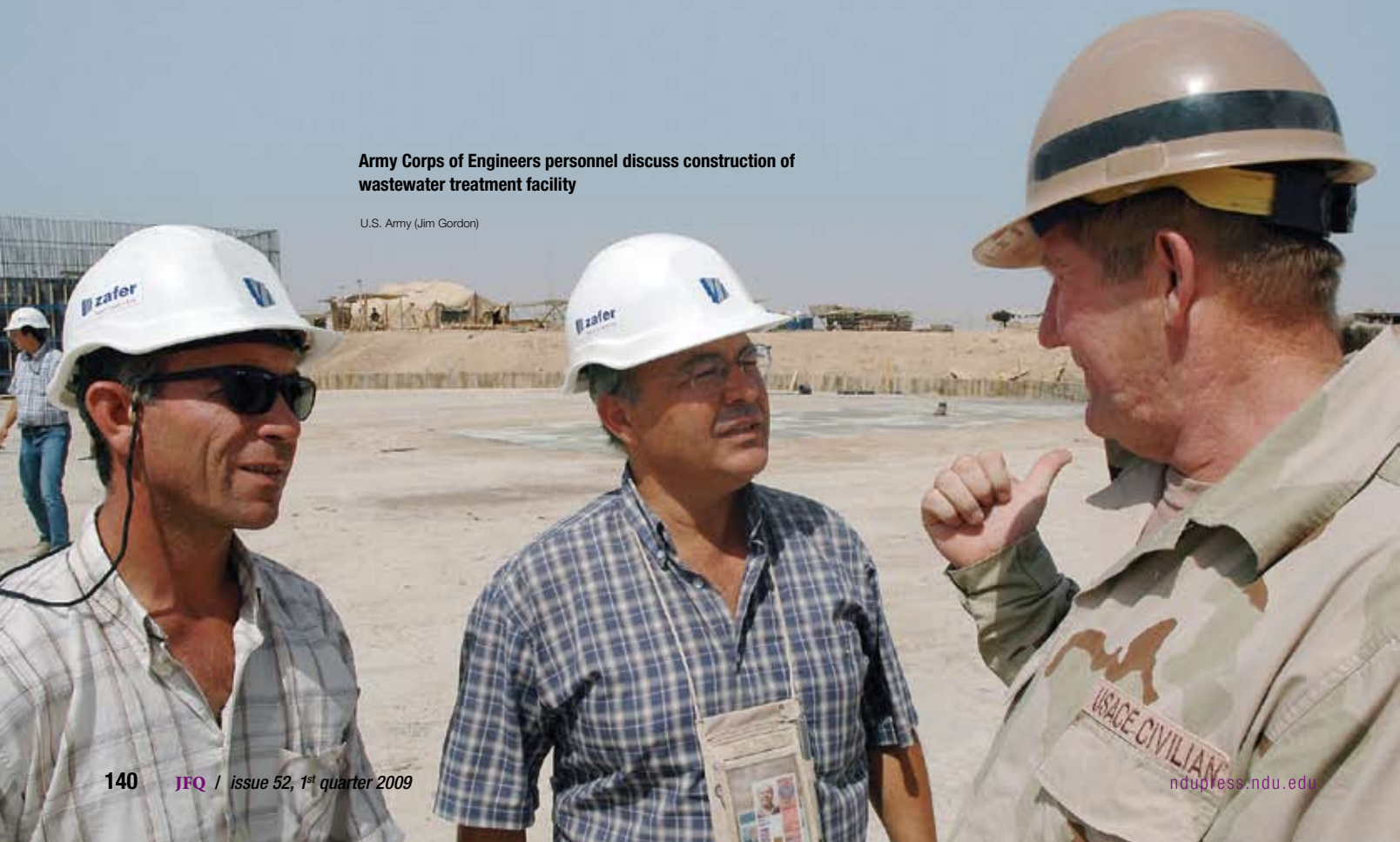
RECONSTRUCTING IRAQ'S PROVINCES,

One *by* One

By HENRY L. CLARKE

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq have a common purpose: to bring about, within each province, the coalition's overall goals for Iraq—a peaceful, prosperous society, able to sustain and defend its political and economic system without major foreign involvement. The PRTs must enable each provincial and local government to achieve these goals with or without coherent leadership from the center. After years of suspicion and violent conflict among Iraq's three major populations (Kurds, Sunni Arabs, and Shia Arabs), it can be no surprise that a centralized democratic government in Baghdad will often be fractured among the national parties and will not always create the kind of stability, cohesion, and leadership the country needs.

Why should we expect anything different in the provinces? Simply because the provinces *are* all very different, and few mirror Iraq as a whole. Some provinces are composed of a single ethnic/religious group, such as the three provinces of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Anbar Province (overwhelmingly Sunni Arab), and several provinces in the south that are overwhelmingly Shia, with different internal divisions within each group. Other provinces have two main groups in various proportions, and a few, such as Salah ad Din, are divided three



Army Corps of Engineers personnel discuss construction of wastewater treatment facility

U.S. Army (Jim Gordon)

ways and have no single majority. Yet even the most demographically divided provinces have the potential to make local accommodations for specific purposes—for example, to improve infrastructure or services—that remain more difficult to achieve at the national level.

Provincial reconstruction is no longer about *physical* construction, although PRTs have supported a lot of construction. It is about reconstructing Iraqi life in the provinces from Saddam's centralized dictatorship to decentralized governments that people accept as legitimate, from the rule of violence to the rule of law, from ethnic/religious antagonism to accommodation, from government-run business to private sector growth, from rampant corruption to accountability, and so on. It is about fundamental, qualitative change.

Moreover, the diversity among Iraq's provinces is so great, and the opportunities for effective foreign engagement vary so much among the provinces, that PRTs cannot deliver a single set of policies and programs as instructed from Baghdad. Each PRT must draw up province-specific plans, priorities, and levels of resources to achieve its goals. While the general principles of counterinsurgency, economic development, and institutional reform do apply throughout Iraq, they involve policy choices, and each PRT must adapt them to address the unique circumstances prevailing in each province. Efforts to create a single "provincial doctrine" for Iraqi PRTs tend either to be inapplicable to some parts of Iraq or hopelessly vague.[1] Likewise, efforts to contrive a single set of measurements to compare the performance of all the teams can only occasionally be useful because the provinces in which they serve will progress or regress at different rates, and the PRTs' performance will usually not be as decisive as the Iraqi efforts. Moreover, many of the changes we want are not readily measurable.

Provincial diversity and decentralization complicate control and direction by senior Iraqi and American officials preoccupied with the needs of the country as seen from the center, but given the diversity, decentralization offers the best chances for success. Without centralization, PRTs have already become the main platform for implementing many U.S. programs in Iraq, including those of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the rule of law. Without centralization, those PRTs that have established close working relations with Iraqi officials have effectively promoted political and economic accommodations and institutional development and have great potential to do more. Unfortunately, despite the diversity, complexity, and decentralization of our own American political system, our system generates continuous pressure to centralize PRT policies and operations, oversimplify their tasks, and interfere in the most critical and creative contributions PRTs are making to coalition goals in Iraq.

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How *Not* to Reconstruct

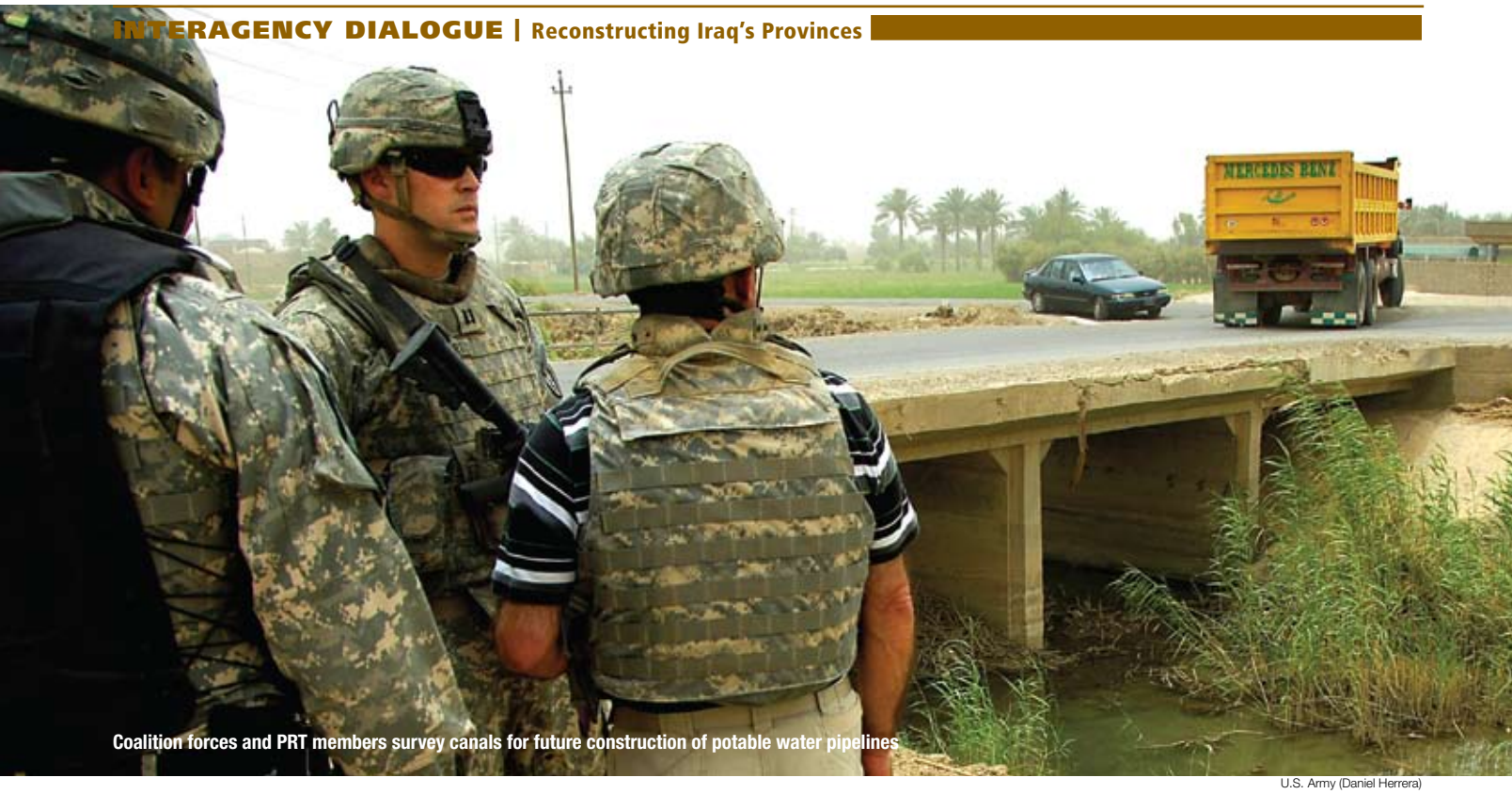
Aware of Washington's pressure for "metrics" of the results of PRT operations in the provinces, the National Coordination Team (NCT), predecessor of the Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, developed a whole series of "stoplight" objectives for the provinces, and NCT and OPA dutifully briefed the outcomes on a regular basis. The results were too simplistic to prove anything about the effectiveness of the PRTs, and briefing officers would have to describe actual changes in each province separately. The exercise showed mainly what we already knew: the provinces were all different, and any shift from red to yellow, or yellow to green, would take a long and undetermined time.

The danger of requiring quantitative metrics for the performance of PRTs in bringing about qualitative change is that inventive people will produce them, and they will measure the wrong things. Such metrics can avoid qualitative judgments by measuring inputs—dollars spent, hours of training, numbers of Iraqis trained, meetings or conferences held, and so forth, but these data measure effort, not success, and the outcomes can still be failures. The even greater danger is that false indicators quickly become the objectives because they are so much easier to fulfill than the real goals of qualitative political and economic change in the provinces.

The Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) recommended creating a system of goals and benchmarks for the PRTs, and in July 2007 accepted the Embassy's view that such goals and benchmarks would have to be established and tracked for each team individually.[2] Yet in October 2007, noting that the recommendation had not been fulfilled, SIGIR recommended that the U.S. Ambassador and Commanding General jointly undertake and approve a "comprehensive plan for the PRTs (including ePRTs [embedded PRTs]), with elements tailored for each," with objectives, performance measures, milestones, funding requirements, and agencies accountable for the plan's implementation.[3] SIGIR thus managed to convert individual team planning into a massive top-down bureaucratic effort, involving dozens of military and civilian agencies and untold hours from hundreds of staff officers. Such a comprehensive plan can hardly be flexible enough to help individual PRTs to accomplish their mission and invites micromanagement of the teams, which can only distract the bureaucracy in Baghdad from thinking about strategic issues.

A current congressional study seems based on the unstated, unquestioned, and implausible assumption that knowledge and judgments about how to implement American goals in each province of Iraq (and Afghanistan, too) can best come from higher authorities:

The bottom line . . . is that until PRTs receive consistent and clear direction from higher headquarters, they will not be able to maximize their efforts or judge their success. In this environment, resources cannot be programmed or applied effectively. The heroic tactical work being done by PRTs will go for naught without more coherent strategic and operational level guidance and oversight. In the absence of such guidance and oversight, resources, instead of supporting strategic agility, may be poorly prioritized and coordinated, and, in some cases, squandered.[4]



Coalition forces and PRT members survey canals for future construction of potable water pipelines

U.S. Army (Daniel Herrera)

This is precisely the *wrong* "bottom line." More lives, time, and billions of dollars have been squandered in Iraq due to poor planning and decisionmaking in Washington, U.S. Central Command, and Baghdad than by anyone dealing with provincial Iraqi counterparts on a daily basis. If one team leader misjudges the best approach for his province, it will not handicap all the other provinces and is much more easily corrected. Yet operational guidance from higher headquarters—which is inappropriate in some or in many provinces—could take months or years to correct. Even someone with extensive field experience cannot sit in Washington, Tampa, or even Baghdad and prescribe how a given program should be prioritized in Ramadi, Irbil, Basra, and Kut better than the teams working in those places; in each locale, the needs and opportunities, and therefore the priorities, will differ. The study overlooks entirely that the PRTs can succeed only through the success of each team's specific counterparts and that supposedly all-knowing higher authorities must usually rely on PRT reports to assess what counterparts can do.

Planning and Measuring Success

Even though there may be few yardsticks or deadlines applicable to all the PRTs, province-specific yardsticks, benchmarks, and timelines can be useful if they are part of each team's planning process. Team leaders must assess what is possible and what might work best in their province, and from that develop a specific plan for PRT operations, including key judgments on timing and priorities for human and other resources. The plan should be coordinated with agencies providing resources and then approved, probably with modifications, at the U.S. Embassy. The team's progress can then be judged on the basis of its *own* plan. The various plans and their fulfillment can be shared and discussed without judging PRTs against one another.

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However, skill in planning and progress toward fulfillment of individual PRT plans can also be taken into account privately in individual performance evaluations of the team leaders.[5]

Some specific objectives *can* be similar in all the provinces, if they can be clearly and quantitatively defined and are not greatly affected by geographic differences. For example, provincial budgetary execution was one of the 2007 congressional benchmarks for Iraq, and it was clearly measurable. The Iraqi constitution provides for the distribution of substantial amounts of Iraqi revenue to all the provinces on the basis of population, and after modest success in 2006, the allocation system was fully functional in 2007. The previous regime had no similar system, so most PRTs were providing provincial authorities with both general and expert advice on developing their budgets and managing these funds. Once the central Ministry of Finance released the funds, PRTs were generally also able to report exact amounts received and spent. Local leaders learned to lobby and reconcile differences on priorities for projects, and provincial authorities became eager to show results. The provinces even committed capital expenditures quite promptly by international standards. While performance was uneven among the provinces, and PRTs had only limited access in some provinces, the political and economic incentives for achievement of good results were comparable among all the provinces. The benchmark was met.

Especially in the field of economic development, there may be other measures of success that provide quantitative indicators—though not necessarily nationwide benchmarks. Numbers of new small businesses formed can show evidence of the business climate, including the removal of obstacles to business. The growth of small-business credit

programs (including repayment rates) can likewise be a measurable indicator. Of course, such numbers will be influenced by differing factors in different provinces—notably the levels of security, corruption, and economic potential.

The most important objectives of the PRTs are neither quantifiable nor easily comparable. In terms of economic work, the most critical path to development in most provinces is likely to require economic reform—that is, a fundamental shift to a decentralized private economy. Iraq's "socialist" command economy remains far behind the progress in economic reform achieved in Eastern Europe, and much of it remains locked into centralized legislation, which is unlikely to change soon. Privatization is badly needed, and some provincial leaders have asked for it, but neither the Iraqis nor the Americans in Baghdad are ready to address the issue. Several PRTs are assisting in the revitalization of state-owned enterprises, to promote employment and production at whatever cost. Ideally, provinces would each conduct their own privatization according to uniform standards and procedures set at the center. Since this is not happening, the PRTs need to look at private sector development creatively, both as a means of replacing defunct state-owned enterprises and to generate attitudes among the provincial leadership to create opportunities to stimulate private rather than public initiatives in commercial development. Economic policy success for a PRT may lie in promoting imaginative local initiatives using provincial resources, which is not a readily measurable process.

Corruption remains a huge obstacle to political and economic development in Iraq, as in most countries. The presence of PRTs, working closely with provincial and local leadership on budgets and projects, often with experienced rule-of-law advisors on the team, cannot prevent corruption and favoritism, but it can help deter them. There is no way to quantify undiscovered illegal activity, or the absence of it, so we will not easily measure how much the PRTs have or will contribute to this aspect of the rule of law. Other rule-of-law developments suffer from the same handicap in measurement (how intimidated does a judge feel?), yet the results of reforms to establish the effective rule of law can be among the most decisive in establishing the capacity of Iraqi provincial governments and courts to become self-sustaining and to be viewed by the population as legitimate.

Political engagement—that is, the influence a team leader or other team members can have on provincial and local leaders—is rarely mentioned as a PRT goal, and the scope for such engagement varies throughout Iraq. Given the breadth of coalition goals, political engagement may be the most important PRT subgoal for the team leader himself. Whether subtle or blunt, persuasion cannot be objectively measured, nor does influence automatically determine success. For example, our team in the Kurdistan region has long underachieved its potential for political engagement there, in part due to inappropriate staffing and security restrictions imposed by Embassy Baghdad, but there is no way to objectively compare its impact with other teams in other provinces. It can be argued that the potential for overall American impact is greater in that region than elsewhere, but there is no way of measuring what might have been achieved without subjective assumptions about what the Kurdistan Regional Government would or could have changed. The only sensible approach is to use a unique assessment and planning process for the regional team in Iraqi Kurdistan, and also for each of the other PRTs, whether at the provincial or local level, and judge the results qualitatively, province by province.

The critical difference that PRTs bring to our involvement in Iraq is their capacity to help their Iraqi counterparts to implement the policies, programs, and reforms that we think will strengthen them. The idea that projects and programs can be implemented solely by foreigners was always risky, and the time for that is now long gone. Nothing the PRTs introduce will be sustainable, or will bring about Iraqi self-sufficiency, unless the Iraqis are themselves willing and able to implement the changes. The programs and resources available throughout Iraq are well established now, but only each PRT can decide how best to persuade the counterparts in its area to adopt them, what priorities to set, and whether local or provincial offices have the capacity to carry out a given activity if it is turned over to them completely. The effectiveness of a particular program in a province may be affected by whether the governor has a third-grade education or a master's degree, whether he is a Kurd or Arab, and whether a different religious group is dominant in one part of his province. It matters whether the province is intensely agricultural, largely urban, or a desert, and what kinds of activity the level of violence will permit.

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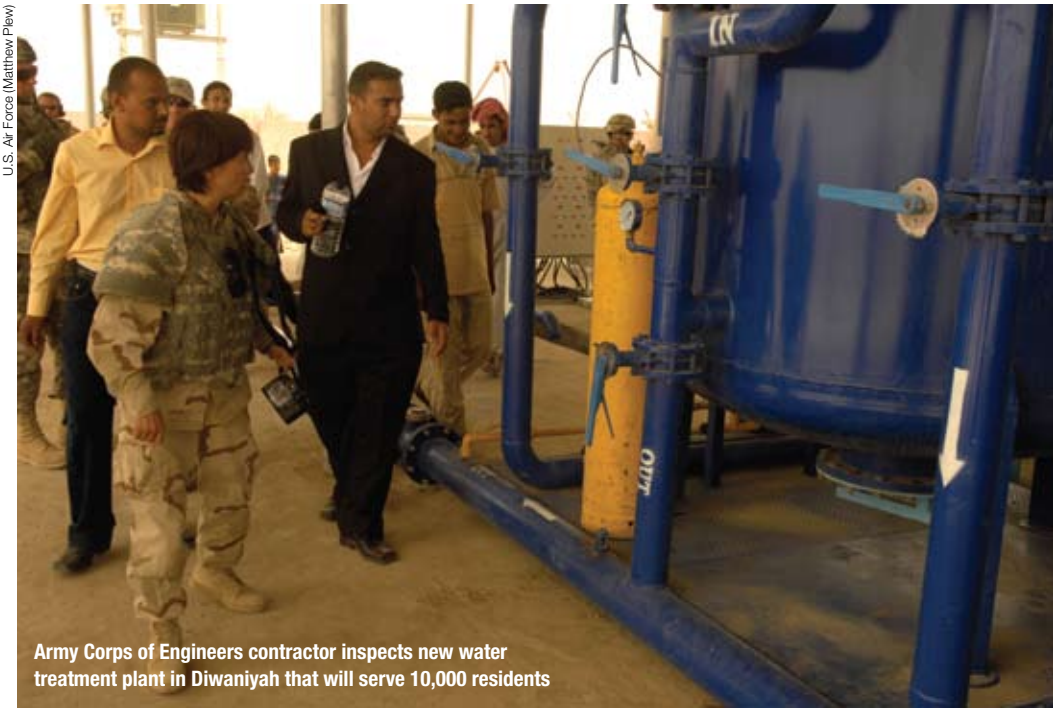
U.S. Air Force (Matthew Plew)



Army Corps of Engineers contractor inspects new water treatment plant in Diwaniyah that will serve 10,000 residents

A decentralized concept for organizing and assessing PRTs requires that the team leaders be *real* leaders—able to lead and manage multifaceted teams, yet also effective in advising their Iraqi counterparts. By drawing on relatively senior Foreign Service Officers for the team leader positions, the State Department has been able to provide team leaders with years of experience working with foreign counterparts, and others with years of administrative management experience, but it has not always found team leaders who have strong backgrounds in both negotiating and management, plus the creativity to work out novel solutions in a totally new situation. There is no obvious "career path" to becoming a team leader, yet many senior Foreign Service Officers have done remarkably well. There are surely potential team leaders from other career paths who should be hired, if they can be identified, but since the mix of talent required is not easy to find, it would be a mistake to radically change the recruitment process for Iraq at this late stage.

Team leaders now receive PRT training together with other team members, and that is not sufficient. The leaders should also receive a high-level, 2-week course—comparable to the courses now given to first-time Ambassadors and to Deputy Chiefs of Mission, but with more military, USAID, and rule-of-law input. The course should use case studies of best practices, and of management and policy failures, and should meet with former team leaders. The goal would be to go beyond specific training, to reorienting team leaders to arrive in the field knowing the ways in which they might get useful guidance if they need it. More importantly, they need to understand their personal responsibility for planning their work, leading their team, and for initiative and imagination in implementing established U.S. goals in their area.

Security vs. Working with Counterparts

Security is critical to the success of PRTs in Iraq, and lack of it is often one of their major obstacles. There are two main components: protection of the team's living and office accommodations, and protection of movements by team members to meet with their counterparts. Unlike the military, in which security is a responsibility of command at various levels, the State Department and other civilian agencies in Iraq do not delegate basic decisions on PRT security to team leaders. State decisions on security are based on a model developed for other countries, which has often worked badly for PRTs in Iraq in both permissive and extremely hostile circumstances.

The worldwide State concept is that foreign host governments are responsible for perimeter security of diplomatic and consular posts, and that if this cannot be guaranteed, the post must be restricted in staffing, evacuated, or closed—a standard clearly opposite to the mission of PRTs in Iraq, where the coalition established and increased the number of PRTs in combat zones, and some teams have come under almost continuous attack. So State persuaded the U.S. military to accommodate most of the PRTs on its bases.

State's Diplomatic Security Service contracts with private companies wherever it must provide movement security. These contracts, originally designed to protect Ambassadors in unsettled countries, place the highest priority on protecting the lives of the passengers. If the threats against a movement are too great, it does not take place. In Iraq, in the event of apparent threats against a movement already under way, the contract guards are free to take aggressive action to deter it without waiting to be attacked. These concepts have not worked well in Iraq: several nonresident PRTs in southern Iraq could not move at all into their provinces to meet counterparts, while in the Kurdistan region, where there were no attacks on U.S. personnel, U.S. contractors repeatedly fired on approaching vehicles, causing noncombatant casualties. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus attempted to deal with some of these longstanding inconsistencies in mid-2007 by shifting more responsibility for PRT movement protection to military units, but in the Kurdistan region and in several provinces in the south there were no available U.S. military units to move the PRTs. Even in Baghdad, an incident in September 2007 received worldwide attention when it illustrated that contractors providing movement security were sometimes too aggressive to be consistent with either the counterinsurgency or broader U.S. goals.

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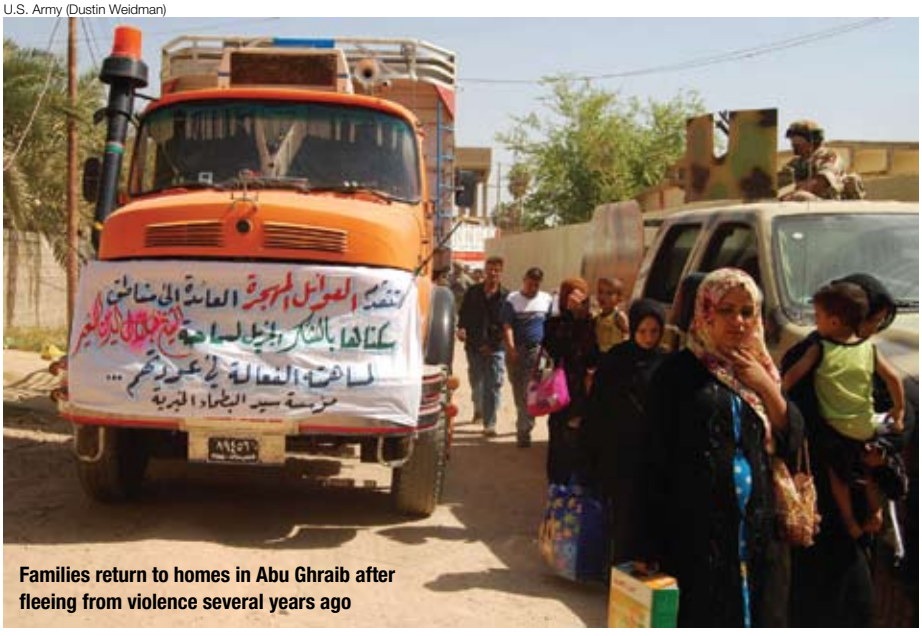
During 2007, the United States created 14 new PRTs embedded with military brigades in Anbar Province and in and around Baghdad Province (including parts of neighboring provinces), so that both movement and perimeter security depended on the brigade. Although exposed to the same risks as combat troops, these ePRTs brought two huge advantages to the U.S. effort in Iraq: providing greater access to district and other local counterparts, and avoiding the problems of State's security structure.

U.S. Army (Dustin Weidman)



Families return to homes in Abu Ghraib after fleeing from violence several years ago

This embedded structure did not, however, solve the problems of excessive security measures in the Kurdistan region. There are minimum standards for protection against terrorist attack anywhere, but the Embassy seriously curtailed the effectiveness of the regional team by requiring it to move out of the city to the isolated Camp Zaytun. The problem of aggressive driving and shooting by contractors was blamed on their contract and vehicles, although the same State contractor (DynCorp) operated the same vehicles differently in Bosnia, when the threat level resembled that of the Kurdistan region.[6]

In the south, where initially there were insufficient U.S. troops to replace the contractors, a solution reportedly has been found by establishing small U.S. military outposts near Karbala and Najaf that could support the PRTs and their movement security for those influential provinces, and by moving the Qadisiya PRT to Camp Echo, near Diwaniyah.[7]

Withdrawal of Brigades

Creating embedded PRTs at the local level created a new challenge: how to coordinate with the provincial-level teams already functioning, especially in Anbar and Baghdad Provinces. To some Marine and Army commanders, it seemed these new teams should be subordinate to the provincial-level teams, paralleling their military chain of command. I resisted that, arguing that the new teams had their own missions and that they should remain decentralized and focused on their counterparts, while of course coordinating with the provincial level whenever necessary. I did not want to develop another layer in the civilian bureaucracy in Iraq, and I did not want to distract provincial-level team leaders from their responsibility to engage fully with counterparts at the provincial level. The Embassy has reportedly since decided otherwise, so the local, embedded teams now report to the provincial team leaders, sharply reducing the number of team leaders reporting directly to the Embassy. If the provincial leaders decide to manage these embedded local teams, rather than use a decentralized structure, they—and especially the Baghdad PRT—will find it a full-time job. It may become more difficult to recruit experienced officers to lead the subordinate teams. On the other hand, the ePRTs do share the same province with the provincial team, and thus geographic diversity is less of a problem at their level. Now that the ePRTs have been operating for many months, if the provincial team leaders take advantage of the ePRTs' separate roles and allow the subordinate team leaders to manage their smaller teams, the latter may be able to maintain their effectiveness.

Embedded teams created another, more basic challenge: where does the ePRT go if the brigade moves or returns to the United States? If the primary purpose of the ePRT is to engage Iraqi counterparts, how can a team break off the contacts, programs, and projects they are working on? Brigades and regiments are maneuver elements, very mobile and easily subdivided by smaller units. But Iraqi civilian counterparts are not, and PRTs can and should maintain continuous contact with them. Some PRTs in Iraq were subdivided—in Salah ad Din some team members were accommodated at other bases. Some embedded brigade team members in Baghdad were located with battalion headquarters when this improved their access to their counterparts. Thus, the PRTs are flexible, but there must be a basing and movement plan to maintain their access to counterparts when brigades plan to redeploy to another area or to withdraw altogether. Such plans need to be joint civilian/military efforts by higher authority, with input from PRT leaders.

With the departure of the "surge" brigades of 2007, in which the new PRTs were embedded, some of their forward operating bases used by ePRTs will be employed by fewer troops, closed, or turned over to Iraqi units. Thinning out U.S. combat forces also means fewer military units to move the PRTs around safely. We cannot reasonably declare the civilian mission of an ePRT automatically "completed" when the level of violence or other priorities allows its brigade to depart; indeed, the ePRT should be able to accomplish more in a more permissive environment. If the PRT moves with the brigade, continuity with its counterparts will be lost, and its longer term counterinsurgency and reconstruction goals will remain unfinished, and perhaps unsustainable—or at least seriously interrupted, while new American personnel try to reestablish the relationship. Since team members do not all rotate at once, but are replaced individually, there is no excuse for a break in continuity with counterparts.

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Who then takes responsibility for security of the once-embedded PRT? Ideally, some nearby coalition forces do. If they are too thin to provide movement security, that job will probably revert to civilian contractors. For perimeter security, State should consider reliance on Iraqi forces, just as the U.S. military is increasingly doing.

A Longer View

The year 2007 was one of huge growth in the PRT effort in Iraq, with 14 new ePRTs, adding new personnel and skills to the existing provincial-level teams, and then increasing staff for teams south of Baghdad that had not been able to function fully until the security climate became more permissive. Managing all this growth left no time to consider reducing the teams or their functions. The teams were popular with the U.S. Congress (which provided new funding specifically for PRT use), with the military and civilian bureaucracies, and with Iraqi counterparts. The potential of the teams had not been fully explored, and from my perspective at the Embassy it seemed they should try anything reasonable that might serve our overall goals in Iraq.

It is already time to reconsider how much U.S. civilian presence is really needed. There is still a huge job to assist the Iraqis in creating sustainable institutions after such bitter conflicts, but the resources we now expend may not be fully effective or justified. Planning for the future of PRTs requires a few assumptions, such as:

1. The great diversity of Iraqi provinces will remain, so sweeping generalizations about what should be done with the PRTs on a country-wide basis will likely be wrong. Decentralization will remain essential for each team's operations, but that does not relieve higher authorities from oversight, reviewing strategy, and adjusting resources.

2. Apart from temporary setbacks, the more permissive security climate will not get worse in most parts of Iraq. This means that while there will be a continuing threat of terrorist attacks on PRTs and their movements,

U.S. Marine Corps (Joseph A. Lambach)

Embedded PRT members inspect textile factory in al Ikaa

most teams will be able to travel often to meet with counterparts, and they can continue to occupy their living and office quarters. A collapse of security throughout most of the country would require a reassessment of both our civilian and military roles in Iraq, probably including security-driven cutbacks for the PRTs. The present relative peace not only enlarges what our teams can do, but it is also even more important to what the Iraqis can do, together with us and for themselves. To take full advantage of the present environment in our planning, we need to assume that it will continue for most teams.

3. Attacks on unarmed civilians, their automobiles, or Iraqi security forces by armed contractors will be completely unacceptable. The rules of engagement and accountability for poor judgment must be completely revised—or new contractors must be found.

4. As Iraqis become more confident in their own security and capacity to act, they will feel less comfortable with an overbearing U.S. civilian presence. We should therefore reduce nonessential functions and staff wherever we can. Attitudes toward us will not be the same in all provinces; we should trim PRTs that are least welcome or least able to be effective with their counterparts. We must also be prepared to eliminate those PRT functions that have largely, if not perfectly, achieved their objectives; if they remain useful, they should be transferred to Iraqi institutions. The public diplomacy function of each team will be essential in promoting a favorable image for the PRT, and for gauging realistically how it is perceived by the public and the media.

5. As of mid-2008, it is not plausible to assume that either the Iraqi or the American people will sustain current levels of military forces in Iraq, including the massive logistical system that supports them. Even the most desirable scenario, a gradual withdrawal of combat and some support units, will be a major military undertaking, and there is a risk that small civilian organizations such as PRTs, now dependent on the military, will get lost in the planning shuffle.

6. Since the process of shifting power and responsibility to the provinces is far from complete, and PRT programs remain welcome, teams will most likely remain an important part of the U.S. relationship even if most U.S. military units depart. With substantially fewer U.S. and British military units, it is reasonable to assume that there will not be enough coalition combat troops to sustain the number of bases now used by PRTs or to provide present levels of movement security, even though such a residual military responsibility would be welcomed by the teams. A combination of Iraqi perimeter security and contractor movement security may be the most workable solution for many teams.

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Based on these assumptions, the Embassy and higher authorities have some immediate and substantial responsibilities for restructuring the PRT program, including its security, throughout Iraq—getting ideas from the individual teams, but without trying to manage ongoing PRT operations. Here are some suggestions to start the process.

1. End new funding and approvals for medium and large construction projects at provincial and local levels. This should not be a big shock; in several provinces, the United States has reduced the number of new construction projects supported by the PRTs and the Army Corps of Engineers. But millions of dollars' worth of new funding was approved in 2007, and completion of the projects will vary from months to years. It is time to stop filling this pipeline with new projects; the PRTs and Corps should focus on winding up existing projects. PRTs have increasingly advised the provinces on Iraqi provincial funding and should continue their expert assistance to provincial budgeting and project management to the extent it is still needed.

2. PRTs will mainly engage politically, promote reform, and deliver various kinds of technical assistance to provincial and local governmental institutions and to the private sector, including agriculture. Teams will continue to need funds they can commit for small-scale projects to support these goals, with minimal higher level interference.

3. Instead of isolating and restricting its functioning, our Kurdistan Regional Reconstruction Team in Camp Zaytun, outside Irbil, should be given new facilities in the city, with secure public access for commercial and consular services, with external perimeter protection supplied by the Kurdistan Regional Government and movement security provided by contractors with new tactical instructions. These measures are long overdue and implementation should begin now. The United States will need an effective presence in the Kurdistan region probably for as long as we have an Embassy in Iraq. Whether or not the team's new facility is given the title of Consulate General, it should function as one, without giving up the team's broad role in technical assistance in developing the economy and rule of law. Since the team has been officially headed by Korea, and the Korean reconstruction projects are largely completed, it might be reasonable to rename the team as a U.S. Consulate General with the departure of the Korean units.

4. Similarly, basing arrangements for other teams should be reviewed jointly (by the Embassy and appropriate military staff) to determine whether the bases and their security are appropriate for a reduced-conflict Iraq. Some PRTs on large military bases, far from their counterparts, have already tried to adjust by dividing the team so key officers are closer to provincial officials. In cases where there are few alternative routes, the distance to a safe base makes each movement more dangerous. The larger PRTs may require multiple daily movements in a more permissive environment. Fewer troops for movement security could become a significant constraint on PRT effectiveness.

5. Each team should examine the effectiveness of all its programs under way and rank their importance, taking into account overall goals and the realistically expected effectiveness of each program in contributing to them. Those functions that have largely achieved their purpose should be transferred to Iraqi authorities, while others that have proved ineffective should be retired. The U.S. Mission in Baghdad will have to review each team's rankings individually as well as nationwide—but unlike normal budget-cutting exercises, this more careful pruning would produce healthier technical assistance programs and more effective teams.

6. The future status of each PRT should depend on what it does. Although perhaps the least important strategic issue, the question of whether PRTs should evolve into consulates, USAID teams, or Embassy offices has been discussed for years. The answer can only be given for one province at a time, even though the decision must be taken at higher levels. Except for Irbil, where the United States has needed the consular and commercial functions of a Consulate General for years, and the security situation would permit it, the status of "PRT" is understood and would seem sufficient. In Basra, where the British head the PRT and their own Consulate General, and we refer to our part of the team as an Embassy Office, there would seem to be little need to change the status quickly. If the security climate permits us much greater access to provincial and city officials and enables us to provide consular and commercial services appropriate for a city the size of Basra, we should also have a Consulate General, but both of these conditions were inconceivable before 2008. The Embassy Office in al-Hillah is an excellent platform for supporting the Babil PRT and a variety of other U.S. Government functions housed there; if consular services are not necessary or feasible, it should remain an Embassy Office. While USAID deserves credit for much of the work done so far by PRTs, the teams should not be renamed "USAID teams" as long as their leaders are responsible for functions that do not fall under USAID, such as rule of law, public affairs, and political and economic reporting.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams remain the best, most flexible format for civilian engagement at the provincial and local levels in Iraq. There is no need to create a single pattern for their further evolution. For maximum effectiveness, the teams and their successors should remain a decentralized structure, pursuing coalition and U.S. goals in Iraq according to the particular opportunities and challenges in each province. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] For example, one tenet of counterinsurgency doctrine says we should not extend economic benefits to those in the population who support the insurgency. Another equally valid concept says that we should make the benefits of economic programs available as broadly as possible, to encourage those who tacitly support the insurgency to shift their support to Iraqi institutions and the counterinsurgency. This is not a purely tactical decision, as neither choice will work unless it is implemented consistently over time. The decision depends greatly on local circumstances, including how much we know about the population.

[2] Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) 07–014, *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program Expansion in Iraq*, July 25, 2007, 12.

[3] SIGIR 07–015, *Review of the Effectiveness of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq*, October 18, 2007, x.

[4] House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Agency Stovepipes vs. Strategic Agility: Lessons We Need to Learn from Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan*, April 2008, 28.

[5] Each embedded PRT, after arrival in Iraq in 2007, was required by the Corps commander (with Embassy concurrence) to prepare a plan jointly with the brigade or regiment with which it was embedded. The Office of Provincial Affairs also began requiring team leaders' plans from the other, provincial-level PRTs in the summer of 2007.

[6] The author worked with a DynCorp team in Bosnia every day for 2½ years, 2001–2003.

[7] SIGIR 07–015, x.