met with the east-west road was a critical checkpoint. By staging the HA there the day prior, we forced the ANA to maintain a presence at that checkpoint.

"At the first meeting, a disaster management committee from the government had come down to talk about what damage there was and, of course, everybody there claimed that a brother, a sister, or a mother had died. I think the list got up to like 80 names. But because the International Committee of the Red Cross had been there early on and they were able to verify there were no civilian deaths, nothing came out of it, which was good."

One of the things that I thought was really successful was working with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They came out on day two or three. We talked them through what had happened and where. They went out and looked around. There was minimal damage. I mean it was almost a surgical operation. They went to the few houses that were leveled because there were bad guys there and verified that they were all combatants. They were able to verify that there were no civilian casualties. That played a part later on when we met with the Shura for the second time that day. At the first meeting, a disaster management committee from the government had come down to talk about what damage there was and, of course, everybody there claimed that a brother, a sister, or a mother had died. I think the list got up to like 80 names. But because ICRC had been there early on and they were able to verify there were no civilian deaths, nothing came out of it, which was good.

We also tied in the International Office for Migration (IOM), which is an NGO. They run the Afghan Civil Assistance Program (ACAP) for USAID. Under the ACAP program, field officers go into areas where there's been battle damage. They do assessments and then they have different ways they can provide compensation. We did a lot of coordination with the ACAP rep there. Somewhat before, we just talked in generalities about what his capabilities were, what he could provide, and what he could do. Then, immediately following the clear, I think we had him up there on day three or four. He went out and looked at all the damage. He hired a local to guide him and met with the Shura to explain why he was there. He had freedom of movement to walk around. It wasn't like they saw U.S. forces with the guy; he was pretty much on his own. He was able to verify what damage there was. We were able to use him to pretty much take care of the battle damage.

I think the big lesson learned there is that we were able to coordinate these pieces before the operation. We went and talked to each agency beforehand without giving away OPSEC and found out what their capabilities were. Under that guise, they kind of prepared themselves and got all their papers straight. They were ready to go when the operation went down. We didn't give away any OPSEC, but they were already prepared. They basically set everything up so that when they were briefed in after the operation, they already had a plan, and they just put it all

together. I think that's a big lesson learned, the rapport that was built before the operation and the coordination. I thought that was a big plus.

Turning Over Stabilization Responsibilities to the Afghans Helped them Plan and Execute their Own Projects

The USAID officer down in our area was a great guy to work with. He came up with this concept of forming a stabilization team of Afghan engineers, surveyors, and community mobilizers. He was able to get the ministry at the national level to buy off on that. They sent down, I think, three engineers, two community mobilizers, and two or three assessors.

We went back up to this village that had been cleared roughly two weeks earlier; us, the PRT CA, USAID, and a guy from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We were with this Afghan Stabilization team. We met with the Shura and talked through, "Okay, what are the basic needs not being met in the village?" For them, it was irrigation, schools, the clinic, and roads. Community mobilizers met with them to prioritize project needs. Then we went out and started doing assessments of their proposed projects.

"We just made sure that they understood that it wasn't us doing it. We put an Afghan face on it. We did that for roughly 10 to 12 projects. All along the way, it was pushing the Afghan face."

What the locals saw was the Afghan engineers doing the assessments. They had all the engineer equipment, the surveying equipment. They're out there surveying where they needed to do a retaining wall. At the same time, they had ANA providing security, and we were there just sort of to observe and advise. What we did is we would go off to the side and whatever villagers were at that spot, we would talk to them, "Hey, these are Afghan engineers here, sent by your government. They're doing surveying 'cause they're gonna put in a retaining wall here." We just made sure that they understood that it wasn't us doing it. We put an Afghan face on it. We did that for roughly 10 to 12 projects. All along the way, it was pushing the Afghan face. Once they finished the assessments, the Afghan engineers came up with the designs. They went up to Kabul, to the national level, and got approved. When they came back down at that point, they handed the designs over to us and we funded them through CERP only because at the provincial level, they didn't have the funds to do the projects.

We took their designs and went through our CERP process, and then, as we were leaving, it had all been approved. Then the next step was us and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Afghans, meeting with local contractors. They were going to go up and start the projects. From the villagers' perception, they saw the Afghan engineers come and the surveyors did the assessment. And when ground was broken, it was the MRRD engineers there with an Afghan contractor.

"It would've been easy for us just to go and pay for it. It would've been done within two weeks, but that wouldn't teach their government anything. This way took a little bit longer, but they did it step-by-step by themselves."

Everybody was working together. I think the people of the village were ready for a change. They had seen and heard about how other villages were benefitting and, because they'd been under the Taliban control, they really hadn't seen anything positive happen in their village in quite a while. It wasn't us forcing the projects onto them. All the projects were projects that they asked for from their own government. It was doing what they wanted to do. They saw it happen. It would've been easy for us just to go and pay for it. It would've been done within two weeks, but that wouldn't teach their government anything. This way took a little bit longer, but they did it step-by-step by themselves. They just saw us looking behind them.

The operation pretty much broke the Taliban in the province. It was extremely successful. They weren't able to do any actions. The best that they could mount was sort of a whisper campaign of, "Hey, we're coming back," but they weren't able to actually physically do anything. Once we heard that that was going on, we developed some talking points and tried to get those out to the people. When the ANA and the ANP were out patrolling every day, they used those talking points. In the past, attempts had been made to clear the village and the Taliban would leave. Then, once the ANA and the ANP left, then they would come back to the village. This time, the villagers saw that the ANA and the ANP were staying there in the village, so I think that was one of the big differences. I think one of the big keys during the build phase was that Afghan stabilization team; really including the Afghans and pushing them out to the forefront made a big difference.

This was a new concept. This was the first time it had been attempted. Because it was so successful, USAID and the PRT decided to try it again in two of the other provinces that were a lot less kinetic¹⁸ and a lot more stable. They took the same concept where you had the Afghan engineers and the community mobilizers. They took them to two other provinces where they met with the Shuras to identify what the basic needs were, and then that led to projects. Right before we left, they took the concept to another stable district within the province that we'd moved into. The next step in the evolution was for their MRRD to, on their own, come up with the plan and then execute it without any coalition support or involvement. That's where we wanted to get them, to where they felt safe and secure enough that they could come up with the plan with the ANA or the ANP, and then they would go out and do their assessments.

¹⁸ Kinetic operations involve the application of force to achieve effects. Non-kinetic operations seek to influence the target audience without force (e.g., by providing humanitarian assistance or through electronic or print media).

Providing Doctors and Medical Supplies Helped Move a Clinic Towards Self-Sustainment

There were two local nationals working in the local clinic. A Forward Surgical Team (FST) was also working in the clinic doing advanced care and surgery. I coordinated with the local nationals to get two more doctors. They brought two more local national doctors in, an internal medicine doctor and a regular doctor. First, they told me he was a surgeon, but he turned out to be a doctor who was interested in surgery. The internal medicine doctor was working with the internal medicine doctor from FST and the doctor who liked surgery ended up working with the FST surgeons. When the patients would come to be seen, the local national doctors would look at them and present their patient to the American doctor. The American doctor would make suggestions about the course of treatment and explain how they would treat the person if it was their patient.

The clinic also had a nutrition program, kind of like a WIC¹⁹ program, which was so good that they transferred it over to the local hospital. We managed to have the local health department take ownership of it and they started running it on their own. It was a program that the French developed and had great success with in Africa. It was more of a PRT program, but I brought it to the clinic because it was easy for the patients to come to. They would do a measurement to make sure the kid was malnourished. If they fit into the program, they gave them kind of a nutrition ball, which was peanuts ground up with some oil and sugar, vitamins, and powdered milk. They mix it up into individual servings, and then they'd write down how many balls the kid should eat each day. We also had baby formula and baby cereal, so we'd give families that if they had infants. They followed the progress of the kids in the program.

The clinic had been started back in 2002 by an Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA). Initially, it was for a need that wasn't being met. The clinic had lasted for seven years and it had never really gone onto any other point. We were able to bring in the local national doctors and start that mentorship-training program. Right before we left, the next step was that USAID was going to take over the funding of the local hospital so they could bring it up to a provincial hospital. We were going to give the clinic over to the Minister of Public Health and they would continue to staff it, run it, and then provide their own medicine. Our only involvement would be the mentorship program would continue. That would be the next step as far as making that actually sustainable by the Afghans.

¹⁹ WIC stands for Women, Infants, and Children. It is a U.S. federal program that provides grants to states to provide nutrition supplements and education to low-income mothers and young children.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 5

Building Schools Affected an Entire Community

We were located in a province where the majority of the people are Hazara. The Hazara are a minority in Afghanistan, but in that province about 90-95 percent of the people are Hazara. Throughout history, the Hazara people claim to have been neglected and looked down upon within Afghan society by the Pashtuns, but also by the government.

The physical terrain is a big contributor to their lack of development. It is very mountainous with high elevations. There are very few roads and, because of the weather during the winter, the passes close with snow. It had an effect on development in that area just like in the Appalachian Mountains.

There had never been any kind of coalition force presence in that province. They had built a small compound about two or three years ago in hopes of having a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) go there and try to develop it, but it was never occupied. It was one of the few provinces in all of Afghanistan that had no coalition presence and no PRT in the entire province. So the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC) Commander, made a decision to send an Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) up there. They didn't have a Civil Affairs Team (CAT) to work with them due to the limited amount of CATs for the entire Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). The Hazara people were very open and very happy. We arrived about three weeks after the ODA. Out of the entire province, the only coalition presence was the ODA, the two of us for CA, and then we had a two-man Psychological Operations (PSYOP) team that was running a radio station. So there were about 15 American guys in the whole province.

They have a pretty robust education system, but they don't have the infrastructure to support it. They're very progressive people and put a high value on education as a means to better them, but out of all the schools in the province, only about a third of them are in an actual school building. Two-thirds of them are under a tree, in a tent, or in a local mosque. When we went around throughout the province, the first thing that people always asked about was building schools for them.

A lot of times when you build a school or a clinic, you don't have the means to sustain it and support it, so you just have a building. You can build a school, but if you don't have teachers to teach in it, you've just got a building. But they already had the teachers in place. Some of them were being paid by the government. Some of them were being paid by the local people who would pool their money to be able to hire extra teachers, and some were just volunteers. And then as far as students, everybody sent their kids to school that could. The only piece that was really missing was the actual school buildings. Everybody had kids over there, so by building a school, you were affecting the entire community, not just a segment of that community.

We worked through the provincial and the district governments to try and have them prioritize which schools were the most important. And they had a plan. They had a list of all the schools that they wanted to build within the next couple of years in each district. And the information that they provided was pretty accurate. They had a list of schools, broken down by how many teachers were operating that school, how many students, boys and girls. And we'd look at that.

We'd say, "This is an area that we want to affect," and when we'd go to that village and talk to the local school principal, the information that he was giving us as far as teachers, student ratio and everything was accurate. We set up weekly meetings with the Department of Education, the District Governor and the provincial government reps. They determined what they wanted to do and how, and then they made the decisions. We would ask a couple questions about how they were going to go about it, but they were 100 percent involved.

We Conducted a Careful Assessment Before Making Any Promises

The packet for the first two schools had already been submitted when we arrived. Two guys on the ODA, the medics, kind of took on the initial duty of Civil Affairs when they first arrived because we weren't there yet. They had very good intentions, but they just didn't have training or experience in recommending and nominating a Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) project. And so, despite the best of intentions, it wasn't well thought through. When we got there, I was trying to push the packet through the approval process, but I assumed that it was well planned and I didn't ask enough questions.

After it got through the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) level, and once it got up to the CJSOTF, they were asking some good questions. And after I stopped and paused and looked at it, I started thinking, "Hey, this probably wasn't well thought out, and there's a better way we could do this." I ended up putting the brakes on it, and it kind of frustrated the Advanced Operational Base (AOB) commander at first because he was assuming that the packet was good and he was pushing hard on his chain of command, saying, "We need to get this approved."

Finally, I said, "Hey, let's stop. The more I look at this, the more I don't like it." At that point, I wasn't even sure if they really needed schools in that location. When the ODA first arrived, as the first U.S. presence there, they wanted to create good impact and good relations. They probably said, "Governor, what can we build for you?" And the governor said, "There are two schools right outside my office. I'd like you to build schools there – you know, new schools." Once you commit to it, you're stuck. They already had schools there. Maybe they weren't big enough schools to handle all the students, but they already had schools there. They had something.

The planned size of the schools for the number of students that were attending was way out of proportion and the bidding process for contractors had not been done very well. Instead of having a time limit or deadline for bids, they just took the first three bids they got.

By the time we got there, expectations were already set that they were getting new schools. So I said, "Okay, we'll still do the schools for them," but we put the brakes on it. We reassessed how we could best spend taxpayer money on what the needs were. We redid the scope of work, re-bid it out – the entire project – and although those were the first two projects submitted, they were actually the last two that got approved before we left. It took a couple months longer because we basically redid everything. But in the long run, I think it worked out for the best and, in reality, they couldn't break ground on any of the projects we got approved until the springtime, anyway.

That's what our goal was; to get these projects approved and the funding allocated before the weather got nice in the spring because there's a limited amount of time for the construction season. In the spring, they could start working immediately and have these schools completed, with the ribbon-cutting before the winter started.

We were able to plan for the actual school buildings to be built and furnished with chairs and desks for the students and teachers. If there wasn't already a well or a latrine at the site, we planned for those, too. The Ministry of Education for Afghanistan has standard plans for all their schools. They all look the same depending on how many classrooms you want. One of the changes that we made was we didn't put any electrical wiring in because they don't have the means to sustain the electricity. We could have put in lighting and a generator, but as soon as they filled up that generator and ran it dry, they would not have had the money to sustain it. Any little bit of money that they did have, they would use to hire more teachers or buy books or pencils.

We could have accomplished a lot more if we had gotten there at the beginning of the summer because during the winter, things kind of shut down. We went out as much as we could before the weather got bad, did our assessments, determined where we wanted to build the schools, did all the paperwork, and got everything approved finally before we left in January.

The guys that replaced us were ODA, not CA. Their job was going to be project management: quality control and quality assurance and paying the contractors as they complete the work.

Establishing Relationships of Trust Resulted in Extra Measures of Security

The network that we were able to establish through everything that we were doing up there non-kinetically was our security blanket. In our province there are nine districts. The two districts in the south are mainly Pashtun and there is Taliban presence there. It's kind of like their safe haven. They have training camps there and they go there on their R&R.

The ODA was really, really involved with the Afghan National Police (ANP). They set up ranges and trained them in security – about what it is and a lot of aspects, such as driving techniques. That helped us to go some places where Americans had never been because ANP was leading the way. That helped us a lot.

Because of the non-kinetic operations that we did and the relationships that we were able to establish, the Hazara people that lived around us were our security blanket. If any Taliban came into the area, we'd get phone calls in the middle of the night and people showing up at the gate telling us, "Hey, there are reports they're mining this road going into certain districts. There are two Pashtun suicide bombers that are coming up into another district." The ODA had people just coming off the street and telling them everything and not because they were being paid. Most of the time, the people weren't even asking for money. They wanted the development. They were happy that we were there and they wanted us to stay there and to stay safe.

We were on a small fire base; fifteen Americans on the side of a hill. We didn't have walls or anything. The nearest MEDEVAC was over 45 minutes away. If we had to call in a MEDEVAC or close air support, who knows what would have happened.

If they had really wanted to overrun the base, it would not have been difficult. But because of our informants, we knew if they were planning anything beforehand so we could try and counter it and be prepared before it actually happened.

Renovating a Mosque Helped Build Credibility

We didn't see any of the work done on the schools before we left. One thing that we were able to do – and we can't take full credit for this because this was something that the ODA had started before we got there – was to plan the refurbishment of the main mosque in the provincial capital.

When the ODA arrived in the province, they saw that the Mullah (Muslim religious leader) there was a very influential leader within the community, but that his mosque wasn't big enough. It didn't have a well or a latrine where they could wash before they pray, and because it wasn't big enough, they couldn't all pray at the same time. They basically had to pray in shifts. So the ODA commander – a very smart guy – said, "This is a good way we can have them roll out the welcome mat for us; by influencing this influential leader."

For a small amount of money – less than \$30,000 – we were able to expand and refurbish the main mosque in the provincial capital. From start to completion, we were able to do the job in about a month and a half. The entire community was able to see immediate, visible signs of development. Not to mention that we were sending the message that we respect all religions and that this wasn't a war on Islam. And after we rebuilt his mosque, the mullah – the most influential spiritual person in the district – was now our biggest supporter and couldn't say enough nice things about the Americans and how they're here to help the Hazara people and how fortunate the people were to have people like us trying to work with them and help them.

It was the ODA's idea, but it was just in the initial stages when we got there. We're the ones that came up with the scope of work and the bidding process and the contractors. We were able to start that, get it approved, and get the project completed. The ribbon-cutting was around Thanksgiving time, right before the winter. That influential leader saying great things about us gave us credibility. By providing visible signs of development, we were able to show that we were serious about what we were doing, and we weren't there just making promises.

And it was something that we were able to show before the winter started. The schools took a little bit longer to process because the plans required building from the ground up rather than refurbishment. But before we left, the people knew that those schools had been approved and the money allocated and that we were planning on breaking ground as soon as the weather allowed. And they trusted that it would happen because they saw what happened on the mosque.

Supporting the Mayor Increased Her Capacity and Promoted a Positive Perception of U.S. Forces

The mayor of the city in which we served was very, very supportive of the PRT. I guess this kind of demonstrates how progressive the Hazara people are; she was the only female mayor in all of Afghanistan. She was very honest, an actual servant of the people, in a place where you find a lot of corrupt politicians. But she really believed that her job was to serve the people. I tried to work through her as much as I could.

I had funding available and whenever she had a great idea, even if I wasn't 100 percent convinced that it was the most important thing or the best idea at the time, I would support her with it because I knew it was increasing her capacity.

"Everything that we could do through her raised her status within the community because they saw her as a person of influence who could make things happen."

Everything that we could do through her raised her status within the community because they saw her as a person of influence who could make things happen. It showed that she was going out of her way to find funding. Even if her government wasn't providing her with an adequate budget, she was looking at other sources to try to be the best mayor that she could be and to serve the people. It's important to point out that she established really, really good communication with the people. People spoke very well about her. People in the two Pashtun districts even came and asked her what she was doing that made her so successful in developing the relationship with the U.S. forces. That was very important because the people in the Pashtun-controlled area don't traditionally accept females as leaders. But those religious leaders were asking for her guidance.

Blind Drops of Humanitarian Assistance Expanded the Reach to More People

These people were really helping us and they were asking for more stuff, so we wanted to help them with preparations for the winter. When winter comes, the roads shut down and prices go up, making it very difficult to get supplies. We decided to buy food and other humanitarian assistance (HA). We bought all the necessary HA products possible, and we sent about \$30,000 or \$50,000. One of the major challenges was that they don't manufacture anything in their province. We couldn't drive trucks of supplies up from the highway known as a Taliban highway, so we decided to launch from another area, instead. The contractor still had to go through a Taliban area, but nothing happened. The trucks got there and we sent a couple of trucks full of supplies to different districts.

After that, people came to ask when they would get supplies in their districts. For an underdeveloped area, they had a communication network. Everybody knew everybody, even if they lived on the other side of the mountain. We rebuilt the mosque. We were building a school there. We were doing HA in that district. You know, people talk. They'd find out and they'd say, "How can we be a part of this?"

One of the ODA members suggested doing blind drops, so we did. Being such a mountainous terrain, it was difficult to deliver this HA. So the way we got around that was doing drops. People throughout the province were asking us, "Come and visit us. Come and visit us. Come to our district." We just physically couldn't get there because of the mountains, because of the weather, because of the amount of time we had and just the size of our force, too. We had 15 guys for an entire province. But one way that we were able to expand our reach was through

bundle drops of HA. These were all blind drops. We were even able to do it in one of the contested districts. Of course, they knew the Americans were behind anything dropping out of an airplane by parachute.

We dropped blankets, rice, cooking oil, flour, beans, and cold weather gear. The local people came back with pictures, fingerprints, signatures, and videos all showing the supplies being distributed by the government in those areas. The thing that surprised me in the contested area was that the local people secured the drop zone and the Taliban didn't harass them. They brought us pictures and videos of the supplies being distributed and people lined up. I had to rely on the district leadership to distribute the supplies, but I trusted them enough to do it fairly and to ensure that the right people got it. However, I told them that I needed pictures and documentation showing that this stuff was being distributed to the people and not just being sold at the bazaar. And they provided all that. It was a way of empowering the local government and showing the people that the leadership was taking care of the people that they were supposed to be serving.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 6

Women Provided Direct Medical Care to Women

There were several Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAPs) that we were specifically involved with. Luckily, we had a female interpreter, so as soon as we got to a village, we'd contact the village elder. One of the males would approach him and let him know that we had two females to see the females in the village. The majority of the time, the village elders said they didn't want their women to be seen. They would send out the children to get the meds to bring back to the women. That was very unfortunate because, if the women are sick, they're not getting the right treatment. They're not getting care.

Towards the middle of our deployment, we ended up hiring a local Afghan doctor who was female. And she volunteered to come on the missions with us and everything. That worked out really, really well. Most of the time the women couldn't come out of their villages, so we sent our female doctor in to see them. More women were getting treated for the right kind of sickness. The kids would come out and say, "Oh, my momma has a cough." But really she had the flu or a Urinary Tract Infection. They weren't being treated correctly. Hiring the local female doctor increased our medical help substantially.

The female doctor and I were able to go onto family compounds. A lot of the women had never seen a female Soldier and all they wanted to do at first was talk and ask questions. But then they would tell us, "We're sick. Thank you so much for coming." There was one instance when we were in a village center and a pregnant woman came in. They actually let me see her. Through the translator, I found out that it was the first time she'd ever been seen by a doctor and touched because they go to a male doctor. He just looks at a pregnant woman. And she wasn't sure her baby was alive. So I took the stethoscope, felt her belly and everything, and was able to tell her that the baby was moving. She said this was the first time a doctor had touched her. The word spread and the next day we had more women come in.

Women Provided Humanitarian Assistance to Women

The all female Humanitarian Assistance (HA) came about because when we went to the MEDCAPs, women didn't come out to receive anything. When we gave husbands a women's jacket, we didn't know if they really gave it to their wife. So I coordinated with the local female interpreter. We went down to the women's center and talked with the assistant director. A lot of battered women come to that center. They're widowed. They have 10 children, no job, nothing. I said, "Would humanitarian assistance distribution help them?" She said, "Definitely." So we coordinated with them. Besides the regular HA stuff, we ordered some specifically for the women. They like lotion. They like soaps, shampoos, towels. We gave them actual shoes for women because a lot of times it's men's shoes and kid's shoes that are distributed.

So we did the HA distribution geared specifically towards women. We conducted it at a school. The director and assistant director of the women center were there. A lot of the women from the parliament were there. I coordinated with the PRT, with the Major over there, to try to get as many military females as I could, regardless of their background. And then there was a USAID

rep, she came down. We pulled up, the guys just pulled security and we handed out stuff. We had enough for I believe 150 women and over 500 showed up. It was an awesome turnout. We were able to see everybody because the bundles had between 8 and 10 items apiece. We saw that there were more women than we were expecting, so instead of everybody getting like 4 bars of soap, we gave them 2 bars. We had enough to give something to everybody that showed up.

That was the only all-female one we did. As of right now, there won't be any more all- female HA distributions because of the lack of female Soldiers going down there and doing that type of stuff. I was pretty much the only female CA in that area doing that type of work. We also had a female Intel gatherer because these women sit in their villages and they see and they hear everything their husbands are doing. They don't have an outlet for it and women love to talk. If you invite them into the women's center, they start talking. So we invited the appropriate women Soldiers to come with the Intel lady so she could get what she needed and everything.

I'm not in contact with them to see how things are going, but before we left, the replacement team met with the female doctor and the interpreter. They know their capabilities and that they're available to help. The other team was extremely interested in using the female doctor and the female interpreter because they didn't have a female Soldier on their team. At least they can use those two as their assets.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 7

A Small Road Project Produced Longer-Term Mutual Benefits

The major project that we worked on related to infrastructure was in a small village. We were focused on that area because of targeting. There were some people who were of interest, or at least had connections there. The Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) wanted to focus on this general three-village area.

We were scouting around for inexpensive, quick-impact projects that would provide employment. Every time people had been in there trying to work with the locals, it was always something that just wasn't really long-lasting, such as hiring them to pick up garbage. They were also doing too many humanitarian assistance (HA) drops. When we spoke with some of the village elders in those towns, they told us that enemy forces punish them for taking HA. When a couple bags of flour lead to retaliation, you're really not getting all that much. It's not really worth their time and their effort. In fact, they grew to resent getting the HA supplies. But there were certain projects they were interested in talking to us about.

They were really interested in the improvement of roads. USAID built a road and it really improved the whole place. Development started to show up. I'm not saying security or stability at that point, but at least development. It wasn't so much caused by what the United Nations and USAID and U.S. Army Civil Affairs (CA) and PRTs were doing; it was just enterprising Afghans coming in and suddenly they have quick mobility. I think the example that was always given to me was that after a road was built, I think there were six car dealerships. It's not a very large city. It's only about 60,000.

"The Marines said that they noticed that it was a lot quieter in the area and that they were getting treated better. Now some of this may have been related to Ramadan and this isn't necessarily a long-term fix, but there did seem to be improvement. This was a place that a year ago, somebody had brought in HA supplies and dolls for the kids and the kids were stomping on them. They were quite mad."

Long story short, the people wanted more expansion. One of the projects that they came up with, and it seemed fairly reasonable, was a culvert²⁰ project. Further east and even in the south, culverts were being used for improvised explosive devices (IEDs), so I had to explain why the

²⁰ A culvert is a structure used to channel water.

project was worthwhile. No American vehicle could even fit on this road. It was strictly for the public and it's what they wanted. It's what they asked for. Like I said, it was a very quick project.

Now, some of the positive effects we got out of this was that that area had been very famous for pot shots, violence, whatever. The Marines said that they noticed that it was a lot quieter in the area and that they were getting treated better. Now some of this may have been related to Ramadan and this isn't necessarily a long-term fix, but there did seem to be improvement. This was a place that a year ago, somebody had brought in HA supplies and dolls for the kids and the kids were stomping on them. They were quite mad. Unfortunately, when you spoke to the Afghans, a lot of them spoke in hyperbole, which I don't really quite get. They were showing us photos of how they were praying for us because we brought in a small construction job. It did temporarily relieve some of the violence there. I don't think that's because of anything we did. In the greater scheme of things, we improved the road that led to the school. I think if we continued on with that work on some of the interior roads, we would improve the quality of life there. I think it might make people happy, but I think ultimately it becomes an employment issue.

One of the things that we noticed when we were doing our interviews that I think is going to affect infrastructure capacity building in Regional Command (RC) East is the lack of employment. Part of this is through the pack mule operations that we're sending people across the border. I don't really know the classification, whether they were really considered returnees or refugees. That's way above my pay-grade and not even really my scope of expertise. In RC East Afghanistan you could actually make a halfway decent living. Technically you're an Afghan citizen even if you've been living in Pakistan. Even though it looks like there are all these jobs available, because people keep moving into the area, it's not actually improving the employment situation. I think one of the biggest problems in Afghanistan is that there's just not enough employment, or not necessarily employment, but at least something to keep fighters occupied.

But long story short on that project, it's sad to say that a \$10,000 project was our capstone. That was the one thing we did. We did notice positive effects, but we noticed that some of the problems we had were because of the way we do contracting with Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP); the way we do our bids and the way we were forced to go get three bids. I think it's a fund we shouldn't be using because of the limitations on how to get the contracting bid and because we're thinking in western terms. If you're a really clever Afghan and you speak English, you're getting all of the bids. The way we do CERP projects, we're trying to make it fair and create competition, but we're not actually doing that. It's actually generating the opposite effects. We go with what we know. We go with who we trust. It's actually creating no competition.

If you are a charming, well-liked Afghan who speaks English, you've already got a leg up on everybody else. As Americans, we're very personality driven. When we find this guy we like, they have the whole cult of personality going, so we keep going back to them. It could create tensions that limit competition in the market.

We found out that one of the contractors we hired wasn't actually local. He started getting a little more influence there than he probably should have had. He was illiterate and he basically teamed up with a well-educated engineer and started a construction company to get influence

with the village elders in the area. Once that happened, he cut ties with the other guy and started his own construction company. I'm not saying I wouldn't have worked with him again, but I knew that it would become a problem later. Luckily enough for us, we got moved. So we had an easy buy-out, like, "Okay, I appreciate everything you did. You did a good job, but we have to move on." But, I think that the Infantry unit that was there – 'cause they're the ones that introduced us to him – will still hire him.

Territorial Contests Between Americans in the Battle Space Decreased Capacity Building Effectiveness

We were then called into the Community Defense Initiative (CDI). The amount of development going on in some provinces is staggering. If we weren't called to do this one mission, then we would have no purpose there because there's just so much going on with NGOs, United Nations (UN), DAI²¹, and USAID.

What the U.S. is trying to do in these situations is not necessarily create militias or defense programs, but basically trying to co-op ones that already exist. I think the criterion was either that the community has fought the enemy or they have asked the Americans for help to fight the enemy. This town had done that. The village leaders fought the Taliban. They actually killed a Jpel²² target. It wasn't for any patriotic sense of goodness. It was a family dispute. They basically insulted the one tribal chief's son. They were trying to usurp the tribal-based power. In those areas, those little mountain pockets in the RC East, the tribal structure still exists very much so.

Suddenly there was focus on that area and it was brought by Special Ops, men in beards. They wanted to implement CDI there. They sent down two Operational Detachment Alphas (ODAs), to include the one we were supporting, and another one that was working an AP3²³ program. We came as well as a tactical Psychological Operations (PSYOP) team and a few other elements to meet with Special Forces. We were in negotiations with two villages of interest, the one where that incident actually happened and the one competing.

We came up with a plan of what we wanted to accomplish in six months. A lot of that was roads, schools, healthcare clinics, wells. Just various things like that around the village. The most success as far as any kind of infrastructure that's built is when you create an ownership environment, which I know kind of goes against instinct – we don't want to build stuff for a corporation or an individual. And you can't say the community owns the project because they just don't think in those terms. They're not Westerners; they don't think in the same terms. USAID said the most success they've had with certain projects was when there was an owner for a particular piece. We basically had it where it wasn't really going to the Malak per se, but we were going to actually have side contracts that were then going to be thumbprint stamped by the district support team so that we could kind of include GIRoA (Government of the Islamic

²¹ DAI is an international development organization.

²² The Joint Prioritized Effects List (Jpel) is the "kill or capture list" in Afghanistan.

²³ The AP3 (Afghan Public Protection Program) is designed to get local Afghans to take charge of securing their own villages against militants who use them as safe havens.

Republic of Afghanistan). This wasn't just a project to bring in American troops and save the Afghan from Afghanistan. It was a project to actually build these civil defense forces while tying them better into GIRoA.

When a contractor comes in, you write into the contract that they're responsible for a year. After that, the village doesn't really view it as their project, as far as ownership and maintenance. That goes into a problem with CERP; it's easy for us to push through and do CERP, but that's the easy wrong. The hard right is to take time to actually tie that community into the GIRoA. First at that local level, then the provincial level. That gives the GIRoA a buy-in to that village and vice versa so that they're accountable to each other. I think that's really what we were lacking.

The big problem was that this was one of those lofty ideas created by some Special Operations General or Colonel somewhere, but they didn't coordinate any of this with the lower levels of GIRoA or the conventional side. Ultimately, at times, our biggest enemy seemed to be ourselves, the U.S. Army, fellow guys wearing the same uniform as I am, maybe a little neater and clean-shaven. The worst thing was that I actually could've seen success because we had the village elders and the people of the village onboard. There was momentum. They wanted the jobs and we had the ability to provide. There was a lot of potential. The Taliban was already skirting that whole area and we were about to get a major foothold in an area that otherwise nobody would've had because of topography. They're already starting to think, "Okay, they're full of nonsense," and it kept expanding. We were losing credibility.

The PRT in our province, the brigade, and the cavalry unit that owned that particular area did not always work well together. Everybody was territorial, which was a problem for us. When we were there, it had its hiccups and its problems and people didn't do targeting very well, but people worked together very well. The PRT and the Infantry units worked really well together. We worked SF. We tried to show, "Okay, if you guys are going to focus on this area, we're going to focus on this other area." We would talk to each other to make sure our planned projects were not interfering with something going on. For example, we wanted to do a soft funding from an old clinic that hadn't opened, but it turned out Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI), which is the French NGO that trains doctors, already had that covered. It was their lane. Not a problem, move on.

Where we were in one province, the targeting wasn't as good, but since everyone got along so well, the forces that were there, that Infantry unit helped put together this project list for us. They couldn't get them done because they didn't have the funds, but we could get some things done, so we're like, "Hey, give that to us," and we pushed it through. We worked great together. They were the battle space owners, so they could monitor the projects, they could do security, have that presence there that we couldn't have since we're such a small element. Whereas, when we went to another province, conventional and unconventional didn't work well with each other. There were personality conflicts. In my opinion, one of the big problems was when we were doing the Concept of Operations (ConOps) to do these missions; you had to have battle space owner approval. Well, we could never get battle space owner approval, so we never got to actually do the missions or go down there and knock this stuff out. As soon as we got momentum going with the village leaders and provincial leaders, we were told, "Okay, it's been put on hold permanently." "Well, who put it on hold?" "The battle space owner." I was like, "Well, he can't do that." It was like, "Well, officially, no, he can't, but effectively, he did."

"Too much of the capacity building is Americans doing American things in an American way."

I guess the bottom line is the need for effective communication between conventional and unconventional forces. They need to figure out the chain of command. Who's gonna be in charge of us and whether or not we need to have that conventional battle space approval for our contracts or not.

Too much of the capacity building is Americans doing American things in an American way. There really isn't that tie in to GIRA. Some guys in the conventional forces don't even know what the MRRD is. There are guys on the Afghan side who do a good job and have a record to be proud of. You need to incorporate them more.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 8

Providing a VMOP Showed Support for the People

A Village Medical Outreach Program (VMOP) is a Civil Affairs (CA) staple event that most teams do. We wanted to bring in the local population to have medical screenings. Our goal was to look at the general health of a particular area and to let the people of that area know that we are supporting them, we are thinking about them, and we care about them. More importantly, we wanted to get the local government to help us achieve that goal. To that end, we brought in local doctors, local veterinarians, and local security; they were running the whole thing. We (U.S. Forces) were the backbone of it, the structure, but they were there and they were doing it.

To start with, we chose an area that didn't want to participate in AP3²⁴. Our Area of Responsibility (AOR) was divided into different districts. Some of the districts participated fully with the AP3, but we had an area with two districts that didn't want to participate. These areas were right in the middle of our AOR where we had most of the incidents with IEDs and blowing people up. The Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) we worked with wanted to target that area and our company commander suggested that we do a VMOP as a means to change things.

We started from the bottom up; basically we brought in the village elders, the district Shura and the governor. After we got their buy-in, we started to look for the location. We went and visited the school, which was right in the middle of the area and was a perfect location in terms of security. It was kind of centralized and in close vicinity to one of our combat outposts. We made a visit to the school, assessed it, spoke to the principal and some of the teachers, and got their opinions about how they would feel if we were to hold the event at their school. At first we met with some resistance. It turned out that the school was built by the Taliban and the teachers didn't want any backlash or any shame brought on the school.

We set up meetings with the minister of education for the district, the minister of health, the district sub governor, the police chief, an AP3 commander and the local Afghan National Army (ANA) commander. We also had access to a village elder who used to be a Taliban member and who has a lot of influence in that whole area now. Meanwhile we sat down and formulated a list of what we would need in order to make this event happen as far as personnel, equipment, supplies, and all types of logistical issues. Every single meeting that we did, we involved the local leaders.

The biggest problem that we encountered in the beginning was this issue that the school was built by the Taliban. We also had reason to believe that the principal was former Taliban as well and he didn't want to do it. He said that if the minister of education agreed, then we could use the school. So we had to talk to the minister of education and then come back to him.

Another big problem with the school was that it was a boys-only school. When we made visits to the school, we brought up the fact that we also wanted to teach females during this program.

²⁴ The AP3 (Afghan Public Protection Program) is designed to get local Afghans to take charge of securing their own villages against militants who use the villages as safe havens.

They said it would bring shame to the school since it was a boys' school, and they did not want the school name being tarnished. In the end, we had to promise them that we would segregate the males and females in separate parts of the school.

The school was well designed for the VMOP. It allowed us to have animals in the back side of the school, outside. We had a side for males and then we had another section of the school for females. We had to promise that no males would be going to the areas designated for female care; that we would respect their culture. We asked them to explain to us what we needed to do to make sure we didn't violate their customs.

After the planning phase, we then had three solid days of preparation and two days to execute the VMOP. We had support from the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF), the General Purpose Forces in the area and an artillery unit for fire support if we needed it. We probably had 100-plus ANA, AP3 and Afghan National Police (ANP) together in all the shifts. They were there most of the time, and provided security during the whole VMOP. For medical support on the U.S. side, we had four Special Forces (SF) medics, a surgeon, a dentist and a veterinarian. We also had five females: a physician's assistant, a nurse, and three medics. On the Afghan side, we had seven doctors from local clinics, a midwife and three veterinarians. In total, we had approximately 200 people, Americans and Afghans, doing the VMOP the whole time.

The VMOP lasted for two days from 0800 to 1600. We treated 3,660 people in those two days as well as 400-plus animals. We also collected biometric data²⁵ on something like 550 people.

Even with the problems we had at the beginning, once we got everyone to agree that we could do the VMOP, they wanted to be there because it made them look good to their people that they were there helping out.

In order to get a good turnout, we worked with the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) unit to get the word out. There were radio announcements that started two weeks ahead of time. All the ministers and the principal of the school put it out by word of mouth, which in many ways is the most effective method of communication in that area. In Afghanistan, you get most of your information either by word of mouth or by radio.

We were lucky in that we were able to expedite our requests for support; what might normally take weeks to get approved took days. Sometimes when you write up a nomination form for a project, it'll take a long time just going from desk to desk for all the different levels of approval that it has to go through. But I think once high level people see your nomination and they see the project as something positive, they take a real interest in it. It helps to build speed for it, so you pretty much get what you need; it gets expedited rather than just sitting at somebody's desk waiting for approval.

The way the process goes right now, units have a limit on money and how many open projects they can have. The SOTF commander has to look at them and say, "What's more important to me?" When you send your project up for approval, you need to explain it well. It's important to really understand the approval process and knowing who to talk to when you need to get a project approved quickly.

²⁵ Record used to uniquely identify people, such as fingerprints.

Another challenge came about two weeks out when the Battle Space Owner (BSO) tried to change the location. He wanted to push it further west, but we had already been working on this plan. Getting the locals to buy in on this VMOP took time. We felt like one area was not only a great area to do the VMOP based on the terrain and the physical layout of the school, but it was in our target area. The BSO's target area was different than ours, so he was trying to move it where he thought he could get more out of it, but it wouldn't accomplish the same thing for us. To fix this, we had to sit down with our Advanced Operations Base (AOB) commander. We said, "Look, this is what we're trying to accomplish for you and this is the area we need to do it." And he was like, "Okay, I understand," and he explained to them and either convinced them, or they just kind of gave up.

Once you start a VMOP or something big, everybody wants to put their piece into it. You've really got to tell everybody to back off so you can keep it under control and really achieve what you're trying to do. A VMOP is a good vehicle for accomplishing a lot of tasks. We treated people and we got them to see how the local security forces could help them out, among other things.

Some people, they see what you're trying to do, but they don't really understand all the moving parts encompassed in formulating the plan. There were a lot of moving parts to it. The security plan itself took more than a week to bring together. We had to think about different scenarios that could happen. Our location was perfect for security because there was a combat outpost not even 200 meters away. Even with that, on the day that most of our supporting personnel showed up, not even 100 meters from our main gate there was a daisy chain of multiple IEDs found by the Special Forces team that was assisting us. You want to have an Afghan face to it so you have to coordinate with the ANP, ANA, and the AP3. Also, there are multiple threats that they have: suicide bombers, vehicle-borne IEDs, rocket attacks and snipers. You have some people that want to come in there to disrupt what you're doing. So that's just one part, the security.

Then you have medical and humanitarian assistance. You have to account for what equipment you're going to need, what you might run into, how many personnel you're going to have working that area. In terms of humanitarian assistance, you want to have enough to hand out at least one piece of humanitarian assistance to everybody. If you don't have enough they might riot.

There was an ODA and CAT-A that had done a VMOP south of where we were going to do ours, so we used their after action review to get an idea of how many people we'd have showing up for our VMOP. The after action review went over every phase of the VMOP and let us know what we should be looking for: what they lacked, what made things move faster, what made things slower, how many personnel and how much equipment we would need. We talked to village elders to find out how many people they had in their villages, by gender and age, to help us with our planning. We sat down together as a team to read the after action review. We tried to cover every aspect.

With regards to getting the Afghans to do more for themselves, one of the problems was that they don't always plan ahead. They live for the moment or the day. It's not that the local doctors don't have the education or the skill set to help their people, it's that they don't have the physical resources to do what they need to do. They don't have enough medicine or equipment, but they have the knowledge. But when they get the physical resources, they sell them or mismanage

them. The corruption is a big problem. Even during our VMOP, the doctors were handing out extra amounts of medicine, which was depleting our supply.

Security was Critical While Giving Away Free Supplies

We also encountered problems with our local security forces. At times they were great, but there were times that they would lose focus completely and they would be more interested in trying to acquire some of the stuff we were handing out than helping with security, especially when radios came out. Handing out radios is one of the worst things you can ever do. We went to a clinic one time to pass out some humanitarian assistance (HA) and part of it was some radios. By the time it ended, there were people with their faces busted open, covered with blood. It was terrible. A whole truck of ANA grabbed a couple boxes of radios and just took off with them.

After that, we changed the way we distributed HA. One of us would be in charge of the whole area, monitoring everything, and other people would control the gates to the female area and the HA area. We had Lieutenants Colonel, Colonels, Sergeants Major, and other high ranking officials helping out, but one of us was in charge on the inside because we knew the plan.

We wanted to make sure that everybody got something. One man would get a bag of rice, one would get a bottle of oil, and a woman might get a bag of beans. Everybody would get something.

Having a plan to control giving away the goods was important, but the other important thing was marking who had already gotten something. First we used ink. You dip your finger in and it's pretty hard to remove. But we found that some would wash it off their finger, so you'd have to check their fingers real closely or they would come two or three times to get more stuff. Once we figured that out, we started putting an X on their hand with a Sharpie marker. You have to get creative and also check their hands before they come in, especially the little kids.

Whenever you're giving stuff out or something's free, everybody loses their mind and they kind of revert to "I need to get what I can get right now." All the professionalism and all the being an adult, all that goes out the window and everybody just starts looking out for themselves. We learned that from some of our small scale handouts; we noticed that they would lose their mind and security would just go out the window. So planning in detail and controlling the HA handouts was one of the biggest things we focused on for the VMOP. That was the concern raised by the principal of the school, "I don't want my school or school name being tarnished because people come here to get stuff and then they end up getting injured or cut up."

So we set up pickets. We set up lines which led to each area or each part of our project, and we had a U.S. Soldier and an Afghan Soldier escorting people to each area, which helped us keep order. Especially in the HA area, we had two Americans, a couple of Afghan personnel helping, and we also brought a military working dog and we sat him there to deter people from getting out of hand.

You have to recognize that a big part of your security plan is to maintain order. If something goes wrong, it can go wrong in a heartbeat and it's going to be hard to get it to calm back down.

It's not just the free stuff that can cause things to get out of control. We ran into an issue with one of our interpreters. In the Afghan culture, males are not allowed to view females outside of

their family. On this one occasion, the female area was getting a little out of hand and we only had a few female personnel to keep security in that area. We had one male interpreter who wandered over to the female area and got into a little fight with the ANA. They told him to leave. He refused and they had an exchange of words. He ended up getting butt stroked in the head with an AK47. Our team member who was in charge of our security ran out there to try to defuse the situation and we actually had some of the ANA draw down on him with their weapons. Our interpreter came out there to aid him and one of the guys on the trucks pointed his weapon in at our compound. If one round had been fired, I think it would have been a bad incident. A lot of people would have gotten hurt because it would have just gone on from there.

We were able to defuse the situation by grabbing this one ANP guy. At some point, some American Military Police (MPs) gave him a set of ACUs (the Army Combat Uniform) with patches and everything with E8 rank. That day, he was in charge of the ANP. When our guy saw the terp (*slang for interpreter*) bleeding from the butt stroking and the ANP guy in our uniform jumping up and down, he grabbed him and took him inside the compound. That calmed things down, but our guy thought that the ANP guy had started the whole thing until he learned the rest of the story about this terp being where he shouldn't have been. Because we had a very good relationship with the ANP chief, we were able to set everything straight later. The chief was all apologetic and thought his guy was in the wrong because we had grabbed him and taken him into the compound. As we got to the bottom of it and the truth came out, we were able to work it out with the chief who felt bad because he felt they had betrayed us.

We can't emphasize enough that security is a big thing and how important it is to keep everyone in their boundaries – keeping charge of your personnel, making sure they're doing what they're supposed to be doing and staying where they're supposed to be staying, because anything can just go wrong at the drop of a dime.

Another thing we learned the hard way is that the ANA and ANP don't always want to work together. ANA and ANP are both willing to work with AP3, but ANA and ANP don't want to work together. When we were all there and the commanders were there, they behaved just fine until we pulled the radios out. After we pulled the radios out, everything went crazy for a little bit. We hid the radios again and everything went back to normal.

Meeting Common Goals Required Expertise and Working Together Effectively

"Instead of making promises just to get on their good side, we were careful to just be honest with them."

Our whole team was always honest with the local people. If they asked us for something, we told them that we couldn't promise anything, but that we would check on it. Or, if it was something that we couldn't do, we would be honest about that and offer them something else that we could do. Instead of making promises just to get on their good side, we were careful to just be honest with them. They respect that in their culture.

As far as working with the BSO and other units in the area, it was the same thing. They have their own mission that they're trying to accomplish. All the units that were there wanted to have this partnership. They wanted everybody's missions to kind of work together and they were nonlethal-focused instead of lethal-focused in their targeting at that point. They all wanted to know what CA stuff was going on, what Civil Military Operation (CMO) was happening: what was the deal, how can we help you, all that stuff. So much of it really depends on the temperament of the BSO that you're with because sometimes people just don't get along. I think we got along with them and they helped us out as much as they could.

Same with the inter-agency; we had the Department of State representatives there and USAID representatives there. It was more difficult working with Department of State but we didn't have any interaction with them as far as getting work done. With USAID, while they were very approachable and you could talk to them about projects and stuff, it just wasn't very functional to get funding or anything for projects. We submitted two projects to them and first they're like, "Oh yeah, this will be done quickly." And then they were like "You know what, nothing's gonna happen for like six months" after we got it all turned in. So that kind of fell apart because we had to go back to the people we had told we were going to do a project for them and be like, "Well, it's waiting for approval." We didn't understand exactly how their processes worked; it kind of messed us up a little bit because we could have done the project a different way.

It's important to know how to work with those other kinds of units and people out there if you really hope to accomplish much of anything. We had over 20 projects but we had inherited most of those. In any area the people can tell you what the big problems are. In our area, the big issues were education and irrigation, but we didn't do much about the irrigation issue because we didn't have the expertise within our team.

Having access to qualified experts like irrigation people to help us say, "Hey, these three villages have the same issue, what we can do?" was important. We started working with Global Partnership for Afghanistan, an NGO that's focused only on Afghanistan, and they had a watershed project. We were trying to work with them because they have engineers, they have those assets to go and look at the lay of the land. They work by terrain features like whichever mountain valley is there, this is how the water works here, and then they can look at the larger picture. These are long term things that they're looking at, like two or three years down the road, to help with their agriculture output and all that kind of stuff. If we want to build capacity in Afghanistan we have to look large like that instead of just oh you need a well? Oh sure, let me put one in, but that well just lowered the water table. Without the right knowledge and expertise and a strategic plan, it's difficult to do a good capacity building project.

As far as Afghanistan, probably it's most important to make the government function for itself. We were doing a lot of things for them, very simply because it's easier for us; we already have the capacity to do it. The biggest thing is to make them understand how to do it themselves. But that's sometimes frustrating because they say, "Well how come you can't fix it? How come you can't help me? I need this."

They have a provincial development plan with a list of projects; there was like 100 projects on there, and the governor is looking at us like "Go ahead and do these projects for us" and we're kind of like "Well, why don't you figure it out; figure out the best way to do it, get your engineers in there." They have engineers, they have the expertise, they just don't think forward.

Their attitude is more like “Today I need to eat” and they’re not thinking “Well, next year if we want crop production to go up, then we need to...” They sometimes have a very short-term view of things. We tried to help them think forward and do what they can do, because they’re smart and they have this information and they want to do well and they want their country to do better, so it’s just getting them to take the next step.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 9

Creating a Local Judicial System Empowered the Local Government

It was immediately apparent to my team that the justice system was taking too long. The Afghan security element had to move detainees to the main city, which was approximately seven hours away by vehicle. It would take them all day to get there because they had to drive real slow and sweep for mines. They would be there for a couple of weeks, probably a month, and we wouldn't hear anything back from them for quite some time. So our team looked into the possibility of putting a courthouse in our district.

The planning process was very complex – we had to consider the culture, location, building plans, security, getting a judge assigned to the area, and finding lawyers. We felt the effort was justified because, if we could get a judge in that district, they would no longer have to wait three or four months to prosecute criminals. They could do it in a matter of weeks or within a month. We thought by creating a local judicial system, you empower the local government. Not only can they arrest people, but criminals can be judged and sentenced locally. That was a powerful piece of capacity building that our team thought was relevant in our area.

We found a location close to the district center near the police station where security was constant and easily provided. We also had to consider housing the judge. That was a prerequisite for us because we didn't want the judge to be housed outside the security bubble. Other considerations included: family, living area, cooking area, and the courtrooms. We hired a local architect to sketch enough space to house one family and enough rooms to run courtroom operations using the provincial courtroom model. It took 12 rooms, at the minimum, with a kitchen because they have big families in Afghanistan. Separate from that, we have the courtroom, a judge's chamber, and waiting areas. So you have about eight rooms just for the courthouse and then you have eight to twelve rooms just for the family.

The development of the project occurred over a long period of time and outside our tour there, about a year and a half. Our team was able to complete the design. The team that replaced us was able to get the funding and actually started to have it built. The team after them witnessed the end result, the actual opening up, and the governor assigning a local judge.

What we envision in the future will be the result of a successful courtroom. You have the justice system and then you have the follow-through of possibly building a bigger jail or a prison somewhere close by that could house criminals. That was the vision we had, but it was way out of our scope. We just wanted to deal with what was in front of us, a local justice system, which was pretty much nonexistent except for a lawyer who had some book knowledge but no formal training.

It's nice to see something that we initiated come to fruition. Will it flourish? I don't know. It's still too early to tell, but now they've got a courthouse and a judge has been assigned, which means the provincial governor has recognized the court (power to assign a judge lies with the governor). Now the funding flows through the Ministry of Justice. It's self-sustained.

We Stopped the Bleeding and Built Respect

It was difficult to talk to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in our district because they didn't want to openly communicate with American coalition forces. They felt obligated to treat Afghan people whether it was friendly or enemy or Taliban. They wanted to be impartial and treat everybody. It was their people; their resolve was clear.

Our medic reached out to them in a number of ways. One way was providing them with supplies they needed, such as books and charts. They were reluctant to show us around the local hospital, however once a month they would allow our coalition partners to walk through. So we tagged along. Our medic noticed that they didn't have charts, especially charts translated into Pashto. He talked to our people and they were able to find charts in the civilian market. They found a full skeleton with different layers - nerves, organs - the chart was about ten pages and each page was different and all of it was translated into Pashto. The medic also purchased medical books from the civilian market. The hospital staff graciously accepted everything, but getting something in return was more difficult than we anticipated. Trying to establish a relationship with them was extremely difficult, but the charts and books were well received.

When a member of our team first got to the area, a suicide bomber injured or killed 26 people in the center of the district. It was apparent that the locals' ability to provide immediate first aid was very limited. Our medic decided to introduce immediate response by way of classes. The idea was to get volunteers from far areas in the district that lacked clinics and trained one or two in first aid. We presented this idea to the Shura. Our idea was to bring them to our medic so he could train them, but the Shura believed the volunteers could potentially be targeted for working with us. We agreed to let the major clinic in the district train them, but we assisted them with some supplies.

When we went out to a village, we would casually ask the locals, "Who is your village volunteer? If somebody comes here and they start shooting people, who are they going to go to?" Obviously we wouldn't mention names because we didn't want them to know that we knew who the volunteers were. Also, I don't think it was a big, big secret, but I just didn't want those people to be targeted. But the villagers would readily say, "Oh, well it's So-and-So. We just go to his house and he has some bandages for us." That told us our program has some effect.

The name of the program escapes me, but in the end the district had 26 people that were qualified to provide immediate first aid, at least to stop bleeding which was most important. And not only did he introduce it to the area there, but he also introduced it to the police and the Afghan Army that were with us raising their level of first aid almost equivalent to combat lifesavers. Approximately 12 individuals received the training.

Our medic also advised the health facility and showed them what a medic bag looks like and how you fill it. These were intended for the volunteers who lived far in the outskirts of the district. Since funding was an issue for the local hospital we purchased the materials needed in the local economy. Our medic would draw something up and then he would have the locals sew up a bag that resembled it. Then we would purchase 26 of them and give it to the health facility

half full. They filled them up the rest of the way and then they passed them out to the volunteers when the class was complete. It was a relatively small bag but it met our intent.

We believe that the face-to-face between the medic and the healthcare worker at the clinic was an important step towards building a relationship with the local hospital. They were responsive to our sincere efforts but they were never comfortable with our presence. The medic had to work through backdoor channels to assist. In my opinion, they were a bit more relaxed once we established credibility. The initial response classes paid big dividends in this area.

We conducted several Medical Civic Action Programs (MEDCAPs) but felt that it took away from our original intent of self sustainment. We did, however, do tailgate MEDCAPs when we'd go talk to village elders. Usually we would be met by children. After their brief check-up, they were provided with vitamins and other HA products that we brought along. We were always conscious about not taking away from the health care system. The health care system has to flourish on its own and, if it doesn't flourish, then the system will not succeed. This will inevitably lead to no salaries for the nurses and doctors. In our area, hospital funding derived from the number of patients seen. We used our tailgate as a tool to gain an audience with the village elders. I would add that kids are the same across the globe and it was a joy interacting with them.

Providing Schools with Basic Materials Benefitted Teachers and Students

Education and educational support was almost nonexistent in our area. Approximately 13 percent of the people in our district were literate. So how do we build on that? We focused on the areas that were friendly with the coalition forces because they provided us with the most valuable information on the education system and we don't want to lose their support. We were able to speak to elders of other areas through the Minister of Education (MoE). And there were areas that just didn't want help at all. Among the many items of the school list request we had areas requesting to rebuild their madrasas (Islamic religious schools) or their mosque. We wouldn't focus on the madrasas or the mosques, but we would focus on the tangible items that the kids could use like books, writing material, tables, and chairs.

Our medic introduced a poster at a school; a big world map with Pashto writing. The expressions on the kids' faces were priceless. They didn't even know what the world was. We ordered several posters for the schools. The posters were framed by another program that we had, a wood crafting program. We tried to nest together all of our different programs whenever we could. There are approximately 27 schools in our district and it was difficult to set priorities.

When our team spoke with the Shura leaders, we asked them for a list of their schools and a list of the supplies they needed in their schools. Most of the schools had poorly structured mud walls, some with no windows, and dirt floors. The district MoE was intimately familiar with all the schools. Some of them needed to be built from the ground level up. Some of them just needed to be refurbished. We work alongside our coalition partners to prioritize and refurbish the schools. Our team focused on getting books and tables (from a woodshop program we initiated earlier). We received a lot of Humanitarian Assistance (HA) supplies to include those from outside sources. These items were mainly teacher supplies, like blackboards, chalk, paper, and pencils.

The MoE had a plan to distribute bulk items. The teachers would come in trucks and were taken to a pile of supplies. They would grab supplies and return to their school. The district MoE would provide us with the distribution list and we would use that information to check on distribution when we traveled to those villages. There were times when the team did not see the distributed supplies in the villages. Corruption did not seem to be an issue at the bottom level, the (teacher) level. All teachers were genuinely motivated to educate their children. Some teachers had propped chalkboards up against trees because the school walls had crumbled.

We worked with our coalition partners and local non-government agencies to help as many schools as possible. We divided up the work according to our limitations in order to reach as many schools as possible. Did our team reach to all the schools? No. However, combined with the unit we were supporting, coalition forces, and non government agencies we reached about 90% of the schools. Some schools refused help.

After several months of coordination with the district MoE our efforts to establish a teachers' conference was beginning to take root. We were at the end of our tour when the district had its first teachers' conference. Coalition partners and the MoE were present and we were pleased at the turn out. At least one representative from 20 village schools was represented. Some could not attend due to the distance. Some walked 12 hours to attend. The agenda was simple: introduction, what has been accomplished thus far in the area, future plans, and individual school/teacher concerns. The teachers were extremely happy that their concerns were being heard. Their common request was simple—school books. In these areas, student to book ratio was 4:1 and many of the books were six years old.

It was a challenge to get books through the appropriate channels of government. Corruption was a big problem. It seemed that we began dealing with the school book problem when we first arrived. Our immediate response was to use our channels to purchase some books until we could gather enough information to implement a long term solution. After several months, we were made aware of a shipment of books that was to be delivered to the provincial MoE for the districts. Every single week we would engage him for those books. Then we would request that the district chief and district MoE engage him about the books. We received excuses at every turn.

In an effort to expedite the process we rented a jingle truck²⁶ and had the district MoE travel to the provincial warehouse to get the books. It took two attempts to make this happen. During our transition with the team replacing us we went to the district MoE's office and he had stacks of books. There were some concerns that the teachers would have to pay for these books, but the team and the Shura were made aware that books had arrived and were supposed to be distributed to the schools. That way, there was no confusion. The district MoE received credit for it because he's the one who got the books, made the distribution list, and distributed the books. All we did was expedite the process. He did two distributions; one in our presence and one scheduled for some time after transition. Sometimes all anyone needs is a little push.

The immediate impact we saw was children getting access to books. When we arrived, books were limited; books had to come from U.S. pocket or U.S. funds. When we departed they got a

²⁶ A colorfully and elaborately decorated truck.

whole truckload of books, and it was funded through the Afghan MoE. So now, “When are we going to get more books?” That's the question they were asking. Part of this process was educating the MoE, showing him how to properly go through his channels, to first contact the government. In this case, it would be the provincial MoE. Then, if the government doesn't respond, you go to the next level up. We showed him who to call and coordinate with. This is self-sustainment. I didn't know how long we were going to be there and when we would leave. We didn't want our footprint to be so big that everyone just gets sucked in and becomes complacent. What our team was envisioning was that, when we stepped out, they could and would help themselves: self-sustainment. We were big on that; that was our focus.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 10

A Skilled Interpreter Made All the Difference

Our interpreter was awesome! For local Key Leader Engagements (KLEs) that we did, our interpreter was unbelievable. It was awesome. He knew who to talk to. He'd call them up on their cell phones or go to their house and say, "Hey, the Civil Affairs (CA) team wants to talk to you." He was our continuity book, really. He pretty much knew anybody in the different provinces around there and they knew him. If we needed to work with the sub-governor or any of the provincial officials, he'd coordinate getting the local leaders of the Shuras and stuff together. He was so good that there were several Operational Detachment Alphas (ODAs) that wanted him to go work for them because of his abilities. I mean, without him there, if we would have had a different terp (slang for interpreter), I believe we would have had a much harder time.

Right at the beginning, if he didn't know somebody when we went into a Shura, he would automatically go around and say, "Okay, what's your name? What tribe are you?" – get all the demographics and everything – finally, he would look at me and signal and I'd start. As he was talking and interpreting, he took notes. Wherever we went, he would take pictures. He's high speed. He made our jobs pretty easy. We could concentrate on security; we didn't have to worry about taking too many notes. If we missed something, we knew our terp was gonna back us up with it and we'd always crossover notes after we got back anyways.

But your interpreter's key. I mean, you can be as smart as you want to, and you can say the smartest things, but the interpreter's going to break it down Barney-style if he only knows just one, two, three. Having a good interpreter makes a huge difference.

CERP Funds were Used to Help One Child at a Time

We had a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) for the villages surrounding the fire base to show them that we hadn't forgotten about them while we were focusing on other operations. Our team organized it and put it all together and basically ran it. As people were coming through, I was in the front helping with the incoming patients. I saw a little boy with a cleft palate. I called my medic and we got pictures. He examined him and got his contact information.

About three months after that, we finally got hold of an NGO that could help him. I can't remember what the actual hospital was called, but it was a program where American doctors were teaching the Afghan doctors. We used our bulk Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds to fly the boy and his uncle to the city and back as well as to cover odds and ends like taxiing while they were there. It was actually Afghan doctors that were able to operate on him. It was great, because he would have never received that care. Plus, it was huge for the elders. I guess there had been previous MEDCAPs where they hadn't been able to help the boy out, but the elders really wanted to us to arrange to help him and we were able to do that.

We brought him in for about three exams just to make sure he was okay and that he was coping well. We saw him one more time after the surgery and he was healing up pretty well. He needed another follow-up, so when we left, we passed the information on to the other CA team that

replaced us. They'll do the same process we did to send him to the city for his follow-up. They're going to make sure that he gets down there for his checkup.

We also passed on information to them about a little girl who needed some care, as well. There are some good programs out there to help the kids. Unfortunately, we couldn't help everyone. There was a burned little boy who we weren't able to help. He had one- to two-degree burns over most of his body. There's a program from Duke that will pay for a parent and child to come to the United States for a whole year to get the surgery and everything taken care of and then bring them back there. We had it all set up for the young boy, but the father didn't want it to happen. We talked to the elder, we talked to the father, and explained the whole process, but the father has never left the local area. He's never even been up to a more westernized city, let alone left the country, and he didn't want to do it.

Rebuilding a Mosque Increased the Trust of Local Afghans in the Area

I like quick, high-impact projects. One that worked very well was a mosque refurbishment. It wasn't an outstanding amount of money, but it was what we could use for bulk CERP, maybe like \$2,500 to \$5,000. USAID won't touch it, won't do a mosque refurbishment, but it's a great way to do a quick high-impact project that will affect locals in a very positive way. I told them, "Hey, you just give us a list of stuff you need for resources, or a new sound system, new prayer rugs – whatever it is – painting or remodeling or something like that – let us know. We'll pay for it if you guys do the labor." It worked out great. The elders were very enthusiastic about it. They're very positive about anything for their mosque. It was fast, it was quick, and then people noticed. They talked about that. The Taliban can definitely do certain things for the people, but they're not doing that for them. So it was really good.

Most of the time, when outsiders go into the area, the locals get nothing. They always complain because they say we've had people come in here a couple months ago and they came in and left. You have different NGOs and different people going in there. We had no continuity of who else went there other than just the U.S. Army. We didn't know anybody else went in there. So they say that, and we're like, "Okay, I don't know who that was," but if we can do a high impact project for them, that says a whole lot. Now they're more engaged to talk to us like, "Well, thank you for that." And we'll say, "Hey, this is in the works. This is coming," then they're more susceptible to it.

And the big one was a very big mosque refurbishment. It was actually \$163,000. It was kind of a carry-on that we came into when we got there, but it was one of the oldest mosques in the whole province area. It was the oldest, over 100-and-some years old. The back story is that there was an incident in which a lot of civilians got killed, so basically they said, "Hey, we apologize for this. This is the reason why," and they promised that they would refurbish the mosque. They were also supposed to build a clinic and a school. When we were there, we saw the end results of the mosque refurbishment. It was gorgeous, and every time we met and talked to local people, they continued to talk about it. "Thank you, again. Thank you, again, for the mosque." And it wasn't just the immediate mosque area that was impacted because there were different villages around the area that went to this mosque on Fridays. You have two: you have a daily prayer mosque, and you have your Friday mosque that everyone goes to. And that's what that was, so it affected all these people around there. Our area was known as a troubled area, but when we were there we had no issues whatsoever.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 11

Working with the Local Leader Helped Regain the Trust of the People

In our province, the healthcare infrastructure was pretty much nonexistent. We worked in the largest district in that province. Immediately following the invasion, there was a lot of development done in which clinics were built, schools were built and people had actually gotten kind of used to the idea of using these. However, when the Taliban took back over, they destroyed all of it. They razed these things down to their foundations and, in a lot of cases, even dug them up. And if they didn't do that, they would use them for fighting positions. A lot of them got destroyed in battles with International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Special Forces (SF) in which we were dropping a lot of ordinance from the sky, not really caring what it landed on, and destroying critical infrastructure.

When we got to the province, the British were already in that area. They'd just done a very large clearing operation and they identified it as kind of their anchor. That's where they wanted to make their center of gravity to influence the surrounding areas. The locals there put up a lot of resistance to working with the British once they had actually cleared the area. I think the locals felt like the British weren't actually serious about rebuilding the place or protecting them because they had destroyed the school and the clinic. The people wanted to know what the British were going to do to replace the buildings.

We went to a couple of Shuras that the British set up for that area, and the feeling I got was that the people were looking for the best option, whether it was the Taliban or the British and ISAF. They wanted to know who was actually going to do something for them. They were almost mocking the British to a certain extent as well as the government officials that were out there. They would say, "If you want to do something for us, if you actually want to be true to your word, then fix our school. Fix our clinic."

It was interesting. They wanted the school there, but no one wanted to be the first person to actually send their kids, so we had to work to overcome the reluctance of people. They needed to see some improvements in security, which the British were able to do for that area. They were able to step up patrols and also convince some of the locals that it would be a good idea.

What really turned the tide, though, was a Shura where the provincial head of education came to speak. The guy's like a minor celebrity. I'm not sure what he's done. It was something way in the past, but he's got a really good family name. He came and he was able to quote the Qur'an pretty extensively, which surprised me. I think that was probably the most effective method of getting these people to really rethink their resistance to sending their kids to school. He asked them if they had actually asked the Taliban why they shouldn't have schools. He said they were completely wrong about it because in the Qur'an it says that Islam is supposed to bring enlightenment. He talked about how when Islam came to Afghanistan, it brought technology. It brought science. It brought prosperity. Therefore, he pointed out that it didn't make sense, according to Islam, for the Taliban to ban schools.

One of the Afghan National Army (ANA) commanders had another really good point that he was able to get across. I think it was good that we all kind of sat back and we let the ANA and the government officials actually run the Shuras. The ANA commander had a line; it was something to the effect of, “If you can’t protect your children – if you’re not willing to send them to school – then they don’t belong to you because that’s the whole point of being a parent.” And I think that really resonated with the people. That’s an honor thing. We’re working with Pashtuns, and protecting your family is really, really big in their society. It’s a big deal. And at that point, people actually started to stand up and say, “Okay, I’ll teach. I’m willing to send my kids.” They did the registration the following day and a lot of people showed up.

Efforts were Successful at Delivering Longer-Term, High Impact Projects

I thought getting funding for this took a long time for Afghanistan. It took us about a month to write up the actual nomination for it because there was a ton of information that had to go in. Despite the fact that they’re a barely functioning Ministry, the Ministry of Education has very, very specific standards for what you can build. Early on in the development models, the U.S. and the Afghan government created this template that we can go off of and adjust and modify and create a uniform system of building and standards and codes. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) reached back to what was done through an NGO in Iraq and brought the plans to Afghanistan, and the Afghan government just basically said, “Looks good; this is the standard,” versus modifying them or doing something uniquely for them. They just adopted what was already being done in another state not really thinking so much about materials and standards of instructions in modern and secular society that had already developed in Iraq, now trying to bring those standards and those materials and costs and everything into Afghanistan. That’s part of the problem. Plans are very complex, the specifications for building materials are very, very stringent, and they’re not generally materials that are available organically within Afghanistan. Most of the items for the construction materials had to be imported in, which made the cost much higher than what we would forecast.

The wording of our nomination had to be very, very specific since it was going to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF). We looked everywhere else first. Nobody else had the money for it, including the PRT. The PRT was kind of the one asking us, “Hey, new American guys, can you pay for this?” They knew that we had CERP funds and that CERP moved faster than their bureaucracy. I think the PRT built a bathroom for one school and it took 18 months to get the funding, and it didn’t even get built correctly. The ISAF PRT or MSST (British Military Stabilization Support Team) civic element – those countries – when they run their project nominations, they’ll be staffed and nominated all the way to their parliamentary level. They have to be approved and funded at their parliamentary level, and it takes a year or two years to see that money come back in approvals.

They could see what needed to be done, but there was no way they could do it in a timely manner. This of course fed into the problem of people saying, “You’re not serious about rebuilding our country. You’re just saying that, because you’re not actually doing anything.” To a certain extent, this pigeonholed us into the role of paying for larger projects because these were things that needed to be done.

Quick-impact projects are great, but the situation on the ground was that somebody needed to step in to pay for these larger projects. That’s kind of the role we took on there. Pitching this to

the CJSOTF, you have to use a lot of terms; coming from combat arms, I know things like, “This is the center of gravity for this area.” “If we do this, it will influence the neighboring areas, the shaping operation for further clearing and holding.” We had to word it very specifically, plus it had to be presented carefully. We were really trying to change a mindset, even within our own staff in higher headquarters. Everybody wanted these small, low-cost, immediate-impact projects, but to really gain influence and sway people to the side of the Afghan government and support what the coalition is doing and what the CJSOTF wanted done, it’s a long-term process. It’s generational. If we want to create that degree of influence, to start shaping and bringing that population over, it can’t be a little sewing circle here or a little something. It had to be something rather tangible and visually evident. When you’re dealing with a minimally literate populous, everything is visual. Everything is tactile. So we had to focus on something that’s going to have that kind of impact.

We ended up doing both the clinic and a school nearby. We had to submit it as two different projects, but their construction cycles were concurrent. We really wanted to get them rebuilt at the same time to try and maximize the impact because buildings were still sitting there with huge, gaping holes and big cracks in the foundation. It was evident that there had been a huge fight there and that we were the ones that destroyed it – not necessarily us, but people on our side. It took about two months to get the funding approved after we had finished the nomination.

Reducing Project Costs Allowed For More Projects

As far as lessons learned, I think the contracting was a huge, huge lesson for me. We don’t really train on contracting or project management. We did the negotiation school, but that really didn’t prepare me for all the details that would go into contracting. Price was a huge deal because we had price ceilings. If it goes over \$50,000, the project has to go up to CJSOTF, which would add a month of waiting. If it went over \$200,000, it was going up to USFOR-A (U.S. Forces – Afghanistan), which would add yet another month of approval time. In a six-month deployment when you really only have about four months on the ground, that’s not a lot of time to play with.

If you do a month of engagement to really figure out that this is going to be the project that we need to do, it takes you another couple weeks to three weeks to actually get all the paperwork necessary for this in terms of actually getting the relevant ministries to sign memorandums of agreement to say, “Yes, we will staff this. We will do maintenance on it. We will pay for all the supplies and we will actually take this building in full once it’s complete.” That’s a very long process. And then to wait for another two months on top of that, it’s basically like the majority of your tour is spent waiting for funds, and even then, too, you don’t know that it’s actually going to get approved, so you’ve done this huge amount of work that may not lead to anything. We had another project where it took us six months to do the nomination only to find out in the end, “No, we’re not gonna do it.” But you don’t know until you actually send it up.

I think learning about contracting is really important for CA teams. It’s important to think about different things you can do to get the price down. The contractors there had a long history of overcharging the PRT. There wasn’t a huge pool of them; guys who were actually competent enough to build to the standards the ministries wanted were really used to going to the PRT. There was one contractor who got all the contracts and then subcontracted them out. In order for him to make his profit, he had to charge an exorbitant amount. I think they built a school for half a million dollars.

Ours was \$200,000, which I thought was still pricey. However, I think the price reflected the security concerns. This was in an area which was previously very, very kinetic²⁷ and we had to convince people to go down there. We had a couple contractors give us bogus bids of like a million dollars just because they didn't want to just flat out refuse and burn rapport with us. We found that a good way to get the price down was just by asking about why they were charging such high prices.

I would just ask them, "Okay, look, what do I have to do to get this price down? What's your biggest expense here?" It was always transportation and security. We found out that they were paying huge amounts in taxes on the checkpoints for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and ANA. One guy told me that to go pick up from a quarry about 40 kilometers away, it cost him \$3,000.00 per truck there and back on a good day. It's like \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00 in between all the ANA and ANP checkpoints. They're just basically robbing them blind on road tax; especially people they know are working for a coalition or the PRT. They know that they're making a lot of money, so they can overcharge them.

We offered to escort their convoys, and they were able to drop like 30 percent of the price right there just by not having to pay taxes. The British were able to help us out on that one. So the guys would show up with supplies, and then the British would take them down to the construction site. There was actually a British checkpoint there. The contractor wanted to know if he could base his operations out of their checkpoint there just for safety. He lowered prices again because he'd constantly over-watch the construction site and didn't have to travel back and forth, again, paying taxes, and also just to have better supervision.

The government was also stealing a lot of money. We had a policy of not letting the government know who the contractor was. It was a holdover from the previous team. I think it was a very good idea. I'd work it out with the governor or the district governor or the mayor and tell them, "Look, if you guys have any questions about this, if you guys want any changes, if you have any issues, just come to me. I'll talk to the contractor, and we'll get it fixed that way." Initially they were really upset about that. They wanted to know who the contractors were so they could go to those contractors and get their cut for allowing them to work in their district. Many of the district leaders bought their positions with the intent of extorting contractors as a means of revenue or income. It was expected. We felt that it was kind of a success on our part that we were able to change the mindset a little bit to get leaders away from the idea of being warlords towards being politicians with political power.

We showed them that they would have more influence when people saw that they had helped plan a school than when they made money off the contractors. Once we took care of those issues, the prices went down. The contractors were visibly relieved. In western society, we see that situation as corruption. But in their system, it's considered the accepted way of doing business. It's a challenge for us to try to reverse that, and these kinds of techniques have to be done as a means to try to reverse that.

The other thing that worked really well, too, was using local labor. It sounds like a no-brainer. It works so well. We had the contractors go out to the places or just send a representative to hire

²⁷ Kinetic operations involve the application of force to achieve effects. Non-kinetic operations seek to influence the target audience without force (e.g., by providing humanitarian assistance or through electronic or print media).

whole villages worth of guys. Basically, every town surrounding the school and the clinic we were building was employed on these projects. We heard a couple times that the Taliban were thinking about planting an IED there, and at one point the Taliban did, but each time locals told the contractor about it because we had community-wide investment in the product.

At the very end, I went out there with the new team leader, and the site manager told me that they had had some Taliban stop by on their motorcycles the other day and threaten all the workers. He asked if they could just grab the guys and arrest them the next time they came by. That was exactly what we wanted them to do. The only problem with that was that we wanted them to give the guys to the ANP or the British and they didn't trust anybody else to put them through the judicial system. So that was kind of a sticking point. We agreed that they would give the guys to the ANA. They have a lot more trust for the ANA. I wonder if the Taliban showed back up and got beat up. Typically, two unarmed Taliban guys on a motorcycle show up to threaten 40-50 guys working on our projects.

If the site manager actually arrested them, it'd be a shockwave through that area to tell the Taliban, "You can't just do this anymore."

Putting Agreements with Allies in Writing Maintained a Common Focus

The first British unit that was there when we came in and we started working with; they were still based out of a FOB. And their forward limited advance was pretty much cut off where they set up their second patrol base. When they were ripped out and another British unit came in, they pushed everything down into another province, with the exception of their logistics train. And they pushed their forward line of advance the entire way further south about another 25 kilometers. So all the resources shifted that way, and all their ability to kind of re-center their center of gravity changed. So that made it more difficult. And their operational priorities had changed as well. They were the new guys in. They got a mission statement. They still felt a lot of things were not secure enough to really do that much development yet, so they felt they had to go back and take some ground and hold the ground and reinforce security before they could reassess and try doing capacity building. Anytime you have a change in force and a new commander and new priorities, things take place that affected some of the working dynamic and rapport between what we were doing with them and for them and what they then later on saw as their ability or desire to continue pushing that.

Lesson learned there is, even if you're working with allies, and it's kind of an informal agreement, put it in writing anyway, because when I did the Relief-in-Place (RIP) I actually went down to their main headquarters patrol base out near the construction sites, and I sat down with their Chief of Staff again and the new team leader who was replacing me, and we talked about what the old agreement was and just to make sure that we're still on track. And there were definitely discrepancies between what they thought the agreement was and what it actually was. So I'm glad we got it worked out. I mean, they were like, "Okay, roger. That makes sense. It's not a problem for us." But just get it in writing anyway. Develop some sort of formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the partnering forces so that your supporting emphasis is still the same, or how it can be changed to meet the new dynamic.

This British captain in a patrol base ten kilometers south of us decided to do a cash-for-work project, but instead of paying everybody \$5 a day, he thought, "Oh, you know we make so much

money in England; that's not a lot of money. I could pay them \$10." So he doubled the rate of day laborers in that area in one day and after that, everyone's like, "I'm not working for less than \$5. You guys could pay me \$10. Why don't you guys pay me \$10?"

We had go out to some of the areas around there and talk to people and say, "Are you kidding me? You're squabbling with me over a couple dollars." I mean, I understand it's a lot of money there. But we were building schools for their kids and initially people just weren't going to do it because they thought we were trying to scam them. I mean, \$5 a day is about the going rate there, but it's still not a lot and if you're a farmer, you probably make more money actually working on your farm. I mean, there were a lot of unemployed males out there, but not as many, I think, as everybody believes, and so this was kind of soaking up labor force.

And initially we had some issues with that, but the contractor was able to go out on a day-to-day basis just by himself and go to the leaders and sit down and work a deal with them.

He went out and actually made some more contacts with local tribal leaderships through Shura and through individual meetings and put the word back out that we still want to hire people, but we're only going to be able to hire them for this amount, and this is why we pay this much, and their investment into their community and so forth – they should be willing to work a lower wage.

Providing Basic Healthcare Reduced the Taliban's Influence and Increased the Local Government's Capability

The clinic being built alongside the school is really going to refocus the center of health services for an important area. There are basically two cities in our province where you can get healthcare. In the 20 kilometers between the cities, there's nothing. And north of one city for another 30 kilometers, there's nothing. People were traveling very, very long distances to go to these places, or they just weren't doing it at all until it was an absolute emergency.

In one city, which is the closest city to the area, there is a hospital, but its ability to provide care for its people is so severely degraded because of poor management that the populous won't even go there. The Afghan Constitution establishes a basic package of health services for all Afghan citizens at no cost. It's what the government's minimally obligated themselves to provide to the citizens. They don't have the ability to provide it, so they contract it to a NGO and these contracts rotate every year. Through the course of that, these entities take over the public health service – the hospitals, the clinics and so forth. Through the course of the conflict and redevelopment, they've degraded the services of these facilities to where they're basically almost hotels. They're not even healthcare facilities. They've actually rented out the bed space on the hospital wards and rooms as hotel rooms. There are people living there. The Emergency Room has one bed in it.

There are practitioners in the city. They work out of the hospital because the government obligates them to work there, but they use it as a means for them to make contact and capture their patient clientele. They pull them into their office in the bazaar and that's where they charge them for their services. They initially see them, throw a little something on and say, "Tomorrow, come see me in my office in the bazaar," and then they charge them for their services when they come there. All their supplies and their equipment have been donated by NGOs or whatever to

the hospital and they've taken them out of the hospital and set up their own practices. Now they're making money off of free donations. So the public's confidence in their health services is low.

We set up a clinic on the fire base and held clinic three to four days a week. We saw people in the clinic three or four hours a day on those weeks, usually 100-150 patients a day, sometimes 200. And that was a project that we had to sustain as part of the transition to redeveloping the health infrastructure capacity for the district. We did that with the idea that eventually the clinic on the base is going to have to transition to something. When we looked at where the majority of the patients were coming from to our clinic, we realized it was centered in a Green Zone. So that led to the idea to put that clinic back up because then we had a means to develop and put up a facility and develop that capacity to where we could transition our patient load into services in their old facility and their own practitioners. And that's one of the biggest reasons why we took on that project. We saw it as a means to transition and develop capacity and vital services to the population there.

It was a big dollar project. When I saw the initial plans, I thought it was going to be cost-prohibitive. I wondered whether they really needed all of the services included in the plan. I went back and looked through all the types of patients that we were seeing in our clinic from that area and realized that everything in the plan was needed based on the types of injuries and illnesses and healthcare that we were already providing for that populous. The plan for the clinic created the capacity for the government to influence that population because, outside of the cities, there was basically no government. The clinic and the school were the two basic services the public wanted but that the Taliban could not provide. We gave the government the ability to actually provide the services and that was our rationale behind this whole thing.

Re-legitimizing their Government Increased their Confidence and Helped Them Solve Their Own Problems

If an area wanted a project, a lot of times they'd come straight to us, but we'd tell them, "You have to go to the district governor. You gotta go to the mayor. You have to go to the relevant ministry, talk to them, and then if you guys need it, and we feel like the government can't provide it, then you guys can both come to us and we'll all talk about it." That was intended to get people used to going to their government and not coming straight to us and also seeing it done through their government. People wanted school supplies for their village, which we could easily provide. But, we didn't bring it to them. We'd have the head of education come pick it up, and the British did this, too. They'd come pick it up at the FOB (Forward Operating Base) and they would be the ones to actually deliver it. So I guess you could see that as civic action.

We were trying to re-legitimize the efforts of their own governance. There was a lack of confidence. We had a lot of meetings, like the weekly district security meeting and the weekly district mayor's meeting, and a lot of it just revolved around telling them, "Okay, look, this is what you're expected to do as a government official. Your job is not to funnel people's problems to me. It's to actually try to solve them on your own.

Like the head of education, he was a project. Initially when he came in, he was just like, "Hey, can you guys build me a house? I want you guys to buy me a car." He wanted a swimming pool. We're like, "What are you talking about? There's no way I'm buying you anything." So

we tried to talk to him about, “You know, you need to have a meeting with all of your teachers or all of your principals to ask them what they need,” and getting him to do this was actually incredibly difficult. It’s something we would all take for granted here. We think the head of education would speak with principals, but he just didn’t do it. He didn’t know what schools he had, how many teachers he had. Most of the teachers who were on the payroll weren’t actually showing up to work.

The Lack of Continuity Killed a Promising Project

This was one of those stories that didn’t go that well for us. It took us like six months to nominate the project only to find out it got rejected. On the very first day we showed up, the guy who was working with the PRT, a British guy who was in charge of education, came to me and was like, “Hey, you’re from the Civil Affairs team. This place really needs a teachers’ training college.”

The population all wanted schools. The big problem was we didn’t have any teachers. The Taliban killed most of the teachers when they went through. Some of the guys went into hiding. They really had no incentive to come to work because they were getting paid through the government so they didn’t have to show up. The head of education didn’t really know who they were anyway. So finding teachers was very, very difficult.

This was another one of those instances where I think the Ministry of Education got ahead of itself. They had put out a pay schedule that said, “If you’re not a qualified teacher from a teachers’ training college, you don’t get paid the full amount.” The only people willing to teach didn’t have all the qualifications necessary to make full teacher pay, so they were getting paid close to nothing. And in a lot of cases, they just didn’t want to do it because it wasn’t worth the risk. Being a teacher obviously made you a big target for the Taliban. This was a problem throughout that entire district. It was a huge stopping point in terms of getting school started.

Trying to get this thing nominated was incredibly difficult because blueprints for a teacher’s college didn’t really exist. And the Ministry of Education was not just going to take anything. We had to get blueprints made, which took several months. And then they were kind of ridiculous. They had a huge domed marble ceiling and big glass ceilings. We really had to scale that down. Once we started, the Ministry of Education realized we had already come through with one school and they were like, “Okay, fine, we’ll cut this out of the blueprints. Change whatever you want. Just get the thing built. We absolutely need it.” It took us forever to find a contractor who could actually do it for the price we needed.

I think we actually got a better price than we should have because it was a really nice facility - very, very big - and we were going to double it as an administration building for the Department of Education. This is what I thought of as capacity building – giving the government the ability to create teachers and actually give the public a service that they really want.

It took us forever to get the thing nominated. Meetings, meetings, meetings with all of the relevant ministry officials. It required an incredible amount of work for a maybe and it almost basically turned into an implicit promise that we were going to build it. I think at some point, people were like, “Yeah, well, we’re not even really putting it in the budget because the Americans are gonna do it,” and I would have to say, “Hey, wait a minute; we haven’t got

approval on this one yet.” I pitched it to my bosses, and higher, and they all thought it was a great idea.

But by the time we were actually able to nominate it and get it up there, the new guys had come in, and they announced that they were cancelling the project. It was a huge, huge loss of face for CA, whether these guys realized it or not at the PRT level. We were working with the district governor, the mayor, and the Ministry of Education very, very closely for six months, so to now say offhand, “No, we’re not gonna do it,” was problematic. And I understand they’ve got different priorities. This was a project that would have been more appropriate for a PRT that was going to have a long-term enduring presence there versus SOF (Special Operations Forces) rotations every six months. But when you’re working in a void like that where the PRT really doesn’t have presence or doesn’t have the resources, you have to consider the value of the project for the long-term. I don’t know what the lesson learned on that one is. Act faster maybe? It was just a bad situation. Our PRT really didn’t have a budget to speak of.

Last I heard, the advice given to the team that replaced me was, “See if USAID will do it.” It would be an appropriate project for them in terms of size and cost, but because of the security situation, they just don’t have the presence in that area yet to start up overseeing, contracting.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 12

Considering the Long-Term Effects was Critical to Sustainment

When I was in South America, the country had no incinerators for hazardous medical waste. So they found a donor from Japan that came in and built them this state-of-the-art hospital, gave them all this technology and a huge incinerator operation, like push the button and everything runs on its own. What they didn't realize was that this nation is still a developing nation. They don't have the money to buy a \$10,000 replacement part when this one piece finishes. So the incinerator ran for maybe a year and it broke. What we did instead was we found a real cheap, \$5,000 or something, incinerator. We built it out of bricks and firewood and it works fine. But that's only a two- year project because after two years that thing's probably going to start breaking down. Nonetheless, it's real simple to make and they can continue to rebuild it. You can't just go into Afghanistan or Haiti and give them this expensive equipment. It serves its purpose, but in the long run, two years from now, what's going to happen?

I was told a similar story about a project in Guatemala. Some time ago, a well was built to assist the local population with water. Whoever planned the well to be built didn't anticipate that the population of that small pueblo or town would more than triple because of the water. There weren't any other resources in place that could account for the increase of the population. This town that was probably well suited for the number of people they had, maybe they had trash pickup or whatnot; they had their own capacities. Now they don't because there are too many people. They can't keep up. I guess the local government facilities could not keep up with the increase of people. The town just turned into one big city built around poverty because of the population explosion.

Increased Cohesion Resulted in Unity of Purpose

We, as Soldiers, need to work better with the State Department. Wherever we go, it always seems like we waste about two months of our deployment time fighting an uphill battle gaining trust with other government agencies before we can even begin to work with the local people. Thinking outside the box does not mean come up with the next greatest invention in that country. All you do is you just go to USAID and ask them what we can piggyback on and what areas they don't want to go into that we need to go into. That's what we did. We went over there and said, "Hey, you guys are building demonstration farms in whatever country and all this stuff. Can we get a bit of that money? We want to do it ourselves over here." They have no problems with that. Instead of reinventing the wheel we just piggybacked on their projects, tweaked them a little bit, made them better.

We made a tilapia farm in Guyana. The country lacks the knowledge of how to farm, how to rotate the crops and things like that, and also fishing. Everything is over-fished there. They don't know how to maintain the livestock, fish stock, all that stuff. So we were able to build that. It was an area that USAID had no interest in, but we had interest in. It was needed, but they didn't have the capabilities to go in there. They had the money. We had the idea. Between the two of us, we were able to do something that mattered. They had volunteers there from the Canadian/British version of the Peace Corps. They were there volunteering. They had the idea also. So they were doing the same thing with USAID, but these were the volunteers that were willing to live there.

USAID didn't have the people to go down there and teach and we were the ones who said, "Well, we'll take this money from USAID, put the VSO²⁸ person there, and the community can now come over here and learn how to farm."

It seems like, especially in Afghanistan, there are so many NGOs that are out there or government agencies that want to do all these great things, and the same thing in Guyana, where all these people are in the capital city or whatever city they're in. They're all there, but they don't have the resources to leave or move to remote locations and things like that. It causes confusion because there's no flow of information between these NGOs, so they're doing the same thing over and over in the same location, and they don't even know it.

One of the things we tried to do was we tried to contact all the NGOs that were around there and tried to figure out what their projects were so we could work together. And that's what we did with a British optometrist. She was there on a grant doing studies and volunteering at the hospital. She didn't have money to go to remote villages. So we took her down to the remote villages. It was the same thing with the tilapia farm. USAID was already doing it somewhere else, in a different country. We told them that if we could get a little bit more of their funding and their expertise on how to do it, we'd establish the program for them and that's what we did. It was USAID funding for the most part with some of our funding. We used the VSO volunteers; Canadian, Philippines, English, they're a version of the Peace Corps, but they're willing to volunteer their time and be a part of that project.

Success was Maximized when the Locals were Empowered

The key I think is empowering the people. The regular Army tends to proclaim, "We did this. No, no, here's our face. Put our names on it," whereas we're more like, "You guys can do this. Let me show you how to do it. All right, you guys got it? All right, I'm gonna step back." That's what we do. I think it's a big thing because they see the Americans as very egotistical. We come in and do projects and paint our names all over the place. If, instead, we can empower those people and say, "This is your project. We're helping you. We're showing you and then you can continue this," That's how you succeed.

In Guyana, instead of us doing all the MEDCAPs (Medical Civic Action Programs) all the time, we showed the Minister of Health how to do MEDCAPs. Halfway through our deployment, he came up with his own team of doctors and dentists and gynecologists. They mapped out the hardest areas to reach and they tried to reach those areas first. Once they got their ducks in a row, we slowly started to move away from his projects. There's not a lot of trust in their own government amongst their own people. We had to show them that bringing their military in to help the people - whether it is using their aircraft, their vehicles, or their boats - makes them look good.

You have to check your egos at the door. Don't try to take recognition for everything you've done. Building that rapport, it's empowering. You can't empower someone by telling them, "I did this. Don't forget." You want them to say that they did it. You want the host nation to start bragging about it. Any time we'd have our little meetings, the first thing we'd tell them is,

²⁸ Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) is an international development charity based in Canada, India, Ireland, Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines, and the UK.

“Don’t mention anything about the embassy. Don’t say anything about Americans. It’s strictly you guys.” Obviously people knew who we were once we got there, but our MEDCAPs always said, “A Guyanese defense force with Minister of Health with help from United States Embassy.” It’s always them hosting it and we’re just helping them out. That’s it.

CIVIL AFFAIRS Story 13

The Capacity Building Toolkit

We're only as effective or versatile as the amount of tools that we have. That's the hardest thing. The military is very good about getting us assigned to these places that need us, whether it's in Iraq supporting Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) or in South America supporting the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Commander's objectives. But there are not a lot of tools sent down range for us. The bottom line is, unless you have funds, you don't have any tools. A four man Civil Affairs (CA) team, whether they are in Iraq or whether they are in Paraguay, can't really affect a whole country if they don't have any resources. We can do good over ten months while we're there, but really, in the long term, how much effect can four small voices have? So, you need things that can amplify and magnify your four small voices and your skill set and those are your tool kit. For CA, the tool kit includes funds. And then the other is resources, whether it is people that give funds or people that give products or people that can answer the bill.

We tapped into the embassy because the embassy was the largest structure there. The military footprint in Paraguay is super small. And there is a reason for that. There are political sensitivities and they went from a right leaning to a left leaning government so everybody military and State Department-concerned has wanted to keep a low profile until this new leader was understood. They didn't want to cause any rifts. Because of that, the State Department became my only avenue for sources. So, what we did was we went through there and figured out exactly how the embassy functions, which we don't get taught back here. You get a general cursory knowledge that there's an ambassador and there are some people that work under him, but unless you really understand the workings, then you can't really understand how you can go in, make yourself valuable to them and in exchange be able to share some of the resources and their contacts. From the beginning, we tried to make ourselves indispensable to all the section staffs of the embassy and the ambassador herself.

In the beginning, there were a lot of honey pot efforts. They may not have been directly in line with what we were specifically looking at down there, but a little investment of our time and effort gained us access to their resources for the remaining eight months and for the teams that came after us. For example, the team should look into the ambassador's public diplomacy office. They have their own specific budget to raise positive PR for the U.S. In addition to funds, they also get loads and loads of shipments of books in the native language. A lot of them are sort of political, coffee table type books. When you are looking to have tools to get you in the door, a tool is a tool.

The problem that most embassies suffer is that they don't have feet to do anything. They can't leave the embassy. We're feet and we have funds; we have cars and we have budgets to move around the country. This was a tit for tat. We got in there and we found an even ground. They have stock piles of stuff and they were waiting to go some place to either deliver or to meet or to pull information and we said, "Hey, we can do this." They may not have specific targets in mind. It may be that they have a certain amount of money or a certain amount of books set aside for either a department or a municipality.

Helping them allows us to come back and take our analysis that we've already done and, given the constraints that the activity has to be in a specific department, direct the resources to a specific part of that department in line with the embassy's strategic plan and the U.S. military strategic plan.

That allows me to take a resource that wasn't otherwise well-directed and direct it strategically. It's not that the embassies are bad; it's just that they don't act very much like a cohesive whole. It's a collection of staff sections that seem to have their separate agendas. Public diplomacy has their fine line mission statements and you have the MILGP²⁹ who has theirs and you have the political section that has theirs. They don't realize that if they did a little bit more cooperation they would get multiple effects from each other's projects. As mediators, we found that it was very easy to go in with attention to detail and really listen to what political wanted, needed, and had, and then in our other dealings with public diplomacy, or the MILGP, we did the same thing and pick up and find out where they all crossed. Our four man team doesn't have a lot of time and the country is so huge that if the public diplomacy is going to do a book donation to a school or library and it can be anywhere in the country, we'd look for political and find out where they are hurting and find out where they need to go and get influence or contact or something and then look at the mil group's also. And so we end up layering all these objectives and it's very easy to see where they start lining up.

Then, with our limited amount of time, our bang for the buck, we can meet our U.S. military strategic objectives, but we can also meet three objectives of the embassy. And we've done it at a third of the cost because political didn't have to give any money this time. The next time it comes around, we may use political's. It was hard-earned, but they began to trust us when we gave them an assessment of where a good location would be for meeting some sort of effects they were looking for; they began to leave that step alone and come to us and present their needs and constraints. I could then come up with a plan that synchronized the needs and resources of four or five departments.

Because we made ourselves indispensable to the ambassador, we were able to get more done. Any time I had any mission whatsoever, even the ones that were specifically military, following military objectives, I had to have a piece of paper called the concept of the operation. It would go through myriad people, including the mil group commander, public diplomacy office, political, all the way up to the ambassador. It got to the point that, once we became valuable, the trust was there that my things were never getting disapproved, nor were there any critique like you can do this, but don't do this part of it. That gave me and the MILGP more access than the MILGP had ever had on their own.

I got a lot of push back from my command because they knew we were working ourselves into the ground. For us, we felt like we only have ten months, we can rest when we get back. The SOCOM commander, that's sort of my administrative commander down there, he's like you're becoming a slave to the embassy and I had to explain to him, you pay Peter. You are planting the seed. For instance, the ambassador or her political officer would let us know the ambassador had an engagement. They would ask us to set something up. We would buy some books and run out there, find a school, get it all set up. Make sure it is going to draw the attention that she needs to

²⁹ The Military Group (MILGP) is assigned to the American Embassy in a host nation.

have as a pulpit or platform. We would be then tasked to write her speech for her and the public diplomacy would order us to write the press release that they would review and then release to the press because you always have a press release and she always has talking points or a speech. And this is not her. This is her functionaries, who, public diplomacy should be doing the speech writing and all this stuff, I'm not a speech writer, but I became a speech writer by the end.

In the beginning, I was like, "This sucks." I mean, I have a ton of other things to do, but here I am, I'm writing stories for the press and I'm writing her speeches, but the deal is, if you leave it up to the public diplomacy officer, he's a State Department employee. In those press releases and in those talking points, you are not going to meet the strategic objectives of the military or some of the other ones that I also am a guardian of. And he's going to write it from a State Department point of view. So yeah, we indebted ourselves and took on an additional task, but it allowed me to really pull some stuff out for my bosses.

Once they realized that, we were being invited to all the embassy planning meetings with the ambassador; we became a staff section. Up until that point, the MILGP commander was the one and only SOCOM rep down there. The commander didn't generally get to sit in these meetings. Let alone, the PSYOP team that was down there or the CA team. But we got invited because we were a main producer. We were a main activator and we had to be there. We had to make sure, they knew it was important that we knew what was going on so that we didn't derail somebody else's stuff, and so that was great. Instead of waiting to hear from it, having to farm it, I was given the information top down, and so I had to spend less time pulling and I could spend more time pushing effects.

We were buying our way in to the point where we had our finger on all the different pulses to become as effective as possible. In terms of permanent capacity building, we were one of the initial forays down there and so for us it was mostly about assessing and collecting information to find the status on the capacity of the country instead of running in and just throwing money at stuff. We were the foraging party, we were the Advance (ADVON) party and we identified where the critical needs were, the ones that were most in line with military objectives and the ambassador's objectives.

The other big resource that nobody ever told us about, but we tapped, was the state partnership. Almost every country in the world has a partnership with a state in the U.S. The state partner for Paraguay is Massachusetts. That means that Massachusetts, their national guard and their state government, has made a commitment to Paraguay to provide support in the form of funds, personnel, information, and technology.

One example of how I used the partnership was to help the director of the Paraguayan military national hospital, which also takes civilians into it. The new director was looking to make it a better functioning hospital, but he didn't know how to start. So we called Massachusetts and asked if they had any funds they could use to get this director up to the United States. We actually ended up using a private set of funds managed by the MILGP commander. We were able to pay for the Paraguayan military general from the military hospital to go up to Fort Sam Houston in Texas and meet with their hospital leadership for three days. They took him through and gave him as much as he possibly could absorb from a fire hose on how a military hospital's administration works. And it didn't stop there. When he came back, right before I left, we used

that same pot of money to pull a couple colonels and generals down from Fort Sam Houston to help him on site. So, for this interchange, there were already fund sites existing.

The Massachusetts National Guard and their state partners up there, they get the training out of it, which is why they are willing to fund it. There are resources out there and there are a lot of training needs in the U.S. So we start connecting these dots. The states have a great training opportunity and it meets the military goals, your ambassador's goals, everybody else's goals down there, so again, it's pulling these fine threads together.

Knitting Together a System

Without too many other funds, I looked to the State Department's Denton program. The ambassador had arranged for the use of military aircraft to transport NGO goods down to the country for free. The program allows NGO's to spend less on overhead and more on doing. The really big NGO in Paraguay is the National Cancer Coalition (NCC). Every year, \$25 million worth of medicines come in to Paraguay via the Denton program. The tit for tat is that I think the shipping would have been a 20 percent cost, which is a huge amount of overhead that they would have been paying. The NGO can't afford to come up with cash to pay for customs and shipment, so this program makes a big difference. And, by sending in the medicines, the NCC is helping to meet one of the biggest priorities for both the administration in Paraguay and for the ambassador, which was health care. We meet the shipment at the airport and we accept it off the military planes, so it doesn't go through normal customs. This is part of the deal, because it's a U.S. shipment and they worked it out with the host country and it's the embassy's shipment. We take it and we administer it for the National Cancer Coalition.

The other big cost is storage in a warehouse. The embassy had a long time contract with a warehouse down there, so we worked with this warehouse and they ended up brokering a deal to allow the National Cancer Coalition to store their meds there for free. It's the CA being a mediator and helping the embassy to help to maximize what little resources are coming in. So, now we have no shipping, customs, or storage costs.

This is something I had to figure out when I was down there. You have to put your feelers out. You won't find these things out until you are talking to people in-country. It just happened that one guy in the political office was assigned to be the one to work with the National Cancer Coalition in the states to figure out and help the Denton program work to ship the shipments down. But nobody else in the embassy really was aware of it. Every once in awhile, they would do a big donation where the president would come down and the ambassador could get some face time, but it was maybe once a year sort of thing, which is a very limited use of up to \$25 million. We came in and we said, okay, this isn't getting used very well, so we volunteered our time and our efforts in the beginning. We would get into the warehouse, write down the medicine, organize it and separate what we knew had to go to cancer institutes and what we knew could be used elsewhere, general medicines. We agreed to help them with the delivery of their cancer medicines. They told us that if we could help them with that, then we could direct the location of the general medicine. So, in our 10 months, we got to direct about \$14 million worth of medicines. The U.S. government can't afford to give me those resources.

Now, there are some small strings attached. I'm not just meeting my own goals. I'm doing it on behalf of the embassy, but I'm putting myself in a position where I'm making myself invaluable

to the ambassador and all her staff sections so that I can figure out how they work. Then, I can help them work better so that I can help the MILGP become a more prominent piece. All that stuff's behind the scenes. They don't see us sweating ourselves down day in and day out. While they're working their nine-to-five in the embassy and going home and having the weekends off, we're out two or three days at a time and weekends making these deliveries in our little teeny trucks or little teeny rental cars all over the country. But the point was what we talked about before, get bang for the buck. I can donate this stuff anywhere because any clinic or hospital could use it. How do I make sure that the embassy gets all they can get out of it? Get press, get positive PR, or whatever else their objectives are.

I had to balance the goals of the MILGP, the Paraguayan military, the Paraguayan Department of Health. You had to be careful about trumpeting into a town and saying, on behalf of the American Embassy, here's some medicines. Then that clinic stops trying to work, even if it's broken, but it will never get fixed. They stop working with their ministry of health to try to get the system fixed, which is sustainable capacity. And what we're doing is non-sustainable. They get a delivery of meds which may let them run for another month, but in a purely medical sense, that's not capacity building. But, if I give it to the local Paraguayan military base commander to give to that same clinic, yes, it's only for a month, but maybe he goes with the local ministry of health official and they donate it there. And they can even say, on behalf of the U.S. embassy and what we usually do is we wrote the speeches for them and their little talking points to make sure everybody gets their proper credit. They would include that, but we didn't have to stick the U.S., me, and the team, out there in front. By giving the local leaders the resources, the embassy has indicated that they were supporting them because they are doing well. And that they are building their own capacity on their own or just need a nudge that they are heading in the right direction. We've slipped them a tool for them to do it, but we've also let them know they need to work on health care. We haven't detracted from their ability to see that ministry of health is involved. We give them the illusion that they may be in control of where it's being donated. Even though the medicine supply isn't sustainable, the system has been made sustainable. So they still believe in the system, hopefully. That's the art of creation.

The training that I wish I would have had is more public relations, public affairs training because that's really what we are in these Civil Military Support Elements (CMSEs, a two to six man CA element) down there. Four men cannot build the sustainable capacity concretely of a nation. I'm not there to build hospitals; I don't have a budget and we're not there for that long a time. So if you're really talking about concrete capacity building, it has to be in perception. And perception should never be short changed. Perception wins wars. And all you need is momentum for things to change.

So we had all those medicines and that was our initial system, but we had to find an exit strategy. We had to make sure we could work ourselves out of a job. Although the effects out in the country are what we needed, we are propping up Paraguayan military, Paraguayan military civil affairs, local leaders, and the Ministry of Health, and supplying direct relief to citizens. NCC is not sustainable. The NGO may be able to last 100 years, but an NGO is not a sustainable part of a country's infrastructure. In the short term, we couldn't use 100 percent of our efforts to continuously do shipments of medicines for the NCC. That would take up all of our time. So we had to find a system.

We went to USAID, who should be the owners of the Denton program because it's the State Department. Eventually, when we left, they were the owners. We sat down with the director of health and tried to get some background about why the NCC wasn't just donating all 17 pallets every month directly to the Ministry of Health. It's because there's been a long line of distrust because of corruption. Well, it's just historical corruption. It may not be true today. We suggested reassessing the situation because there are a lot more checks and balances in their government today. The USAID agreed with us. Together with USAID, we met with the Ministry of Health reps and said, what can we do to get you to the point where you feel comfortable? They couldn't guarantee that once it left the warehouses that the distribution system and the management and hand-receipt and control would continue on and that it wouldn't get embezzled. They didn't want to take the chance because a negative event like that would be worse for their progress that they made than just holding steady and doing their slow growth. USAID sat down with the Ministry of Health and said, we're going to invest in a system where the software systems, hardware, where you scan barcodes and stuff, where you can start tracking your medicine.

And that was good for us because this was going to enable us to slowly shift away from these personalized deliveries and get it back into the ministry of health's system. We tried to teach them that the way you deliver the medicine can give you twice as much benefit as just delivering it. Yes, the medicine still gets to the clinic, but if you just drop it off, you're missing out on a lot of benefits that you could be getting from the delivery. Like bringing the local mayor or the police chief and having the police unload the supplies from the van into the warehouse. Anybody can unload it, but when the public see that their local police are distributing it, they stop distrusting the local police. They call in tip lines and they say, hey, somebody is making a bomb over here or something like that. We taught them about the PR effect; that perception is sometimes better than reality.

Because the military is still the one with most of the transport, we'd act as a middle man between them and the Ministry of Health. We helped them start negotiations about using military transport trucks to move the supplies to their district hospitals that would then take control and move it out. We're making the system function because Paraguay as a whole has limited resources. Instead of letting these military trucks sit idle, they could be used to transport medicine. The reason why the military doesn't use the trucks is that they don't have fuel. The Ministry of Health has a budget for fuel, but they don't have trucks. So, again, we act as a middle man, a mediator. We find pieces of water and knit them together and then we can step back. That's where we left it. The next team was continuing to grow these permanent relationships.

If NCC dries up now, it's okay. It will hurt, but the system has been exercised and now USAID has invested in a concrete sustainment capacity building of a system: electronics and software that the Paraguayan military or Ministry of Health has and will always have whether they have ten boxes or they have one box. They have a system to track and appropriate proportionately to the needs of their country and it meets the ambassador's goal. We get credit, but we learn very quickly that you don't have to stand up and say, "I did this" to get credit. Everybody knows that the U.S. embassy is responsible for it, but it's human nature that the person that's presenting it is also receiving that credit.

Working to Make their CA Viable

In Paraguay, part of the directive for us was to work by, with, and through our mirrored agency down there. The Paraguay military did have a CA directorate, but they were for disaster management so they were more like a military FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). They weren't really versed in what we call CA. They are only activated and only funded during emergencies. Other than that, they're just an administrative headquarters. When they are activated, they are given power within their own military to organize the military's resources to aid the Paraguayan government to meet whatever the disaster is.

The trick for us in Paraguay, no matter what we did, whether we were visiting an orphanage, a small town somewhere that had some issues, or a region where the ambassador had some interest, we made it a point to bring the Paraguayan military CA out with us. We were already budgeted for our vehicle and our fuel, so it didn't cost anything extra to bring a passenger. From day one, every time we did an assessment, whether it was a typical one that you think about for CA like a school or hospital, or going in to do a meeting engagement with somebody, we made sure to bring a Paraguayan military CA person out with us. One, it was to increase their training; to get them to the point where they understood the full range of what CA potentially could do for them. Two, the biggest thing, was for perceptions; if the people don't perceive that the military is on their side or in support, then they're not on their side and they're not in support. And it costs a heck of a lot more money to bring people back after they have dipped down past that line. It was sort of a PR mission to make sure that we increased the positive perception of the Paraguayan military, specifically with CA. And it was very cheap to do it. We had lots of missions from the ambassador to go anywhere and everywhere so why not always make sure we bring our partners with us? They get free press out of it. They have their own agendas when they come out, but usually they liked to sit and watch us. So, by osmosis and exposure we were quickly increasing the versatility that they had, at least in their minds, their top leadership, to what they could be doing. That's another way to stretch nonexistent dollars.

For us, our main capacity building effort was the Paraguayan military CA. They had no budget and they didn't do anything. They weren't even known within their own military. There were like 15 people, 15 high ranking Soldiers. They are right across the street from the command headquarters, but tucked in some trees. The director who is a full bird colonel of CA doesn't offer anything so he doesn't get anything. One of our goals was to increase their prominence and their perceived value to the point at which the Paraguayan military CA is able to give their advice and influence the military as a whole. My goal was for their country to have access to the full assets of the Paraguayan military to be able to affect CA to build permanent capacity. Our goal was to increase their skill set so that they were viable and then marketable.

I loved news shots because, when the ambassador shows up, high functionaries show up, high military officials show up. They see that the full bird Colonel CA guy has the ear of the ambassador, can come up to her and say hello and talk. He's always there. By the time we left, he was en route to be promoted to a general and it was in a large part to do with this. He became the main go-to guy. The ChoD, the Chief of Defense, was calling him weekly to find out what he could do for him because the president was calling the ChoD and saying your military is doing great things. It wasn't about anything the military was doing; it was about the military CA.

We let the ChoD have the credit, but we knew he knew who was getting him the credit. Their CA was being expanded when we left.

Also right before we left, we called The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) and we used some of the MILGP commander's money to lock in WHINSEC to come down because they have a civil military program. They have a civil military operations type program that they run. Paraguay can't afford the matching funds to send their guys up there, but we could afford through the MILGP commander to pull a Mobile Training Team (MTT) down. We couldn't afford to pull a full MTT down that would actually teach somebody from scratch to be a civil military officer, but our focus was to get them to come and have desk side time with the ChoD, chief of military and win him over and show him the full potential of CA. I had many meetings with him, but they were all very formal because he's a three star general. I can't counsel or mentor a three star general. But the team from WHINSEC could present examples from countries with successful civil military programs and gain his buy-in.

I've heard that a little after I left, the CA director got promoted. My hope is that he gets promoted up to a point where he can come back and help the CA grow even further and stay important.

We were trying to foster a better relationship between the civil government and the military throughout the country. We were working through the CA director to get him to wake up his military base commanders that they need to get out and do things in and with the community if they expect the community to support them. It was just a law of logistics. If you have a frontier that's 100 miles long and you only have five people defend it, you can't physically defend it. You have to enlist the support of the population that they will call if something happens on the border and give a tip or be willing to come in or speak. Paraguay is suffering from a shortage of law enforcement because one, they just don't have the budget and two, there's just not that many people.

We were trying to get them to understand that, given that the military was worried about this insurgency coming up and they don't have enough people to be on the streets and watch for all this stuff, they should let the police handle it. The military should do civil military operations to regain the public support of the local law enforcement.

And so we got them practicing. Every time we traveled to one of these posts to do anything, like a book donation, we scheduled multiple visits ahead of time for planning. Even though we could set it up in a couple hours without much coordination, we forced extra visits into the schedule. During the first visit, we met the key players individually to get them sort of used to the idea that we were going to do something and we were going to expect some involvement from everybody. Then we'd have a planning meeting, which we didn't really need. We'd have the local military commander sit down with the local mayor and the school director. Sometimes they had never even met before, even in towns that were ridiculously small. It's just because that's the way it had always been. But by the time we left, they were on a first name basis, had exchanged phone numbers, and had discussed what they could do for one another. And so we left this permanent capacity, this network, which hopefully will grow so they begin to depend on one another. It's reasonable that the population is still gun-shy about their military. By bringing this Paraguay military CA out to meet with the locals, we were able to re-broker the trust and rebrand the

military as a new instrument for, with, and by the people. We made an effort to expand the effectiveness of local law enforcement through civil military operations.

We did have some evidence that what we were doing was working. There was a string of insurgent activities going on in Paraguay. They had some activity that had died away, but they sort of switched modus operandi. They started doing high profile kidnapping to raise money so that they could buy arms. The last kidnapping was like six months before we got there. Paraguayan CA were never even talked to, why would they? But as soon as we got there, we worked with them and they were trying to pull this area back that had pretty much been harboring the insurgents and so, little by little, because we didn't have the prominence yet, we nudged them, we helped them see that their engineering company up there repairing roads, the populace, this is more than they ever got, and USAID, we helped work with them and we started working on all the clinics up there.

Eventually, they bought back the population up there. And the end product was that we did a final Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) as a culmination exercise because they went in hard with military, cleaned that area out and then they brought in the engineers and started repairing roads. USAID and the Ministry of Health started working with their clinics. And then to show that this wasn't a place to be scared, because it used to be that you had to go with an armed escort, we had a final MEDCAP in May up there and it was out in the open. Dignitaries, everybody was there to show that this place was not the wild, wild West anymore because people were not walking around scared that they were going to get shot.

The bad guys had moved north and had done another high profile kidnapping. But before the military went in, they called the Paraguayan CA director and brought him into the initial planning. He had a large part to tell them about winning the hearts and minds to get the same effects as the military got last time, but in a shorter time frame. And that time is essential. The longer you let them get the tick embedded, the harder it is to get it out. Now the CA director is acting as a prominent member and that's the sustainable capacity that we want. We had worked ourselves or could work ourselves out of a job. And so that was our success story.

We also got to the point where Paraguayan CA was doing MEDCAPs on their own. And not just them, the Navy had an autonomous one. We invited the CA officers from each of the Paraguayan service branches to come to our Paraguayan military CA headquarters section that was going through the planning, the organization, the movement and execution of the MEDCAP so that they could see it. After observing the process, the naval officer brought the ideas back to the Navy. Without us, they did an autonomous MEDCAP using the lessons they learned from watching as we taught these other guys how to do it. And so we are almost to the point where we can step out on those functions, just like NCC, and move on to other fine points.

Building Self-sufficiency and Maintaining U.S. Relevance was a Paradox

The problem is, if you are going down there to build capacity and you do too good of a job or you do it in such a way where the people begin to look to you rather than their own government, then you're defeating your own purpose there. You don't pick that up right away. That's a very fine line that the teams have to understand and have to get beyond is that you can come into a town and understand their critical issues, their vulnerabilities and address them, but it doesn't matter how well you made this new municipal building. By the way in which you did it, you've

set that growing or budding government back ten years with respect to the support of the people. In the long run, you have the building, but that town is going to fail because they are always going to be feeding off of the welfare from the U.S. so you are not really building self-sustaining capacity.

It's a weird paradox for us because, despite our goal of building capacity, even if we were successful at working ourselves out of a job, nobody would ever let us be finished with our job. They don't want our job to be finished there. So, I don't know how to work that. The ambassador is always going to need political leverage, that's always going to be there, so it's weird.

Politically, we will always be useful for the embassy and the U.S. military down there as a PR tool because if we lose Paraguayan popular support for having continued U.S. presence, the U.S. military is going to be asked to leave, which we don't want. Between Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, there's not really a home for us down there, so Paraguay is the last hospitable place where we are welcome. The Paraguayans like us. They bring up stories of the U.S. military being there all the way from the Kennedy days, bringing powdered milk to the children that were starving, and building schools. You need these quick, but sparkling impact things to come along every once in a while to punctuate in the popular history that the U.S. is continuing and has continued to be a long time friend.

So we are working to make them self sufficient, but really, we need the U.S. to remain relevant, and in order to be relevant you have to provide or be worth something, so at some point you reach a point in the prophecy where somebody is going to have to give. By our good nature and because we are associated with being military personnel, we are maintaining the ability for the U.S. military to continue their presence and activities there and I don't ever imagine that there will ever be a point where we've reached a certain criteria line where they are ready to remove U.S. forces, because political and public sentiment change with the winds. And so you can't ever say I'm done. The population loves us. Because it's just like our elections in this country: you are in today and you are out tomorrow.

Becoming a Good CA Soldier

I know USAID has a staffed office at SOUTHCOM, down in Miami. I wish they had sent us down to SOUTHCOM to spend concerted time with a USAID person before we went down to Paraguay. I also wish that, before being sent in country, CA teams were sent to their state partnership to see what resources are available. It would have been great to meet with people down there just to get a feel for what's possible because your brain can't even open up to possibilities unless you've been made aware of them. We are paid to come up with innovative answers to these things. Innovation is spurred by your imagination and if you can't imagine it, then you can't innovate. CA is not something that can be learned in a book. It's exposure and talking and conversational skills and learning how to deal with people and vocabularies other than your own. By getting exposure, such as sitting down for a day and being able to talk to a State Department person, you begin to learn how you have to talk to them, how to talk to them in their language. It's a remarkable skill. And they tell you in negotiations you're supposed to listen to somebody and if people use tactical words or visionary words, you are supposed to match their vocabulary in order for them to maybe see the light of day and come to your side.

These issues are not addressed in our CA training. This branch is growing so fast, there's not time. When we came out of the pipeline, we had three months before we were in Iraq for eight months with ODAs for CJSOTF. Then we're back for six months, which included our time off, block leave, time away to train up. We only had six months and then we were gone again for ten months to South America. The OPTEMPO (operations tempo) does not allow for training things that you cannot completely define in a box.

If you can't define it in a box and program it into a schedule and put a cost next to it, it's not getting put in. There is a lot of stuff that they spend time training that can be learned from your peers, but there's a lot of stuff that you need that you can't learn from your peers. Negotiations, medications, linguistic processing; it's not something you want an ad hoc teacher to do. Those are not things we can learn from our buddies. You really want a professional to be able to teach them. If you go up to the Massachusetts National Guard to speak with the state partnership people and you get introduced to the State Department people, you're learning all the facts that you need when you go down to Paraguay about resources, but it's a double layer. You are also getting exposure talking to non-military people, which we don't get a lot. A lot of these things are country-specific, but there are some universal programs like the Denton program that everyone should be educated about. The state partnership, it's a universal thing. I don't know of a country that doesn't have one in South America or Central America. I only found out it existed because there was a guy that is stationed in the MILGP who is on loan from the Massachusetts National Guard.

The techniques of getting in and becoming indispensable are really my main lesson learned. If you're not of use, then you are going to be acting on the surface or you are going to be acting on the outside. You'll still do good. You'll still feed some babies and deliver some medicines, but the bang for the buck is significantly decreased.

"You arrive in this country having not worked with civilians, let alone the State Department very much. You're biased toward the military's objectives down there. The biggest thing to get over, and a certain amount of ego stands in the way, is that military objectives are not necessarily at the pinnacle."

I think the hardest thing to overcome in the beginning is that I live a military life. I'm a military officer and I support the military and I work for the military. When you move down there, you process through Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH). You go there and you're given your marching orders by the SOCSOUTH general. You arrive in this country having not worked with civilians, let alone the State Department very much. You're biased toward the military's objectives down there. The biggest thing to get over, and a certain amount of ego stands in the way, is that military objectives are not necessarily at the pinnacle. It's that the U.S. objectives, which include those of the State Department, may be an umbrella that includes that

stuff. There is this sort of sense that if you do something that's not specifically linked to the military objectives; you shouldn't be doing it because you are a military guy; that is wrong. For me, the difference between the Iraq mission and here is that in Iraq I was acting on a tactical level. I had operational implications. Down in Paraguay, I wasn't at a tactical level at all. I was at this higher level. Young Soldiers need to learn to see macro actions instead of micro actions. They need to be able to understand where they fit into the larger set of objectives and understand that fitting in doesn't mean you are subservient. I had some difficulty with this at first.

Teams that deploy with their kit and their weapons have the hardest time moving over and being able to pull from the civilian side of the house and interact and understand that the larger picture governs all. For those of us like Guyana and Paraguay where you are in civilian clothes and some of the other teams like Colombia where you are sometimes in civilian clothes, but we didn't have weapons, you don't travel around in this stuff and you take off that guise. What they need to realize, these guys, is that what's important is not that you always look like a Soldier as in you've got the gun and you can take that hill.

There are a lot of instances where people have problems taking that leap. They think military problem solving can only be applied to solving technical or traditional military problems. And if it's outside of that traditional military box, they shouldn't be doing it and their techniques don't apply. That's why CA has to make sure it stays away from trying to teach people *what* to think. It should be teaching them *how* to think or allowing them to get to the point where they are building their own structure and technique and problem solving. But unfortunately, military courses in general like to have a static answer because there's a right and a wrong and you can grade somebody on a right or wrong. It has to be a more subjective thing.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Soldiers and units work to influence targeted groups with specific messages. In combat, their focus is on enemy forces and may include propaganda and deception operations. In the context of Capacity Building, PSYOP units seek to gain the trust and confidence of the local population by disseminating specific messages that support the themes established by coalition commanders and host nation government officials. In June 2010, the U.S. Military dropped the term Psychological Operations in favor of Military Information Support Operations (MISO). Active duty units are found in the 4th MISO Group, a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and primarily support Army Special Operations Forces. Reserve Component units are under the command of U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) and primarily support General Purpose Forces.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS Story 1

A PSYOP Team Proved Itself While Integrated with Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and Special Forces (SF)

The company commander for the MARSOC (U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command) was requesting PSYOP. They knew it was an asset. They're now Special Operations and they wanted to utilize all the enablers that were available. So they were hollering for PSYOP. They were hollering for Civil Affairs (CA). They wanted to be equipped like a legitimate Special Operations team should. So we launched out early to support those Marines and then everybody else in our company came in the country later. The impact was that we didn't have as much time as the rest of the company to prepare and train and we were sent to work with this unit we had never worked with and, more importantly, a unit that had never worked with PSYOP.

When we arrived at the fire base, I knew we had to sell ourselves on our capabilities and basically earn the trust of those Marines, since they had never worked with the Army before. When we got there, we didn't have a radio in the box. We didn't have any PSYOP-specific equipment that we could use to influence personnel on a large basis around the Fire Base. We were basically restricted to mission-to-mission support.

After some delays in getting out of our province, we went on our first week long mission with the Marines, and that was actually the first time we had gone out with them. Our team for that mission was me and my driver. We also had the K-9 handler in our truck as well as our gunner. This was a multiple day mission 50 miles north of our fire base. The whole intent was to go check out some villages, get some atmospheric, gather PSYOP-relevant information, shake hands, and just let the locals know that the coalition is in the area. The conventional Marines had been patrolling in the area, working out of a Combat Outpost (COP), but MARSOC wanted to kind of push further north and get as far up as we could and just see what's going on.

We went out one evening and headed to a village. It was about a six-hour movement over the terrain with tactical vehicles. Like I said, that was the first time PSYOP had gone with them, so we had to prove ourselves. Whatever else we might have wanted to accomplish on this trip, basically, it was an impending Troops-in-Contact (TIC). We were getting reports of Taliban activity in the area, so we knew we were getting into a gunfight. Turns out the Taliban were using the village as a base of operations for that area.

It was a dark night, very limited visibility, and even with night vision goggles, you needed the infrared lights on your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to drive. We got sent out early so my driver had little to no real training for driving under those conditions. We're coming up, cresting a hill, and there was a right turn. I was guiding him through it, but the front right tire slipped out. Our vehicle rolled over and ended up 90 degrees on the side. Fortunately we got our gunner inside the vehicle before it went over and everyone got out of the vehicle fine, but all I could think of was: this is our first mission, so this is what we're bringing to the fight, a truck that's on its side moving to an impending TIC.

The whole movement stopped, the rest of the patrol had to come back to our vehicle. The MARSOC commander was pissed—everybody was pissed at us. And I was pissed at us because we're better than that. We had to prove to these Marines that the Army, especially PSYOP, is a little bit more than just a truck on its side during a movement. My fear was that the mission was going to be scratched due to this vehicle. Fortunately we threw a tow cable up to the front left bumper and pulled it down. The vehicle cranked right up. We had to reorganize the turret because all the ammo got thrown. Our truck had six loudspeakers that mounted to it for our vehicle loudspeaker system. Two of those speakers were just crushed, so we had to drive down the road with those dangling.

It really didn't delay the mission too much; probably about a half an hour from the time of the incident until we got reorganized. I was still really pissed off, because I'm the PSYOP team leader, never worked with Marines before, and this is what we're showing to them. We continued on with the mission; it's another three hours of driving and I'm calming my driver down the whole time: "Hey, you're fine. These things happen, relax." I was still pissed off, but I didn't want to mess with his confidence.

Some distance out from the village, the patrol stops and most of the unit and key leaders dismount to move the rest of the way to the village and establish support by fire positions in case things go badly. The operations sergeant, who was basically operating as a team sergeant at that time, pulled me out of my PSYOP truck and directed me to the first vehicle in the convoy because at that time I was the senior ranking NCO, Marines, Army, whoever was there. It was going to be my job to lead the vehicles forward when and if the dismounted members called for supporting fire from the vehicle-mounted crew-served weapons. I was to make sure that we got everybody set in place and fields of fire locked down. I ended up leaving my truck, the PSYOP truck, with just my driver, who was still a little shaken up from the rollover, and a gunner. I went up to the lead vehicle and took over as basically the ground force commander of the vehicles.

Sometime later, we had troops in contact. The Marines called back for the trucks to roll in, so I had to get the vehicles up the road and get them in position to support the dismounts. But the whole time I'm thinking we have to do our job as PSYOP as well. Once we stopped the first truck, we were taking fire; rocket propelled grenade (RPG) airbursts ten yards over the vehicle. It's go time, but at the same time I was thinking we also have to do our job here as PSYOP, 'cause they need to see what we're capable of doing. We need to control the battlefield and assist the commander.

During troops in contact, everybody is a shooter first. It's force protection. You want to return fire, get everybody in the right position. I wish I could draw you a layout of the village we were in. On the south side of the village, there was a ridge and then a huge wadi³⁰ system that basically ran through the middle of the village. On the north side, there were foothills leading into more mountains. The original plan was for the PSYOP team and loud speaker vehicle to co-locate with the Command and Control (C2) element on the north side of the village up in the foothills and broadcast into the village. At the time, like I said, it was just my driver and a

³⁰ Arabic word for a valley or dry river bed.

gunner, and they had to go through this wadi system. They were taking fire and it was really slow going.

The TIC really only lasted about 20 minutes. We kind of controlled the area after that, but during this whole time, I was thinking about how we have to do our job. We have to show these Marines what PSYOP can do for them, for mission to mission support. So my driver finally gets to the foothills where he's supposed to co-locate with the C2. I have a clear view of him going through the wadi, getting up onto the mountains, because of our position on the south side of the road.

Once my driver got the vehicle in place, I told him to orient the loud speakers toward the village. Our interpreter got on the loud speakers and broadcast a message to the village that, "Coalition forces are here to assist you. At this time stay in your home," the generic crowd control kind of messaging. When it became obvious that we weren't having too many civilians interfering and the gunfire had subsided, we started clearing the village. We had our interpreter using the system to send the village a new message saying, "At this time, move to the south side of the village and we will have a meeting and discuss what happened." We used that to basically clear the village so the MARSOC guys could go door to door, searching the village without any civilian interference.

We emptied that village in about 20 minutes using our PSYOP capabilities, allowing the Marines freedom of movement to clear and to operate without civilian interference. Of course they had stragglers, one-sies and two-sies, but they didn't have to worry about clearing when most of the village moved to the meeting site. Once we had the whole village down on the south ridge of the town, we separated the males into one group, the females and the children into another, and we addressed the males.

One of the enemy combatants was injured during the firefight, so with all the civilians gathered there on the south side of the village, we did his medical evacuation right there in front of them. It just kind of happened that the landing zone was right there where we had the people assembled, but the commander and I decided that it would be a good visual display of what kind of people we are to treat this guy, give him medical attention and take him off to the hospital when just minutes before he was trying to kill us.

With all the males there, the commander starting talking to them, and he was totally on message to show us as the good guys and the Taliban as bad. We basically did what PSYOP does; it was an after-action meeting to let them know the "who, what, where, when and why" of us being there: we're here to stop X group from infiltrating down the province and placing IEDs and killing Marines, which they had been doing out of the village. Basically, from a PSYOP perspective, we were making sure that the message was getting across. We were controlling the battlefield for our supported unit. Me, as a team leader who was away from my truck, it actually worked out fairly well because I just so happened to be directly at the spot where the Key Leader Engagement (KLE) was taking place, and my driver was broadcasting into the village. So we were running a split team operation, but it just worked out really well to where I was Johnny-on-the-spot helping out with the medical evacuation and then assisting the commander with putting the PSYOP touch on why we were there; pushing out those psychological objectives: You need to support your government; You need to support the police; Don't support insurgents.

That kind of opened my eyes as to how beneficial it is to actually split up, have one guy here, one guy there. We utilized that lesson when we went to another area near the Iranian border. Not too many Americans had been down there. We went down with another MARSOC team, and during that movement it was about a week long trip. I was in my vehicle and I had my assistant team leader, an E5, in the rear vehicle. When we would arrive at, say, a district police headquarters I would go in with the team commander and some of the Intel guys and just talk to the village elders, get their perspective on what's going on in their area.

I also sent off one of my PSYOP guys with the Marines who would do foot patrols. They'd go to the village and build rapport, show our friendliness, if you want to call it that, "Hey, we're here. We're the good guys." They'd go to the bazaar, buy some ice and some drinks and just talk to the people. What we learned that it's beneficial to have one guy speaking to the head honchos and then another guy talking to the regular townspeople.

Then, when you link back up and do an After Action Review (AAR) or a hot wash, if there is a huge discrepancy in what was being said by the leaders and the people, you can kind of see where the breakdown was and we at PSYOP could address that with messaging and programming and stuff like that.

We had a radio station at our fire base, but it had about an eight mile broadcast range. Our Area of Responsibility (AOR) with MARSOC and the ODA was so huge that the radio station had a very, very limited effect for the province as a whole. We did the best we could to influence people, just with reinforcing messaging: "Don't support the Taliban. Support your local government. Your local government cares. Go out and vote," addressing all the generalized themes that we have to stress when we're out there.

Basically, we made our reputation and our money with the mission to mission support, being able to control the battlefield, draw people out, herd people from one part of town to the other, and just being another asset for that team to utilize. Even if it's just, "You guys are on a machine-gun team," not necessarily doing PSYOP, because it might not be called for at that time. That's why I say, "I'm here to give you what I got," but we didn't PSYOP the world on this last deployment, by no stretch of the imagination.

I mean a funny part about that first mission is we had that vehicle roll-over, but we redeemed ourselves 1,000 percent with our conduct and performance during the actual troops in contact and the mission. Later, it became a laughing point, not necessarily like, "Oh man, these guys have no credibility. They're never coming out with us again." We were on every mission that Marine team did while we were there.

We had a similar experience once we moved to support a Special Forces Group. You always feel you have to prove yourself. They could be the coolest team of guys in the world, but at the end of the day they've got that big long tab; they are "Green Berets, Special Forces," and you're not. You could be the best team in the world, but at the end of the day when we all go home, they're going to their Special Forces barracks and we're going to our PSYOP barracks.

But we integrated with them really well. I think a lot of it had to do with how when they sent their Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) out, they saw the PSYOP guys coming back from a mission with the Marines. I was the one giving them an intelligence brief on the area, because

there was a limited handover from the Marines to the ODA. In many ways, we were the holdover and the link between the two. Prior to missions, the chief, the team commander would say, “Hey, Z, you got anything, any heads-up information?” It would be something as simple as, “Hey, going down Highway 9, there are three big potholes in the road.” They don't know that; we did. And when we're driving down the road, “Hey, good call, Z.” It was just all about building trust and confidence in us. The Special Forces guys hadn't worked with PSYOP before. I've gotten mixed feedback from them, where one team that supported them didn't do anything, or another team was great and they went out on missions and did everything. It all comes down to the leadership and I made sure that we were out on every mission, building great rapport with them.

To be honest, what I'm proudest of is that when the Marines left after we'd worked with them for three months the commander took me aside and said, “Hey, we really enjoyed working with you guys,” not, “You working for us.” So just the verbiage used was, “We really enjoyed working with you guys; you brought a lot to the table,” and that's a team that had never worked with PSYOP before. Also, at the end of that deployment we had built up incredible rapport with the Special Forces team to where we still associate at Fort Bragg. It's just going in, knowing we did a good job and doing the best we could with the limited capabilities we did have, because our area was so big we couldn't get out so much. But having the team leadership tell us that we were a credit to PSYOP, Special Operations, that's what I took away as reinforcement that we supported them.

Offering a Consistent Message Helped Educate Isolated Afghans

In the tactical PSYOP realm, the best thing we do is that mission to mission support where we're controlling the battlefield. We're not going to go in there with a PSYOP leaflet – this nice little handbill with some words on it – and change what's going on. It's the constant presence and the constant actions that will make us be able to enforce our psychological objectives. If they see the bearded ones, as we were called with the SF guys, in the bazaar treating kids for malnutrition or whatever was ailing them, if they see us out in the village helping to bring sandbags because the river floods and they want to build up a retaining wall—it's in the action. My personal opinion about PSYOP is we're best placed on that mission-to-mission support.

At the same time, we did have our radio station. In some areas, it works. I'm just going off of my experience. In our area we didn't have the broadcast range it had and it was too austere to really affect a lot of people, but the radio worked for the broadcast range and we got positive feedback. But our battle space was so big, that was a drop in the bucket. We couldn't get out to all these areas; their accessibility was so limited. You'd drive into a village 100 meters south and they didn't even know what's going on in the world. They think you're the Russians. They think the Russians are still there. I mean you run into these little pockets of the land that time forgot, basically.

That's my target audience in PSYOP. I'm supposed to influence them, but I have to start all over and teach them the history of the world up until the present and then begin trying to influence them. I mean, we tell them the Russians are gone. “We're Americans; we're fighting the insurgents. Have you seen any guys slinking around at night?” The locals have credible information, but they just don't know who it is. “What do their machine guns look like? Are

they driving white trucks? Are they driving station wagons?" It's getting a witness description of something that happened.

With PSYOP, as we roll into a village, the Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP) is to have a very general message: "Send out your elders. We'd like to speak to you about conditions in your village." It's a very general thing. The thing about Afghanistan is that TV is limited; where we were at, radio was very limited. So when we pull into town with something coming out of the loudspeaker, it's entertainment. Everybody is gonna come out. It's like the ice cream man driving down the street. Everybody is looking and everybody wants to come out.

Their hierarchy in the villages, the elders, will kind of sift through the crowd and present themselves to us. That's when we utilize the TTP we settled on, where I as a team leader would speak with the elders with the commander and gather what we need to gather. In Afghan culture, if they say they're the leader, they're usually the ones talking. We mirror where our commander says, "I'm the leader of these men," so we would always ensure that prior to going into a village, the commander was prepped with an agenda. He is the leader during that conversation because you don't want the commander to say something and then Bob down here say, "Oh, don't forget about this," because that's taking away the credibility of the commander. He'd always ensure that our talking points were in sync with our PSYOP themes. Then, as a PSYOP team leader, I made my money by being a stenographer during those meetings, taking detailed notes. As PSYOP, we look at things from a different perspective; if there is hesitation, all the factors that go into lying, the looking up and all that stuff. The supported unit guys are shooters. They're looking for threats. We're looking for the human factor. If there are guys whispering back and forth in the background, that's a note like, "Hey, who are these two guys talking?" It's just basically being situationally aware and just another thing to try and build rapport and credibility with the supported unit.

Before every mission, you get your briefing. What do you need to talk about? It was pretty much the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the whole deployment. Of course, there were instances of where the commander might forget something and then you'd very discretely whisper it to him, but you still want him to be the authority figure. But that was pretty much our standard before every mission. The commander knew what he was gonna talk about. We knew what we were going to do as PSYOP, too. If we were going to hand out 50 handbills, we'd try to get some feedback too, not just the message of the handbills. Simple stuff like do an assessment on whether they can read. Do they understand what's going on? Where does their loyalty lie? It was a regimented system of operating out there, but we had our role to play in getting the message out.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS Story 2

Afghans Joining a Neighborhood Watch Served as a Prerequisite for Approving Projects

When I initially got ready to deploy to Afghanistan, our company was brand new. We stood up from scratch with, really, no equipment at all. I was appointed as one of the detachment commanders. I'd say 98 percent of my team was brand new to PSYOP, either from my class or the class right after me. I believe I had one person in my detachment who had done a PSYOP deployment before, and that was a regional deployment. So it was a first tactical PSYOP deployment for all of us, but the majority of us had deployment experience from our old Military Occupational Specialties (MOS).

One of the challenging things for a PSYOP attachment and Special Forces (SF) is integrating. That was one of the things that the schoolhouse told us and I experienced it myself. The mission that I ended up doing was a little bit different than what a normal PSYOP detachment commander would do. Doctrinally, I'd be up with the battalion advising the battalion commander, but we got on the ground and had responsibility for helping to set up the Afghan Public Protection Program, the AP3. I don't want to oversimplify it, but basically it was kind of like neighborhood watch with AKs. The idea was to get the villages to protect themselves and integrate them in with the GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan).

We had the full spectrum of PSYOP tools to support that mission. There was a newspaper when we first arrived, but because of the way it was funded, I could not keep it going. I think CERP funds were used to initiate it, but the government didn't have the funds to continue it going, so that kind of fell to the side. The radio stations, the Radios in a Box (RIABs), were probably the best thing we had for getting our message out. I would recommend them to anybody going into a similar country like Afghanistan. Because the literacy rate is so low on average, radio is definitely the way to go. If they get to a point where TV is wider spread, then that would probably be the way to go. But for right now, definitely radio.

My three radio stations were set up to support AP3. They were off our base, run by Afghan contractors that we hired. The officer who was there before me did the initial hiring and we continued with them. One of them was right across the street from the base so it was very easy to visit. The other ones were hard to visit because you had to go through IED territory. We usually got to visit them about every two weeks if someone was doing a mission that we could hop on.

We achieved that not only using the Advanced Operational Base (AOB) to double our mission – 'cause sometimes their missions just didn't have the time to let us stop – but we would link up with the coalition forces. I built a decent reputation with 10th Mountain Division at the time and as we left it was 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. I tried to continue that for the people that relieved us so they would have that relationship and capability as well. We worked closely with coalition forces. If I didn't have a radio in the area where I wanted to get one of my messages out, I would give them the radio message that we had gotten approved and they would broadcast it for me. I did that for them a couple of times in areas where I had the only radio and they had a mission and a pre-approved, non-interference message they wanted played.

The way the AP3 program was meant to work, it was a carrot and stick approach; the carrot being if you joined, you get a paycheck and you get projects from Civil Affairs (CA). If not, you don't get the project.

We had an area that had a lot of Hazara who instantly were with the program. They were real easy to bring over. And that was the first area where they did the AP3 program. The governor said, "Hey, this is the area we should do it in," because he knew his people would be enthusiastic. We actually got so many recruits from that area that we had to turn people away because they were at their full quota.

Other areas, which were more Pashtun, were more resistant to it. We had heavy HIG³¹ and Taliban, but in our area, unlike the rest of Afghanistan, they seemed to get along quite well. They didn't do a lot of internal fighting. If you talked to the villagers and asked them about the program, they would be like, "It's great. I want to join. I've seen where these other villages are getting projects and there's no fighting in those areas. It's severely reduced it. But I can't join because the elders haven't told me I can." And so we did a series of Shuras. The governor was doing a lot of negotiations with them also. And, finally, we got one of the key elders to tell those people to join. I think we ended up getting 50 or 60 that joined in that area. I considered that a victory.

We had a problem with the Afghan government paying the contracts, so the money wasn't getting down to the actual guys working on the checkpoints. Before the pay problems got fixed, we had a lot of AWOLs. To deal with the problem, we came up with little contests. One was for the village elders. We told them that we would give the village that gave us the most recruits a project first, so that they would be at the top of the list. There was a different incentive for the AP3 commanders. Everybody we talked to had either talked to an elder or one of the AP3 commanders. They had also seen our posters that we put up. My favorite was the apple poster.

A Simple Message on a Poster Resulted in Widespread Support

For AP3 recruiting and support, we had a poster with an apple that didn't look like much. It kind of looked dumb, with little kids and an apple. But for that area, that was the effective brand. In the capital, they actually have a monument with an apple on it, so they identify the apple with the capital.

This was another thing started by the previous team and the way they explained it to me was that before they even went into the capital, they asked people, "How do we brand this program?" And they did a bunch of questionnaires asking what people think of when they think of the capital. They ended up, really, just talking to workers on Bagram Airfield (BAF) I think, originally. About 40 percent said apples because they grow a lot of them there. Fifty percent said potatoes. They decided that a potato wouldn't look very good on a poster, so they went with the apple. They came up with the concept of hands holding an apple. I think the hands were used in other products. I'm not 100 percent sure on that, but it was really widely received. By the time we got there, locals had seen the hands holding just the apple. It had been out there for I want to say at least eight or nine months. They knew that was the AP3 symbol.

³¹ Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin, a militant group.

It was messaging specifically for their capital. We were trying to update some of the older products just to continue the process. And my one sergeant came up with the idea of putting little kids in it. So he got on Photoshop and came up with the concept and we sent it up to the sergeant and the captain and they came up with the final design and did the translation. And knowing that most people couldn't read, we just kept it simple, "Do your part to protect your village. Join the AP3 Program."

When I was testing it at the Village Medical Outreach Program (VMOP), everybody I talked to looked at it and, without being able to read it, said, "It means we should protect our community. We should protect the children." They all got a general message of "Come together and protect yourself," which is the whole point of the program, to get the Afghans to protect themselves so we don't have to do it. Out of all the products we had, they actually got this one. I did get some that said, "We should keep the children fresh, like apples." We had some funny translations like that, but I think they got the point. I was real proud of that poster, even though it's not the cool commando with the gun or anything like that. Out of all the products we worked on, I was pretty proud of that one.

When a PSYOP Team Integrated with the ODA, Success Increased

Integrating with the ODA, probably one of my best assets was one of my team sergeants. He was a mortar man before he changed over to PSYOP; very, very competent tactically. He got right in. I think we were there two weeks when the ODA got hit and lost three personnel. They got hit very hard right from the bat. He ran their mortar for the team after that when they did missions. I mean, they brought him on everything. They trusted him.

It's real key for a PSYOP team to get the trust of the ODA. Some people are going to get along better than others. I had other teams that had problems getting integrated and they didn't get to perform to what I think their full potential was. The ODAs only wanted to use them for drivers. Driving for them isn't a bad idea, but you can't always be a driver because you have to stay with the vehicle if you're the driver, so you're not doing any PSYOP.

Some of the other companies were a little harder to integrate with, but most of my teams did pretty well and got integrated really well and, hopefully, made a better reputation with those ODAs. I think a lot of the difficulty with integration is based on an ODA's negative experience working with a PSYOP team before. So they're just automatically going to be like, "Oh, you're PSYOP. I don't want to work with you." We lucked out on that aspect.

What I noticed was that at first they were a little shy to bring our people out. They brought my guys out on stuff that they thought was going to be quiet. Once, my one team had an IED incident. My guys did everything properly, acted correctly. From that point on, the ODA trusted them. It was trial by fire. Once they see you react, they know they can trust you.

During the train up we did train with the battalion, but I didn't do my Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) until after the fact, and some things changed when I did the survey. In the train up, I had positioned the different teams with different companies, and we just kind of evenly spread it out through the battalion.

What ended up happening once I did the survey is that I found out that two of my teams were going to have to be with this one company, which left a whole company with no one.

To expand coverage, we ended up breaking down into two-man teams. I thought that was a really good strategy to give us further coverage because we couldn't go off post without an MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle) and we didn't have any. The AOB had one extra one that CA and PSYOP shared for missions, but it was easier for us to ride along with the ODA on anything we needed. Usually CA was the one that controlled the MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle).

A tactical PSYOP team, by doctrine, is three people. Usually, you have your team sergeant, your assistant, and your PSYOP specialist. To get more coverage, you can split-up two, three-man teams and make three, two-man teams. So what we did was we took two of the E5s that were very competent and put them together as a team. Then we supported one of the other companies. They ended up doing a FOB clearing. They were talking back and forth with the Taliban over the radio. They even got to the point where they were negotiating the surrender of the Taliban who were there.

The big thing for a PSYOP detachment when they're supporting an ODA is to get integrated, the earlier the better. If they can get to the point where they can do some shooting with them, then that's a plus. My guys got integrated, but the problem was that when we actually got to Afghanistan, I had to move teams around, so the team that integrated with a specific ODA didn't necessarily end up working with them. It probably would have been a better result for some of them if they had stayed with the teams that they had trained with. But sometimes things change once you get over there.

I'm very proud of the fact that all my guys were able to be pretty successful. Like I said, we were all brand new to PSYOP and came in just knowing the bare minimum and having the manuals to go off of. We were able to fall back on our prior experiences and use them to our advantage, despite our lack of previous experience with PSYOP deployments. I was really lucky; I had a great team sergeant and great team leaders.

Knowing what I know now, there are a few things I would have done differently before we deployed. We focused a lot on shooting before we went. I would put a little more into the cultural studies. Also, I would definitely try to know at least 99 percent where people are going and try to get them matched up with the ODAs they're going to be with in-country. That is kind of out of our control but it's still a good goal. Part of our job was trying to influence the people, so the other thing I would recommend is to try to read about the area you're going to and come up with a base plan. But don't just take what you read at face value; you have to compare what you experience talking to the locals with what you read because your little local area may be kind of the oddball and totally different.

The Radio-in-a-Box was Effective at Getting the Word Out

We didn't do any leaflet drops because from talking with Afghans in our area, I can tell you that they look at it like we're littering their backyard. If you're trying to influence enemy, it's not necessarily a bad idea because who cares if you litter the enemy's backyard. But if you're trying to gain the locals on your side, you may not want to throw a bunch of garbage in their farm field. They might get irritated with you.

The majority of our radio stations were set up to appear as GIRoA government radio. The governor became a critical asset in helping to make the radio a voice of Afghanistan and not a U.S. thing. I'll give you an example. When we first got there, we had an incident where some insurgents ended up killing a little kid with a mortar. We wanted to exploit that. The way we originally wrote it up was that "the cowardly terrorists" had launched an attack and killed a small Afghan child in this village. The governor brought up the point that the people know that that's a U.S. message just because of the wording. He suggested we use "enemies of peace" instead of "cowardly terrorists." With his assistance, we had a more effective message. Two of the things that made him such a great asset were that he spoke English very well and that he had worked with the media and non-government organizations, so he was very media savvy. We started using that term "enemies of peace." It sounded more like the Afghan government, which furthered our goal of making the radio messages more reputable.

We had a large listener base. The way we would confirm that is through call-in shows. My DJs would set up a call-in show. "What would you do if you were the sub-governor of this area?" And people would call in, "I'd build a school. I'd build new roads," and stuff like that. It worked very well because the people were participating and felt like they were getting their voice out.

I wasn't able to take voice recordings of the callers and use that in a direct product, but we would use a few messages like: "The people want this. You know the people want this, so do your part."

One of my biggest challenges was money. When I took over, the previous company had put in the paperwork to make all the contracts pay electronically, which you have to do now. The problem is, in Afghanistan, your main bank is a great distance away, and so my radio station managers had to drive there. And for the radio station that was out in some provinces, that's risking death. The direct deposit didn't quite work the way it works in America. I think I had two payments actually go through. The first one, they had to bring the paperwork proving that we deposited the funds. I had to do get a copy of the request from contracting and finance, and then come back and give it to my DJ so he could give it to the bank and hope that this would work.

I don't know if it was corruption in the banks or just the way they do it. Like, you have to prove that this electronic deposit even came. After the first one, I had one payment just go through automatically where he didn't have to do anything, but finance got overloaded. I went back and went through the whole contract with the S4 (Logistics Officer). We pinned it down; there was just such a backlog at finance that we weren't the only ones with the contracts not paying.

It was very frustrating. I ended up complaining enough that I finally got them turned to where I could pay them with an SF-44. That kept them from quitting because we were about four months into not being paid. The SF-44 is basically your cash receipt. Like if I paid you cash for a contract, I would put on the contract number. Then, I would have my page and the manager sign it. That's how we would account that I actually paid them, with the SF-44. I think that's why Big Army's trying to go electronic because it cuts down on corruption.

But it was clear that paying these guys was essential to continuing the program so basically, I just had to keep going up there and talking to the next higher level. I mean it went all the way up to the general, I believe, and then back down. So it was widely known the contracts weren't

paying. But like I said, it wasn't just me. Everybody was having problems, but you just have to keep at it.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS Story 3

Getting the Content Right on Leaflets Produced Results

I've been deployed to a couple different countries where leaflet drop operations have been utilized. In PSYOP, a lot of people are trying to get away from leaflet drops because it seems to get overused. As an example, in Afghanistan, one Army Division was dropping leaflets every week. They're just littering all over the country. It should be for a specific target or to help shape the battlefield.

I've got two big examples of how leaflet drops, if used correctly, can shape the battlefield. The first one took place in Colombia. I was down there as part of the Military Information Support Team out of a U.S. Embassy. We had done a leaflet drop operation looking for one of their High Value Targets (HVTs) down there. He was actually the number four in the FARC³² and this leaflet was in effect to offer a reward for his death or capture. About a month before we redeployed the police announced on the news that the number four gentleman had been killed. Essentially what happened was the Colombian Army had him surrounded for about 30 days. They were down on food and down on ammo. His bodyguard looked at him and went, "I don't want to get killed by the Colombian Army," so the bodyguard shot him, grabbed his laptop, walked out, and they had him on the news holding up our leaflet saying, "I would like my money." That was the first time I've encountered an instant measure of effectiveness. This leaflet worked well enough that his bodyguard killed him and came out and got the money.

The second one we ran into was this last tour in Afghanistan. Our detachments out west wanted to do a leaflet drop; battlefield shaping of the operations. The request came up from us. We worked through the concept, built a leaflet, and sent it up through command channels. Unfortunately our planner at that time had convinced the command that leaflet drops were of no use. So we had to go back and re-convince them that, yes, leaflet drops do have a use if it's specific. Doing them just to do them every week is wasted paper, but this is a specific target. It actually took about two weeks to convince the higher headquarters that this effect was worth us doing a leaflet drop. I think the resistance to doing a leaflet drop was there because they had seen so much of it, especially in Iraq. I haven't been to Iraq, but I've heard stories of missions just dumping leaflets, like 100,000 leaflets over a town of 16,000 people. With oversaturation, nobody is paying attention. You're basically just littering all over the place.

This was more specific. We finally got the go-ahead. We printed them off. We flew out with them. A couple of my guys were with them. We got to kick the boxes. We ended up hitting six different points with about 10,000 leaflets per point. No idea if anybody picked them up, but they were out there. We were trying to shape the battlefield out west, get the Taliban leader out there, to move.

About a month and a half later we got him and about 18 of his inner circle. Unfortunately he was killed during the mission. On two or three of his close bodyguards and the other people

³² A Marxist-Leninist revolutionary guerrilla organization based in Colombia.

within the group, they found our leaflets. Our leaflets had made it to them. They were probably carrying them as a badge of honor, “They’re looking for my boss,” but it showed us that the leaflets had at least made it to him and he knew we were looking for him.

More importantly, the information on his whereabouts came in on the tip line. I'm not sure exactly how that information got to the guys who eventually went in to get him, but our leaflet was the only source of information with a phone number on it of who to call to talk to about where this guy was. It took a month and a half or two months, but it worked. That's the second time I've been involved in a leaflet drop where we've actually gotten a high ranking HVT. It felt good to know that that works, but dropping it every week doesn't work. Like I said, it needs to be specific to help shape the battlefield or a specific target, not just, “Give up your guns.” Nobody over there is gonna give up their guns. Everybody has them. Everybody needs them.

We did a second leaflet drop in Afghanistan. Again, it was a fight to get the leaflet approved. There was a sweep, cordon and search, sweep and clear mission scheduled. We dropped the leaflets ahead of time and it said, “You need to lay down your guns and turn yourselves over to the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), the commandos, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF),” whoever, “If you don't, the A-10 aircraft will come back.”

Previous to this push, the A-10s had gone in there and killed a bunch of bad guys. We knew from the intelligence that they were scared of the A-10s, so we did this as a preemptive strike, “We’re coming and the A-10s are coming, too. So lay down your weapons. Don't cause trouble.” The unit conducting the clearing mission went in there relatively easily I believe, and there was not a lot of fighting back, because the bad guys knew that the aircraft were on call and they did not want to mess with the aircraft. Again, this was a specific purpose for this PSYOP product or method of delivery as a leaflet.

Getting the content right for the target audience is one of the most important parts of pre-production. Tactical PSYOP teams will get in touch with their PSYOP detachment and say, “Hey, we want to do a leaflet drop. This is the mission, the ODA we’re working with, and we want to shape this battlespace so that the ODA can do it.” They send it up to my detachment, which was the product development detachment. They would come up with a concept. We would actually work the photos, the language, the backgrounds, colors, and schemes, to try and get the message across. In Afghanistan, the literacy rate is so low that most of it has to be pictures. But, you have to be careful about going to cartoon pictures because then they think it's a joke or that it's for kids. My graphic illustrators had to do a lot of research into looking at pictures and seeing which ones would fit, which ones made sense. We'd put together the photo storyboard, if you will, of what we wanted to happen. Then we would add, for those who could read, the verbiage of, “Stay in your homes for the next two days,” something like that.

Once we had that done, we had to get approval. We would send it off to the approval chain, which for us stopped at the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) commander. He had approval for all our products. While he was doing that, we would take it and give it to our interpreters and they would translate it into Pashto and Dari, the two main languages spoken in Afghanistan. If we knew it was going into an area where they did not speak either one of those, then we would try to find another interpreter to have them put in that local tribal dialect, but for the most part it was Dari and Pashto. Once it was approved, it would come

back down to us. If it was a two-sided thing, we would attempt to do one side in Pashto and one side in Dari. Sometimes that didn't always work. Sometimes it was two-sided, both Pashto, and you just re-created it, the same product in Dari, depending on which teams it was going to. The approval process for that can take anywhere from 24 hours, if it's high profile and we want this right now, up to two weeks, depending on if the approval authority is traveling around town or around the country, if the Judge Advocate General (JAG) wants to get involved. One of the problems we ran into was that in Afghanistan, they don't want the faces of captured HVTs on any products, which makes it hard to convince the audience that we got this guy. They look at it and go, "Well they say they caught him, but did they really? I don't know. The picture is blurred out and I can't see his face. I don't think they did. I think they're making that up. They're lying. They're Americans. They're lying." We couldn't even put the face with bars in front of it to kind of obscure it. It had to be blurred out. That was a difficult problem we ran into and I don't think we ever got around it. We attempted to. We put the same photos of the wanted targets. We'd blur out their face, write captured across it in Pashto or Dari, and we would attempt to tell on a print product where they were captured. We would also, at the same time, release a public service announcement on the radio, "Hey people, you can relax. The bad guy was captured on this date, at this place, at this time." It was kind of a hoping game that, between the two, they would believe you.

Getting back to message content, we knew it was important to say things and show things that mattered to the target audience and culture. We had done some research before we went over there, especially my graphic illustrators, on color themes within the Afghanistan population. Animals are always good. Does an animal mean one thing to a certain people? And we relate that to the Native Americans who place great importance on eagles and buffalo. In Afghanistan, the lion is meaningful, but we ran into a problem with the lion. Somebody sent it back down asking, "Do the Afghans know what a lion is? There are no lions in Afghanistan." My reply to that was, "Of course they do because they were calling one of their own leaders the Lion of Afghanistan back in the early '90s after the Russians left, before the Taliban took over." So they do know what a lion is, for the most part.

Another issue we had was with the four interpreters who worked with my detachment. They were all U.S. citizens, but native Afghans. Translation-wise, they were great in Pashto and Dari. They knew what they were saying. The problem I've run into the two times I've been in Afghanistan is these are people who are in their 40s and 50s; they don't speak the same language as the Afghans in their 20s or 30s. It's the same thing here in the States. I don't speak the same language as the 20-year-old private. I'd like to think I do and I'd like to think I'm young, but no. Towards the end, we finally got one or two younger guys in. One was 26, the other was about 32. Then the message got a little more modern.

With Afghanistan being tribal, we had another problem where we would have the guys from our detachments down south call up going, "Hey, this message makes no sense in Dari." Then I would check my interpreters. Did they mess up? I would take it over to a different interpreter and he would say, "No, it makes perfect sense." I'd call back down there, "No, it makes perfect sense." And we'd figure out that their dialect of Dari down south is different than the dialect of the two interpreters I was using up here. You're gonna run into that countrywide.

I think part of it is because of the age of the interpreters. They're not bad people, but they left when the Russians came in. They left when the Taliban came into power. They lived in Europe; they lived in the U.S. Now, they're back there as contractors.

They've got language skills, I'm not knocking them for that, but they're speaking proper Afghan versus what the people on the streets are speaking nowadays.

Getting it right comes with a lot of trial and error. A lot of times, as we'd send the product up in English through the approval process, we would send it back down to the teams and I would send it over to my interpreters again and say, "Look this over. Does this make sense in Dari? Does it make sense in Pashto?" I talked to the teams out west, up north, and their regional commander and go, "Does this make sense in the local vernacular?" And sometimes it came back yes, sometimes it came back no. Then we would re-crunch it. Meanwhile, it was still up above us in the approval process. It comes back and the folks in the approval chain would say: "We want this changed and this changed on it." All right, so if we make these two changes, send it back out, pretest it, yep, yep, this make sense. If we could get agreement on at least two or three different areas out of five in the message, we're sending it. That's as close as we're gonna get.

Developing a Baseline Product and Keeping it Current Helped Increase the Effectiveness of PSYOP Tools

A whole campaign will take a while. If we're shooting for just one product, announcing the opening of a medical clinic or something, that's shorter. We'll still pretest it, though, to get the feedback. Is this working? Even at the end of the eight months, we were still asking, "Are these the right colors? Are these the right symbols? Does this photo work?" We were still pre-testing even the basic stuff to try to get feedback on whether it worked.

We were looking for as much feedback as we could get because we had no baseline. We didn't fall in on a baseline. The guys before us didn't fall in on a baseline. To fix that and to make sure we left things better for the guys coming behind us, we made sure that when the three-man teams did an assessment and it went to the detachment, I made sure the detachment would send it to us. I'd send them an e-mail or call them and go, "Send me that. Send me in its raw form and we'll store it and organize it here," so that when the guys took over from us, they had 15 or 20 assessments. When we started, there were four. It's a long process. It will take a while to really understand.

It's a problem that when people request a product from the product books, it may be out of date. We look for it at my detachment level, this old product, look through the product books like, "This product is from '03." Is this still a viable product? Is it still reaching the correct target audiences? How can we update this product or is it one we just toss aside? One officer came to the place where he said, "All right, guys are asking for stuff that's way too old. We have no records, no measure of effectiveness if this works or not, nothing older than 07'." If they really want something from 03' and they say, "This is exactly what we want," then we will take that product and we will update it with newer photos. That's one way we kind of worked through that problem.

You keep handing somebody the same piece of paper over and over and over, eventually they're like, "Yeah, I've seen this," and they'll toss it away. It doesn't resonate. The importance of pre-

testing and feedback isn't just for the mission; it helps with the approval process for new products too. The biggest thing we found was actually the feedback of the pretesting coming back from the teams. "We've tested this. They know what this message means. I tested it with three guys who could read. They understood it. I tested with three more who couldn't read, but they got the gist of it from the pictures." The teams would send up a little one-page write-up, "This is who I pre-tested it with. These are their ages, their job status, and this is essentially what they got from this product." That helped a lot because it's better than just sending the product up for approval.

Each taskforce over there is different. Each taskforce commander is different. The guys who were there before us had six people in their approval rating. We had 14. That's how we wanted it. It went through the PSYOP planner, the Information Operations (IO) planner. Like I said, JAG was involved. The group Sergeant Major was involved. The Deputy Commanding Officer was involved. Then finally it got to the Commanding Officer. As I said, there were a bunch of people involved. Not all of them had the ability or the authority to make changes to the product. They just wrote comments off to the side. But when you've got five or six people who can make changes then it comes back down to okay, they want to see this. Go back, start over. Make those changes, send it back up. Somebody else doesn't like that. Go back, make those changes, and send it back up. And then once they finally say, "Yes, this is good. Now send it out to pretest," you end up with a product that looks nothing like what the pretest guy says met their needs.

There were a couple times when they came back and said, "No, I want to change it because of this," and we found out later that they had Intel we didn't have to make this product, or, "No, we don't want this on there," because of some Intel they had. We're gonna run into that. That makes sense and we'll change accordingly. But there are other times, "Why do they want this changed? This change has nothing to do with the product. This is just somebody going, 'Look, I changed this.'" You run into that once in a while.

So our approval process was longer. There were more people in it. They streamlined it a little bit. We didn't have to carry hard copies out there. It was all digital, which is fine, but you know how it is getting e-mails with things attached to it. It's like, "Is this the first version or the fifth version? Which one am I looking at?"

To expedite things, we figured out that nobody was actually reading the target audience analysis worksheets, which were done by the team that would work on the target audience analysis. I mean that thing can be two pages to fifteen pages, depending on how deep they get in on which target audience they want. We need that for our records so that when they come back and say, "Why did you make this product?" or, "Who is this product targeted to?" here it is and this is why we targeted these people, but we were flat out told they're not reading it, so we took that out. The less paper for them to actually look at, the faster they whipped through it.

There were two or three things we ended up taking out that I still made my guys do because it's the correct process and we need those records, but it didn't actually go up in the pack. That made it a little faster. The feedback from the teams made it a little faster. Sometimes they ignored it, but that helped to be able to go in, to walk in and go, "Here's the packet for this product. The guys out in the province have already seen it and this is exactly what they want." Sometimes they still said, "Well that's fine, but I don't like this vehicle." "Okay, got it. We'll change the

vehicle.” Other times it was, “Oh, well if they’re all good with it and that's exactly what they want.” There were two or three where it was that fast and you got it back.

I think just building a working relationship with the people you support helps to get things done better and faster. I know that the First Sergeant and I at the time would go up every Wednesday and Saturday for the Senior Leaders/ Sergeants Major meeting, and we hadn't done that the first two months we were there. Nobody told us about the meetings. So we heard about them and started going to them, which reminded them, “Hey, we do have the PSYOP guys here. They are doing this stuff. Okay,” because they forget about their attachments.

"Just the face-to-face interaction, even at a kind of off-line type event, brought the PSYOP element forward a little bit or to the forefront of what was going on."

And that's just the nature of the beast. But to see two people representing twice a week, “Oh, you're the PSYOP guys, oh yeah,” and then they would start to actually read the PSYOP portion of the Situation Report (SITREP) a little more. You walk in and say, “Hey, I heard you guys did this. That was a nice job. Thank you, that's nice.” They noticed us. Just the face-to-face interaction, even at a kind of off-line type event brought the PSYOP element forward a little bit or to the forefront of what was going on.

Another example of trying to keep the message relevant and current was some work we did for a Special Operations Task Force (SOTF). They came to us and said, “We’ve got these.” It was an old flipchart of all these medical classes. Hepatitis was one, proper breastfeeding of children, how to sterilize water, where to get good water versus bad water, basic things we in the States take for granted, but you realize that without the knowledge they don't know. So we took these flipcharts and I gave them to my audio and visual team and my graphic illustrators, and they ended up taking photos of each of the flipcharts. Then we got the interpreters, especially our female interpreters, to do voiceovers for it, and they made an actual video and then burned it to disc. We ended up making six different videos, each four to six minutes long, covering probably eight to twelve different medical classes. So we gave that back to the SOFT and they loved it. Their med teams would go out and do the Village Medical Outreach Programs (VMOPs) and in one of the huts they would have the female interpreters go in there with one of the female medics. They put the women in there with a laptop and play this video. So they were getting classes. They were sitting there, but the doctor and the interpreter could also stop and talk to them about it without all the men over there, without all the men interfering.

The VMOPs, some of them lasted two days; some of them would last a week. But we would advertise it over the radio. We have the TPT advertise that they were coming starting a week or two prior, and some of them saw up to like 3,000 people over a space of a week. These videos were looped and were playing.

They came to us and asked the first time, “Can you just make copies of these flipcharts?” and we said, “Yeah.” Then we took it and ran with it to see what we could do, gave it to my audio/visual team and came back about two weeks later and went, “Here’s the first video.” It took them a while to tweak it all correctly. I said, “Great, make eight more.”

We had a little flexibility on that project, but for the most part the medium is decided by the team downrange, what they want. Do they want handbills, if they’re gonna physically go out, interact with the crowd at, say, a Shura and hand out these handbills? Do they want something that they’re gonna play over the radio in a box in conjunction with the weekly radio wheel of playing different messages and music of things?

Obviously, you can’t send the video to some small village. They don’t have electricity or the capacity to play it, but the medics could take it with them and present it on laptops.

But a lot of times units would ask for things like a handbill. On a sheet that they sent out, the request form, we’d look at it, look at what the target audience was, what the message was and go, “Not only can we do your handbill, we can also do a public service announcement supporting that VMOP up in that area starting a week out, and we can also do a couple of bigger posters for you to put up around the week prior to this.” Sometimes they just asked for one product and they’d end up getting three. Sometimes they’d asked for three and we can’t do that. We can do one. So that’s where the medium came from.

The content came from the unit too; in their request form they would briefly describe what they want or what their vision is for their product, and what their goal is and who they’re targeting, what the audience is. Then I would give it to my guys. They also had a copy of the target audience, you know, “I’ll support you.” “Well, this is what we’re thinking.” We take their input and this is kind of what we’d come up with. Then we send it back to them and go, “Does this meet your intent?”

That’s when we do the pretest with the teams. We essentially did two pretests with these teams. The first one is going just to the team in English; does this meet your intent? If they say, “No, that’s not what I meant,” great, we’ll redo it. If they say, “Yeah, that meets my intent,” then we’d bring it up, finish putting the packet together, send it back down and go: “Now pretest it with the locals. Do they understand it in Dari and Pashto?” If the locals got it on the pretest, send it back to us, now let’s go forward.

So the approval process while I said could take anywhere from 24 hours to two weeks, there’s at least a week to three or four days back and forth of building that actual product. I know it frustrated the guys downrange because it would take so long sometimes, and it frustrated me, too, ‘cause you’d love to be able to turn out the perfect product the first time, but it doesn’t happen that way. The good part is it made them backwards plan a little bit more and think, “What do I really want?” versus what am I telling them I want and what am I gonna get back?

A PSYOP Message was Invaluable to its Intended Use

I was with a Military Information Support Team my first tour. We were out with the Minister of Narcotics and we were talking about working on a poster for counter-narcotics, counter-poppy. He said, “I want to see this poster before you do it. We had a French company design a counter-mine poster for us. It was a beautiful poster; wrapped around the mines was this cobra hissing at

you, beautiful colors. They spent a lot of time and money on it.” He said, “The problem is we showed it to a bunch of Afghan locals and snakes mean danger. And what do you do with a snake? You step on it and kill it. That's not what we want them to do with the mines.” So while the U.S. and ISAF understood the message that snakes are bad, so mines are bad, the local populace understood, “You step on it and you kill it 'cause it's bad.” We both knew it was bad, but had two different reactions to it.

We would pretest our products with the Minister of Counter-Narcotics and bring it back and change it. I thought that was funny 'cause I want to guess they spent like \$50,000 on that poster. They spent a lot of money and time on that poster to get it up and in the end, they canceled it. It never made it past the approval process. He said, “It stopped at my desk because once we pretested it and realized that people would step on it to kill it, we knew that was a bad thing.” That's one of the funniest ones I've heard.

Another time we did a pretest on a product. We were working it, trying to convince this village, the locals to leave prior to forces coming in and finding the Taliban. We didn't want them to get caught in the crossfire. We tested this product with the local nationals who were working there. We said, “Do you understand this?” The product had a picture of a radio with the radio station up. The message was supposed to be, if they listen to that radio station, it was telling them to leave and it would tell them when to come back. The locals at Bagram understood the message, but they didn't get the point. It was lost in translation or we didn't do a good job telling them that this was some town down south. They got all big eyed and looked at us like the Taliban was gonna come over the hill tomorrow and attack them. They were like: “You mean we need to leave? We've got to go? We're not gonna be able to work tomorrow?” It took about five or ten minutes of our captain and the interpreter calming them down, to go, “No, no, they're not coming here.” Yes, the message was very clear to the point; they thought they would be overrun. We ended up not using that product. The mission didn't go off, but we had one. We continued to push it to get it approved so that if it ever came up again all we had to do was change the name of the village and the radio station, and that product is preapproved and ready to go out.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS Story 4

Using a VMOP to Influence the Locals

First and foremost, what I'm going to talk about is an operation called the Village Medical Outreach Program (VMOP). VMOP involves taking care of animals and taking care of villagers; it's a great opportunity to actually do influence operations in the villages. Of course, the primary objective of the VMOP is to provide medical assistance. The doctors and the medical team provide medical assistance while the Civil Affairs team provides humanitarian care and project assistance.

We (in PSYOP) worked on this by conducting influence operations, such as bringing posters, handbills and information telling the community to support the government in Afghanistan, support the local village government, support the local representatives, support the local imam (Muslim religious leader), and support the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—the military and police—and also the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) to include the Special Operation Forces. We supported the doctors and the medical project by providing posters with information that showed how they could take care of themselves; how to battle malaria, always wash your hands, how to wash your food before you eat it, cook your food totally before you eat. All that stuff that supports good health. We also had the ability to conduct loudspeaker operations to help get the word out about the VMOP, the location and what and why it was happening. On one occasion we starting taking mortar fire during the VMOP and the loudspeaker team helped direct people to safety.

Also, our Tactical Production Team (TPT) NCOs would get involved in what we call key leader engagements. So where you have the medical personnel doing the treatment and you have the ODA commander talking to the key leader, we also get involved with them. We give talking points, some perspective and points of view of how he, as the leader of the village, can actually help the village grow into a more established, civilized situation.

Most of the times we executed a VMOP, the medical team treated over 2,500 people. Humanitarian assistance (HA) was given to all of them. The HA involved clothing, food, perishables, shoes, everything from things to wear all the way to things to eat. It was pretty successful combined effort for the ODA, PSYOP, CA, and the medical staff.

As a result, we were able to develop closer ties to the local community while showcasing the local security efforts, the local national police and the local military. Moreover, we were able to establish a better understanding of the area and people by casual interaction and the employment of the CAT-A's and the TPTs to do key leader engagement; talking to the elders and the people in the villages. All this reporting and the insight gained would increase the recruiting potential for the National Police and the National Military along with improving our situational awareness and force protection posture.

Afghanistan Information Dissemination Operations Influenced Afghan Leaders

So the VMOP, the Village Medical Outreach Project was part of capacity building because the medical team was training the local medical Afghan team and of course all the other stuff that the village gains by that program. But we have another area related to Foreign Internal Defense where we help the locals with specific security capabilities. In our particular case it was called the Afghanistan Information Dissemination Operations (AIDO). The TPTs were training the Soldiers of the Afghanistan Army in dissemination operations to do part of what we do.

So down to that level we were engaged directly in training the Afghanistan military how to do information dissemination operations. We had a TPT that would train these Afghanistan forces in how to present a message, prepare a message and broadcast a message. From development to production to distribution and dissemination of the product, we trained these guys to do everything, which was very efficient. And these AIDO teams were imbedded into the commando units, like how we work with the ODAs. So when the commandos would go out on their missions, these AIDO Soldiers would engage the key leaders and do the talking, the key leader engagement.

The AIDO teams would also handle the battle damage assessment match. They would talk to that leader, "Yes, this happened, but here's the way we're gonna fix it," and so on. They would actually be the ones to come back and highlight the success of the operation and set up with the local radio and the local newspaper, the local media, saying, "By the way your Afghanistan commandos, the 2nd Kandak Afghanistan Commandos, conducted an operation, they brought into custody five insurgents or conducted a mission to protect the school."

So that's another very successful story. In addition to our employment of tactical PSYOP groups on the ground, AIDO was a way to embed in the population and provide assistance that they needed.

Culture Training was More Applicable Than Language Training

"When comparing the importance of language versus culture, if you asked me which was more important to understand, I'd say culture. Understanding culture goes a long way."

When comparing the importance of language versus culture, if you asked me which was more important to understand, I'd say culture. Understanding culture goes a long way. Language is important because if you can speak the language, you've got direct communication with the village leader. There's no intermediary, no interpreter in the middle. But culture is much more important; understanding not only the way they dress or the way they act, but why they do things. In Afghanistan, it's very religion driven. It can change drastically depending on where you are operating; every single one of these locations is different. Understanding your specific AOR (Area of Responsibility), the culture, the way they react, the way they act, and the way they dress, is money. It's important. Of course, learning the three primary languages is added value

for us. It's value added to the way we operate because we can actually address and engage directly with the village elders. But if I could choose one of the two, it would be culture.

When I got the task to get the company ready for deployment, we looked at what we needed to know how to do. Of course, we need to be able to move, shoot and communicate, but that's something that we're already going to train on; we're going to have a week of ranges and everything. More important for me was getting my guys ready to adapt to that culture, to that language. We coordinated with the language lab and we had Farsi, Dari and Pashto classes scheduled for the different teams depending on the regions. If you were operating in RC West or RC East where Dari is predominant, your teams would go into eight weeks of Dari language training. It was two days a week for three hours in the afternoon. If at all possible, I would allocate more time to language 'cause Dari is a hard language to learn.

But a lot of the time the basics of the language takes you a long way, even saying hello or how are you takes you a long way.

In addition to that, we used the Strategic Studies Team every week to do what we call cultural awareness classes. Once a week, the Afghanistan Strategic Studies team leader or one of these team guys came in and the civilian would actually do a class, Introduction to Afghanistan. First is a general discussion of all the political, military, and economic and language factors. And then after that, they would cover specific items in greater detail. So we're gonna understand the way they dress; the burqas and everything they wore. Why would they wear it? What are the ages that they wear it? What would the married wear, the single wear? Why would they wear this? Identifying economic status by the way they're dressed and so on.

In addition to language and cultural awareness classes, we had a negotiation seminar. Because that's what the TPTs do when they hit the ground, they do negotiation. It's all about being able to articulate to that leader what you can bring to their table and how you can help them so they can help you. Negotiation training was very important so we blocked approximately ten weeks for that as well.

So in between the normal shooting, moving and communications training, we included language, negotiations, and cultural awareness studies and it paid off. It paid off big time because the guys arrived there with a general knowledge. It definitely helped us to understand how they were dressed, to understand the basics of the language, to understand economics, how to work and all that stuff so we could actually engage and work face to face with the locals and interact a lot easier. One of the reasons that we do this training is because there are so few of us (PSYOP) to go around.

It doesn't happen often, but sometimes we have to go in and fix a messaging problem that someone else has created. Sometimes you say some words that don't really support your intent or your capability like when they do false promises. False promises mainly won't hurt you, but it hurts everybody that comes after you. So many guys don't understand the art of influence or how to negotiate, how to influence a person. When you do it right, they commit themselves to it, like "yeah, we're gonna support a new school, we're gonna support the local government" or whatever. That villager is going to take your word, especially if you're wearing a United States Flag on your right shoulder. If it says U.S. – or you're wearing an ISAF uniform, he's going to take your word for it. He's going to hold you accountable for it. And sometimes we've been

called upon to go out there and fix it when they've made promises they can't keep. We do what we call consequence management. Our guys have those skills; it's something that we train on.

Anyone can train on a course, but it's something that given your level of training, your level of cultural awareness and situational awareness, plus your negotiation skills that come into play and kind of shows that we should let the guys on the ground do the work.

Have I seen that? Has it happened? Yes. Have we been able to control it? Yes. Some places have we been unable to control? Yes. It's a matter of talking, and influencing, and persuading and trying to change this guy to change his train of thought. It's not for free. Of course, yeah, we'll build you a school. Yeah, but of course you need to bring some people in, workers, so the workers can do the work. They're going to get paid for doing the work.

And so the message becomes, "That's part of the payment that we're going to do for you, but you could actually help us out too. Tell us about any kind of insurgents in the area or any kind of suspicious activity, you need to help us, you know, identify these activities; identify these people so maybe we can make your village safer."

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³³ The references cited in the list above are not linked directly to specific content contained in this book. However, the references will be helpful for readers who seek additional information on concepts, principles, and practices related to BPC.

³⁴ This report includes a reference list of documents related to BPC that readers can access to gain additional information.

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