Enduring Voices



Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan
2003–2005



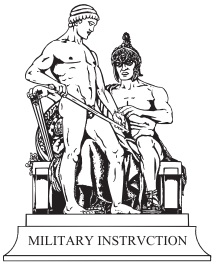
Christopher N. Koontz
General Editor

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Enduring Voices: Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan, 2003–2005

Christopher N. Koontz

General Editor



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Foreword

In October 2001, U.S. troops and their allies struck back at the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that had harbored and supported the terrorists responsible for the attacks of 11 September. This swift and forceful response deposed the Taliban and heralded the beginning of what would become a long struggle to bring stability and security to the people of Afghanistan. Not only did the Americans confront a persistent insurgency in Afghanistan, but they also faced the pervasive poverty and political instability that fed it. Two years into the conflict, Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, the commander of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, devised a sophisticated counterinsurgency strategy that reoriented and refocused military operations. His new approach integrated military operations against insurgents with efforts to develop the government, defense forces, and economy of Afghanistan.

The U.S. Army Center of Military History prepared this anthology of oral histories to document this critical period in the Afghan conflict. It records the memories, perspectives, and opinions of those who planned and implemented the counterinsurgency strategy at multiple echelons of command between 2003 and 2005. The interviews selected for this volume provide, in the words of those who participated in the events, insights into the complex operational environment in Afghanistan and the ways in which the Army adapted and adjusted its strategy and tactics to that environment.

Washington, D.C.
30 October 2008

JEFFREY J. CLARKE
Chief of Military History

Preface

This volume represents a new venture for the U.S. Army Center of Military History: an anthology of oral histories. It is the product of the Center's effort in 2006 and 2007 to continue the written chronicle of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan, a project that involved the conduct of many interviews. As the research progressed, the value of the information those interviews contained became so apparent that the Center decided to publish the interviews themselves.

The interviews spotlight the establishment of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan in October 2003 and the tenure of its first commander, Lt. Gen. David W. Barno (USA, Ret.). In less than two years, General Barno changed the U.S. Army's approach to operations in Afghanistan by developing a program that aimed to rebuild that nation while giving its government the strength it needed to stand on its own. The interviews presented here make available for the first time the experiences and opinions of the American soldiers and their joint military service, interagency, and international partners who brought that program into being. In order to show how the ideas and decision making that shaped General Barno's effort evolved and the military and political challenges he and other Army leaders faced, the interviews emphasize the perspectives of senior officers. As a result, the anthology is not a complete survey of the period spanned by the tours of duty of its subjects. Neither does it serve as an interpretive or analytical history. Instead, the anthology sought to include material that would leave the reader with a sense of the depth and complexity of the decisions driving the operations in Afghanistan as well as of the operations themselves. To that end, while seeking to preserve the conversational style and tone of each interview, I have introduced minor edits and cuts whenever necessary to preserve clarity or to highlight important themes.

In addition to thanking those who willingly and generously gave their time, documents, photographs, and memories to assist in this project, I would like to thank J. Patrick Hughes and Lisa M. Mundey, who conducted many of the interviews for the project, as well as William M. Hammond, Stephen J. Lofgren, Joel D. Meyerson, and Richard W. Stewart for their advice and assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication. Two U.S. Army officers with expertise in counterinsurgency operations, Lt. Col. John A. Nagl and Maj. Dwight E. Phillips, provided gracious and insightful comments. I also wish to acknowledge S. L. Dowdy, who developed the maps included in this volume; Beth F. MacKenzie, who assisted with the photographs and charts; and Michael R. Gill, who designed the cover and layout of the volume. Finally, I am grateful to Diane Sedore Arms and Alisa Robinson, who patiently and expertly shepherded the manuscript through its editing phase, and Anne Venzon, who created the index.

Washington, D.C.
30 October 2008

CHRISTOPHER N. KOONTZ

Enduring Voices



Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan
2003–2005



1

The U.S. Army and Afghanistan, 2001–2005

The armed services of the United States responded swiftly to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that occurred on 11 September 2001. These attacks originated in Afghanistan, where al Qaeda, a terrorist group led by Osama bin Laden, enjoyed the protection of the Taliban, the fundamentalist regime that had imposed its rigorous interpretation of Islamic law over most of the country. The initial efforts of the United States and its international Coalition allies to destroy al Qaeda and topple the Taliban produced impressive results, but they also served as the first shots in what would become a lengthy struggle to establish democracy in Afghanistan as an alternative to Islamic extremism. What began as a small-scale military effort soon became a complex campaign that coordinated the military and political contributions of the United States, the United Nations, and the Coalition to establish and develop the new Afghan government. This campaign required the U.S. Army to change its command structure and strategy in Afghanistan, resulting in the establishment of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan in October 2003 (*Map 1*).

In early 2002, General Tommy R. Franks, the commander of U.S. Central Command, established a new command to oversee operations in Afghanistan. General Franks and his staff were increasingly preoccupied with planning the impending invasion of Iraq. They hoped that a stronger command in Afghanistan would be able to maintain control of operations there while they devoted their attention to the preparation for the march to Baghdad. As things stood, the headquarters that commanded conventional forces in Afghanistan—Coalition Forces Land Component Command (Forward)—was small, in essence, the division tactical command post of the 10th Mountain Division (Light). The staff of the headquarters, established in December 2001 at Karshi Khanabad in Uzbekistan with slightly more than 150 soldiers, was responsible for controlling conventional operations, coordinating with Special Operations Forces, and providing logistical support in the Afghan theater. To create a more capable headquarters, in May 2002, General Franks established Combined Joint Task Force-180 at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and placed it in the charge of Lt. Gen. Dan K. McNeill, the commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps. General McNeill formed the new headquarters around that of his own corps, which deployed from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and augmented it with joint service and Coalition staff and liaison officers. With a larger and international staff, General Franks hoped that Combined Joint Task Force-180 would be better able than its smaller predecessor



MAP 1

to oversee tactical operations while taking control of an increasingly complex military and political situation.

General McNeill's appointment came at a time of uncertainty in Afghanistan. A group of prominent Afghan exiles had concluded negotiations among themselves in Bonn, Germany, and had formed on 5 December 2001 an interim government to be led by President Hamid Karzai. This first Bonn Agreement promised the promulgation of a new constitution for Afghanistan and gained United Nations support for the new government, but the country remained shattered by decades of conflict and divided by political, ethnic, and tribal dissension. In the years following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, no central political authority existed, and conflicts had erupted among factional warlords controlling

large militias. Many of these warlords perceived the new interim government as a threat to their ability to influence events in Afghanistan after the apparent defeat of the Taliban.

In addition to the menace of the warlords, the Taliban and its al Qaeda allies still presented a threat. A major offensive against them in southeastern Afghanistan, Operation ANACONDA, concluded on 19 March 2002 in a victory for Coalition forces and the Northern Alliance, a major Afghan militia allied with the Coalition. This operation smashed Taliban and al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan, rendering them incapable of operating in large formations. Since armed resistance to the Karzai government from various factions still existed, however, it was clear that the United States and its allies would have to remain in Afghanistan for an indefinite period. Even so, leaders in the administration of President George W. Bush and the Department of Defense believed that conditions in the country would soon allow a shift in emphasis from combat to stability and support operations, in which troops would perform peacekeeping duties while supporting civilian political leaders and relief workers.

Taking charge of Combined Joint Task Force-180, General McNeill reorganized the command structure of his subordinate elements. The units of Maj. Gen. Franklin L. Hagenbeck's 10th Mountain Division, which were already in Afghanistan, continued operations as Combined Task Force MOUNTAIN. The Special Operations Forces units hunting for fugitive al Qaeda and Taliban leaders—including bin Laden and Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban—fell under a new Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. The Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, comprising mostly civil affairs units, conducted humanitarian assistance missions.

Elements of the 82d Airborne Division began to arrive in theater in June 2002 to replace those of the 10th Mountain Division; in September, Maj. Gen. John R. Vines assumed command of Combined Task Force-82. Composed of 82d Airborne Division units already in theater and other units, this new task force replaced Combined Task Force MOUNTAIN as the main tactical headquarters subordinate to Combined Joint Task Force-180. As those changes continued, on 27 May 2003, General McNeill relinquished command of Combined Joint Task Force-180 to General Vines. The new commander's tenure was brief. He departed Afghanistan in October, along with the headquarters of the XVIII Airborne Corps, when the unit's yearlong tour of duty in Afghanistan ended.

The limited number of troops and amount of resources committed to Afghanistan by the Department of Defense and the constant rotation of units in and out of the area of operations made command of U.S. forces in Afghanistan difficult. The 10th Mountain Division, for example, began its second rotation in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in May 2003, when its division headquarters, aviation brigade, division support command, and other supporting units deployed along with its 1st and 2d Brigade Combat Teams. Because its division-level headquarters replaced a corps-level headquarters as the command element of Combined Joint Task Force-180, the division's staff did not have enough personnel or resources to conduct the complex operations of a combined joint task force with an almost nationwide area of responsibility. Complicating matters further, General Hagenbeck, who had commanded the division during its initial rotation in Afghanistan, changed commands shortly after the force's elements began to arrive in theater. His replacement, Brig. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, had, just weeks before, served as an assistant division commander of the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) during the invasion of Iraq.

In May 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld declared that major combat operations in Afghanistan had ended and that American forces would begin rebuilding Afghanistan while maintaining peace and order. Until early 2004, however, Combined Joint Task Force-180 forces continued to conduct major military operations.

Typically, these efforts involved a series of assaults conducted by heliborne company- or battalion-size units against small bands of insurgents, who invariably suffered defeat if they resisted. In August 2003, for example, Operation MOUNTAIN VIPER targeted enemy forces throughout Afghanistan with the aim of denying them sanctuary and destroying organized resistance. Operation MOUNTAIN RESOLVE followed in November and targeted Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin, a militia led by the Pashtun warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and other insurgent groups active in the mountainous region of the Hindu Kush near the border with Pakistan. The next month, by striking Taliban insurgents in Operation AVALANCHE, General Austin sought to set favorable conditions for the grand assembly, or *loya jirga*, that would meet in Kabul in January 2004 to frame a new constitution for Afghanistan. Operation MOUNTAIN BLIZZARD took place from January to March 2004, targeting enemy forces operating along the southern and southeastern border with Pakistan. A follow-on operation, MOUNTAIN STORM, began in March 2004. Newly arriving troops from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) continued this operation when the 10th Mountain Division began its phased deployment out of Afghanistan. All these operations inflicted heavy casualties on insurgents and resulted in the discovery of hundreds of caches of weapons and ammunition. When the first units of the Afghan National Army began to operate alongside U.S. and Coalition forces, they helped demonstrate early signs of the viability of Afghanistan's fledgling democratic government.

The Afghan National Army was one of the first institutions established by the interim Afghan government, and it would soon become an important element of U.S. strategy in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. At first, in early 2002, the training of the Afghan National Army was the responsibility of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) International Security Assistance Force. During this stage, British and Turkish troops formed the recruits into *kandaks*, battalion-sized units of approximately six hundred soldiers. In 2002, the ranks of the Afghan National Army numbered between two thousand and three thousand volunteers, and initial plans called for five *kandaks* to report to a corps-level headquarters based in Kabul. Combined Joint Task Force-180 received the mission to take control of the training process and assigned it to the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force. Later, the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan was established to oversee training and to coordinate security efforts in the theater of operations, and Maj. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry arrived in October 2002 as its commander. At that time, the office consisted of a small and underresourced cell in the U.S. Embassy in Kabul that supervised a French contingent of training officers, a group of British soldiers training noncommissioned officers, and a battalion from the 3d Special Forces Group instructing foot soldiers in infantry tactics. Plans called for the formation of a single corps, roughly comparable in size to a U.S. Army light division, that would command and control the Afghan National Army's *kandaks*.

Political pressures produced major changes in plans for the Afghan National Army. In December 2002, representatives of the Afghan government met with envoys from the United States, Russia, China, and several European and Central Asian states. This meeting resulted in a second Bonn Agreement, which included provisions for a stronger force to defend Afghanistan. Shortly thereafter, President Karzai announced a plan to build a larger, professional, and ethnically balanced army of sixty-seven thousand. Its expanded number of *kandaks* would be organized into five corps rather than one. This enlarged Afghan National Army, led by a Western-style General Staff, would be subordinate to a Ministry of Defense composed of three thousand civilians. To accommodate the new plans, in May 2003 Combined Joint Task Force-180 formed Task Force PHOENIX, composed of the headquarters of the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, and its subordinate 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, to assist with training.

In July 2003, General John P. Abizaid succeeded General Franks as commander of U.S. Central Command. General Abizaid wanted to create a coherent and cohesive strategy by synchronizing the ongoing effort to build the Afghan National Army with other international efforts to create a police and judiciary for the Afghan government; to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate armed factions and militias into civil society; and to confront the growing problem of narcotics production. Toward that end, he took steps to forge communications and working procedures between military commands and civilian agencies in Afghanistan. He also began work to establish a new command in Kabul, initially named Combined Forces Command-Central Asia, that would ensure better cooperation with the Army's international and interagency partners. These included the constitutional Afghan government, Coalition forces serving with Combined Joint Task Force-180, NATO's International Security Assistance Force, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and official and nongovernmental agencies and groups contributing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The command would also coordinate regional strategic partnerships and initiatives with the nations bordering Afghanistan and serve as a higher headquarters for Combined Joint Task Force-180. With these arrangements, Abizaid sought to divest the task force of its political and strategic responsibilities so it could concentrate on the supervision of military operations.

General Abizaid selected Maj. Gen. David W. Barno to lead the new command. General Barno had recently commanded the U.S. Army Training Center at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and was overseeing the training, in Taszar, Hungary, of the Free Iraqi Forces, a militia of expatriate Iraqis formed to assist the United States during the invasion of Iraq. Arriving in Afghanistan in early October 2003 for a six-week preliminary visit to evaluate the situation, General Barno realized almost immediately that the nation's problems posed a formidable political challenge. General Abizaid also understood this and was aware that the initial mandate of the new command to forge regional partnerships across Central Asia was exceedingly ambitious. As a result, he decided to narrow the new command's focus and to rename the organization Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. The command's staff originally consisted of a group of six officers hastily assembled from units already present in theater. Because of the shortage of readily available personnel and the lack of an official joint manning document enumerating its personnel requirements, it had to share staff officers with the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan and had to transfer others from Combined Joint Task Force-180. Ultimately, the requirements placed on General Barno's command forced the growth of his staff from an originally planned complement of approximately 100 to between 350 and 400 personnel, some of whom were joint service and Coalition members.

The unexpected insurgency that arose in Iraq after the fall of Baghdad diverted resources and attention from Afghanistan. As a result, General Barno believed that Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan was not a major priority for U.S. Central Command; Headquarters, Department of the Army; the Joint Staff; or the Department of Defense. In addition to the inadequate personnel and resources initially provided to establish it, General Barno received insufficient guidance from higher commanders and policymakers. Promoted to lieutenant general and taking formal command in late November 2003, he had to compose his own mission statement during his flight from the United States to Afghanistan.

General Barno's effort resulted in what became known as the "Five Pillars" strategy. Identifying the Afghan people as its center of gravity or decisive strategic focus, the approach sought to win their allegiance by taking five major actions: (1) defeating terrorist forces; (2) providing security for the population; (3) assigning "area ownership" to individual military units, each of which would remain in a single locality for its tour of duty to increase interactions with local Afghans; (4) performing reconstruction and encouraging good governance; and (5) obtaining support from Afghanistan's neighbors

and the international community. To build support for this approach, General Barno began a public communications campaign directed at the Afghan people and the international community. It emphasized the accomplishments of the Afghan government and its international allies.

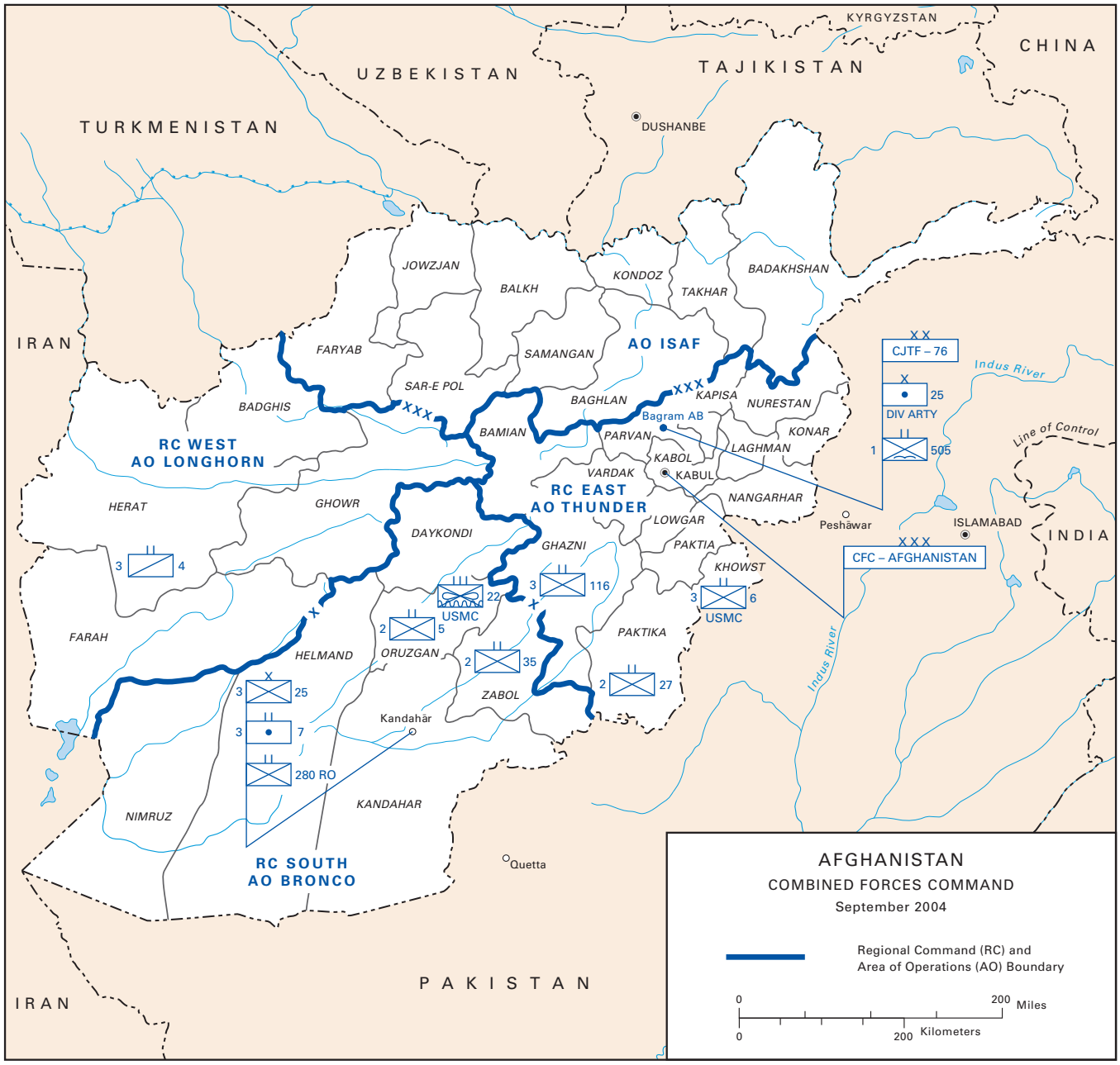
The year 2004 began with signs of hope for the campaign in Afghanistan. Although still facing staffing and manning problems, General Barno's command was crafting policies and practices to reorient its military efforts. Since his forces had produced an unbroken string of tactical victories, General Barno wanted to follow them with counterinsurgency and reconstruction operations, which he hoped would bring long-term strategic success. At the time, he had reasons to be optimistic. The *loya jirga*, or assembly, that began in January 2004 approved an Afghan constitution on 5 February that created a liberal legal and political framework for the fledgling government. Then, in April, the Afghan National Army demonstrated greater effectiveness than it had in the past when its troops quelled the revolt of militia in Faryab Province, located in the north of Afghanistan along the nation's border with Turkmenistan. Cooperation with Pakistan along Afghanistan's unstable southern border also seemed to be improving. Pakistani forces were engaging Taliban and other enemy forces in their own territory with greater frequency than before.

The situation in Afghanistan, however, was far from secure. The nation's president, Hamid Karzai, had an interim appointment to office, and it would take months to organize and carry out a national election. Determined to disrupt or prevent that election, enemy forces in Afghanistan were demonstrating an ability to learn from their tactical defeats. Recognizing the futility of trying to meet U.S. and allied troops in force-on-force engagements, they had begun to adopt tactics from the rapidly escalating insurgency in Iraq, including the use of improvised explosive devices. Meanwhile, although the region near the capital of Kabul was relatively safe because of the strong presence of NATO forces, local governance and security were still uncertain for most Afghans.

This lack of security made it difficult for the Afghan National Government and its allies to begin the task of rebuilding a nation still suffering from decades of Soviet occupation, civil war, and Taliban repression. To assist in rebuilding the nation, planners from U.S. Central Command, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development established provincial reconstruction teams. These groups were composed of small units of troops augmented with civilian reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, and governance experts. In early 2003, five of these teams began the monumental task of redeveloping Afghanistan's devastated political and economic infrastructure.

In August 2003, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson received word that his 25th Infantry Division (Light) would replace the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan in early 2004. As originally scheduled, the division would deploy its headquarters and its 2d and 3d Brigade Combat Teams, some of its aviation assets, and supporting units to Afghanistan in early 2004. The plan changed, however, after the division began its predeployment preparation and training exercises. The 2d Brigade Combat Team and an attack aviation battalion were ordered to deploy to Iraq in early January 2004, while the 25th Infantry Division Artillery and aviation and support brigades joined the 3d Brigade Combat Team on the deployment schedule for Afghanistan. The forces bound for Afghanistan began to deploy in February 2004, gradually replacing the 10th Mountain Division units through the following month. The formal transfer of authority between the two divisions took place on 15 April 2004.

The arrival of the 25th Infantry Division occasioned a change in nomenclature. To create a new name for the task force that was unconnected with particular units and to make a symbolic break with the past that would signify a new approach to military operations, General Barno redesignated Combined Joint Task Force-180 as Combined Joint Task



MAP 2

Force-76 (*Map 2*). The organization maintained its headquarters in Bagram but divided its area of responsibility into three major sectors, called regional commands, to accommodate General Barno's strategic pillar that specified area ownership by military units. The Headquarters, 3d Brigade Combat Team, took command of Regional Command South as Combined Task Force BRONCO. This force included two infantry battalions, a field artillery battalion, a Romanian army battalion, two Afghan National Army *kandaks*, and four provincial reconstruction teams. Combined Task Force THUNDER, under the command of the 25th Infantry Division Artillery, deployed to Regional Command East. It was composed of the 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry, augmented by the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division (Virginia National Guard); the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines; three *kandaks*;

and eight provincial reconstruction teams. The 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, two provincial reconstruction teams, and a number of *kandaks* formed the smaller Combined Task Force LONGHORN, which began operations in Regional Command West in June 2004. A multinational unit subordinate to Combined Joint Task Force-76, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, conducted special operations and civil affairs missions within the combined joint task force's area of responsibility but was not permanently assigned to a specific geographic area. At the tactical level, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan issued guidance to the regional command task forces that emphasized new elements of its counterinsurgency campaign. Units would conduct combined operations with Afghan government and military forces to demonstrate to the Afghan people that the Coalition was an ally of their government and not an occupation force. An information campaign to broadcast the achievements of the government and U.S. and allied contributions would underscore that point (*Chart 1*).

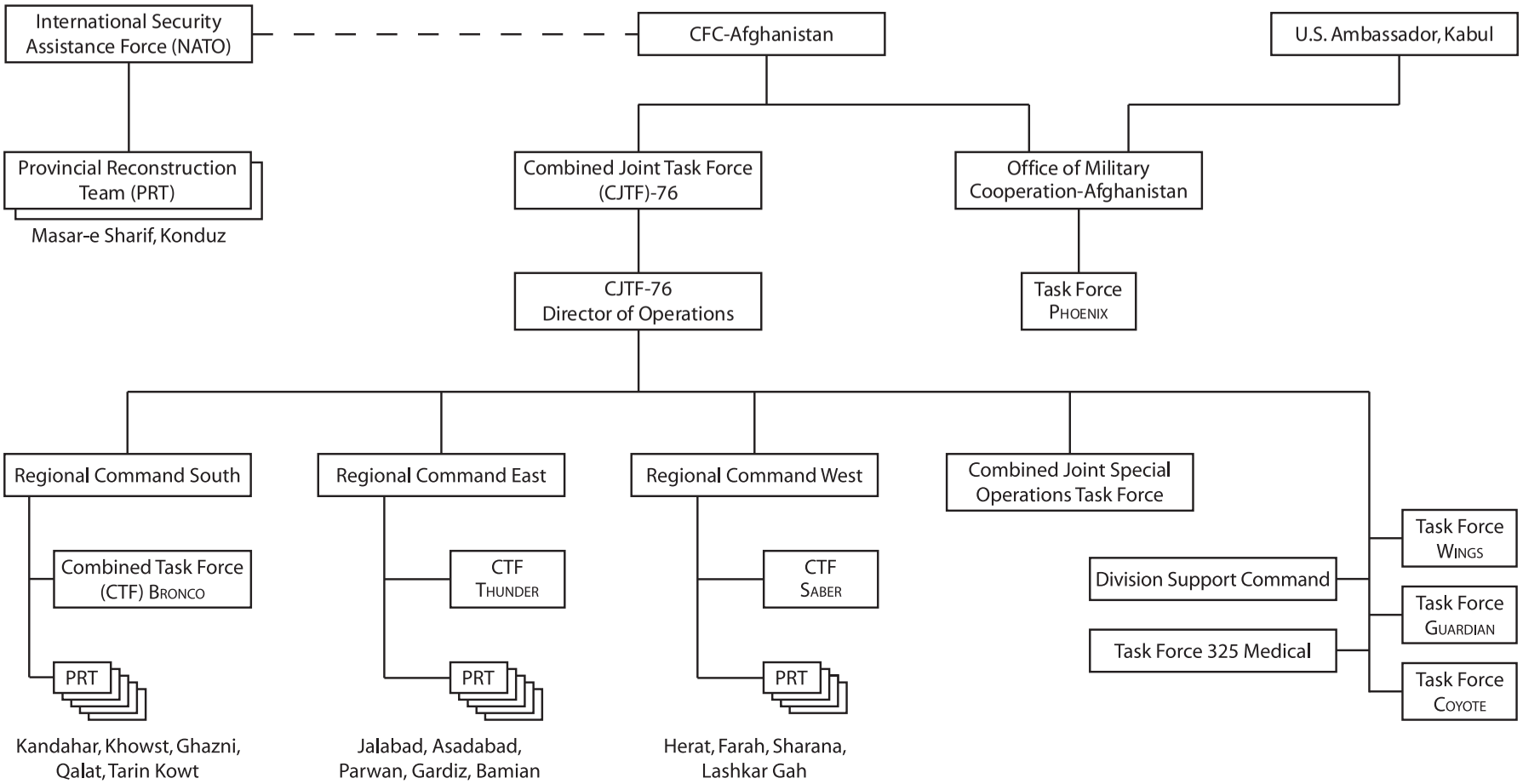
On arriving in March 2004, Combined Joint Task Force-76 continued Operation MOUNTAIN STORM, the anti-insurgent offensive begun by Combined Joint Task Force-180. Over the year that followed, it undertook two more major operations. The first of these, LIGHTNING RESOLVE, began in July 2004. Reinforced by the arrival of the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, the effort helped create a secure environment for the Afghan presidential election, which took place in October 2004. The U.S. Central Command also authorized the deployment of the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), which conducted missions in support of the election in Regional Command South, taking temporary control of the U.S. Army units in the area. The Afghan National Army contributed as well by providing security at thousands of voting and ballot-collection sites throughout the country.

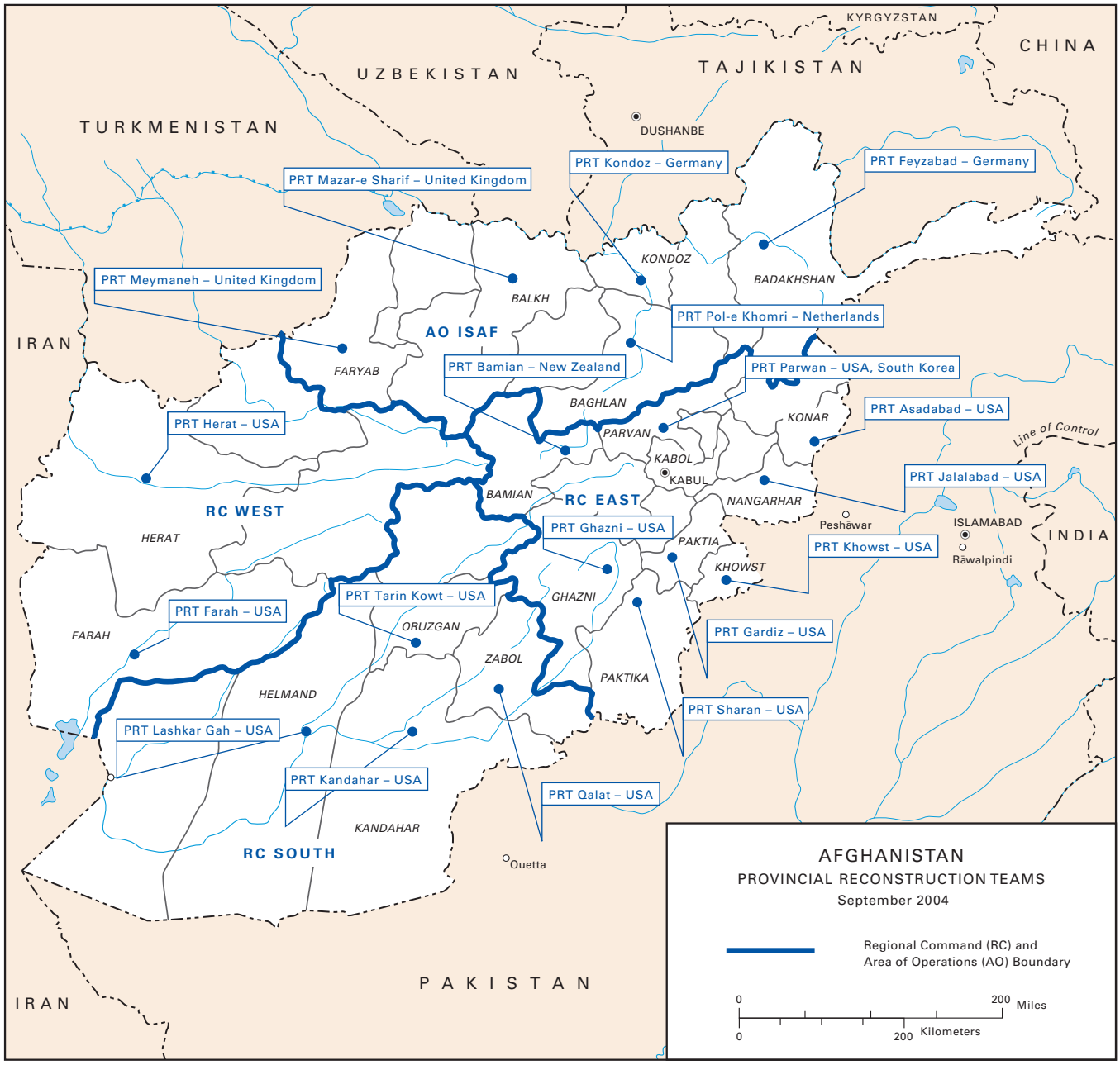
Beginning in December 2004, the second major operation, LIGHTNING FREEDOM, suppressed enemy forces along the southern border with Pakistan. Under General Barno's direction, Combined Joint Task Force-76 synchronized the effort with smaller operations that included Afghan political leaders and military units and with various allied reconstruction and relief efforts. In this way, General Barno could extend the reach of the Afghan government to demonstrate its growing experience and legitimacy to the Afghan people.

By the end of 2004, General Barno believed that the allies and the Afghan National Government had accomplished a great deal. President Karzai had been declared the winner of a successful election that had taken place with only scattered signs of armed opposition, and the number of provincial reconstruction teams had grown to nineteen, bringing increased security and humanitarian assistance to the countryside. Earlier in the year, General Barno dissolved the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, reassigned selected personnel to the provincial reconstruction teams, and increased the number of U.S. and allied personnel serving in the teams. Difficulties in finding civilian experts from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Agency for International Development posed a persistent problem. So, too, did the sometimes different operating approaches between U.S. and NATO forces. Overall, the United States and its allies continued their tactical dominance in engagements against increasingly adaptive insurgent forces, but a decisive military victory against them remained elusive (*Map 3*).

The Southern European Task Force (Airborne) replaced the 25th Infantry Division as the headquarters element of Combined Joint Task Force-76 in early 2005, with the official transfer of authority taking place on 15 March 2005. Its commander, Maj. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya, continued the counterinsurgency operations begun in the previous year. The 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade, arrived in February 2005 and began operations in Regional Command East. Supported by Afghan National Army troops, the

Chart 1—Combined Forces Command (CFC)-Afghanistan, October 2004





MAP 3

battalion conducted air assault operations against insurgents and performed civil assistance and reconstruction missions in the war-torn region along the border with Pakistan. The remainder of the 173d Airborne Brigade deployed to Regional Command South as Combined Task Force BAYONET, while control of Regional Command West transferred to the NATO International Security Assistance Force. In April 2005, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, joined Combined Joint Task Force-76 and assumed control of Regional Command East as Combined Task Force DEVIL. The last unit of the 25th Infantry Division remaining in Afghanistan, Combined Task Force THUNDER, transferred authority to Combined Task Force DEVIL on 1 June.

General Barno's tour of duty ended shortly after the Southern European Task Force arrived. On 3 May 2005, Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry assumed command of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan and began his second tour in Afghanistan. Under his leadership, the command concentrated its efforts on training the Afghan National Army to be the long-term guarantor of Afghan security. On 18 September 2005, the soldiers of Combined Joint Task Force-76 replicated the previous year's electoral success by ensuring a largely peaceful parliamentary election. The Southern European Task Force's tour of duty ended in February 2006, when the 10th Mountain Division began its third rotation in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

The United States and its international allies had accomplished a great deal by the end of 2005. General Barno had successfully established Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan and had put into place a strategy to address the poverty, lawlessness, and sense of despair that fueled the insurgency. The innovative provincial reconstruction teams increased the visibility of the Afghan government and helped spread hope to the countryside. The Afghan government and army seemed to be gaining credibility among the populace. Finally, it appeared that the Taliban had been weakened, and U.S. and allied forces continued their dominance over insurgent forces in battle. Nonetheless, the campaign in Afghanistan was far from over. The interviews included in this volume record not only the progress made by the end of General Barno's command but also the difficulties that remain to be overcome. Counterinsurgency warfare and nation building are painstaking and trying endeavors. These interviews document not only the frustrations and sacrifices but also the perseverance and achievement of those who served in Afghanistan.



2

Planning and Directing a Campaign: General Barno in Afghanistan

Lt. Gen. David W. Barno (USA, Ret.) *served as Commander, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, from October 2003 until May 2005. After returning from Afghanistan, he served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management before retiring from the Army in April 2006. He then became the Director of the National Defense University's Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. He was interviewed there on 3 May 2006, 21 November 2006, and 14 March 2007 by J. Patrick Hughes and Lisa Mundey, both of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. General Barno describes the inception and creation of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, stressing the shortages in personnel and expertise that plagued the command's staff for over a year. He mentions the command's purpose as a coordinator of military and political strategy and its relationships with subordinate military task forces and with military and civilian leaders at U.S. Central Command and the Department of Defense. General Barno, aware of the fact that the United States and the Coalition faced a counterinsurgency, altered military operations and tactics, increased the number of provincial reconstruction teams, disarmed and reconciled with Afghan warlords and militias, and engaged the government of Pakistan in an attempt to control the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.*

In another session, General Barno includes his thoughts on the command's Coalition personnel, especially its British members. General Barno describes his relationships with subordinate commanders, the different ways in which the 10th Mountain Division (Light), 25th Infantry Division (Light), and Southern European Task Force (Airborne) related to his command, and his philosophy on command and control. He discusses the rotation of units and the impact on operational continuity. Public affairs were important elements of the command's operations, and General Barno explains his thoughts about the media and the relationship between the State Department and Defense Department. General Barno discusses detainee operations and rules of engagement for civilians. General Barno concludes his interview with a discussion of best practices and prospects for success in Afghanistan.

DR. HUGHES: **Interviewing General David Barno in his office, third of May 2006, Dr. J. Patrick Hughes interviewing. Sir, you understand that this interview is to collect historical information and could be used for Army studies in the future?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Yes, I do.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. And you're sitting voluntarily. Sir, could you describe the process of assuming duties and command in Afghanistan?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I was actually sent out there on about the third of October 2003 in a temporary duty status from my position as the commander in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, with the expectation that I would be nominated and later confirmed to be the overall commander in Afghanistan. So, I spent my first roughly six weeks there as a two-star in the middle of a major transition of overall command in the headquarters in Afghanistan. We had been supporting in the effort there with the headquarters of the XVIII Airborne Corps throughout most of '02 and '03, and by October '03, that organization had left. The successor division headquarters, also known as CJTF-180 [Combined Joint Task Force-180], was being led by the commander of the 10th Mountain Division, then-Brig. Gen. Lloyd [J.] Austin, who had just arrived in late September. I came in just about a week or so after that. At that time, I was the only two-star American in the country, Lloyd being a one-star. We had a one-star acting head of the Office of Military Cooperation[-Afghanistan]. So, de facto, I became the officer in charge, I guess, of the effort until we got all of the other piece parts in place on confirmation and whatnot. When I came back to the States about six weeks later, and I was incidentally confirmed, about Thanksgiving time frame, as a three-star, my role was to stand up a new three-star headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, separate from the previous CJTF-180 headquarters, which was about a twenty-minute flight north at Bagram in an old Soviet airfield. So the intent behind this new arrangement was to both collocate the three-star headquarters with the U.S. Embassy effort, the other international embassies, the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] International Security Assistance Force [ISAF], and the Afghan government to better create stronger political-military ties, and also to attempt to separate an operational-regional-strategic level from a tactical level. About six to eight months earlier, we had had a separate three-star headquarters doing operational-level things, but we also had a two-star divisional headquarters, [Combined] Task Force-82, doing tactical things in the spring of '03. Those two organizations were then blended together and skinnied down, and the results of that effectively were that the organization became very tactical in its focus because it had one commander with one headquarters and one staff doing both tactical and operational and regional-strategic. CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] recognized that this wasn't the best solution by late summer of '03, so this new change was put in place to create an additional headquarters there above and beyond -180, which would remain tactical and do low-end operational. What would eventually become Combined

Forces Command-Afghanistan headquarters—the three-star headquarters—would do high-end operational and what I call regional or small theater-level strategic there in Afghanistan.

We started with six people in October of '03, and there wasn't too much of an expansion planned beyond that. There was no joint manning document [JMD]. There were no real facilities to put a headquarters into at that point in time. There wasn't any flow of people or resources to do that, so we slowly built by really raiding other organizations in the command in Afghanistan for people. We began to build the headquarters that, by the time I left in May of '05, had just over four hundred people in it, so a pretty dramatic change, but it was a joint and combined headquarters. It was stood up out of what I describe as the "instant coffee model"—just add water, and it springs out of the ground. . .it was an extremely painful and difficult process to build a joint manning document, and then even more difficult to get support from the services, who were very reluctant to provide any manpower to fill the joint manning document against its identified requirements, which were later validated by a joint group coming out of [U.S.] Joint Forces Command and each of the services' staffs. But that took over a year to have that process go from my arrival until there was full recognition that the size of the headquarters was as we described it in the joint manning document. So it was very challenging for a time while we executed operations, standing up the headquarters, building a staff, creating office space, and getting computers while we were fighting the war and building the political-military relations in the capital. So it was a pretty sporting time there, for the first three or four months at least.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What was your reporting chain?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: My boss was General John [P.] Abizaid and, above him, Secretary [of Defense Donald H.] Rumsfeld.

DR. HUGHES: **What guidance did you give? What was your mandate?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Did I give or did I receive?

DR. HUGHES: **Did you receive, and then how did you—**

LT. GEN. BARNO: My basic guidance from General Abizaid was to establish the headquarters in Kabul; to focus on the political-military conventions; to separate the operation in Bagram physically, geographically, from what we're going to be standing up in Kabul; and, essentially, take ownership of all of our operations there in Afghanistan; to build close relations with the Afghan government, with the embassy there; to try and work with the International Security Assistance Force to tighten that relationship up; and then look to how

we could improve our overall standing there, going into a critical year in 2004 with the Afghan constitution going through its creation in the winter of '03–'04, and then a massive unprecedented registration of the Afghan people for a presidential election in October '04, which was a major political event.

DR. HUGHES: **What was the situation on the ground when you got there—with the Afghan people, with the government, with our soldiers? How did you see the situation as you arrived?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I think there was some separateness, certainly between the U.S. Embassy's effort, which had been overseen by a chargé [d'affaires] since the summer of '03 for four or five months by the time I arrived. No ambassador had been there since about the middle of the summer in 2003. About six weeks after I arrived, Zal [Zalmay] Khalilzad arrived as the new U.S. ambassador. He had been there for some visits during my first month or so in country, and he and I really forged a very close personal relationship and a very close military-to-country team relationship that became, I think, the hallmark of our time over there. That was something that



General Barno and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld speak to troops of Combined Task Force BRONCO in Qalat,13 April 2005.

was not, I think, as good as it could have been when I arrived. I was out for a visit in September before I was deployed by General Abizaid on rather short notice. During my visit, I remember going to a meeting between a senior U.S. military official and a senior embassy official in which the military leader indicated he was going to brief the secretary of defense and President [Hamid] Karzai on our ground tactical plan, and the senior embassy official noted he'd be very interested in finding out what the heck our ground tactical plan was as well. So there was definitely friction, partly because of the geography of being an hour-and-fifteen-minute drive or a twenty-minute flight between the two, and there were almost two parallel universes there that were at work and trying to move forward on our efforts in Afghanistan. Again, relocating our headquarters to Kabul was part of a directed effort to try and help that a little bit.

I think from a countrywide situation, the northern half of the country was relatively quiet. The southern half of the country was, I think, still in the situation where there was a fair bit of Taliban violence, but not as substantial as there is today here in '06, obviously. And that the Taliban were pretty much still rocked back on their heels to some degree, although they were beginning to stretch their legs again a little bit in different parts of the country. The NATO forces were minimal at that time. There were about six thousand NATO International Security Assistance Forces in Kabul, only they weren't in any other part of the country. They were all in the Kabul metropolitan area. The U.S. forces were spread primarily in the east, the southeast, and the south of the country and, of course, at Bagram, which was to the north of the capital there. We had four provincial reconstruction teams [PRTs] under the U.S. and Coalition at that time, only two of which were U.S., and those were in Konduz, in north-central Afghanistan, and in Gardiz, just to the east of Kabul. Then there were two other PRTs, one manned by the British up in Mazar-e Sharif, and then one manned by the New Zealanders in Bamian. So that effort, which took on a lot of emphasis very soon from us, was in its very early stages at that point. The United Nations was operating around the country, much less so in the east and south, due to their perceptions of the security threat being fairly significant there.

The warlord efforts: There were still militia forces throughout the country that were remnants of the Northern Alliance times, and some of the traditional warlords. These were small armies, but many of these militias were armed with T62, T55 tanks, D30 howitzers, rocket launchers—very heavy weapons, so they weren't lightly armed forces, and they had the opportunity to create a lot of mischief, which they did on a number of occasions, including my first week or so there. So you had that threat that I just described as the centrifugal internal forces pulling Afghanistan apart

internally from warlords to tribal rivalries to poverty and corruption and crime, lack of education, lack of health care, poppy production, etc. The internal dynamics of the country were very challenging, and that was the environment in which we were conducting military operations. Our military operations were my central concern, almost exclusively on counterterrorist operations—read: hunting down remnants of the Taliban and al Qaeda and [Gulbuddin] Hekmatyar's group [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin, or HIG] in the mountains and trying to find the rest of these elements and conduct military operations against their mark. The PRT effort, which was more hearts and minds, was again in its very, very early stages. There was a relatively slow expansion plan on the books to grow the PRT effort over the next several months. We took a pretty significant relook at the whole internal strategy when I arrived at the first sixty days and made some pretty dramatic changes to it.

DR. HUGHES: **There must have been different challenges in dealing with al Qaeda, Taliban, the warlords. Could you elaborate on what the different challenges were?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, I think one of the things that we did is we assessed—we, with our six people initially, and then about twenty-five, thirty, of us—assessed the overall environment that we were operating in. We decided very early on that this wasn't simply a counterterrorist environment. This was really a classic counterinsurgency campaign. We began to build the structural support to execute a classic counterinsurgency campaign. We had no U.S. military doctrine whatsoever at that point in time by which to guide us. In fact, as I was searching about in my own memory for things I knew about counterinsurgency, I actually took to Afghanistan three West Point textbooks that I had as a cadet, dated 1974, Department of History, "Counter-Revolutionary Warfare," and they were up on my bookshelf in the embassy in Kabul, because we really had nothing in the way of doctrine. None of us really had much of any training on the counterinsurgency business, so we were kind of scraping on how to think about this. I had, fortunately, a number of British officers there during my time, including my J-5 [staff officer for plans], who had had quite a bit of counterinsurgency experience of their own. Between us, we were able to think through what were some of the basic premises that we needed to put in place to execute a counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan. Among those—and this was the strategy we moved to in November–December '03, January '04, across the country—we laid out what we called the "Five Pillar" campaign strategy for our counterinsurgency in Afghanistan with the people of Afghanistan as the center of gravity of that effort, ensuring that how they decided ultimately would determine the outcome of that campaign, which is a pretty typical counterinsurgency outlook…trying to attain unity of effort in the interagency and international

community in Afghanistan—not unity of command and not ownership or leadership of that effort, but just a unity of effort that moves all the players down the field and in the same direction, playing the same sport, as I used to say, but with different jerseys on.

We had basically five pillars of our effort, which was the counterterrorism, deny sanctuary, which was what had been the primary focus of effort until that point in time: to continue to put pressure on the enemy to keep offensive pressure on him. To build the Afghan security forces was the second pillar, which was the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, which was a program at about the sixty-five hundred mark for the army and probably a bit higher than that for the police, but it was a dysfunctional program on the police side. The third pillar was really to establish and create area ownership, which was a change in how our military units actually operated in Afghanistan. Prior to the fall of '03, units typically would operate out of bases, enclaves, small military locations—fortresses to a degree—where they would gather intelligence, plan and prepare operations, and then go up to some distant location, typically for two weeks, and conduct a main operation like a [Operation] Mountain Lion, whatever it might be to hunt down insurgents, and exploit intelligence they had gathered. Then they would return back to their base and do maintenance, debrief, plan for another operation, gather more intelligence, then go perhaps to a completely different province for another couple-week operation, kind of a "raid" strategy, if you will. We changed that to a different structure across the country, particularly in the south and the east, where we had most of our forces. Our units actually were assigned territory that they owned for their entire tour in Afghanistan. So if you were a battalion commander, you might have an area the size of Vermont or Rhode Island that would be your area of operation, but it was yours for your whole tour. You got to know the leaders, the mullahs, the key provincial officials; and your companies or platoons typically got areas they were assigned, became expert at, and worked closely with the key leadership in those areas. Again, basic counterinsurgency strategy, where units had territory for the first time since we'd been in Afghanistan, and they stayed with these areas for the whole time there. So that was a very important part of what we were trying to do.

We also worked on looking at how we could engage regional states [the fifth pillar]. That was part of my charter, particularly with the border of Pakistan. My area of operations assigned to me by General Abizaid had parts of four different countries in it: all of Afghanistan; all of Pakistan, except for Jammu and Kashmir; and the southern portions of Tajikistan; and Uzbekistan. So I had four countries that I interacted with military and

senior security leadership on, particularly with Pakistan, where I could typically travel once, twice a month, meet with their senior military, senior intelligence, sometimes foreign ministry officials, to be able to work on maintaining pressure on the Pakistani side of the border and being able to minimize any border conflicts between friendly forces on both sides of the border as well. As part of that, we also hosted a, about every two months, tripartite conference. That was a meeting of the senior security leadership of Afghanistan, typically represented by their national security adviser; Pakistan, usually with their director general of military operations; and then me as the U.S. leg of that. We would rotate that typically between Kabul, Islamabad, and Bagram every two months to talk about various issues between the countries and the war and the strategic security relationships there. So, that was important.

And then the fourth pillar there in between, I didn't mention, which was essentially to build good governance, extend the reach of the Afghan government out into the provinces, which we did primarily through our provincial reconstruction teams out there. The base of all this is information operations, trying to win a war of ideas and continue to get the messages out through the Afghan government to their people to assist them in building for the future. So, that was a broad lay-down of what the strategy was that we moved to, which was much more comprehensive and had a lot less kinetic and a lot less traditional military components than what we were doing prior to that time as we evolved into a new phase in Afghanistan in late '03.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that earlier: the militias and warlords. The warlords' power seemed to decrease over time. Is there a reason? I assume this was because of some actions?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, we actually worked closely with Ambassador Khalilzad and President Karzai during the course of late 2003 up in the northern part of the country, and then throughout 2004, to develop, essentially, measured, thought-out, controlled confrontations with different warlords, sometimes initiated by actions they took, but sometimes part of actions that were planned by the government to reduce their power base and to shift them into either peaceful positions inside the government as ministers, or to basically ship them out of power entirely. That happened through leveraging the use of Coalition military power, along with the Afghan National Army, which changed the dynamics in the north around Mazar-e Sharif. After some serious militia fighting and tank deployment and everything else in October and November of '03, we assisted in deploying the Afghan National Army up to separate those factions and to begin cantoning or locking up their heavy weapons systems, which we then spread to other parts of the country. The

same thing occurred in August of '04 out in Herat Province, where the warlord/governor out there, Ismail Khan, had a confrontation with another local warlord. We helped to deploy Afghan National Army forces out there, along with our Special Forces, to separate the factions and to begin disarming them, and to leverage some of the U.S. airpower and other assets to help send convincing messages to these folks. In August '04, when the vice president, Fahim Kahn (who was probably the most powerful warlord of the country in August of '04), was told by President Karzai that he would not be on the ticket with President Karzai in the upcoming election, we—myself and Lt. Gen. Rick [J.] Hillier, commander of the NATO ISAF forces—visited Fahim Kahn and explained to him some of the virtues of peaceful resolution of differences in a democracy.

And all these were backed up by implicit, sometimes explicit, use of both the Afghan National Army and Coalition military power, including airpower. So, that had a big influence, and by the time I left in May of '05, through the accumulation of all these efforts, the heavy weapons had been removed from all warlords across the entire country and cantoned and put under the control of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan government through a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration process there. By then, also, some of the most prominent warlords in the country had been removed from power or had been morphed into being elected as members of the parliament, being appointed as governors, being appointed as ministers in the government. There were some significant changes and the people of Afghanistan certainly saw the commotion. Well-known so-called warlords across the country were no longer holding positions of power in the country.

DR. HUGHES: **One of the questions which we've been asked is successes that the United States has had in working demobilization. Any details of how the militias were stood down? What lessons could be learned in that area?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I'm not sure if I'd put them in the lessons learned category. In reality, the DDR program itself—demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration program—which was administered by the United Nations in a kind of systematic way around the country with the Afghan police, Afghan army playing a role in that, but it was not something the U.S. military had a direct role in. What we did have direct role within, or a very strong indirect role, was when there were confrontations with warlords, militias, and warlords exerting their power in the face of the national government's efforts. We were key enablers in working with the Afghan government to bring the Afghan National Army to bear against these problem sets and to facilitate more rapid DDR in those areas, and in some cases through

some direct application of military power. The implied use of possible U.S. military power was required to help convince people to see the right thing to do.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. There was a lot of tension in the U.S. press on the search for Osama bin Laden and then the leadership element of al Qaeda and the Taliban. Did that occupy a lot of your command's attention? How did that play out?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: There's not too much I can talk about in an unclassified forum. We had a very focused, dedicated effort, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year, that worked on the high-value-target set that we were seeking to kill or capture, which certainly included bin Laden and [Ayman al-]Zawahiri, Mullah [Mohammad] Omar, [Gulbuddin] Hekmatyar, and a number of the other key lieutenants there. So, that effort was very closely held, but I stayed engaged with it. I got briefed on the status of it every day. It was a very well-coordinated, well-thought-out, ultimately, I think, well-resourced effort during my time there.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You mentioned operations in Mazar-e Sharif a couple of times. What unfolded there?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, there were a variety of different things at different times. The event that took place in late October–early November of '03 involved two different warlords of that area who were deploying their forces and beginning to shell each other and to have tanks out on the road shooting each other. We had a British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, and they took a very aggressive, active role to get out and to confront the leaders of the two factions and to threaten them and coerce them into pulling their troops back apart from each other. Afghan Minister of the Interior [Ali] Jalali, after a late-night meeting one night in the U.S. Embassy with the acting chargé at the time, David Sedney, myself, head of the UN effort in Afghanistan, which was Lakhdar Brahimi at that time, and probably a couple other key Afghan players—Minister Jalali flew up to Mazar-e Sharif with the delegation of the Afghan government to confront the offending parties there and to demand that they reposition themselves. He then began an actual cantonment of heavy weapons process. So, that action, which was precipitated by their violent confrontation, actually led, through some coercion and indirect threats on the part of the Coalition and by the Afghans' great work, great initiative by the Afghan government, to those warlords to be disarmed of all their heavy weapons within the following sixty to ninety days, which was a pretty big accomplishment. The British PRT played a hugely important role. It was a very small force acting very boldly. We have a picture in one of our briefs of them running up and down the road in their jeeps

between militia tanks that were out on the road. They did some terrific work, and it paid some big dividends.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that part of your mandate was to work with the embassy staff. How did the interagency—because I assume it was more than State and Defense in power—play out?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, it was interesting. I deliberately collocated myself at the U.S. Embassy compound. I lived on the compound in a half-trailer about fifty feet from the ambassador, who lived in a double-wide trailer. I had an office twenty feet from his office. I started my day there every day, and I finished my day there every night. I saw him in the morning at a country team meeting, which for a long time we did five days a week. I've been to over three hundred country team meetings, which is probably a "fatal dose" for a military guy over time. And then a smaller security core group meeting followed the meeting with the ambassador. So, I spent the first two hours or so of every day with the ambassador, and we were both very much in tune with what each other was doing, where we were going, and we had a common view of what our efforts were going to be. Typically, I would not infrequently see him in the evenings, too, when I was back there. So, that was a huge, powerful way to both ensure that our efforts were connected and mutually supporting but also that we sent the message that we had a single, unified U.S. effort there between the chief of mission and the commander of the military operations. I would supply a couple of things as well to help enable his effort.

We very early on, even with my very small staff—I took five field-grade officers and seconded them to the ambassador to use as strategic planners, led by a colonel, a very, very capable fellow, and we kept that staff refreshed as people rotated. So, he actually had five military planners to do whatever he needed them to do, and they ultimately were the authors of the mission performance plan for the embassy. They built metrics for the embassy to use in measuring performance in different areas across the country. They helped provide a backbone of some pretty well-trained manpower, because the embassy itself was a very, very, small, very junior organization with an extraordinarily limited number of people who did not have a tremendous amount of experience. It was arguably the second most important embassy effort in the world, and in a war zone. It was not resourced well during the entire time I was there. For example, the State Department international narcotics and law enforcement division [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, INL], which had responsibility in Afghanistan for building the police program, which was a program that would ultimately, supposedly put out sixty-five thousand Afghan police, also

had responsibility for the entire counternarcotics effort in Afghanistan. That dual-hatted effort, which was immense by any measure, was supervised, run, and executed by one person most of my time there, and it went up to a grand total of three people doing it by the time I left. So, that just was not humanly possible to have the kind of results that you would want with that kind of manning by the State Department. That was fairly endemic across all aspects of the embassy operation, so we tried to assist with that.

We developed a very comprehensive campaign plan that fit behind that Five Pillar strategy I described to you—vetted it, worked it, shopped it around the embassy, tweaked it—and eventually it became the embassy, the country team plan for our effort in Afghanistan. We spent a lot of time shopping that around the international community there, as well, and getting buy-in, consensus, and good ideas in terms of that. We tried to make our efforts as complementary as we could. I didn't work for the ambassador. He and I both recognized my chain of command went through General Abizaid, but we were absolutely partners and joined at the hip in our operation over there, and I think that's one of the more successful iterations we've had of military-chief of mission cooperation in a war zone in the last ten or fifteen years, or maybe even dating back to Vietnam.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You mentioned that you gave units geographical responsibility. That had to change their tactical deployment—obviously, their entire way of operating. Would you elaborate on that?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, I think the best shorthand model I've seen is probably the Marine three-block war model, where you've got the description of an organizational company or platoon, whether it be doing kinetic force-on-force fighting in the morning, be doing peacekeeping operations in the afternoon, and you could be doing relief handout and supply operations and taking care of babies and sick people in the evening. That was not uncommon for our units out there as we shifted to a more counterinsurgency-based model.

DR. HUGHES: **As opposed to counterterrorism.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Correct. As opposed to primarily focusing on kinetic operations to kill and capture bad guys wherever you find them. Now, they still did that, but they also did: "Okay, let's go to this village, do an assessment, and find out what the people's needs are, see what we can do." We had this Commander's Emergency Response Program, CERP, that was an incredibly powerful weapon in the toolbox to be able to deliver immediate aid, immediate dollars, through the Afghan government, typically local governments, to be able to trade quick-impact

projects on the ground: build wells, repair schools, buy schoolbooks, in some cases buy tractors or seed—a wide variety of things, only limited by the imagination of the commanders in the field. But again, this was new territory for them to be surfing on. They did a tremendous job, and I give huge credit to our young commanders and young noncommissioned officers and platoon leaders out there for innovation and adaptability. A good friend of mine was one of the battalion commanders down at the border of Pakistan. He had been one of my company commanders when I was a battalion commander. I went down to visit him a number of times, and one of the things I asked him in early '04 was: "Mike, we just changed your mission here from counterterrorism, which it was when you first got here last summer, to now a broad-based counterinsurgency approach. How did you get your platoon leaders and company commanders and first sergeants and platoon sergeants to be able to shift gears here midstream and go from one to the other?" He goes, "Easy, sir: booksamillion.com."

He had actually ordered books on the Internet from Afghanistan on counterinsurgency warfare, had them shipped into his units, had his people read them as they were in the middle of this fight. So, it was, again, tuning the car while you're going down the highway, great adaptability by our young soldiers. It's also pointing out the fact that we were pretty bankrupt in our doctrinal process as we went into this war, and the units just responded magnificently well, and my feedback was that they very much appreciated having the flexibility to use a broader "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency strategy as opposed to a more narrow focus, and they loved the areas of responsibility they were given, because then they became expert in those areas, and they were able to hand those areas off to other units who would come into the same area. Barring tactical emergencies, we would not move them around.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. There was a shift during your time there from a command of a coalition to an effort that included NATO. Could you describe that process and its unfolding?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, that's not really true. I think what actually occurred is this. When the Taliban fell and Kabul was abandoned by the Taliban in about November 2001, shortly thereafter, within sixty days, an International Security Assistance Force under UN authority deployed into Kabul, a force of several thousand, primarily Europeans, that began a series of six-month rotations. This was ISAF, International Security Assistance Force. That was a multinational, European-based effort, through '01 and '02; but in August of '03, NATO assumed the ISAF mission, and the International Security Assistance Force was still in Kabul, and that was about two months before I got there. So, when I arrived in October

of '03, it was now the NATO ISAF force, as opposed to just ISAF, and NATO had ownership of that program.

We were parallel structures in Afghanistan. There was no command relationship between the two of us. And again, as I mentioned, ISAF—NATO ISAF—when I arrived, only was located inside of Kabul. By January of '04, they had taken over the northeastern corner of the country. We had kind of chopped that territory out to them. Then they slowly began an expansion that included beginning to deploy some PRTs. They took over the American PRT at Konduz, and then by the summer of '04, began to spread out a little—across the north-center part of the country, including Mazar-e Sharif. By the time I left—shortly after I left, in May of '05—they spread all the way out to Herat and had the northern half of Afghanistan under their cognizance. But, again, there was no command relationship between the two forces. We reserved the right as Coalition forces to operate anywhere in the country. We advised the NATO force that we would coordinate and tell them what we were doing, but we did not seek permission. There was no command lash-up between the two. Now, our two headquarters were a quarter-mile apart. I saw the commander of ISAF all the time. There were four different ISAF commanders during my nineteen months in Afghanistan. They were on six-month tours. I was on a nineteen-month tour, as it turned out, and so there was a continual turnover of the ISAF commander, of the staff, of the ISAF units, and all of them would leave within about the same two-week period of time at the end of every six months. So, there was tremendous turnover, disruption, lack of continuity to some degree, and each commander—the four I knew were very, very capable officers, very capable commanders from four different countries, but as a metaphor, their direction for their command was each about forty-five degrees apart from the others, so you had a bit of a constant zigzag in terms of where they were going in Afghanistan, which made things fairly interesting. But, that said, we had a very good collaborative, cooperative relationship. We kept each other informed on what we were doing. But now, what's happened since then and what will happen later this year [2006], is much different in that there's going to be a combined command that unifies essentially NATO and the Coalition into a single command structure, but that won't occur until quite a bit later here this year—late '06 or perhaps early '07.

DR. HUGHES: **I was reading Minister Jalali's article in *Parameters*, where he had indicated that one of the problems with the different national contingents was that they were under constraints from their own governments as to what they got involved in, what they concerned themselves with. Was that your experience?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Yes, absolutely. I think each country had a different approach. NATO had some significant challenges trying to reconcile and harmonize these approaches, and it ranged from taking a PRT that might be eighty to one hundred when the U.S. ran it to making it four hundred to six hundred when a NATO country came in, and having a hospital with it and having all kinds of other things with it because of national concerns about casualties. We had one instance where a certain NATO PRT had an improvised explosive device [IED] that they discovered outside their front gate. They refused to leave their compound until a U.S. unit came in and disarmed the device. So, there were some real issues related to what their nations would allow them to do. A lot of them have smoothed out here allegedly with the upcoming rotations, because General [USMC James L.] Jones has worked very hard with the Europeans to remove all national caveats, supposedly. I hope that's the case with this, now that the rotations are coming up here. But that was a big challenge because each country had sometimes a substantially different take on what they could and could not do. When the ISAF troop rotations took place, one nation that might be operating in one area would be replaced by a completely different nation, and that was not true with PRTs. PRTs stayed under the national umbrella during the time that they remained there, at least during my time. But with caveats and what people could and couldn't do, it was difficult. NATO also had a lot of difficulty in marshaling the required resources, for both soldiers and aircraft and other high-dollar-value, high-cost items out there. They had to generate forces for every six-month rotation, and it took tremendous amounts of effort by senior leaders to get that done. They were a great partner there in Afghanistan, but they had to get themselves there, become established; and then to continue to sustain those rotations took immense amounts of effort, in my observation.

DR. HUGHES: **You've repeatedly mentioned the provincial reconstruction teams. Was there a set model? It sounds like there were different things going on with the different PRTs.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, each PRT that was under the Coalition, at least—and when I first got there, there were only Coalition PRTs ("Coalition" meaning U.S. and typically twenty and twenty-one friends and allies that are working with us under OEF rules)—when I got there, we had about fourteen thousand in the Coalition under what would become CFC-Afghanistan [Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan]. By the time I left, we had about twenty thousand to twenty-one thousand, and that included about sixteen hundred to eighteen hundred Coalition partners, with the remainder being Americans, which is important to recognize. We made a major push to expand PRTs rapidly as part of our counterinsurgency

strategy. With only four there in the fall of 2003 as we were going into the spring, we realized that PRTs were a key way that we would exert influence in parts of the country where there was no U.S. or Coalition presence. So, we said, "We're going to triple the number of PRTs inside of six months," and by spring of '04, we actually had deployed a total of twelve PRTs out in the country as we were going into the elections that spring. That was a huge event, and we deployed them all into contentious areas in the south and east of the country. We basically disassembled the CJCMOTF [Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force] headquarters, which was where a majority of the civil affairs people in the country were located inside the fence at Bagram. We dispersed them out in the PRTs around the country. We had to cannibalize our own organizations to generate that much PRT power that rapidly because we couldn't get it pushed to us from the U.S. in any way, most of these folks being reservists to start with. So, we basically took apart the headquarters and put it all out on the field. That had a huge positive effect on the elections and the voter registration in the spring of '04.

The registration process, the benchmark for success for that effort, was set at about 5.5 million. If we got that many people registered working with the United Nations, it would be deemed a success, and by the time registration was over, 10.5 million Afghans had registered, and in the fall, 8.5 million came out to vote. The final slate included eighteen candidates for president. President Karzai won with about 55 percent of the vote, but this was a very, very interesting process that few people thought was going to be accomplished without being disrupted by terrorist organizations.

DR. HUGHES: **You had the establishment of the constitution, the registration, the presidential election—all took place during your tour. That had to be not only a major focus for you, but a major success for the efforts there.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, I think—my sense is—I kind of look back on '04, which I thought was a watershed year for Afghanistan. I think the terrorists also recognized that it was a watershed year of success for President Karzai and the Afghan people and the Afghan government, and that they were going to have to do something—they, the terrorists—had to do something dramatically different in 2005 to be perceived as remaining a credible force in the country. They really got, in a lot of ways, shut out on the scoreboard in 2004, not through any effort of mine, for sure, but as all the events that accumulated took place. And there were successes across the board, as we kind of walked through that. The losers on all of those efforts were the Taliban, al Qaeda, and Hekmatyar's group, Hezb i Islami. I think they very

clearly understood that if they were going to have any future whatsoever, they were going to have to do some very different things in '05 and '06. You know, not being plugged into the intelligence anymore, my sense is that, as I read the newspaper, that a lot of the uptick in violence and some of the new tactics that they appear to be using is a result of that assessment, but that's speculation on my part.

DR. HUGHES: **You have estimated that opium production was about 50 percent of the economy.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Not my estimates, but I think those were common figures of the UN.

DR. HUGHES: **Yes, I think that was in one of the interviews, but it might not have been you that made that comment. But did we become involved in counternarcotics? You mentioned the embassy staff's responsibility, but …**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, the Coalition military—we didn't take any ownership of the counternarcotics fight, other than to enable the Afghans where we could be a bit more effective on that. One of the challenges I had was sorting out early on how many different disparate efforts we could take on with our military force over there. You know, one of the little-known facts on Afghanistan is that Afghanistan, as a country, is about 40 percent larger than Iraq, and it has about 4 million more people than Iraq, but our force levels were obviously about 20 percent of what we had in Iraq with about twenty thousand troops. So, we had to be very judicious about how we metered or how we tapped out our military effort where we used those silver bullets of our military capability. And so, as we looked across '04, you know, as to be expected, there were almost an infinite number of different things that people wanted us to do. So, my basic approach to that was that we were going to sequence our efforts in Afghanistan and not attempt to do them all in '04, and I tried that. Instead of having a win, a win, a loss, then a win and then two losses, and a win and a loss, our goal was to have a sequence of wins, that everything we did, we'd build a win on a win on a win on a win so that you'd have an unbroken series of positive outcomes, which would build your credibility and your momentum. So, I intentionally took any direct military role—and the policy folks supported this back here in D.C.—any direct military role in the counternarcotics right off the plate, because I thought that would be a distraction for us in '04, especially with the elections. We tried to be helpful where we could. We shared intelligence. We actually built an intelligence-sharing cell for counternarcotics before I left, and we were growing our efforts in late '04 to '05, but we were very focused. The main effort I assigned in writing to our military organization, our military units, in 2004 was: "Set conditions for a successful Afghan presidential election."

That was the military main effort for 2004. All of our various undertakings were designed to serve that purpose for us.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you and your command have a role in the building of both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police force?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We did in the case of the army, but not the police. The State Department [Bureau of] International Narcotics and Law Enforcement [Affairs], INL, had the police, and they were doing it through a contract with a U.S. firm. On the army side, we owned that lock, stock, and barrel through the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, OMC-A, who worked dual-hat both for me and the ambassador, and that was a pretty successful effort. We had a contract as well that did great work for us, in our case in helping to rebuild the Afghan Ministry of Defense, help us go through this selection process with the Afghans for who should be at what level and how they should be selected and trained. Then we had really a multinational effort to train the Afghan National Army that involved everyone from the French and the British and the Mongolians, who came in for some specialized training and which collectively really helped build a very well disciplined, very popular, very diverse force with ethnic representation across the country right down to the squad level. So, they were a very professional outfit that got great reviews everywhere they went in the country, and I was very impressed with them. They would not shy from a fight. You know, there were some of our allies who said the Afghans are genetically programmed to be warriors, which you can take or leave, but they were pretty tough, pretty effective, and did some great work out there. So that was our program.

We made the argument that we did not agree with the police program. I did not feel that the police program was a well-resourced, well-thought-out, effectively managed program; in part because of the lack of people involved at the supervisory levels, as I mentioned. So we made a pitch in late '04 that "Someone needs to take over the police program" (it didn't have to be the military) "and here are the resources that would be required to go with that. Here's how the program ought to be built differently from the way it is built, and here's how you would lay that all out and package that all up." We designed this and briefed it to the secretary of defense over a couple of months. And, ultimately, he was able to convince the secretary of state to sign off on that program. By about February-March of '05 decisions were made to shift that under military purview, and by summer '05, shortly after I left, the military took that over and is now running that program, as well, with considerably more resources and more supervisory support. Now, instead of an Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, which just did the Afghan army, it's Office

of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan that does army and police. The State Department is very much a part of that effort—the deputy OMC chief is from the State Department office. So—from what I'm hearing, at least—it's on the road to success, and it's being resourced directly, because the police are, in my judgment, probably more important long term in a counterinsurgency campaign than the military is. But we had to focus, obviously, because of how the lines were drawn initially, on the army, because that's what we had under our wing.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You indicated that you had a regional focus and met regularly with the Pakistanis. How did that unfold, particularly on that critical Afghani-Pakistani border area?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, we had a couple levels of that. You know, the tripartite committee, as it was called, met about every sixty days. That was designed to look at tactical coordination. I tried to move it from just tactical issues. It was originally created before I arrived. I think August of '03 was the first meeting, and it was really stood up because, if what I was told was correct, because of a border shootout that involved a blue-on-blue–type incident between either U.S. or Afghan forces and Pakistanis that resulted in a Pakistani soldier being killed. So it was really designed to meet that immediate need to de-conflict issues on the border at kind of a tactical-level approach. I tried to move it from tactical level to the strategic level of security issues on the border writ large between the two countries, and starting to get them to talk more about their common security interests. At the same time, we spun off a border subcommittee that would continue to work border issues; we spun off a military intelligence subcommittee that helped to share intelligence; and we were beginning to work toward spinning off—and I think we actually handed this over to State—a counternarcotics subcommittee, because we thought that was an important issue for the two countries to work together on. But my goal in that was to try and use it as a confidence-building measure and relationship-building mechanism between the Afghans and the Pakistanis as much as it was to get any pragmatic work done. So, we would meet. We would typically brief what each of the organizations was doing. We'd get updates on the subcommittee meetings, and the subcommittees would actually go on visits which brought to the border, typically, a brigadier with each delegation to look at a particularly difficult area of the border—you know, work through how procedures might be improved in that area of the border, and then go to a different area next time. They did that about every month or so. That also resulted in us getting radios provided to the Pakistanis and shared frequencies and call signs so units could talk to each other on both sides of the border. U.S. units and Pakistani units could share information on conflicts, where the enemy was

using the border against both sides, and they actually were able, in one case, to have the Pakistanis direct U.S. artillery fire into the edge of the Pakistani border area and kill terrorists that were operating in between two sets of forces there. So those were very productive sessions. Again, they built a lot of confidence between the forces, as well. That enabled us to help provide information to the Pakistanis that they needed on things from IEDs to communications to shared intelligence. So it was, I think, a very successful effort that paid a lot of dividends other than just the pragmatic dividends.

DR. HUGHES: **The impression is that the Pakistani government was becoming a presence in areas of their own country that they hadn't been much of a national presence in before.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Absolutely. By the spring of '04, they moved tens of thousands of troops into South Waziristan, where they had never had a Pakistani military before in their history, since the country was stood up in 1947. And so that was an area where there was an indication of a tremendous amount of terrorist activity—al Qaeda, Taliban activity, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan activity. The Pakistanis were in there in force, and they had a major campaign in South Waziristan in spring and summer of '04 that I think helped contribute to some of the peaceful outcomes of the presidential election that the Afghans held that fall. So, yes, that was a little-known fact that the Pakistanis really hadn't operated in that area before, really hadn't been out there other than a very thin veneer of Frontier Corps troops out on the very edge of the border. Most of them were local soldiers. So, that was a huge undertaking. They took a lot of casualties. They had a lot of fights. They were using airpower inside their country for the first time, tactical airpower with both helicopters and jets, and so there were some big fights there in the spring and summer of '04 time frame.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Were there any issues in western Afghanistan near the Iranian border?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I'm not sure what "issues" would be defined as. I guess the issues we had were internal to Afghanistan, obviously from a standpoint of primarily warlord fighting out there. In August of '04, there was some pretty significant what we call green-on-green, Afghan-on-Afghan, warlord fighting between the forces of Ismail Khan, who at that time still had tanks and artillery, and forces of Amanullah Khan, a warlord to the south of there, who was one of his great rivals. And there was a fight going on around the Shindand Airfield, which was one of the biggest Soviet bases in years past. We, together with the Afghan government … the Afghan government decided that they wanted to take some strong measures to intervene in that conflict and put it to rest. So, we facilitated moving Afghan National Army troops

out to Shindand Airfield, taking control of the airfield with U.S. Special Forces, and then set up as a buffer between the two warring forces and began to demobilize the two forces, which was a very successful program. Ultimately, Ismail Khan, who was the governor of Herat, had all of his tanks surrendered and cantoned, and he eventually came back to be a minister of the government and was doing quite a good job by the time I left there. So, it really defused that whole situation out there in that part of the country, through the use of Afghan National Army forces at the forefront, but also through the use of our own military capabilities, our enablers, especially our air transport capability, our attack helicopter and scout helicopter capability, our rotary-wing movement capability, and our airpower. We had a lot of ability with a small number of troops—SF [Special Forces], cavalry forces we put out there to have a tremendously broad influence across that part of the country. We had a U.S. air cavalry squadron out there for a couple of months who did some great work.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. In the interview you gave with the press just after you got back, you indicated that there were some advantages in having a light footprint—that is, fewer visible soldiers in country. Would you please elaborate on your thoughts there?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, it was a fact-of-life issue as well, as we had twenty thousand or less troops there covering a huge amount of territory, so we had to operate in a way that leveraged Afghan forces as much as possible, and also recognize the fact that we didn't have an immense number of forces to cover every bit of the territory. So, we operated at a fairly low profile where, I think, in most cases, we were able to leverage our airpower very effectively. One of the things I've mentioned in other interviews is that we had the ability to operate throughout the country, essentially at platoon level, because we had pretty widespread knowledge that twenty minutes away from any contact there would be airpower overhead. I can get A–10s. I can get F–16s out there. I can get attack helicopters out there. So, our forces could operate fairly small-sized units on remote patrols for multiple days and have the confidence that if they got into a fight, they'd have very quick reactions from reinforcing forces and from tactical airpower, and they'd be able to deliver some ordnance on the target.

So, what that portrayed to the Afghans, though, is that you didn't have battalions of U.S. troops typically tromping around. You had small units coming out. They were operating and getting face to face with the Afghans; they were interacting with the local people; they were having tea with the mullahs; they were meeting with the elders; and we had the PRTs—which, again, were a very small footprint. PRTs were eighty to one hundred soldiers, mostly

all U.S. military or Coalition military; always an Afghan Ministry of Interior official as part of the PRT; always a Department of State official; typically a USAID [United States Agency for International Development] official there; sometimes a U.S. agricultural [United States Department of Agriculture] official. But operating in a provincial capital, which is typically quite a small place, a long ways from any other American military power, unless it was really tough country; that projected a lot of confidence out there again that we could reinforce quickly. And so we talked "light footprint," which made in some ways virtue of necessity.

I've also been asked, "Did you have enough troops? Could you have used more troops? etc." I was very comfortable with the troops I got, and I asked for troops when I needed them. I asked for additional troops for the '04 election. I got a battalion from the 82d [Airborne Division] for a month and a half, which was just right at the right place at the right time. I got a marine expeditionary unit in at the spring of '04 for about seven or eight weeks. They ran some good disruptive operations up in Oruzgan Province. So, I had a lot of flexibility. General Abizaid responded very well to requests when I made a good case for them to bring in additional forces for specific operations for specific reasons. So, I felt very comfortable having that many forces in country and being able to accomplish the mission in the environment we had there—a very different environment, obviously, than Iraq, radically different. I think as an order of magnitude the number of attacks, typically when I was there, was about one-tenth the number of attacks I recall seeing in Iraq on a given day in the same period of time. I don't know if that's true or different or the same or anything else today, but when I was there, that was about the order of magnitude in terms of what we were dealing with for violence.

DR. HUGHES: **What were the big decisions you had to make during your tour there?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I think the first one was establishing what strategy was going to be and what kind of a campaign we were fighting. There was some dispute when I arrived—talking to subordinate units about whether this was Phase III of the operation or Phase IV of the operation, even though there had been a decision made in May of '03 that this was now a Phase IV operation in Afghanistan and in Iraq. So, I thought that was an interesting insight on some degree of confusion existing in terms of what we were doing and why and what our approach was. So, being able to develop and then get out and explain—and I went down to units all the way to battalion level and talked to senior leaders, company commanders, and CSMs [command sergeants major] at least, across the force, to include when we rotated new units in—to talk about the counterinsurgency strategy

and to make sure they understood what was different about Afghanistan from anywhere else they may or may not have been, and what our approach was going to be; and that paid huge dividends. I got some great feedback. One of the nicer compliments I got from a retired four-star who had been visiting and had been out to see our units. He was taken aback to hear the exact same description of what our strategy was from platoon level all the way up to three-star command, which I felt very good about. So, I think we gave clear guidance out to our folks, and they embraced it, and they ran with the ball out there and made it happen. So, that's exactly what you want to happen. But that was probably one of the biggest decisions we had to make.

There were a number of other operational-level decisions in terms of how do you react to a situation developing in the country with warlords. A lot of the difficult calls were made on green-on-green–type situations and how the Afghan government might be moving ahead on its own and how to interact with them. We established what was called a "dual-key" system for use of the Afghan National Army, which was that both the Afghans and the U.S. had to "turn the key" in order to put the Afghan army into an operation.

General Barno meets with soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry, in Paktia Province, 5 October 2004.



Otherwise, there were cases where the Afghan army would make its own call and go out and get into a fight somewhere that we couldn't support them or didn't make sense in the broader strategy. So, that was an interesting little innovation we had.

One of the other difficult decisions, I think, was to look at how we were going to modify our operations to take into account the growing Afghan sovereignty over our time there. I met with President Karzai on a pretty regular basis, ranging from three times a week to once in three weeks. It varied. I'd get called in about once a quarter, and typically there'd be a sizable group of Afghans, sometimes elders from the provinces and members of the cabinet, and most of the cabinet in there, to hear from them all the things that the Americans were doing that were getting people upset across the country. As a result of one of those, I promised President Karzai I'd come back to him in a month or so, and I'd kind of lay out how we were going to tweak our operations to make them more attuned to the cultural sensitivities inside Afghanistan. From that, we developed something called the Fifteen Points, which was a layout of basic procedures American units would take, Coalition units would take, to enable us to continue our operations, but do them in ways with slight modifications to acknowledge what the Afghan concerns were; to put an Afghan face on the operation; to try and always have Afghan police or Afghan National Army forward in our operations; to think about how much we were doing at night, if we didn't have to, based on a threat situation; to see how we were dealing with women and making sure—that was a hugely sensitive point—how we were perceived in interacting with Afghan women, which is a true sensitivity across the region from my current job, as well. So, I mean, those were things that were not taught at [Fort] Leavenworth.

DR. HUGHES: **Would you explain what exactly was the sensitivity?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: In the Afghan culture—and typically throughout much of the Islamic world, at least in conservative parts of the Islamic world—there is great sensitivity to women being seen by outsiders. In Afghanistan, if you go to any home, even in the city, you'll find that there is a wall around the home. If an Afghan goes to build a home somewhere out in the middle of the country, the first thing they will do, inevitably, is they'll build a wall around what's going to be their home so that they can have their women work shielded from the outside, and then they'll build their house. They'll sleep on the ground inside the wall until the house is built. The reason for that is in the Afghan culture, it's a great affront for outsiders to see Afghan women. We had one instance, I recall, where a woman died in childbirth because the men in that family would not allow an American male medic to touch the woman, to come near the woman. So,

there's a huge, huge cultural sensitivity, incomprehensible to Americans, to any perception that your women have been seen, which in some ways is viewed as being violated by other men. In our operations, day or night, when we would go into a walled compound (which they all are), one of the things we would normally do from a force protection standpoint is separate the men from the women. That created great angst among the Afghans. So, what they asked us to do, and what we eventually worked toward, is either we'd have a woman soldier there with the women, so at no time would the Afghan women be with American soldiers without Afghan men there, or we would get one of the elders to be with the Afghan women while they were separated from their men. The women were considered soiled after that, and it was a great offense to the family that the women had been separated from the men. It's a very different cultural context than what we think about here in the United States. So, those were things that the average American is not going to bring to the fight when he comes to Afghanistan. I think we've gotten smarter over the last couple of years, and we're starting to introduce that as a basic understanding that all soldiers have about the culture. That was a huge issue in Afghanistan in how we were perceived—and for the best of reasons—to be treating women in the country. Now, I've seen in the last month videos on the Islamic Web sites or postings showing American soldiers searching women in Iraq. That's hugely offensive to the Muslim world. To the American, the picture looks like, yes, they've got the women separated off, and they look like they're treating them with respect; to many people in the Muslim world, that's a huge cultural offense. So, those types of issues are very, very important in that culture. We took some time to try to work our military operations to accommodate that, because, again, if your center of gravity is the Afghan people, if what you're doing on these raid operations or these missions is offending more of the Afghan people than you're moving over to your side, you're losing ground, you're not gaining ground. So, in the counterinsurgency, those parts are incredibly important.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What would you consider were the biggest challenges that you faced over there?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I think being able to set our program up for long-term success was probably one of the biggest challenges, with the amount of turnover to maintain continuity in the overall effort, and to build a set of relationships and a mutual understanding of the road map forward that could be sustained from unit to unit, commander to commander, ambassador to ambassador, because the Afghans remain the constant through all those things. In retrospect, I was there for nineteen months, which is considered to be a long tour. That's probably not nearly enough in terms of how long we keep commanders there. Once you build

those relationships, those carry immense weight in that part of the world, probably a lot more than they do over here, where we're kind of, in some ways, in a transitory culture. In that culture, the trust and confidence that you have in the individual is paramount. I remember many occasions where we were rotating units, and the local officials would have incredible angst at a change-out of the battalion commander. And the commander would have to introduce his successor and talk about how much he trusted him and talk about how their kids had played together to convince—and even that was difficult to do—to convince the local elders and the officials that this person was the trustworthy descendant of the person who was leaving. I saw that with Ambassador Khalilzad after he left. There was great angst over there. In a culture that places huge value on interpersonal relations, trying to sustain the direction and the airspeed and altitude, if you will, of an effort that's going to rotate Americans through over and over and over again, I think strategically it's probably one of our biggest challenges to build that confidence that we're going to stay there for the long haul and that we're going to have consistent policies and directions.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You have discussed a number of things that obviously went very successfully. What would you consider the major achievements of your tour?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, I think you've cited several of them. In my view, the following: the successful passage of the Afghan constitution in January of 2004, the most moderate Muslim constitution in that part of the world; the great success of the voter registration program, the first of its kind in Afghanistan, in the spring and summer of '04, with 10.5 million Afghans registering to vote in their first-ever presidential election; and the election itself in the fall of '04, with 8.5 million Afghans coming out to vote despite lots of threats on their lives by the Taliban and al Qaeda; and the peaceful presidential inauguration in December of '04. Those were probably the highlights of that year which were very, very significant. There have been a number of achievements since that time—the parliamentary election in '05, for one—but those are probably the most important things I think we accomplished, all of which, interestingly enough, are in the political dimension. Success, in my view, in that type of counterinsurgency campaign, is going to come through political successes of the host nation government, not through some degree of military success. So, there was a great deal of confidence built in the Afghan people in their own future during that year, because they were able to take control of their future, vote for their future, make decisions about their own future. They got continued, very strong international support during that time.

One of the things I regularly tell people is that the Afghans' biggest concern is not Americans and Westerners overstaying their welcome; it's the fear of abandonment. We were confronted regularly with questions about "You're not going to abandon us again, are you?" because their perception was that we walked away from them lock, stock, and barrel after the Soviet war was over with, and that plunged them into a period of tremendous internal civil war, destruction, and devastation. They're coming out of a 25-year civil war and the war between the Soviets and themselves, and that just devastated the entire country, so they are sick and tired of fighting, and they want international help to stay there to help them get back on their feet. So, we're in a tremendous positional advantage if we can maintain our effort over there.

I also offer the return on investment for the United States. With twenty thousand troops there and about $10 billion to $12 billion a year of investment, that's less than 2 percent of our defense budget for a year and less than 2 percent of our military manpower for a year. For that, we are in a regional position of great influence through Central Asia with people who want us there for the first time in several centuries. They want outsiders there that provide a positive influence to keep them in an orbit looking toward the West, not just toward Russia and toward China, who are very interested in bringing them back into their spheres of influence. It keeps a very positive supporting framework right up next to Pakistan, which is the second-largest Muslim country in the world and has, we think, perhaps two dozen nuclear weapons, so Afghanistan is a very, very important strategic ally—friend—in that part of the world; and our presence in Afghanistan has a very positive influence. Of course, to the west we have Iran, and the fact that we have troops and influence and friends in Afghanistan has a moderating influence on them, as well. So, we're in a very strong strategic position there, at a relatively low cost in manpower and dollars. It is a position of great advantage and great influence that I think we need to sustain over time. Time will tell if we do that or not.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What lessons should the United States and the U.S. Army learn from our experiences there? Your experiences there?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, I think one of our continuous challenges here is to understand the nature of the war that we're fighting in that part of the world, not just at the tactical level, but how does the strategic level of war apply in a counterinsurgency fight that reaches outside of a single country and to the region and perhaps globally, certainly, if you include al Qaeda? I don't know that we have, as an army, as a military at large, thought our way through the implications of that and how

you fight, how you succeed, how you design a strategy in Afghanistan that isn't simply an Afghanistan-centric internal strategy but is a part of a global strategy—how those pieces all fit together. How does Pakistan fit into that? How do we look regionally, instead of simply at a single country? As many people have said—a few people have said, I guess, and I certainly say—this is not a war in Iraq and a war in Afghanistan. Those are parts of broader regional conflicts. They are part of a global war, and how you structure your long-term strategic approach in each one of those for a global war is not necessarily the same way you structure for a war inside a single country that hasn't got regional and global implications. So, I think that's a subtle but very important lesson yet to be learned on what we're doing and have been doing in Afghanistan. So, I think that's something we have to give some thought to.

Otherwise, I think we've had great success, and we've shown the adaptability of our units. We've been able to reinvent ourselves on the fly to do counterinsurgency operations after a long hiatus of not touching that at all and not getting exposed to it and not training our folks on it at all. We've now got a very experienced force, both from duty in Iraq and duty in Afghanistan and from thinking about different types of warfare. I still think that we've got to work our way through this strategic level and what this means, not simply the tactical level. The Army, in my view, is an area where it needs to be careful that it does not become too tactically focused, given the fact that just like with my headquarters, the operational level and strategic level weren't Army functions any longer; they are now joint functions. My headquarters was effectively an orphan headquarters. It didn't have a post, didn't have a flag, didn't have a patch, didn't have a museum, didn't have a World War II history; therefore, it didn't exist in the Army institutional hierarchy at all in any way, shape, or form. That also is true in terms of where the Army devotes its thinking about fighting. It no longer owns the headquarters and does those kinds of things. By and large, there's a risk that we're going to nosedive into only being experts at tactics, techniques, and procedures; and that's where our dollars are going, that's where an awful lot of our thinking is going, and that seems to be where a good bit of our writing is going. I have concerns about that, because I think the Army is an institution that does have enough depth to be able to talk, think, write, influence at the operational and strategic level, and to take some ownership of that once again. I think this trend is kind of the inadvertent second-order effect of the Goldwater-Nichols Act [which streamlined the military chain of command] because we don't operate at the operational headquarters level and the strategic headquarters level any more in the Army. All of a sudden, the Army is now simply train, organize, and equip as a force, and that does not leverage, in my opinion,

the immense depth that the institution has on war fighting writ large, and we need to be careful about that.

DR. HUGHES: **Are there things I should have asked you?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Oh, there are a million different things we can go into, I think. That was a pretty good quick-look overview of the different aspects in Afghanistan. There are a lot of things we can talk about in the interagency operations; a number of things we could talk about in how we work with allies and friends and Coalition headquarters operations, perhaps; there are some interesting things we could probably talk about on relationships, vertically up the chain of command back to Washington, which is kind of an element now; how technology and modern communications play in the ability for people to reach out and touch you; and how you interact with different levels above your command, not simply internal to your command. I suspect that that is certainly more prevalent today than it ever has been in history, because the technology's available to do it. So, those are things maybe for a different day.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, thank you very much, sir.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: It was pretty interesting. I appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

[End of first session. Beginning of second session.]

DR. HUGHES: **Sir, you were about to give basically an overview of your experience there. Would it be possible to ask you to go back a little bit? How did you find out you were tapped for the assignment?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I had some ongoing telephone conversations with General Abizaid when I was in my previous job as the commander of the Army Training Center at Fort Jackson. He and I have known each other for twenty-plus years. We had been company commanders together in the same Ranger battalion during the Grenada invasion, and we knew each other, and we stayed in touch pretty extensively. I had just come back from a three-month deployment in the spring of '03 to Hungary, where I had been tapped to deploy a task force from the United States to Taszar, Hungary, to train Free Iraqi Forces, which were intended to go in and accompany Americans on the front end of the invasion. That was a disappointing effort from the standpoint of getting few recruits, which we didn't have any ability to influence. But I had been back probably about two months from that effort. General Abizaid originally attempted, shortly after we returned, to deploy our task force to Afghanistan to begin training the Afghan National Army forces, but that was turned down by the [U.S.] Army. Then he looked at possibly having me involved with that individually and that didn't pan out.

Then, several months later, he approached me about going to Afghanistan to take over this new three-star organization that was being envisioned, not exactly planned out at that point in time. So, after going through the various wickets with the Defense Department and the secretary of defense and whatnot, I did get selected for that job. I went over for a reconnaissance visit in September [2003] for about one week; and I traveled around the country most of my time with General [Maj. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry, who was the military cooperation chief in Kabul, and the remainder of my time with Lt. Gen. [John R.] Vines, who was the CJTF-180 commander, XVIII Airborne Corps commander, at Bagram. So, I got the picture of both the Kabul end of it and the Bagram end of it, both the political-military environment, which Karl Eikenberry had been tasked to do by General Vines as one of his priority efforts, while General Vines focused on the tactical-operational end of it out of the headquarters at Bagram. So, there was some discussion of how the new headquarters was going to be formed and stood up. It was pretty thin planning, and there really wasn't an anticipation that I would come in quite as quickly as I did.

DR. HUGHES: **What sort of model did you use to set up? Is there a standard model for a joint headquarters?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Not one that is kind of one-size-fits-all. We essentially looked at what were the critical nodes that we needed to be able to perform right away. We clearly needed a political-military [POL-MIL] section, since my charter from General Abizaid was "Your job, Dave, is big POL and little MIL." But, as I told him a month later, it became, very quickly, big POL and big MIL and big ECON [economics], so it was big on all sides of the house. So, we built a political-military section. But again, out of the six people I started with, probably the most important part of that was that four of us had served together in the same battalion in the 82d Airborne Division about six years prior, I guess. Actually, it had been almost ten years.

DR. HUGHES: **Were you in a position to select your own staff?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: No. That was pure coincidence. In fact, where I attempted to select my own staff, I was generally stymied from doing that by the Army over the next two years, and I will talk a little bit more about that, because that was very frustrating and uncalled for, in a lot of respects, given that we were a forward-deployed organization, and presumably the number-two priority effort for the military at that time. But my chief of staff had been my battalion S-3 [staff officer for operations]. He was there in the OMC, so I took him out of the OMC and made him my chief of staff. The fellow I made my political-

military officer was there working for General Eikenberry as a political-military officer.

DR. HUGHES: **Could you give us some of the names?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Yes. Col. Tom [J.] Snukis was the chief of staff designee. Second, now-Col. Tucker [B.] Mansager had been one of my company commanders in my battalion, and he again was working for General Eikenberry. I pulled him over to be my political-military officer out of the OMC. I had then–Lt. Col. Mark Stammer, who had been one of my staff officers in my old battalion. We pulled him up to be basically our SGS, secretary of the General Staff, or secretary of the Joint Staff. Then there was me. So, the four of us had all worked very closely together in 1992 and 1993, and we knew each other very, very well at a much younger point in our lives, when we were doing parachute infantry battalion kinds of things. So, we had a relationship already, and that enabled us to cut through all kinds of bureaucratic inertia in all the "getting to know you" and "forming and storming" things, because we already knew and trusted each other and understood how each other thought and operated. So, we were able to do a tremendous amount of "cut right to the chase" decision making and had a lot of respect for each other and a lot of confidence in each other to start with, which was pretty unusual.

I was a two-star at that time. I had not yet been confirmed by the Senate when I arrived in early October, but I was, in effect, the officer in charge in Afghanistan, because I was the senior American in country. I had a one-star promotable, plus another one-star, at Bagram. I had a one-star, the acting OMC chief, in Kabul. That was our whole contingent, I guess, of general officers in Afghanistan at the time. If you went back a year prior to that, you would have had a three-star, probably two two-stars, and several one-stars, and so the whole size of the operations had downshifted primarily through attrition and through unexpected absences and gaps in filling positions. So, now, when I returned to Afghanistan after my initial reconnaissance visit in September, when I went back somewhat unexpectedly on or about seventy-two hours' notice to take over in early October, we had a very, very small contingent of senior leadership, and there were no general officers above the rank of one-star in the country when I returned, which was pretty stunning, considering we had fourteen thousand troops, give or take, at that point in time, and several very large organizations. The generals had rotated out and others had not taken their place, and one had departed unexpectedly for illness. The embassy, at the same point in time, had been without an ambassador since about July and had a chargé [d'affaires], an acting ambassador there, the deputy. So, the whole effort in Afghanistan was in a bit of a sideways drift, to use a current term. That was one of the reasons I got accelerated

very quickly, to get in there and kind of start getting things established, even though I had not been confirmed yet.

DR. HUGHES: **When you went over there for your reconnaissance, what briefings either there or here did you get? Who gave you briefings and what sort of information was shared with you as you were starting up?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I'm not sure of the exact sequence, but as I recollect, I had a series of briefings in the Joint Staff, although they were pretty rudimentary. There wasn't a tremendous amount of preparation time that was available. I remember having a Pentagon roundtable with a number of different players who were involved in Afghanistan, interagency players, but mostly defense players. Ambassador Bob Oakley, I remember being at that; Debra Cagan, I remember being at that; and a number of folks from the Joint Staff. I had an office call with the J-5 [staff section for plans], Joint Staff, who, at that time, I think, was [Lt. Gen.] George [W.] Casey. So, we had kind of the beginnings of briefings, but there wasn't really enough time to do any kind of in-depth preparation, which was a bit of a problem, needless to say. In many of these positions, you tend to get a month or two foreknowledge and preparation time. In my case, I had very little time from when I was notified that I was going to go. I went on my reconnaissance—which was done rather hurriedly and was about a ten-day effort with all the movement over and back—and I came back from that and expected that I would have about a month, roughly, before I might have to go to Afghanistan, but I got called within a week of returning and was told I had to be there in seventy-two hours. So, we were off and running at that point in time. The amount of preparation was pretty limited from that standpoint.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you get situation briefings when you got in country?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: To a degree. I spent some time down in Bagram, but again, in my headquarters in Kabul, we didn't have an operations center, we didn't have a staff, and we didn't have a J-3 [staff section for operations]. Essentially, my approach was that I would let folks at Bagram continue to run the day-to-day tactical operations while I filled and began to oversee what I called the regional strategic effort. I viewed our headquarters mission as being a regional strategic headquarters. I had responsibility not just for Afghanistan, but for parts of three other countries: all of Pakistan, except for Jammu and Kashmir, and then the southern parts of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. So, reporting to General Abizaid, that was my battle space. That was, prior to my time, CJTF-180's battle space. But I wasn't focused on just the building of the headquarters. I was also focused on running the operation and getting involved with the political-military

aspects and understanding how the embassy was working. So, I was allowing day-to-day tactical stuff to continue to be run out of Bagram. I talked to General Austin, who was the brigadier-promotable commander of the 10th Mountain Division, who had his headquarters in there as CJTF-180. He and I talked daily, so I had a good set from him on what was going on. But I made some deliberate decisions that were counterintuitive, I think, at that point in time, to a lot of folks that were the right decisions to make in retrospect. One was I decided I would put my personal location at the U.S. Embassy, live at the embassy compound, and have about three or four of my key folks live there in a trailer complex with me. I had an office in the embassy where I would spend about a third of my time. It was right next to the ambassador and the DCM's [deputy chief of mission] office, so I was sending a deliberate message that we were going to have an integrated effort and that it wasn't just military guys down the road a mile at their own compound doing their own thing and coming up to visit occasionally. We were actually going to live there and be part of the community; we were going to be at meetings; we were going to go to the country team meetings; we were going to see the ambassador every day; and we were going to be part of an integrated effort. I wasn't told to do that, but clearly the intent of the guidance I got was to try and pull this effort together and try to blend the political and the military. So, I made some very specific decisions to do those kinds of things.

The only thing I did that I was questioned early on when I got there from somebody was about how I was going to get the twice-a-day videoconferences that were held with all the commanders in Afghanistan. In the morning and in the evening, typically, there was a video teleconference [VTC] done out of Bagram, where the senior commander and staff would sit down and get operational updates from all the commanders in the field down to about the lieutenant colonel level, roughly speaking, the colonel and lieutenant colonel level. It would last about forty-five minutes or so, and it would be at about eight in the morning and at about seven in the evening. I said I wasn't going to do that, and I didn't want to have that level of very granular tactical detail because it would cause me to focus on the tactical-level detail instead of looking at the big picture and understanding how the pieces needed to go together to fit it into a broader campaign. That was exactly the right decision.

But what had happened—inadvertently in Afghanistan, in my opinion, at least—during the summer of '03, in the spring of '03, we had the XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters in Afghanistan at Bagram, which was the joint task force headquarters, and it had what I would characterize as regional strategic- and operational-level responsibilities. He also had a division headquarters, a de facto division

headquarters, called Combined Task Force-82 [CTF-82], the 82d Airborne Division headquarters. He had a two-star ex-division commander, John Vines, doing the CTF-82 tactical job, while [Lt. Gen.] Dan [K.] McNeill, as the commander of XVIII Airborne Corps, and his staff did the operational and regional (or low-level) strategic job. The decision was made in spring 2003 to get rid of [Combined] Task Force-82 and give the entire mission to CJTF-180 and replace the corps headquarters with a division headquarters, which occurred in about May or June '03. That was done for efficiencies and to save manpower. Afghanistan was thought to have become very quiet and going into Phase IV operations, so there wasn't a need for a corps and a division headquarters; but what it did, in my opinion, was it caused that one headquarters to default down to the tactical level. It started focusing only on tactics, and no one was doing operations, and certainly no one was doing serious regional strategic work. That was why, in part, John Vines—according to Karl Eikenberry, at least—gave Karl this mission. It was "You do the POL-MIL stuff. Keep me out of that. I'm going to be down here doing operational tactical stuff." So, we lost our visibility at the regional strategic level. We started drilling down and being very focused on tactics, which I wanted to distance myself from the start, and we were able to do that.

Now, I had ops updates daily, face to face, in person, from my staff once I started building one. I originally had a first lieutenant marine reservist as my J-2 [staff officer for intelligence]. I had an Army captain as my J-3 for the first month or two there. But the idea—which was, I think, deeply flawed—was for the staff for Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, as it became, to be a reach-back staff, where we would leverage all the capacity at Bagram but only have a handful of people up at Kabul, and we would be able to reach back and get all the information, and we would just share all this electronically. Well, that worked not at all. The staff in Bagram was responsible for and responsive to the commander in Bagram. They didn't have any relationship with the commander in Kabul, who was an unknown quantity. This was their division commander down the road in Bagram there, and they all worked for him, so the reach-back idea wasn't going to work in any logical frame of reference. So, we ended up having to build our own staff organization in Kabul and getting support from CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] to stand that up. We eventually went through a series of iterations of joint manning documents to go from six people, which was what we started with to several hundred. By the time I left in May 2005, there were over four hundred, but that took an immense amount of time, energy, and effort. We had to build that ourselves. We had no one helping us do that, particularly from the services. We identified the requirements, which were pretty modest—originally, I

think they were in the 150-to-200 range—but then they eventually grew as we documented all the things we had to be able to do. The services fought every single one of those requirements and really pushed back on providing us manpower, especially quality manpower. So, as we began to make our requirements known, we began to get filled with Individual Ready Reservists, some of whom had been out of uniform for ten years, and an extraordinary array of people who were kind of at the end of the pipeline, from a military standpoint. The joke was when I went into our little-bitty joint operations center, the average age in the ops center dropped ten years when I walked in the room—and I was forty-nine years old at that point in time. So, this was not a young crowd. The staff used to say: "This is the world's most forward-deployed AARP chapter." We had a lot of reservists that were sent to us as individual augmentees because the services weren't giving up active duty people who were assigned out there to their own divisions and corps. We were really an orphan headquarters in many respects. CENTCOM gave us lots of support during this period and worked this hard. General Abizaid and I talked regularly, several times a week, to try and help meet our requirements. He asked me to try and design the headquarters to be at least one-third combined so we could get the leverage of other countries. We built it that way, originally, but we couldn't get the combined slots filled either. We ended up having to convert most of those to U.S. over the next year, because the Coalition wasn't providing that level of manpower either, and the services certainly weren't, so it was fairly problematic from that standpoint. In the midst of all this … I don't want to give you the impression that all we were doing was building the headquarters. We were fully in charge of doing operations across Afghanistan and responsible for the overall mission.

DR. HUGHES: **The last time we talked, you suggested that this time I ask you about what your and your headquarters' relationships were with higher headquarters all the way back to D.C.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I think it was actually generally quite good. I thought we had a very good relationship. This was not what I expected. I was regularly—and I will cite the exceptions in a minute—very pleasantly surprised by how well that worked. The fact that I have a close personal relationship with General Abizaid was, I suspect, immensely helpful for his staff to see their way clear to help us out and to respond to our requirements, knowing that we were standing up from scratch with a pickup team of 100 percent of individual augmentees. When XVIII Airborne Corps went to Afghanistan, they brought nearly the whole corps headquarters, and then they augmented it by 20 or 30 or 40 percent with extra individual players. When the 82d Airborne came to Afghanistan, they brought the division headquarters, and they augmented that with additional players. When we stood up our headquarters,

there was no corps staff, there was no trained organization, and there was no outfit that had worked together, other than the four of us that had been in a battalion at Fort Bragg years back. So, we had to build a staff that was now running the overall Afghan effort out of individual augmentees, the vast majority of whom we had never seen before in our life, and most of whom were not from the active component.

So, we "stole" a bunch of our staff out of Bagram. We basically took the whole J-5 shop out of CJTF-180—about twenty-five people, led by a British colonel. They became the core of our thinking and operations and our plans and our strategy work, which was hugely helpful. Then General Austin and I agreed for him to give up his J-3 and his J-2, both colonels, who were augmentees, to provide to me, one of whom I provided to the ambassador to be his chief planner at the embassy to stand up his embassy interagency planning team, and the other one I made my J-3 in our new organization. General Austin, with the 10th Mountain Division, just went down one level to his own G-3 lieutenant colonel type, and to his G-2 lieutenant colonel type, in the division, and it worked out fine for him.

Going up the chain of command though, one of the peculiarities we had in our headquarters was how few general officers we had. That was uncommon. In fact, we made some decisions in early '04 not to increase the number of general officers in the headquarters. We had the opportunity to bring in, or at least ask for, a one-star chief of staff and perhaps a one-star J-2, and we kind of talked amongst ourselves, and I encouraged them to think hard about whether they really wanted to do that or not, and we decided not to, in part because of the baggage that comes with general officers [GOs] and their expectations. We were operating in a very austere, focused, small-group environment, and for most GOs, unless you can pick them by name, you are not going to be able to put them in that kind of environment and have them be fully effective. So, we didn't really want to add to the pain level of the staff by introducing more generals who could put demands on a small staff. So, again, that was kind of a counterintuitive move, but I'm very glad we did that, in retrospect. We brought in a British two-star as a deputy about eight months later in May of 2004, and I finally got a command sergeant major, whom I did get to pick, in May 2004, which helped us immensely. But going up the chain again to CENTCOM, the dynamic was that the CENTCOM staff, of course, were all flag officers—one-stars and two-stars in the staff principal positions—so when one of our folks would call up to their CENTCOM counterpart, it would be a colonel talking to a two-star, or sometimes a lieutenant colonel talking to a two-star. But to their everlasting credit, CENTCOM flag officers dealt with that with no issues. They were very supportive and understanding of what

incredible responsibilities we were putting on these young colonels and lieutenant colonels in Afghanistan, who were principal staff officers in a three-star headquarters, who should have been the best colonels or one-stars the Army had, who were people that just happened to be there at the time to be pulled into these positions. So, they were very, very supportive from that standpoint.

We also ran a very, I thought, open and transparent effort with the folks back in Washington, particularly with OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] and largely the State Department. The basic rules we had were that we were going to continue to keep everyone informed and not play a stovepipe such that we would only talk to CENTCOM and not talk to anyone else. We regularly talked to folks on the Joint Staff; we talked to folks on the National Security Council; and we talked to folks in the State Department to keep them informed and to build relationships. When I would come back to the U.S., I would make a point to get around and see these people to build those relationships. That was immensely beneficial to us. That was probably one of the best things that we did, partly just because of the personalities of the folks we had involved. We sustained those relationships through two different groups of CFC staff officers during the time I was out there, and that was one of our hallmarks. I felt, whenever I came back here, people had a good idea of what we were doing, and they knew we were talking to them. We had not cut out our higher headquarters. We always kept them informed of what we were doing. We weren't trying to outflank them for resources or anything else. We kept a very broad lateral range of communications up all across Washington, and that paid big, big dividends for us, and we did not get crosswise with anybody in our chain of command, which was very helpful. So, I think I was surprisingly pleased with the chain of command moving up and out.

Now, where I will register complaints is with the services, particularly the Army. The Army was unhelpful, to be generous, in terms of providing us with resources and capabilities and people. They clearly had Iraq on their minds, but there was no interest whatsoever in providing us with anything but the absolute minimum level of support. The frustrating thing for me was, as I looked at what we were asking our staff officers to do—stand up a headquarters in a new environment, being kind of on the cutting edge of running the whole show in Afghanistan. If you went to Fort Bragg and you went to see who the G-3 of the XVIII Airborne Corps was, the G-2 of the XVIII Airborne Corps was, and the chief of staff of the XVIII Airborne Corps was—these were all folks who were going to grow up and be generals in the Army. If you went around my staff, none of my staff officers grew up to be generals in the Army. None of the people the Army sent me were people who would

ever grow up to be generals in the Army. I couldn't even get SAMS—School of Advanced Military Studies—graduates and I even asked the chief of staff personally for that at one point in time with no results, while the Army, through its peacetime personnel system, continued to fill billets for SAMS to units that were not deployed. I watched the 25th Infantry Division, which was in Afghanistan, with its staff officers frozen in position, get its annual slug of SAMS graduates sent to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, even though I couldn't get SAMS graduates on my staff in Combined Forces Command. So, the Army was continuing to pump out its standard rotation of each unit getting so many Command and General Staff College graduates, so many War College graduates, and so many SAMS graduates, and they would go right to your peacetime home stations. You could be deployed and not have those guys, but the Army was not going to send them to a joint headquarters that didn't have a flag, a museum, a marching band, and an alumni association. So, there was a huge disparity there between how the services support their own organizations and joint organizations that aren't part of their own. If CFC-A was XVIII Airborne Corps serving as a JTF [joint task force], it would still be an Army corps. Since CFC-A was not an Army corps or an Army division, I had virtually no influence within the Army in getting resources and capabilities out there, except what I could exert through CENTCOM and in making a lot of noise, and that was not appreciated. So, we had some real issues with that. We didn't get the quality cut that you would get in former battalion and brigade commanders.

I mentioned not being able to get individual staff officers. When I was trying to line up my summer '04 slate for key officers, I have a couple of interesting anecdotes on this. I sent a list into the Army saying to the colonels division: "Here are five colonels who I would like to have be considered to be my next chief of staff." Colonels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5—they were all available, none of them were in command, and none of them would even be broken out of a key assignment to do this. After a month or two of waiting, it came back that none of those five would be available because they were all doing other important things out there. On one of them, I went to a four-star who had him in a fairly mundane staff position, and so this was a commander in the field to a four-star in a nondeployable organization back in the States, but it was "No. Sorry. He is really important to our organization. I am not going to give him up." So, there was just no institutional support for this effort. The other incident—which is even more telling and damning in some respects, I guess—I had an officer call me up who I had served with before, who had already commanded a brigade, who had already done his joint time, so he had done all of his colonel-level requirements, and he said, "I would like to become your J-3 in Afghanistan this

summer. I think I would be a great fit for the job, and it would be a great opportunity for me. I have all the stuff I need done, and I think branch is for it." I said, "Well, that's great. Sounds good. Tell us what we need to do. You would be a great fit. I would love to have you come out." I got a call from him about two weeks later and he said, "I need to withdraw my name from consideration." I said, "What happened? Some family problem or something?" He said, "No. I talked to the Army about it, and they told me that your J-3 slot is not coded for a former brigade commander, so I am being assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas, to be the chief of staff of a nondeployable division headquarters there that is coded for a former brigade commander." So, I lost that guy. Those were the kinds of dynamics we were having to deal with on an individual basis, and they were the same issues on requests for forces, and requests for individuals, and requests for staff folks. It was a very, very problematic system.

In building our joint manning document, we went through several iterations of that, and you have to have a validated joint manning document to get people requirements from the services, which they can still reclama and stonewall or slow down. But in our case, we eventually arrived at a joint manning document that had, I think, around 420 people in it for our headquarters, roughly speaking, and the services all objected to those numbers, disbelieving them. So, Joint Forces Command put together a team led by a Marine two-star, with representatives from all the services' staffs up here and from the Joint Forces Command, to come out and spend a week with us and validate our requirements and to see what our workload was and all that, and they came back at the end of the week and said, "Every one of those requirements is valid." That occurred in August 2004, almost a year after I arrived in Afghanistan, and it took another four to five months before we started seeing the quality and the numbers of people coming in to fill those billets from the services. So, the whole process was almost an eighteen-month process, being the number two priority in the world for military operations in U.S. Central Command, fighting a war, to be able to get the kind of quality support in numbers and in the caliber of people you need to have to run any kind of organization. So, it was very disconcerting to see that in our relations back here with the services, particularly the Army, which, I think, suffered as a result of that. The Army didn't "get it" from the standpoint of what was important and what wasn't, and they really were in a conservation-of-force mode as an overriding priority. I understand that. You can't simply send people down range at every whim of the commanders out there, but there was no effort made to try and find out what our needs were and to assist us. There was no effort, interestingly enough, and I'm at fault, I'm sure, for not banging this drum louder myself, but it wasn't really possible to do that before I got

to Afghanistan. There was no effort on the services' part to try and facilitate the stand-up of this key headquarters in the theater because it was a joint organization. If we were standing up a new corps headquarters, that would have been a different story. So, a very interesting lesson in the dynamics of Goldwater-Nichols and who is responsible for what and how we fulfill those.

DR. HUGHES: **You spoke a little bit earlier about meetings at the embassy, interagency meetings, etc. How did that interagency team come together? Who were the players? Obviously, the joint headquarters and the State Department, but who were the other players?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, the embassy suffered from almost the exact same list of problems I just arrayed for you that the military organizational structure did. They got, in my opinion, very little support from the State Department to get the quality or the quantity of players they deserved to have in what, at that time, was our only "combat" embassy. We didn't have an embassy in Baghdad at that time. We were still running the CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority]. But the embassy I saw there, when it got contrasted with embassies in Islamabad, Pakistan, or with the embassies in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan…in Islamabad, the embassy was three times as large. It had people with Ph.D.s who had lived in the region for fifteen years and who spoke four languages. When I went to Kabul, I would find people in their second assignment in the State Department who spoke no languages, had no experience, and had never been in that part of the world before, because that was all the State Department could get to volunteer to go to Kabul, because it was a volunteer system, as it is today. So, it was a very junior, inexperienced group. There were some very dedicated people, but also some people who should not have been there from a quality standpoint and an experience standpoint.

So, the ambassador had to struggle with that once he arrived. He got there, Zal Khalilzad, about six weeks after I did. He arrived in November '03. He actually had about six months' preparation for it. He came after setting the conditions to arrive and working up his plan for accelerating success in Afghanistan. So, the country team itself was a very inexperienced, very small, very undermanned, overwhelmed country team. They had an interesting additional capability, though, called the Afghan Reconstruction Group [ARG]. It was an organization purpose-built in the six months before Ambassador Khalilzad got there to get high-quality, experienced talent from the private sector and put them in as an adjunct to the embassy in their own little mini-organization to work the various key ministries in the Afghan government, like aviation, some private sector things, and some energy things. They were able to get former COOs [chief operating

officers] and CEOs [chief executive officers] and CFOs [chief financial officers] and other very experienced private sector people and put them on kind of a special contract for a year and have them come live like dogs at the embassy in Afghanistan in the trailer park, inside a minimum-security prison, inside a construction site, where we all lived—so, some very, very dedicated Americans. The first group was led by Jack Bell, who is an assistant secretary of defense up in the OSD world right now in logistics; and the second group, the second iteration of that group, was led by a fellow named Lou Hughes, who is a former GM executive, who is back out in the private sector now—but very, very talented guys. The ambassador actually built a stable of people outside the State Department to help him do State functions because he didn't have the capacity to do that inside of his own organization.

Another interesting anecdote there that is illustrative, I think, in the embassy, the State Department's [Bureau of] International Narcotics and Law Enforcement [Affairs], INL, representative, that part of the embassy was a key component that had responsibility for the entire police training program, which was a hundreds of millions of dollars program; and it also had responsibility for the counternarcotics effort in Afghanistan, which was an immense challenge, as we all know, so both programs were very problematic and very difficult. For most of my time in Afghanistan, the State Department INL office at the embassy in Kabul comprised one person. There was one person doing both of those immense jobs. I mean, if that were a military organization, we would have had 150 people doing that, because it was so complex and so involved and took so much attention, supervision, planning, and coordination. One person. So, that was kind of the level of caliber of the effort that you had on the embassy side.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. I don't know if this is just a wiring-diagram–type thing, but the change from the commander of military operations to the commander of Combined Force Command sounds like it had a great deal of significance. What was that shift all about?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: It was probably less significant than it sounds. The commander of military operations was a term I never used during my time in Afghanistan. It was a convenience term, I think, that GOMO [General Officer Management Office] invented in order to have a Senate confirmation for an organization that didn't exist because they couldn't very well say, "We are going to confirm Barno to be the commander of Combined Forces Command" when there was no Combined Forces Command. We didn't actually activate it until after the first of the year '04. We operated as though there was one. It was really more a matter of getting the crest and the name blessed by General Abizaid, and

I think that actually happened in probably November or December of '03. In fact, I have a crest somewhere that has Combined Force Command-Central Asia on it. That was the route we were going down, and then the decision was made back here, I think, that we didn't want to send that message. We wanted it to be Afghanistan's, so we went back to CFC-Afghanistan. We operated on that basis from the get-go, but they were very late in a changing-nameplates kind of a thing back here. But we were operating as CFC-A probably from about January 2004 on.

DR. HUGHES: **So, the combined title definitely applies, at least in American terminology, to working with allies. You already mentioned a British deputy.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Coming a bit late to the stand-up game, relatively. Maj. Gen. John Cooper got there in May 2004 and was replaced in December 2004 by a second British deputy, Maj. Gen. John Gilchrist, who is now the defense attaché here. The Coalition part of the headquarters was filled very slowly. The first Coalition membership would have been the head of the J-5 element we brought from Bagram. There was a British J-5 colonel down there and the British were replaced about every four months, but we had a series of British J-5's that I maintain were just superb. They were very, very good, super high-quality officers. It is embarrassing for me to compare them with some of the American officers I got, in some ways. These Brits were top-notch folks, and many of them have been promoted to brigadier general.

DR. HUGHES: **What did the J-5 do?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: He is the chief of plans and strategy in an organization. As time went on, I got a Canadian colonel to be my J-9, which was civil-military operations. I'm just going through the staff principals now. We had French officers come in; we had Korean officers come in; and we had Turkish officers come in, so we began to fill other staff sections in ones and twos, based on what the capabilities were of the officers who showed up, and from what service and from what country, on the doorstep, so that was a very slow process. I would say, even when we had several hundred people in the headquarters, we never had more than about twenty-five to thirty Coalition. Again, I'm just guesstimating. One of my chiefs of staff could probably give you a better number.

DR. HUGHES: **One of the things that you suggested I bring up was the impact that communications technology had on relationships both up and down, and with various different people you needed to communicate with. How did the technology impact your mission?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I think from a headquarters-downward standpoint, we had access, that we probably didn't use intentionally, to

be able to see in great detail, had we wanted to, what our subordinates were doing. I elected not to run a VTC-centric operation. I also elected to run an operation that was very light on process, which is unheard of in the military. We are very, very process-centric in our staffs. I was telling somebody the other day that staff officers and "the process" are like addicts with cocaine. They have to have process to be comfortable. If they don't have it, it makes them extraordinarily uncomfortable. I was probably too light from the standpoint that it made the staff uncomfortable to deal in that environment, because they really have to have process to function, but I don't like process. I try to avoid it at all costs, so I offloaded as much of that on my chief and my deputy as I could. On the technology side, we had the ability, if we wanted it, to look down into our units to see Predator feeds, to watch JOC [joint operations center] displays of where units were at, and to pipe into the nightly VTCs of the commanders in the field. We did none of that intentionally because I didn't want that level of detail. The SITREPs [situation reports] we got every day, which I glanced at but didn't spend too much time on, were disturbing in a way, because they really reported all the way down to platoon level, literally, in Afghanistan, and what platoons were doing all over the country; but what they missed in the detail was the importance of the big picture and what was going on outside of this military dimension. So, I found that I was not terribly interested in what platoons were doing, or even what companies were doing, in some cases. I was very interested in the political environment that was around the villages and the towns and the provinces and the districts these platoons were operating in, and I couldn't get that reporting because we trained our military leaders to report on things like "I moved forty-seven kilometers down this road from 1515 hours until 1800 hours. I went into a bivouac, and then I started a ground assault convoy," and so on. It was all black-and-white military operations—logistics-focused; time-, date-, and place-focused—as opposed to what was the nuance there, what was the environment, what was the sense, and what was happening, unless there was contact, when you had fighting. Otherwise, there wouldn't even be a report. Really, the best overall reporting I got was from PRTs, although they suffered from the same problem on the military side. These very good reports came from the one State Department person in the PRT, who would report out to the embassy on what the political environment was around the PRT once or twice a month. Those were extraordinarily interesting and valuable reading, because they told me all the things I couldn't get from my PRT military chain of command, who were sitting in the chair next to the State guy writing this report in the PRT, who had all the same access to information but didn't process it the same way and couldn't make those kinds of reports. So, I thought that was an interesting observation on the foibles

of information technology. I could get lots of information on things I didn't need to know, but I couldn't get good information on things I really needed to know, and that was true on the intelligence side and it often was true on the operations and political-military side, as well. We are getting better at that, but our system is not built to do those kinds of things, so it is very, very challenging.

Upward above our headquarters on information technology, General Abizaid and I typically talked frequently by phone. We did get these little Tandberg video desk teleconference things, Voice over Internet Protocol [VoIP], Secure Internet Protocol Router Network [SIPRNET], or Nonsecure Internet Protocol Router Network [NIPRNET] on our desk. Those were great. They were just for fun. I could dial up his number on his desk in Tampa, and he and I could see each other and talk on the phone face to face, which was good stuff. There is value in that. You get some nuance and some perceptions from face-to-face phone calls that you don't get just listening on a telephone, so there was utility in that.

The most debilitating—I use that word intentionally, I guess—aspect of this was the video teleconferences back to Washington from CFC-A headquarters. We had zero of those from October '03 until about the middle of June '04, which was a very nice period of time. Then, in the middle of June '04, suddenly the Defense Department and the secretary of defense decided that he needed to get more involved in Afghanistan and initially directed that we would do a weekly video teleconference for about an hour, or forty minutes to an hour, in duration with the secretary of defense on things in Afghanistan, particularly the building of the Afghan National Army [ANA]. It was never intended to be a situational update on Afghanistan, except as an aside. It was "What is the building plan for…," and it was all very objective, empirically oriented, data-centric type of discussions—"discussions" being a generous term. So, we would have to spend a vast amount of time, energy, and effort to prepare analytical briefings that we could defend to the secretary on the program for expanding the ANA, accelerating the ANA, what their attrition was, etc. Again, with a very small staff, this was a backbreaking effort. This about brought us to our knees at the once-a-week rate, and we finally got General Abizaid to convince the secretary to go to once every two weeks, which was barely sustainable. These each took several days' worth of intense effort by the staff, and lots of my time.

For our VTC participation, number one, it was me and maybe my U.K. deputy; we would be the only ones on screen. I would usually put a couple of staff officers on the wall, to include usually my British J-5, who was responsible for building these briefs, interestingly enough. Then, General Abizaid would normally pipe in from his aircraft

or somewhere and kind of be there in moderate-and-listen mode, occasionally interjecting, and sometimes his deputy as well from wherever he was. The audience back in D.C. was the secretary of defense, the deputy secretary of defense, the undersecretary of defense for policy, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the director of the Joint Staff, the J-3 of the Joint Staff, the J-5 of the Joint Staff, and a host of others at the deputy or next-to-deputy level. So, these were pretty intense affairs, pretty high visibility, from the perspective of who was on the receiving end. It wasn't just you and the secretary of defense kind of sharing chain–of-command, commander-to-senior-level viewpoints. It was kind of trial by fire with the OSD staff, although the staff wasn't there to kibitz and to criticize, but that certainly added to the intensity. So, the secretary of defense, who is much more amenable in person on these things, with an audience of fifteen people in the room, took a bit of a different approach than he would have if he were just sitting there with you. So, those were very contentious, painful, difficult, and tribulating kinds of sessions, and they put a lot of pressure on our organization and our staff to be able to understand what his requirements were and to be able to deliver on those requirements week after week after week. So, that was where I thought information technology was pernicious. The same technology existed in my first nine months as it did in my second ten months, but it was used in completely different ways. It wasn't used—much like I wasn't using it with my subordinates—for that first period of time, but once it started getting used, it became kind of a blunt instrument in the tool bag.

DR. HUGHES: **I'm a little bit fuzzy on exactly who reported to you. What was the chain of command underneath you? Who did you get reports from, and what was the structure?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: The direct reporting chain was CJTF-180 to me, or later CJTF-76. So, essentially, the divisional commander who was in Afghanistan as the tactical commander—what I called it basically was CJTF-76's responsibility or CJTF-180's responsibility—was the tactical level and the low end of the operational level. My responsibility was the high end of the operational level and what I called the regional and strategic level of the whole country, the theater-strategic level. So, from a reporting standpoint, I would get reports from my subordinate headquarters, which was CJTF-180, then CJTF-76, and they got reports from CJSOTF [Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force], and they got reports from all their various component piece parts out there. I also got reports from the Office of Military Cooperation, where we normally had a two-star boss and often a one-star deputy, who was doing the training of the Afghan National Army. So, those guys reported to me. They had a dual-responsibility chain to me and to the ambassador, which we

had worked out early on. So, I got at least two sets of reports from that side of the house. I also de facto had a high degree of authority over the U.S. military ODRP [Office of Defense Representative-Pakistan] office in Pakistan. I also got some informal reporting, and a lot of operational visibility, on our classified Special Operations Forces in country.

DR. HUGHES: **When you were first standing up, what were your intentions? You have already talked about very definitely building a working relationship with the ambassador and the team there, but what were your overall intentions for your command?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Largely to create a unified effort in Afghanistan that encompassed all the players. One of my buzzwords to my staff was "We own it all. I don't want to hear 'The State Department should be doing this and USAID is not doing that and the Germans are responsible for that.'" I said, "As far as I'm concerned, I don't care if we have six people on the staff or six hundred, we own it all. We are going to take ownership of everything in sight, and we are going to fuse this into a single unified effort. It doesn't mean we are going to be the leader of each of these lanes ourselves, but we are going to lead from the rear, and we are going to coach, mentor, shape, and push people around and get all the players on the playing field playing the same sport and going to the same set of goalposts. They can wear different jerseys and have mustaches and funny hats, but they are all going the same way, and that includes the NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], the United Nations, and the other embassies." So, that was my self-appointed large charter, to get this thing moving in a single direction with some unified guidance, even if it was indirect leadership for it.

We spent a tremendous amount of time laying the groundwork for the September '04 election that ultimately resulted in electing President Karzai, ensuring the Taliban weren't able to interfere with that or that, through incompetence or lack of capacity, the UN was not going to fall down in its ability to get out and to get into every district in Afghanistan. We had a very fused effort with the UN. I have great regard for the UN in Afghanistan. I was very close to the head of the UN mission during most of this time. He and I built a strong personal relationship, which weathered a lot of storms and tough times while we were there. Again, going around and building personal relationships with all these ambassadors and with all these other key component players on the Afghan side and on the international side there paid immense dividends for us. That is not something in a manual, that is not something we tell people to do in counterinsurgency, and that is not normally a military task, but we would not have been able to have the success we achieved by any estimation without

having built those relationships. So, again, that was a great reason to be in Kabul and to get out there and reach out and touch all these folks. So we really had a very unified effort with the UN, and the UN did an extraordinarily capable job in Afghanistan during my time.

DR. HUGHES: **You have mentioned the PRTs a number of times.**

DR. MUNDEY: **Can we do something before we get to the PRTs, because I know that is going to be a long conversation. Could you lay out for us, when you first arrived, what you identified as the major challenges that needed to be addressed?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: When I was flying back to South Carolina on a C–17 after my September '03 reconnaissance visit, I sat and I built a briefing that laid out what I saw during my reconnaissance, and it really became the catalyst for what I needed to fix when I went back. So, having that available would be very useful, but one of the things I mentioned already was unity of command. In September '03, there was a tremendous, in my view, dysfunctionality in unity of command inside of Afghanistan, inside the military in Afghanistan. This is it here. [Referring to document]. This is one I personally did.

DR. MUNDEY: **Great. PowerPoint briefings don't necessarily have authors, so if you wrote this one, it is golden.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Yes. That is one that my two little fingers did. I have done that a couple times. This was actually, I think, pulled off a whiteboard chart I probably drew up, because I did a fair amount of that with the staff at different times. Let's see … yes, this was all whiteboard. There is another good chart, and I have called it a couple of different things. There are a couple variants of this, as well. This may not be the one I was looking for, but there is one that kind of looks like this, that is kind of a sequence of wins, which was one of the assessments realized. There were ten things that needed to be done in Afghanistan that were critical to success, and we had pressure from ten different people to do all ten of those things right then, tomorrow, but we were not going to do that. We were going to sequence those out over the next two years, and instead of going and doing them all then and having win, win, loss, loss, win, loss, and win, we wanted to go from win to win to win to win to win to win, so there was not a broken series of successes, and we sent the message that we were only going to be successful. To do that, we had to sequence these things out, so we called it a "sequence of wins." One of the things that we pushed off to write on that chart, which was something we continued to have a battle with, was the drug issue there. We intentionally moved that out of '04 and took that off the table as something we were going to spend a lot of energy on because it would put

us in competition with the other priority tasks we were trying to achieve.

DR. HUGHES: **I had started to ask about PRTs, which you have mentioned a number of times and which obviously are very critical for the story. What was your role with the PRTs? What was their status when you arrived, what was your vision for them, and how did they change?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We had four PRTs there when I arrived. Two of them were American. The other two were British, in Mazar-e Sharif, and Australian—correction, New Zealand—in Bamian. If you call them Australian, it really ticks them off. The two American ones were in Konduz—a fairly small one, about thirty-five folks—and then in Gardiz. I actually got to visit the Gardiz PRT when I was there on my reconnaissance visit. Interestingly enough, one of the things I did get from visits to Washington and in what little study I did get to do in reading on Afghanistan was recognize that these PRTs looked like they were really a success story, and we needed to get them moving and really proliferate them. They were innovative, and they were meeting a need out there, it seemed like. Then I kind of had that reinforced when I went out to visit one, but the glide slope they were on was not a very robust glide slope. They were at four and they were going to eight in the spring of '04. That was the base plan when I got there, so I said, "Let's see what we can do. We clearly have to have more PRTs out there." So, we did a little assessment, and we found that we had more civil affairs soldiers in the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force [CJCMOTF] headquarters than we had out in the field with PRTs. I said, "We can fix that," so we disassembled the headquarters and cut it down to bare bones and shipped all the CJCMOTF civil affairs soldiers out to the PRTs, and we actually tripled the number of PRTs in the spring. Instead of eight, we went to twelve. So, by about April/May 2004, we had twelve PRTs out, and those eight new ones were all in the south in contested areas. It was a deliberate decision to put them out into areas where we were concerned about security, where the Taliban hadn't been challenged in any way, to kind of put that marker out there. It was a risky move, as well, because we knew that these guys were going to be kind of out there on their own to some extent, but we also felt we had enough military force to back them up, and it was going to change the calculus in that entire part of the country in terms of the Coalition and the Afghan government vis-à-vis the enemy, and it did. That had, I think, a very impressive and intimidating effect on the enemy.

The PRTs brought hope with them; they brought money with them; they brought the Afghan flag with them; and they brought recognition that this was not just the Americans. This was also the Afghan government because

there was always a Ministry of Interior representative with the PRTs. And it wasn't a fort that was out there to kill people; it was there to help the communities work with the local government. So, they were widely, I think, viewed as kind of outposts of hope in the future and optimism and a positive outlook for people who had not seen any sign of the government or the Coalition except for guys running around in Humvees with guns for a long time. So, we really, I think, took the initiative away from the enemy there. My goal was, when the snow was melted and the enemy came back out at the end of winter, there would be twelve PRTs in Afghanistan, and there were. I think that changed a lot of dynamics in the southern part of the country, which we saw manifest itself in success in the registration for elections and in the election itself. The downside of that was that it created expectations that, in some ways, probably haven't been met now a few years later, so that is kind of being assessed in terms of what went wrong that we (or the Afghan government) didn't deliver on, what the expectations were or what we didn't deliver that we potentially could have out there, and how was that managed. That was one of our bold strategic moves for '04, to push out dramatic numbers of PRTs in the area in the south and the southeast. This was an important catalytic factor.

You may have seen the Security Strategy South and East in some of the documentation. I went to a meeting in late October '03, shortly after I got there, at the head of the UN chief's home, then Lakhdar Brahimi. His deputy, Jean Arnault, later became the special representative to the secretary general and succeeded Brahimi. But Brahimi sat down with us over dinner one night and basically challenged me and the Coalition to do something about the security situation in the south and east of Afghanistan, and Jean Arnault had written a paper kind of articulating what the security problem was as he saw it out there in the south and east. So, we said, "Okay, we'll take a look at it." So, I sat down with my mini-staff there and we went through this. We came back about two weeks later and said, "Here is what we think the solution is. We think we are going to design a Security Strategy South and East" (which became the counterinsurgency campaign plan for Afghanistan) "and we are going to stand up regional development zones," focusing the first one on Kandahar to deliver economic impact and accelerate the effects down there in the southeast part of the county. They were quite taken aback that we had even read the paper, much less decided to do anything about it. That helped, again, I think, cement early on our relationship with the UN mission, which was then spinning very hard to get ready for the constitutional *loya jirga* in December and January 2004. So, we began that, and that led us to the full-fledged development of the counterinsurgency campaign, and we wrote our own Security Strategy South and East that kind of came out of that. We took that and shopped

it around the U.S. Embassy, shopped it around the other embassies and the other embassy key players in Kabul, and to the UN, obviously, so we got a lot of buy-in for what we were trying to do from other actors out there, which was, again, kind of an unusual thing to do; but it got a lot of people engaged in this process and made it apparent that they were going to be a stakeholder in this and we were serious about doing something about this problem.

The thing I saw when I came there on my trip and then when I came back a few weeks later was a UN document which seemed like a red flag in front of a bull with the military in Afghanistan. The UN produced about every two weeks a security map for Afghanistan in color that had red for "no-go" areas, yellow for "dangerous-go" areas, and green for "go" areas. The guys preceding me—it drove them up the wall. They were enraged by this, because they disagreed with the chart and said, "This area is not dangerous!" and so on. So, there was this incredible negative dialogue going on and this contentious back-and-forth catfighting over the UN basically poking the Coalition in the eye over security and the Coalition totally disagreeing with the UN's assessment of security, which was not by any metrics the Coalition agreed to. It was a stupid argument to have, in my view, so we just took it off the table and said, "Fine. We are not going to get upset about map colors. We are going to work on the fundamental problems here. There is obviously a challenge in security and the international community doesn't feel like it can go down there, and we have an election coming up." So, we said, "We are not going to argue about maps any more, unless we can talk about how you design it and whether you have the right factors, and we can help you with that. But we are not going to say you guys just aren't telling a good story. You are hammering us for things you ought to be telling us," which is kind of what we do with the press sometimes. So, we said, "Okay. We will work fundamentals here, and you guys can color the map whatever way you want to." So, we just stopped having that fight with the UN, and that, in and of itself, I think, reduced tension between the UN and the military significantly, because you weren't constantly in a battle over who had the right perception of security across the country. So, that is an interesting little mini-vignette on what mattered and what didn't, and what kind of relations we had with different people in Kabul and why. So, again, I can't overemphasize the value of physically being present there, interacting with these guys, building relationships, getting to know people, and making friends with folks who you wouldn't back at home necessarily drink a beer with and watch football on Saturday or Sunday, but were very important to our effort in Afghanistan and who I genuinely have great respect for after my time there but were not people in the military sphere you typically would align with. That's critically important in an effort, in the counterinsurgency field especially, that is not about just

finding bad guys in the mountains and dropping bombs on them.

DR. HUGHES: **To a certain extent, I am very interested in that we had different nations involved in the PRTs, and the Air Force and the Marine Corps. How did that all come together? Were these disparate organizations and institutional cultures, etc., able to function together?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We didn't have any Air Force or Navy PRT commanders when I was there. We had a Marine PRT commander, and Marines and Army ground guys are pretty common to the battlefield out there. There were certainly no issues with that. With the other nations, these were PRTs operating under the Coalition, which was different than operating under NATO. As we grew those Coalition PRTs out there, I felt that they had a lot of confidence, and I heard this on numerous occasions. There was a lot of confidence with the Coalition countries' having their PRTs under the U.S./Coalition command because they knew that they would have fire support. They knew they would have a quick reaction force. They knew they would have aerial MEDEVAC [medical evacuation]. They knew they would have the ability to deliver airpower. They knew they were going to get logistically resupplied, and they knew they would be very well taken care of, as well taken care of as an American unit on the field. They did not have that confidence in NATO in many respects, in part because of NATO's lesser military capabilities and in part because of the national caveats they were operating with and the uncertainties that go with relying on some other country for something. That was not the case with relying on U.S. backup in the PRTs. So, there was a lot of comfort in that, and there was a great reluctance, in a couple of cases that I saw, to move out of that model into a NATO model as the territory shifted around to NATO. Now everything is NATO today, from the standpoint of PRTs. I am aware that they are not talking about them today, but the American PRTs still operate very differently today than the PRTs coming out of some of the NATO countries.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. That, to a certain extent, got into a question I had. What was the chain of command for the PRTs? Who did they report to?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Again, a great question. This is part of that convoluted chain of command I saw in September '03. When I first went there for that reconnaissance visit, every unit in the country seemed to report up its own reporting chain based on what kind of unit it was. The aviation units reported all the way up the aviation chain; the infantry units reported up the infantry chain; logistics units reported up the logistics chain; Special Forces units reported up the Special Forces chain. No one reported into any kind

of a unified command apparatus below CJTF-180, so we pushed very hard—this took until about March '04 to put this in place—to have two brigade headquarters in Afghanistan, one in the east and one in the south. Then, when we put those two flags on the ground, going from one brigade to two, we then aligned all of the units operating in their battle space with those brigades, so the PRTs then reported to the brigade commander, not to the CJCMOTF civil affairs soldiers back in Bagram. We had worked up some interim relationships to make the PRTs more connected to the maneuver units before that, but that finally crystallized the idea of area ownership. That brigade commander owned his whole brigade battle space and everybody in it. Now, CJSOTF had a slightly different lash-up, but the brigade commander had tremendous influence on that. Doctrinally, they have a little bit of a different setup than a regular maneuver unit would, but they were responsive to that brigade commander and they ran very well-integrated operations and were linked into the brigade headquarters. So, that was, in my view, the ideal setup finally in March '04. We had two brigades set up. We had them geographically put in the right locations. We had the right span of control for two brigades instead of having one brigade cover the entire country of Afghanistan, which was madness. Every other unit in Afghanistan covered the whole country of Afghanistan, as well. The aviation brigade commander had the whole country. The logistics commander had the whole country. It was a very uncomfortable setup from my perspective. So, we were able to finally, after all kinds of arm twisting, get that second brigade headquarters in there to be able to stand up to do that. Our predecessors never had that option.

DR. HUGHES: **I'm a little bit concerned about the time at present. I have a bunch of questions left to ask.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We can do a reprise of this sometime. Again, I really compliment you guys for taking the bull by the horns here.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, thank you, sir.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Thank you.

[End of second session. Beginning of third session.]

DR. MUNDEY: **This is Dr. Lisa Mundey, interviewing Lt. Gen. David W. Barno (USA, Ret.) regarding his time as the commander of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. It is 14 March 2007. The interview is being conducted at General Barno's office at the Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. Sir, are you sitting for the interview voluntarily?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Yes, I am.

DR. MUNDEY: **Do you have any objections to the interview being used by historians or researchers with the understanding that you will be quoted or cited accurately?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: No, not at all.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay, great. Now, we've actually gone over quite a bit of material with you already. We've talked about your transition to command; your initial briefings; communications with General Abizaid and Secretary Rumsfeld; standing up of CFC-A; problems manning CFC-A; your relationship with the U.S. Embassy; expanding PRTs; and a host of other things. So, we're going to touch base on just a couple of things where I'd like to get a little bit more information and move on to some new topics that we haven't covered yet. And to start off with, when we talked to Maj. Gen. [Peter] Gilchrist, he asked us to ask you why you had a British deputy.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I requested a British deputy. First of all, in the midst of standing up the command itself, we had a fairly extended period of time where we had no other flag officers (aside from me) in the command. As we talked about in some of the early interviews, the stand-up of the command itself was a very rocky proposition. It was not done with a great deal of preparation and foresight by those that were considering the idea that this had to happen. I was launched out there without, really, any command to fall in on. There was no real major preparatory setup or any serious plan of action or milestones—just stand up the command, then show up, and begin to flesh it out of a very small core of people that we begged, borrowed, and stole from other elements in the country. So, there were certainly no flag officers in that structure. It had to be a Coalition organization. General Abizaid asked that we try and make about 40 percent of the organization Coalition forces, so it was logical for me to attempt to get a Coalition officer to be my deputy. In my view, having worked with British officers occasionally in the past, they clearly share a very similar culture, have no language issues, have a very common understanding, I think, of a military background; but in my view, also, they had a unique, broadly speaking, level of experience in counterinsurgency warfare. So, I thought that asking for a British deputy specifically would be a very wise way to go with the Coalition, a senior flag officer in the command with me, and also to leverage what I thought was a pretty extensive amount of counterinsurgency background that the Brits had from their time in Northern Ireland, from their time in the last fifty or sixty years where they've had some reasonably successful counterinsurgency campaigns. That led me down that road. I thought it was practical to do

that, that I had a pretty good chance of getting someone, and that I could get someone that could help us as we worked through the challenges of a counterinsurgency in this environment.

We also made a decision internal to the staff as to whether we wanted to request another flag officer to be the chief of staff. I remember having a meeting in the dining facility, the mess hall, one day with some of the primary staff officers and asked them what they thought of that. I made my opinions known. I frankly wasn't too keen on the idea of having another flag officer. If I wasn't keen, they weren't at all keen on the idea because of the amount of, potentially, additional work and bells and whistles that another flag officer would bring to the headquarters. A deputy was one thing. So, we stayed with a colonel chief of staff for my entire nineteen months, and I think that was changed about the day after I left, or very shortly thereafter. There was a significant multiplication of generals that arrived in the months after I left. I'm not sure whether that was value added or not, but it was an interesting change to see in the headquarters shortly after my departure. We made out terrifically with an extraordinary amount of luck in both of our O-6 colonels who were chiefs of staff.

DR. MUNDEY: **You mentioned that you had a goal of 40 percent of the command being Coalition forces. Did you actually reach that?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: No, we never came close to that. That's my recollection. That may be flawed. I know that the number General Abizaid asked for when we came in was an initial manning number for the headquarters—yes, to have a number very close to half the headquarters be Coalition. I recollect it was about 40 percent in order to put less stress on the U.S. manning system back here and to give us a higher propensity for getting the fill on the American slots we were looking for, and so we went in with that. To fast-forward a year later, we had probably about 75 or 80 percent of the American slots filled and probably only about 15 or 20 percent of the Coalition slots filled, so we eventually recoded those out and made more American slots, because it's very, very challenging to generate, particularly from Afghanistan, Coalition support to come and fill positions. We did get great support from a myriad of different countries, but it was never in the neighborhood of anything more than probably thirty-five or forty Coalition folks altogether in a headquarters that eventually grew to be over four hundred. It was going to be a pretty small number, because countries just weren't prepared to send substantial numbers of people out to do that.

We did have them in key positions. We had a British J-5, my director of plans, the whole time I was there rotationally, and

those colonels who filled those positions were absolutely superb. I thought they were some of the finest O-6's I'd ever seen in my military career, so we got terrific support from the Brits on that. Having a British deputy didn't hurt with that, either, I'm certain. We had a Canadian, typically, as our civil-military officer, our J-9—again, we got good folks from the Canadians in that department—and we had a variety of others in different positions. Those are two that really stood out as major Coalition senior staff positions, and we had others sprinkled throughout the command. There were challenges there in terms of who had what language capabilities; who had what computer capabilities; who had ever served in a Coalition headquarters before; who had staff experience that was multinational, as opposed to only their own country; so, there were some interesting dynamics. But the challenge, which I think we met, was to find the right niche for each of these people, so that they could contribute, they could learn from the experience, they could help us with some of the challenges that we had, then go back home; and it would be a positive experience for them, and one that their country would want to support by continuing to send officers out to fill those billets. I think we did that quite well and had a lot of success. I don't recall any country ever pulling out of a rotation in the headquarters as a staff officer, which is a good sign, if my recollection's accurate.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Great. We talked about your relationships with the people above you, Abizaid and Secretary Rumsfeld. How about the commanders below you? What were your relationships with [Brig. Gen. Lloyd] Austin and [Maj. Gen. Eric T.] Olson?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: In each case, all three of these officers I had known before. I had three different—we're just talking on the CJTF-180 and then -76—the three two-star commanders that served there sequentially. First, Lloyd Austin, commander of the 10th Mountain Division; he and I had been battalion commanders together at Fort Bragg. I had immense respect for him. I thought he was a supremely talented officer, and we got along very, very well. He, I think, was probably the most thorough and the most aggressive about keeping me informed about what his operation was doing. XVIII Airborne Corps had essentially pulled out in the spring of 2003 and had replaced itself with the 10th Mountain Division headquarters that was reconfigured to attempt to be a corps-level headquarters and a division-level headquarters at the same time, which was a very flawed construct. The outlook there was, we couldn't afford to have both a division and a corps headquarters in Afghanistan. We could perform the mission with the division headquarters doing both levels—doing theater-strategic, operational, and tactical missions. What I think occurred—what I observed, at least—was that when you remove the corps headquarters, you gave the

division headquarters that mission. Even though you had a three-star there for part of the same time, all the players defaulted down to the tactical level. They became tacticians. I thought there was significantly inadequate attention given to the theater-strategic role at the headquarters and the operational role at the headquarters because tactical activities consumed them. It was only a single headquarters performing all those functions, which, I thought, did not work fundamentally. So, when we brought my headquarters up to stand it up in Kabul, that was clearly the role I was going to take, what I could describe as the theater or regional-strategic role, the high-end operational role. At Bagram, separated by sixty kilometers, was a divisional headquarters that was still configured as a JTF, but they had the low-end operational role and tactical role, and we kept those fairly distinct. And, again, Lloyd Austin oversaw that transition and, I thought, did a magnificent job at doing that. And there were always broad pieces shared between the two organizations. People in one were standing up, taking people out of the other. He and I—again, we're very good friends—had a great relationship over there in a very difficult environment because I was having to build my headquarters mostly out of his personnel strength. He was extraordinarily generous in giving me key people. He took his J-3 and his J-2 and gave them to me to use in whatever capacity that I wanted, and he defaulted down to the next level. He was totally a selfless soldier in this and really was instrumental in helping our success in the stand-up with the CFC headquarters and allowing us to focus on that theater-strategic mission. So, I thought that went very well.

He was changed out in, I guess, about February of '04, with the CG [commanding general] of the 25th Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Rick Olson, whom I also knew. He had just come out from commandant of cadets, West Point. Each of the three commanders I had were very capable guys. They had very different personalities, and each had a different style of operating. All three were effective in the environment over there, but the personalities and backgrounds clearly played a role in terms of how they looked at it and how their forces looked at higher headquarters. In 10th Mountain Division and with General Austin, who had spent a lot of time in the 82d, it was normal for him for his division and from his experience to have an operational three-star headquarters. They always had XVIII Airborne Corps. He was always in an XVIII Airborne Corps unit, and so his outlook—having been corps chief of staff, having served in the 82d several times, having served in 10th Mountain, which was a component division of XVIII Airborne Corps—is that it was a natural fit to respond to an operational three-star headquarters and relate to the division as part of the corps. 25th Division and their successors, SETAF—Southern European Task Force, from Italy—had no such relationship with any three-star operational headquarters; so their

outlook—and it took me some time to figure this out—their outlook in a sense seemed to be that three-star headquarters were administrative burdens on two-star operational headquarters. And that's probably a little too harsh, but it was clear that something wasn't fitting together the way it had with 10th Mountain Division. And there were rocks and bumps with 10th Mountain, as well, because they were not used to having a higher headquarters in Afghanistan, except themselves. Whenever you impose a headquarters over someone, you get some degree of friction. But I finally did realize with 25th—and I had served in 25th a couple of times and knew the environment out there quite well—that their three-star headquarters historically had been an administrative headquarters, had no operational functions, so there wasn't that operational linkage of reporting, of information sharing, of back-briefs, of guidance and direction that you would expect from a division operating inside a corps, because that was a division operating by itself in the Pacific. Its administrative headquarters had no impact operationally on what the division was doing. I saw this when I was there as a lieutenant and captain in the seventies and eighties. I saw it again as a flag officer when I was there in the late nineties, and it hadn't changed any. That perception was still there—that the division didn't work for anybody, that there was no operational linkage. So, I think we had some growing pains there as the 25th came in to get them in an environment where they were used to operating with an operational headquarters above them, that there was a necessity to share information with, to seek guidance, or to get approval on certain things.

I tried to run, I think, an extraordinarily decentralized operation over there and stay out of the tactical business entirely. We did, I think, over time, see that we did not have an adequate system of back-briefs and direction and guidance. On the good end of it, I think we gave exceptionally thorough and comprehensive broad guidance within which the CJTF at Bagram could operate. On the downside of that, I think that at times we saw them making moves, retrospectively, that we probably should have been involved with up front on the approval, decision-making process, whether it was repositioning a battalion that was perhaps 20 percent of your combat strength to a completely different part of the country or beginning an operation with goals that they hadn't really checked with us on. My philosophy on command and control is that the two are a zero-sum game. The more command you have, the less control you impose, and the more control you have, the less command you actually have. And so, I tend to undercontrol and, I would like to think, be on the side of decentralized command. I never got too energized about much of that unless it got outside of the commanders' intent. That's the environment you'd like to put your subordinates in, which is give them as much latitude as possible when it comes

to accomplishing their mission, stay informed as to what they're doing, and let them operate very aggressively and broadly within left and right limits. They're well sketched out, but they're wide enough to give them a lot of latitude in doing their job. I think we were pretty successful in doing that. Sometimes we got a little too far off the edge of that, I suppose, but I was more comfortable doing that than putting people in an environment where they were overcontrolled.

I think, culturally, parts of our Army—and that, maybe, is changing—my observation of the last ten years is that parts of our Army are very control-centric. Our technology, and to some degree our philosophic upbringing, in some cases, has made us very control-centric in wanting to know everything all the time and being involved in very, very detailed type things. I was quite averse to that. I mentioned in one of the earlier interviews that I declined to have the command and control system in place up in Kabul that they had in Bagram, which was a twice-daily, essentially, video teleconference or audio teleconference with all the commanders in the field, their battlefield update brief or battlefield update assessment, the BUB or the BUA, which was in the morning and the evening. I did not participate in those ever during my time in Afghanistan, intentionally, because I did not want to be involved in what Alpha Company, 1-87th Infantry, was doing that day in Kajaki Dam. That would take me down a rat hole I didn't want to be in. I was very comfortable with them doing that. I thought, there's clearly a necessity for tactical units and even low-end operational folks to be involved with that, but for my level, I wanted to try and be the integrator and the azimuth-setter for the entire operation and allow the details of that to be worked out by subordinates. That's fairly uncommon.

So, that was just an interesting observation on the 25th as they came in and, again, it took me many months to figure out why this was more problematic in terms of information sharing and back and forth than it should have been, both staff to staff and commander to commander, quite frankly, and I think that we sorted that out over time and reached a mutually agreed-upon position. There was much more of push-back or friction there than I would have anticipated. In retrospect, after a few months over there, I finally realized why that was the case—and certainly part of it's always personalities—but it's also, clearly, the environment that division came out of, where they had no history of having a higher headquarters, and so having a higher headquarters in a combat environment was strikingly new and different for them, and they had no grooves to fit into that which they were used to dealing with. It took me longer to figure that out than it should have. Their successor there, the Southern European Task Force—I only worked with [Maj. Gen.] Jason [K.] Kamiya, the commanding general, for

about three months before I departed. I'd known Jason for many years. He took over my brigade from me at Fort Polk, so we knew each other quite well. He had the disadvantage of coming in with an organization that was not (for the very first time in Afghanistan) a divisional headquarters tasked to perform a divisional headquarters and CJTF role. I only saw the front end of that, but that was probably an unfair proposition for that headquarters to take on because of their very, very small size, relative to a division headquarters, and because they were not configured to fight like a division was configured to fight. Whereas the 25th or the 10th Mountain might, to form into a CJTF, have had to add 25 to 30 percent—and I'm guessing roughly—additional manning to flesh them out into a combined joint task force, SETAF, because of its very tiny size, had to add somewhere between 60 and 80 percent additional manning to flesh them out into a combined joint task force. So, they were much more of a pickup team, much more of an ad hoc organization that had been formed but was not yet complete, by the time they deployed to Afghanistan. The individuals didn't always roll in until the very last minute.



From left, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, General Barno, and General Kamiya salute during the Combined Joint Task Force-76 transfer of authority ceremony, 15 March 2005.

They struggled, I think, with this lack of a cohesive core that had worked together for a very long time (unlike a divisional headquarters) for a good bit of time during their tour there. So, I think that one of the lessons learned out of that—again, I didn't watch the second half or the last two-thirds of their time there—but one of the things that I've heard discussed is that it was probably not a reasonable mission to give that headquarters because they were not configured to execute that level of complexity and didn't have the core base of people to be able to fall in on that, and then just add a relatively small percentage to flesh them out in the joint arena and in the combined arena. So, again, on their side of the house, I think that they, again, were not used to having a three-star headquarters but were also struggling with some of these internal dynamics. So, I think that that was the third of three different relationships between the organization in Bagram and us in Kabul.

It's also probably instructive to look at that from the standpoint of continuity and change. We—the U.S. Army, the military, the Defense Department—made a quick but conscious decision at the beginning of this war—Afghanistan, Iraq—that we would not rotate individuals, but that we would rotate units into the fight. There are tremendous advantages to that from the standpoint of unit cohesion and teamwork and continuity inside of that unit as it prepares at home station, works together, deploys together, fights together, learns together, bonds even further in combat, and then redeploys back home again, so it is a very powerful organization, internal to itself. That has encouraged, I think, the great success we've had in retention of people with units, reenlistment of people within the same units, and being able to keep people for longer periods of time within the military because they're with their brothers and sisters that they've bonded with through these combat operations. The downside of that was long-term continuity. Now, I was in one of the two individual augmentee headquarters in the theater. (The other one was in Iraq, with [General] George Casey's headquarters, MNF-I [Multi-National Force-Iraq], which stood up in the same way that we did, although in a much more, I think, thought-out fashion and certainly a much better supported fashion than we did.) Our two headquarters, which were at the top of the two theaters of war, and we were the only continuity. We had commanders that were staying for a long time. We had staff officers that were eventually staying for a long time—they certainly weren't on a one-year rotation where everybody came and everybody left at the same time. Our immediate subordinate headquarters came in with a worldview that they had derived from being at home station and reading newspapers and staying up on intelligence. They brought that worldview to the situation. Sometimes they adjusted to what was on the ground, sometimes they didn't, and sometimes it took longer than it should.

They only had a one-year sprint that they were running, and so their viewpoints, their knowledge, their historical assessments, their continuity from their predecessors, were relatively weak. They did not have a view that took them beyond the end of their tour, necessarily. It became the responsibility of the senior headquarters, which was very problematic. When you're trying to build bonds and relationships with individuals out there, particularly at the local area, but also at the governmental area—in my case, at Kabul, and at the provincial level for PRTs and for tactical units—this constant turnover had a deleterious effect on our confidence that we had built in the local population and the local leadership as we rotated units in and out. Now, we calmed that down significantly during my tenure in Afghanistan by putting in place what I call area ownership for our units. A unit would go into an area, and instead of operating out of a base and conducting a raid for two weeks up in some remote area and then coming back, we planted them in that province for their whole tour. We said, "This is your province. You own the whole thing." It was the New York police precinct concept, which I think we've talked about before: "You're responsible for the results. You get to know all the people. You get to know all the elders. You get to know all the mullahs. You get your units aligned with certain parts of the province. It's yours, and you have the responsibility for this thing. I want everybody there to know who you are at the end of all this. We're not going to send you six provinces away for a two-week operation unless we have some tactical emergency," and that's how you build the fundamentals of a counterinsurgency campaign, on that long-term knowledge and understanding and continuity and confidence and trust between units and the populations out in these areas.

A one-year tour in a province is an immense, positive change from these two-week in-and-outs that we'd been doing before that. So, that was helpful, but, again, one year has its own limitations. So, I think that's one of the retrospectives we need to think about with regard to counterinsurgencies: Are you wise to put all of your units on a one-year rotation scheme, where everybody comes and goes at the same time and there's no continuity? We tried in the last month or six weeks that they were in country to get 10th Mountain Division, not maliciously but for continuity purposes, to document, essentially, all the things that went wrong during their tour, all the things that were screwed up, that were bad decisions. At CFC, we shared it as well, whether it was having a bombing strike that killed nine children from an A–10 or having bombs go awry or going in and breaking down someone's home to find out he's a government official and having a big brouhaha over that. These things are part and parcel of warfare. I had a running mental list of these that I had been involved with during my time in Afghanistan, but we couldn't for the life of us get the division to document

those and turn them over to their successor, presumably because it was an admission that "We didn't do everything perfectly." So, when that division walked out the door, there was no one there in that headquarters at Bagram with the new division coming in that knew a darned thing about the mistakes that had been made. And so, within months, I started to see the same mistakes happening again. It was extremely frustrating.

I'm told when the Brits did rotations in and out of Northern Ireland, they would always take 20 percent of the unit, and they'd give it a six-month overlap one way or the other, so you'd always have that base of "Wait a minute! We just did this and it didn't work, and here's why it didn't work" or "We just screwed this up here six weeks ago in this particular village, and they're now angry about this." You had that knowledge. And when you take 100 percent of your people out in a two-week period of time and replace them with 100 percent new faces, you lose all of that. If it's a mistake, or if it's a problem, or it's something that didn't work, or it's some other catastrophe out there, no one really wants to publicize that, so it doesn't get captured for the next guys, and they get to make the same mistakes over again. I think there are some significant limitations that we probably underestimated in our rotational scheme. It's done other good things for us. It's certainly preserved the all-volunteer force, which I could argue is an overriding objective of our military right now, arguably even at a higher level than winning the wars that we're in, in some respects. It's certainly done that. It's certainly contributed to doing that, but there's a price to that out on the battlefield, which is your lack of continuity and your lack of long-term understanding. Every twelve months, it's the first day of school. You're starting over on the first day of school again. Everybody's trying to find their lunch box and get their rain jacket and discover where their shoes are, when we already knew all those things six months earlier. Now a new crew has come in, and they're trying to find their lunch boxes and their raincoats, and we don't have to do it that way. And I don't think we've challenged ourselves adequately to find ways to maybe get the best of both worlds out there. For example, we ought to figure out how to get the same units rotating back and forth to Afghanistan alone, and others back and forth only to Iraq.

DR. MUNDEY: **It's very interesting you say that. We've interviewed several PRT commanders, and that's one of the things that they talked about, is continuity, because on their level, they are dealing with personnel who in some cases are only there for four months or six months at a time.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: That said, though, on the PRTs, a little bit of the saving grace there, by sheer coincidence, was that the nonmilitary components of the PRT were on a different rotational

scheme from the military guys. So, what I saw over and over again is the military element of the PRT—which is probably 80 percent, 90 percent, of the population—they would get up and be replaced lock, stock, and barrel by a new military unit, but all of the civilians would remain because they were somewhere in the middle of their four-month rotation or their six-month rotation or their three-month rotation, and so, by sheer chance, you bought yourself some continuity and some knowledge, and so, those people became the wise men and the wise women out there in that PRT for the next month or two, until everybody else kind of figured out the lay of the land.

Now, ISAF was the same, and more, and worse, because during my tenure there, nineteen months, ISAF had four different commanders and four different ISAFs. Typically, within a two-week period, the entire headquarters would change out and every single unit would change out. Two weeks later, you'd face a new crew of people who had absolutely no knowledge of what was going on, other than what they had read in a book. So, that was really a sporting proposition between new commanders with new azimuths and ideas and directions and a new staff—it was their staff from Europe, somewhere. You got some significant zigzags in terms of what ISAF was willing to do, what their direction was, where they played, and how they operated. And again, the horrifying part of that was, every six months—it has not dramatically changed, as best as I can tell, over there. Now ISAF owns the entire operation, so that ought to give us some pause.

DR. MUNDEY: **One of the things that you mentioned you wanted to talk about last time was the media. So I'll open it up to you to—**

LT. GEN. BARNO: I took what, I think, some people might refer to (for its time) as a different outlook on the media and with media in Afghanistan. I do not share the school of thought that sees the media as an adversary. Some of this may sound like it's platitudes, but I genuinely have seen the media as a positive influence because of their role in keeping the American people and the global audience informed out there. Certainly they're like the weather, which is to say, you can't change the media; they're going to be a fact of life. You have to deal with it, and my view has always been that the more you engage with them and the more time you give them, the more opportunities you give them to get out and see things, the better off you're going to be. The best way of getting your story out is to get out and tell it, and the commanders have to do that. I firmly believe that commanders—including me as the senior commander—have to be in front of the media, have to be talking to the media, have to be accessible to the media. We mouth that platitude sometimes, but we seem to rarely do that.

I did, I thought, a considerable amount of media while I was over there, and I sought opportunities to do media as much as I could. Number one, the commander's got the vantage point no one else has. The commander and the public affairs officer and your spokesman are not the same people with the same outlook with the same responsibilities. Most of it was Western media, because the Afghans had a very nascent, undeveloped media structure. They had the beginnings of media, but nothing that was recognizable to the extent it would be in the West, and they were relatively passive in terms of how they approached media. There were a number of Western media reporters over there—BBC, *New York Times*, *60 Minutes*—many of whom were transitory. There were several very, very good reporters who came and stayed, who were there before I got there and are still there today—Carlotta Gall being one, with the *New York Times*. So, I made a point of trying to get to know these folks and get inside their heads a little bit, and let them get inside my head a little bit, and get out and talk to them.

Some of them, of course, were relatively negative and confrontational on certain things, and you could expect that. They also certainly respected your willingness to engage with them and talk with them. So, not only for visiting media that came in on a fairly regular basis—although mostly only for high-visibility events, like the election—but for the long-term media, we tried to keep them in the loop. I tried to look for ways to engage them personally. I also made a very strong effort to get embedded media out as often as we could, out to our units, and that always paid big dividends. Probably some of the best stories came out of Special Forces and out of patrols with 10th Mountain Division. Some units even made enemy contact while reporters were there. We saw some very good stories out there, I thought.

The Afghan story is a very good story, and one of my contentions on information operations writ large is that you can't spin a bad story into a good story. You have to have good news to tell a good story. I thought we had a lot of good news stories in Afghanistan. I hammered on my PAO [public affairs officer] folks, not infrequently, about mouthing platitudes that sounded relatively sophomoric about the "cowardly Taliban" and things that I thought were unnecessarily offensive culturally to these folks and didn't treat the enemy with the degree of respect that he deserved to be treated with. That might sound a bit odd, but I think that some of the things that I, to this day, read on how we're characterizing enemy operations, how we're characterizing attacks on American forces, etc., is as though they were illegitimate from the standpoint of warfare. So, I always was very conscious as I was looking at my own media—we had press spokesmen out usually three, four days a week—that

we weren't saying things that I viewed as kindergarten-level approaches to the nature of the war that we were in. I mean, things didn't translate readily between Western thinking, outlooks, and approaches and Eastern or Afghan thinking, outlooks, and approaches, but I was particularly concerned about some of the things where we almost were taunting the Taliban because of the way we described them and things of that nature, which I thought were very, very inappropriate. I rode our media guys pretty hard on that type of stuff, and I see us, today, defaulting back into that groove as we talk about what the Taliban's doing. I find it a bit unprofessional in some ways, or unsophisticated if you will, in terms of how you interact with the enemy.

Now, that said, I watched with a lot of interest how the Taliban handled their media approach, and, of course, they had the tremendous advantage of being able to say whatever they wanted. For example, every time an aircraft went down, literally within minutes, the Taliban would be talking to a spokesman and claiming credit for having shot down an aircraft, whether he even knew where it was or not. It didn't matter. So, we kind of had to accept the fact that they were going to do that. Now, I'm encouraged that, as we worked our way through those things, that we kept the media informed as to what was happening, even though we didn't have final results. The media now, as I watch them report out of Afghanistan, will report that the Taliban frequently will claim credit for aircraft that they didn't shoot down at the end of the day. So, that's a good outcome in terms of how you keep the media engaged and you talk to them and keep them informed.

I will tell you that one of my positive experiences over there in dealing with media is that, again, as I made myself accessible to folks, on more than one occasion, we had media people that were very helpful to us in giving us a heads-up on stories that they were going to write in certain cases, that helped us at least prepare for them, especially if it was a negative story, on occasion, and also to give us insight that we didn't have from other sources. So, I thought they were very, very valuable. I always read their reports with a lot of interest, because there's a tendency to get into a "spin-cycle" thinking that what people are criticizing you for is simply balderdash. But the realities are, typically, most of the critiques of our operations in Afghanistan by the media have had a degree of truth in them that we had to seriously think about and assess, and look to see if we had to change how we were doing things, in order to address that. Reading their reporting was extraordinarily valuable because it was like getting a second set of situation reports from an objective observer, who wasn't wearing your uniform, that was looking at your actions from a relatively unbiased viewpoint, if you will, or certainly an outsider's viewpoint, and saying, "Here's what it looks like from the outside." You

can't do that if you're in uniform. You can't assess your own operations inside your own organization and say, "Yes, this is what it objectively looks like." So, that outside viewpoint is tremendously valuable perspective from the media.

I also did a fair bit of media when I came back to the United States, whether it was Pentagon press or going up to CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies] and talking about our counterinsurgency strategy. I was amused at the thing I did at CSIS in '04, which was carried on C-SPAN, and I had innumerable people tell me they had seen it on C-SPAN and it was actually a pretty good lay-down of what our strategy was in Afghanistan, what we were doing with PRTs. So, that paid much higher dividends and had a much greater reach than I thought it was going to when we originally signed up to do that. So, it's an important element of being able to tell your story. People inevitably were shocked and surprised and pleased at our approach in Afghanistan when they heard it, especially when they heard it from the commander, and were surprised that the commander understood what was going on from a standpoint of something other than sheer kinetics. So, the degree to which you can get commanders out in front of the public and in front of the media as a venue to the public, I think, is extraordinarily important. We don't do enough of that. We don't encourage people enough about that.

Now, the other side of the coin. I was talking to somebody here a few weeks back that commented on a quote from [USMC General] Tony Zinni when he was the commander of CENTCOM. Zinni had said that when he was commander of CENTCOM, he only got chewed out five different times in his, I guess, four years. Four of the five were for things he had said to the media. And that was certainly my experience in Afghanistan. The only time I got chewed out in Afghanistan or took brickbats from my superiors were on two or three media-type things. Now, that's an important point because the reality is that all the good media in the world doesn't counterbalance a couple of stories that get spun wrong, you say something wrong, you make an inappropriate comment, or your words get taken out of context, and somebody gets upset about it back in Washington. This worries me because what we inevitably do here is we send a message to commanders that: "Yes, we want you out in front of the press, but if you goof it up, you're going to get hammered." You might not get chewed out for a single tactical operation in two years, but if something comes out in the *Early Bird* that reflects adversely on the administration, on you, on the military, on what policy is, you're probably going to get chewed out in some fashion. You'll get a nasty phone call from somebody. So, commanders are going to look at that and say, "Well, why the hell should I be out in front of the media? Tell me where the advantage is to doing

this because all the advantages are intangible." Some of them are long term. Most of them you'll get no positive feedback on from anybody, certainly not your bosses. But any negative thing that comes out in the media that you've got a fingerprint on, you're going to get plenty of negative feedback on that. So, we've created a system, inadvertently, where we've tremendously disincentivized commanders from talking to the media, interacting with the media. It's a losing proposition. What you're doing is basically you're out—and this is my outlook—you're just going to go out and take risks. You're going to take risks and talk to these guys, and it's not always going to come out right, but because of what you get out of it intangibly, and what your command and what your mission gets out of it intangibly, that outweighs the fact that you're going to get your butt chewed at some point in time. And it happens inevitably. But again, what our leadership has to understand, both military leadership and civilian leadership, is that if you go after commanders every time they screw something up in the media, they're going to stop talking to the media, and at the end of the day, that's far, far worse than anything that comes out from some individual story. And that's the environment that we seem to be operating in today.

I laughed when I heard Zinni's comment, because that was exactly my experience. The only negative phone calls I ever got in each case were media things. In over nineteen months, that was it—nothing on a military operation, nothing on a political operation, nothing on anything going on with the interagency process, nothing on dealing with the embassy, nothing with dealing with allies—the media, yes. That's way out of whack. I don't know how you fix that, but I think it's important that leadership on the military side and on the civilian side get sensitized to the fact that you want your commanders out there in front of the media, you want them engaging with these folks, and you have to take the lumps that go with that. Just like we will forgive mistakes our subordinates make and we'll provide protection for them and shields for them on honest mistakes, we've got to do the same thing for senior commanders, or you're never going to see them out in the media, by and large. So, we've got to get people out of that mode because this is a war that's being waged in the media, on the Internet, in newspapers, on radio, on television, in al Jazeera, and if we don't get the commanders out talking to these people, making their side of the story known, then we've surrendered that part of the battlefield, and that's a very foolish thing to do. But we've incentivized commanders to do just that, which is kind of frightening.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, what I hear you saying is that the standard for media relations must be a positive story all the time, or there'll be some chastisement down the road at some point?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Probably not necessarily a positive story, but if you're in the story, and you contributed to somehow, a negative quote, something like that, whereas if you're not in the story at all, then that's the perfect world as far as everybody's concerned. And, of course, that again incentivizes you to stay away from the media. If you stay hunkered down in your fighting position, you never talk to the media, you never get quoted, you never have a comment that a reporter spins back some other way, and there's nothing about you in there, then you're golden. I could have done no media in Afghanistan for nineteen months and nobody would have said "boo" to me. It would have been perfectly fine, because it's a no-win, no-loss, even-score game. No one cares. If your mission suffered because of that, no one could really tell, and no one could really hold you accountable for it. But if I'm out in the media, and I have a hundred media encounters, and out of a hundred media encounters, I have three quotations that go bad, get taken out of context, said at the wrong time, or say something we didn't want to say about U.S. policy, I'm going to get three phone calls. I'm not going to get ninety-seven good phone calls or ninety-seven anything for those other stories. I'm going to get three phone calls calling me to task for the three things that get out of the box. So, if you're a commander, you don't know which of the hundred calls that's going to be, which of the hundred interviews that's going to be. So, if you're a commander, why on earth would you bother to do that, when it's painful to start with? The ninety-seven things that came out, none of those are fun, easy, enjoyable, or positive, and of the ninety-seven stories, probably ninety of them are neutral stories. You might have seven positive, and then you may have three that get off the railroad somewhere. So, if you're dealing with that kind of mix, why the hell even do it? I mean, you've got plenty of other things to do. Reporters are not fun people to interact with normally, unless you've got a high tolerance level for people that want to give you a hard time—and I kind of do—but you know, there's no reason to do that. That's how we've defined military leadership today. So, we literally have created an unfortunate environment out there where at least we've ceded—at least the propensity, the tendency, the trend line is to cede that territory to the enemy, let them just run with the ball, and we just stay out of the limelight and let our public affairs officers go out there and mouth platitudes off the talking points. I don't think that's good.

DR. MUNDEY: **One of the other things that you mentioned that you wanted to talk about was this relationship between the State Department and the Defense Department. What would you like to say about that?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: The old quote on that is that "Defense is from Mars and State is from Venus," and there is a significant, well-known cultural difference between people that grow up in the State Department and people that grow up in the military. It can

be overcome, but it takes a tremendous amount of work and effort on both sides to do that. When I was doing the Free Iraqi Forces training mission in Hungary in early '03, I worked with our embassy in Budapest pretty extensively. That was probably the first time on a significant basis that I'd worked in and around an embassy and kind of watched how they operated and dealt with their folks coming down to see us. Obviously, I'd bumped around State Department people a little bit before, but there's clearly a different culture there. In the military, you kind of grow up in the teamwork culture where accomplishing a mission, which is to get something done, is the overarching order of the day. In the State Department, to caricaturize it a bit, it's a culture of "observe and report," and the highest-value outcomes are the well-done reporting cables back to Washington. So, if that's what your organization values and you're doing that individually—by the way, you don't write cables collectively as a team and then submit them—your skill in the State Department, in many ways, is graded by your individual performance, always in your individual written performance in terms of cables and other reports that you write. So, you've got a very individualistic culture there, and the selection process for State Department officers is extraordinarily tough. It's based on individual merit, individual academic talent, and individual intellectual capabilities—much different than the military process. You've got two types of individuals that are radically different from each other, who have dramatically different value sets, who operate in very different ways, whose valued products are significantly different from each other, who don't fuse together in groups well, who are both great patriots, and they're both serving our country, but from completely different ends of the spectrum. Most military folks don't have too much interaction with State Department folks, and vice versa. State probably has more than military.

There's an immense misconception in the military that if State Department people would only get out and do their jobs, the military effort would be a great success, and that this is not really a military thing, it's a political thing. Well, I reject that outlook from several vantage points. One is that war is an extension of politics by other means. We fight wars in a political context, and winning the war at the end of the day is the ultimate political objective. It's not "winning the military part of the war and losing other parts of the war, and that's okay." The military has somehow gotten off on what I call fragmentism, where we've boxed our little part of the war into a nice, neat container, and we're working to get all green block checks in our part while everyone else goes down the tubes and gets red checks in theirs. Then we blame it on them. It's a bit disturbing to see that.

Part of it is this misunderstanding about the capacity of the State Department. In Afghanistan, we did a wide variety of

missions that were traditionally State Department missions, whether it was setting up elections, or putting military people in the political or economic section of the embassy, or giving the ambassador a set of military planners, or writing the Mission Performance Plan for the embassy with those planners. We did all types of things that in no way, shape, or form fit the military context, and we did it because we had twenty thousand Americans in uniform in Afghanistan, and we had two hundred State Department people in Afghanistan. And those numbers mean something, and that's a pretty good ratio of the capacity of the Defense Department and the State Department. This coming year, the Defense Department budget is going to be $716 billion. The State Department budget, if you roll everything in there, is probably going to be around $60 billion. There're sixty-five hundred Foreign Service officers in the State Department; there are 1.4 million military people in uniform. Those aren't relatively close cousins to each other in terms of capabilities, but military folks think that their State Department ought to be contributing all this additional capacity, so that they come into it with that misconception that State and Defense are kind of co-equal organizations. Defense is an 800-pound gorilla, and State's a 95-pound beach weakling, who's losing weight. It's going downhill, and we don't have any conception of how the two organizations stack out capacity-wise to each other or what their missions are. And the State Department missions, again, with that individualistic focus and the observe-and-report focus, are not necessarily to change things, accomplish things, finish things, or to complete programs or seize the objective like the military gets drilled in from Day 1. When you blend those two cultures together, you've got some huge disparities there. So, one of the things I tried to do, personally, was to break down as many of those barriers as I could.

As I think we talked about, I established an office in the embassy thirty feet down the hall from the ambassador. I lived on the embassy compound, fifty feet from the ambassador. I saw him for several hours every morning. I saw him frequently in the evenings. I spent a lot of my time in embassy country team meetings, which are painfully boring events that have nothing to do with military operations, to show that I was part of that team, that this was a single, integrated team. We had a bunch of the military guys on the walls for those meetings. I'm sure people were wondering what the hell we were doing there because we were talking about all kinds of things that had very little to do with the security of the country or military mission or things of that nature, but it sent that message that we were one team. It caused us to get to know all these people. We became friends. I became good friends with the heads of the USAID there, both of them. I became a good friend of the ambassador. I became good friends with

the DCM, certainly great friends with the chief of station. All of the people there in that country team meeting knew who you were, and you knew who they were. You knew you lived on the same compound, and you were sharing the same hardships. You weren't some remote force that was an hour-and-a-half drive away in some barbed wire–fortified compound. So, that changed the dynamic of the linkage between the military in Afghanistan, in my opinion, and the State Department and the embassy in Afghanistan. It became much more of a single-team, unified effort.

As I thought about it—I never really thought about it this way when I was there, and I didn't articulate it ever this way when I was there—but the relationship between me as the military commander and the ambassador as the chief of mission, really probably is best described in military terms as a supporting-supported relationship. The ambassador as the chief of mission was the supported part of the relationship, and I was the supporting part of the relationship with the military. Now I'm sure some of the military guys would have seizures hearing that, but that probably is a fairly apt description of what our relationship evolved to and how I understood what my role was there in the military sense. We had things, clearly, that we were doing that weren't directly related to what the ambassador was doing, but we were in many ways a supporting cast player to an overall, integrated embassy effort that we helped plan, enable, provide people to, and think through together with the ambassador.

Even in the last several days, I've heard again this idea that we've got this military and security situation over here in one box: The military does this, then—in this other box, over here, across the room—we've got this reconstruction problem, an economic problem, a social problem, and a narcotics problem, and that belongs to the State Department and INL and Commerce and Treasury. That's balderdash. This is a single, unified fight, and it's a single war, and there's a single set of enemies who don't look at it as a multiple-agency effort that they have to stitch together. To the extent we could when I was there, we mashed those boxes together, and we had a single box, and everything was in that single box. All the different efforts complemented each other in an integrated counterinsurgency campaign that's got to pull all of those different elements of power together in a single, unified campaign plan, which we had and which we built a lot of consensus for both within the embassy and within the international community there. That was, I think, a dramatic difference from what had occurred before and a part of it was through the collocation value and what that brought to the table in the second- or third-order effects.

It also, unfortunately, was a significant difference from what we have today. What we found after I left and after

Ambassador Khalilzad left (within a few weeks of each other), was that the two organizations immediately defaulted back to their basic cultures. The next commander moved out of the embassy, moved back to his military compound. He stopped attending country team meetings. The ambassador and the commander feuded on a regular basis according to accounts from a number of different people, although of course, not publicly. Part of that was the organizational cultures. One of the things that was happening in the last couple months I was there is that—this is from Big State back in Washington—there was a "normalization" effort of the embassy under way, which was to make the embassy in Kabul like every other embassy in the world, and normalize how the embassy was designed and normalize the military relationship in the embassy, which was code for "Get the military back in an OMC-type of relationship with the embassy and not in this kind of bastardized arrangement." I cautioned them all before I left, publicly, that normalization should not be an excuse for trying to separate the military and the embassy once again, but that's exactly what happened, within a matter of weeks. Today, it's gone to the extent where we don't even have a three-star headquarters there anymore. So, we're back to where we were in some respects in early 2003, which I think we will come to regret very quickly. I think that was one of the great success stories of our time in Afghanistan—the degree of integration of embassy and military. I've got a good friend who spent a good bit of time out there, back and forth, doing assessment visits, and he told me recently that he doesn't believe in integration anymore. I was shocked, and I asked him how he could say that because we had such success with integration. He said, looking at it now, he is convinced that—and I don't agree with him, necessarily—the reason it was so successful was the personality of the ambassador and the personality of the commander. When those changed, everything went back to its normal groove of competition and lack of cooperation and lack of integration. You could make a pretty good argument there, I suppose. But if we don't use the model that we devised, we're going to have to devise a working model that can fuse the military and the mission responsibilities in a country that's fighting an insurgency campaign. And to the best of my knowledge, we don't have any better models in the last ten years than the one we had from '03 to '05 in Afghanistan. So, hopefully, some of our commentary will help illuminate that for others that are trying to find good ways of doing this and the best practices for doing this.

DR. MUNDEY: **Turning our attention, for the moment, back to combat operations, just to clarify a couple of things, we were talking about how CFC-A had the theater, regional, strategic, and the CJTF-180/-76 had the operational. Who actually approved combat operations in theater?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: Well, it depends on what level of approval you're talking about. For example, if your company was going to conduct a raid some night in Badakhshan Province or in Paktika Province, the battalion commander would do that. Normally, the operations are approved one, sometimes two, levels above. So, a major military operation, like a named operation, MOUNTAIN THRUST or something like that—because it would normally be about a battalion-sized operation—a division commander, CJTF-76 or -180 commander, would approve that. I would be knowledgeable of it, but again, I think that was one of the things I was not entirely comfortable with, was the degree of visibility we had on the lay-down of those operations. I was generally pretty comfortable. They were always within our intent, and that was absolutely the case, I think, in '04 as we were doing our preps for the election and focusing on the election as our military main effort for 2004. But the actual approval of the military operation, at the end of the day—I had responsibility for them, but I wasn't personally involved in approving most individual operations. The exception to that would probably be in some of the special operations categories, but we will quickly get into classified stuff if we go down that route. I did approve specific operations in a number of cases there and got briefed in detail on most—essentially all of those—in certain categories.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. I was unsure exactly how to bring up this particular subject. So I'll bring it up, and let you go with it where you would like. The issue of detainees. Obviously, we don't want to go into any sort of classified discussion here, but could you speak generally about detainee operations in Afghanistan?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We were all taken aback by the reporting out of Abu Ghraib. One of the things that I generated shortly after that all broke—and I was given some good advice on this by General [USMC Peter J.] Pace—was to take an internal look at all of our detainee operations in Afghanistan. And that was my own initiative as well, but he suggested putting a flag officer in charge of it, which I did, Brig. Gen. Chuck [H.] Jacoby. We did basically a top-to-bottom review of all our detainee operations to make sure that we were in keeping with all the laws of land warfare; with the guidance from DoD policy; we had all the right logistic systems in place; we had all the support systems in place; we had the right oversight in place. So, I launched Chuck out on a mission to go to every single detainee facility in Afghanistan and to go through a very detailed checklist of what was the situation in each one of those, from the major facility at Bagram all the way to field holding sites, and look at what our policies were, look at what units were doing, look at standardization. Very, very wise thing to do, and I certainly don't take credit for all that. Clearly, I understood that we

had to take a look at our operations based on what we were seeing out of Abu Ghraib, and so we knocked that out in about a month or so and we found, fortunately, not much that was terribly wrong. Our basic policies were sound. We had some logistics issues out at some of our more remote sites in terms of having the right kind of facilities, in looking at how long we were holding people at different sites. We did put some metrics and markers in place that said we would limit the amount of time people were being held and flush them back into the system much more quickly in these more austere locations out in remote areas, that they weren't staying there for weeks, that they were there for what became very short periods of time and then they were moved to centralized facilities where you had more of our professional military intelligence people and professional military police that could deal with them. So that was a positive change.

The good news in all that is that there was nothing that was of an Abu Ghraib nature, and there were no major systemic abuses out there. Throughout my period of time and before, in particular in Afghanistan, we would have occasional abuses that were documented and investigated and, in some cases, prosecuted. In early 2003—probably eight, nine months before I got there—there had been some deaths at Bagram, and General McNeill conducted a very extensive investigation of those deaths, which I read back through and looked at what they had found. I think that investigation helped preclude or maybe preempt some of the more egregious things that perhaps were found coming out of Abu Ghraib. Obviously, there was tragedy that entailed the beginning of that investigation, but I think that actually helped set better conditions by the time I got there for the overall detainee operations than might have been the case otherwise. I did feel that we had some degree of detailed oversight that had already been run through the system because of that investigation. But again, the Jacoby review was a very helpful thing and I thought it was useful for us.

I was concerned about our growing numbers of detainees. Part of that was looking at whether we had a complete degree of confidence on whom we were picking up and that we were keeping the right people and letting the right people go. And, of course, inevitably, we found in both cases, on occasion, we would let the wrong people go and we would keep the wrong people. And so, trying to get that into more of a coherent groove was an important facet, and I think Chuck Jacoby's top-to-bottom look was very, very helpful in helping us to really take a fine-toothed comb through the whole system to make sure it was working properly. I pushed pretty hard to try and get us to release as many detainees as we could, going through release process, and then turn them over to the Afghans. That was, I think,

a positive story, because one of the challenges of detainee operations is that there's got to be an end state to them. You don't want to keep people forever. Eventually, we'd want to turn them over to the Afghans, collectively; but in the meantime, we wanted to make sure that we were holding people properly with the right policies, with the right rights and protections, and that we weren't growing that population, and that we were continually combing through it and taking people out that we didn't think were a threat and turning them back to Afghan control. Those people were generally repatriated back to their home villages. Abu Ghraib really put a spotlight on that, but we did our own internal look to make sure that we were in good shape, and I felt pretty good after having seen the results of that.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. As with any sort of military operation, occasionally civilians are going to get involved in it, and there were a couple of instances in which a bomb went astray, civilians were killed. Who actually determined the policy with regard to the interaction with civilians? In terms of going through and looking for the cordon and search, who determined the rules of engagement, how the civilians were treated; and was there any kind of push-back from the Afghans toward U.S. and Coalition forces with that kind of interaction?**

LT. GEN. BARNO: That's a pretty comprehensive subject, I think. The rules of engagement, of course, are determined and refined throughout the chain of command, but civilians are always treated appropriately with the laws of land warfare. Specifically, though, one of the things that we did—and I don't recall if we talked about this before—was that in response to some of the complaints from President Karzai and from other senior Afghans about the nature of our operations, in spring of '04, spring/summer of '04, we sat down and devised some new guidelines. I went and briefed President Karzai on fifteen points of military operations that we had very carefully crafted to enable us to continue our military operations within Afghanistan, which now had a constitution and was getting an elected government, so we could still conduct the military operation we needed to while respecting the Afghan culture. So, we took some measures that impacted our tactical operations, which made them a little bit more challenging, in some cases, for our people to operate in, but in the strategic context allowed us to continue to do operations without alienating the population or the government. It was really a pragmatic effort to extend our freedom of action in the country as long as we possibly could. That was my goal.

I saw a very strongly growing feeling of Afghan sovereignty and the beginnings of concern and resistance against foreign forces operating with impunity throughout the country, which was us, the Americans, and to a lesser extent,

NATO and America's Coalition. I realized that we had to do something to address these concerns, as opposed to ignoring them until they came to a boiling point. I promised President Karzai that I would look at the various incidents and come back to him with some recommendations on how we could modify our operations to protect both what I used to describe as a "bag of capital," which was Afghan goodwill, that we wanted to spend that goodwill very, very slowly, very carefully, and not expend it in foolish ways by exacerbating our relations with the Afghans, alienating them, and making them very angry for reasons that didn't have any particular value to us tactically. So, I came back in with what we called the Fifteen Points, and it was a series of different things. We very clearly understood that we wanted to put Afghan police in front of our military wherever we could in going into areas. We would use tribal elders to go with us to a house to search and find individuals, arrest a person, rather than kick the door down and throw things around in the house and alienate the family. We would not have American soldiers cause Afghan women to be separated from their men, unless there was a tribal elder there with the women or, at worst case, there was an American female soldier there with the women, because the most sensitive topic in Afghanistan, by far, was treatment of women by foreign forces. That was explosive, gasoline on fire, in terms of the cultural sensitivities out there. So, we were very cautious about how we did that. We said that we would not conduct operations at night unless we had to in order to protect our forces. That sounded like a fairly dramatic change in our operations, but the realities were that most of our cordon and search operations were taking place during the daylight. We were trying to do that, because we were actually operating within a generally friendly population. What I heard from the Afghans, which resonates with Americans as well, was "How is it that we, the Afghans, with a constitution that gives us all these rights, can have people barge into our bedrooms in the middle of the night and drag our wives and children out of bed and throw them on the floor and point weapons at us?" Darn good questions. It was very clear to me that if we were going to extend our freedom of movement for many more years in Afghanistan, as opposed to bringing our freedom of movement to a stop in Afghanistan, that we were now dealing with a government that had been elected by the people, with a constitution that they had approved, with foreign forces that were in Afghanistan because the Afghans asked them to be there, not because they were in there to invade Afghanistan, that we had to operate in ways that would take that into account and protect that capital of goodwill, the bag of goodwill, for as long as we could. The day that ended, the day we spent the last of that, we were gone, we were out of Afghanistan, and that might not be in our national interest to do that. So, we were trying to modify operations in a way that would give us as long a

ride, as long a coast, as we could, and still be able to conduct our operations, but do them in slightly different ways that respected Afghan sensibilities.

We specifically identified the population of Afghanistan in late 2003 as the center of gravity of our effort, and so anything we did that jeopardized the population's support for that effort, population support for their government, or for the degree of hope which they all had for their future—that put the entire mission in Afghanistan at risk. So, we realized that the strategic objective here—protecting that center of gravity, the population—was more important than maybe the tactical objective of a platoon that wanted to go into a walled compound and kick the door down. I had to take kind of a strategic outlook here: "What's the United States going to want to do strategically, and how do we extend that for as long as we can? If we have to suboptimize some of our tactics, as long as they don't put people's lives at risk, we will do that." I was there a year beyond that. I never got any feedback from tactical units that any of those changes accorded risk to their personnel, or that they had heartburn with that, which was encouraging. So I thought that was kind of interesting.

One thing that I would comment on, on the civilian end of this, is the use of airpower. I think that one of the things that I observed in my first few months there—and fortunately, I'm observing from a distance, in the newspaper, at least now—is that there is a tendency to use airpower more robustly than was probably appropriate for an environment where the civilian population was generally on your side. In my first six months there or so, we had several instances where we were using airpower to attack individuals that we were trying to capture or kill, or we were striking at targets where we knew an individual or a cell might be in a certain area. We knew there were going to be civilians there, and, inevitably, we'd have civilian casualties. In several cases, we accidentally killed civilians while we didn't even successfully attack the target we were trying to strike. So, I ratcheted down our use of airpower fairly significantly and really focused our airpower. Any time we had a unit in contact, there was no question that we could use airpower. So, it was kind of "protect yourself when you're in a firefight," being able to use bombs, rockets, and the appropriate assets against the enemy. We didn't get terribly restrictive on that. Where I was very restrictive on airpower was when no one was in contact. Then we better be very thoughtful about whether we were going to use an aircraft with bombs or not. And that was a change. I see us kind of going back the other way a bit now, and I have some concerns about that, because what I saw in this initial use of airpower is that we were really alienating the population. Whenever we killed civilians—even in recent months here in 2007, President Karzai has been in tears at a press conference at

deaths of Afghan civilians because of Coalition airpower, NATO airpower in this case—that's a big red flag. Airpower can serve as a substitute for ground forces, but it is not as discriminate as ground forces are once you introduce it into a fight. So, we were very judicious—and I really changed the game plan with our use of airpower to really restrict it to activities where we had troops in contact. If we didn't have troops in contact—no one's at risk if you're not in contact. If you're in contact, you're at risk, then yes, we're going to deploy A–10s or attack helicopters or whatever else we need to out there. If nobody's shooting at you, if you're not in contact, you can develop a situation further without having to use airpower and drop bombs on suspected targets. You're better off putting ground forces in, surrounding the target, and discriminating who's in the target area and pulling out the person you want. If you don't then there's a lot of risk to your overall strategic objectives, I think, in terms of turning the population against you. The Afghans have a lot of bad memories of the Russians [Soviets] being there dropping bombs on villages on a regular basis, and we have to be extraordinarily careful that we don't end up being viewed the same way.

I remember seeing an Afghan report once, after an air strike—and this was fully justified in our case. We were working in an operation and there had been a firefight with some Taliban. They ran into a compound. We sent in a rifle squad, platoon actually, to get these guys out, and they killed two soldiers in two separate attacks to enter this compound. We did this before we used airpower. Then we finally dropped, I think, two bombs on the end of the compound and killed, I think, some civilians as well—a textbook use of force appropriately, in concert with the laws of war. But I also commented to our folks afterwards—I think I saw some Afghan reporting on this—in our American view, what we did was, "We conducted a raid to seize a compound, and after receiving enemy fire and taking casualties, we used precision-guided bombs to destroy the corner of the compound that killed the enemy soldiers and inadvertently killed one, two, three civilians." That was the American view. The Afghan view of that is, "Americans bombed a village, burned our crops, and bombed and destroyed cars and set them on fire." Both views are accurate. It struck home to me, because it reflected the lens through which you view the operation. In our case, it was a very precise use of measured firepower after we had had two soldiers killed tragically. I ended up in an interesting debate with President Karzai and his cabinet not long thereafter. From the Afghan view, it was "You bombed a village, and you burnt the crops in the village, and you burned the cars of the people in the village!" Again, they were looking at the results from the "if you lived in the village" standpoint, not the "why is the Air Force there and how do we use it?" I just thought that was hugely revealing about how military

operations look based on which side of the fence you're looking at them from. I use that as an example to send out to all of our forces that we had to be very thoughtful about how our operations are perceived by people that aren't sitting in the joint operations center looking at a computer screen. We have to realize that, especially with airpower, when we're using that, the connotations of that alone are really dramatic in Afghanistan.

Now, on the good side of airpower, we were able to use it as a show of force on a regular basis, because there was a tremendous amount of fear and respect for airpower by the Afghan people—friends, enemies, neutrals, warlords—and we got a lot of mileage out of that. It gave us the ability to operate in small units all over Afghanistan, because when Taliban saw an infantry platoon out there with forty guys in it, they knew that twenty minutes from the first shot fired, there was going to be an A–10 over their head or an attack helicopter, and that's big medicine. Everybody was very clear in their mind that we could draw on airpower to leverage our small units. That's why twenty thousand Americans and Coalition forces could operate all over Afghanistan for four-plus years because we had airpower there to put right on those spots at the right time, in reaction to contact. So, we got immense mileage out of small units by being able to do that. But at the same time, using airpower separate from ground forces, out of contact, independently, I thought was, generally, pretty counterproductive from our standpoint of protecting your center of gravity, the population.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Well, we are running out of time. I had actually quite a few questions left to talk about, follow-ups with the constitutional *loya jirga*, the election 2004, the regional development zones, so I'll let you choose what it is you would like to talk about in the last few minutes.**

LT. GEN. BARNO: We can return to target on these others, as well. Good question. Let me think how I want to kind of wrap up this session here today. I think I would probably not go to those questions, which we can address separately, but talk about best practices and models for success in the idea of international and interagency integration. The more I think about it and the more I talk to different groups on Afghanistan, that topic comes out more and more often. I think we had a very good working model in the embassy in Kabul and the CFC at Kabul for how to thoughtfully blend together a military operation, a military headquarters, military objectives, and all other objectives which are part of the overall campaign plan and the war writ large. One of the philosophical underpinnings of our success that I don't see replicated today in a number of places is the idea that war is a holistic enterprise; and that war contains political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure elements; and that at the end of the day, the instrument

that the United States of America has charged with fighting and winning its wars is the U.S. military. I certainly took this approach in Afghanistan, that the military had ownership of all of those things. Not that we will be the lead in each of those in an economic environment or social environment, but that we had an ownership of the overall campaign that led to the end state of success, meeting U.S. policy objectives, winning the war. The idea that is more commonplace, it seems, today—and I think it's pernicious and self-defeating—is that there's a military component of war that the military has ownership of, and there are these other components of war that some other people have ownership of, and between the two is an unknown force that doesn't exist and that doesn't result in a war-winning strategy at the end of the day. In my view, the fact that we had a holistic campaign strategy that the military helped to write and originate. We shopped it around the embassy for changes, improvements, and additions; shopped it around the international community for changes, improvements, and additions; and at the end of the day had a generally broadly shared campaign strategy for Afghanistan. We all found what our niches were and played to those.

The military was the 800-pound gorilla, the glue that bound it all together, helped enable it, helped lead from the rear in a couple of categories, helped shape and direct it, and resourced it in a lot of ways, because most of the resources were in the military effort over there. We had a $12 billion-a-year expense account that we were using, and no one else had anything remotely like that. We had all the helicopters, the trucks, the communications, the aircraft to go with that to get things done around the country. So, the fundamental concept that we understood and drilled from Day 1 in CFC when we stood it up and when I was there was that this was a holistic enterprise, that winning this war entailed fusing all of these disparate elements of power into a single element that was moving toward the same set of objectives. Not everybody wore the same outfits, not everybody was wearing the same hats and from the same country, but everybody was moving toward the same set of objectives at different speeds, with different dance steps, with different outfits on, and the military was the enabler and the driver and the catalyst behind that. That's a fundamental principle of success in counterinsurgency operations that I think is generally lacking most places that I look right now. The military, in Iraq and Afghanistan, it seems to me, has begun to distance itself from ownership of the outcomes, which is horrifying, and distance itself from ownership of the integration of the effort. We've begun to look inward to define our military objectives as separate and distinct from the overall, war-winning objectives. We're beginning to grade ourselves as successes because we are accomplishing the military objectives, while others are failing to accomplish their objectives. That's disastrous,

and it is an aberration of the understanding of warfare that should not exist out there today, and I hope that it dies a quick and violent death here in the next six months. It's the opposite of what our outlook was in Afghanistan, and I attribute a lot of our success to the fact that we put our arms around this whole thing—not to be in front of it all, not to lead it all, and not to beat our chests and say we're in charge, but to enable, to understand it as a holistic enterprise and to enable the entire enterprise to be successful through our resources and support—and I think that was a big mark of the success we had there. So, I'll leave it at that.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Thank you very much.**



3

Building the Command

***Maj. Gen. Peter Gilchrist, C.B.**, of the British Army served as Deputy Commanding General, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, from November 2004 to August 2005. He was interviewed at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., on 24 January 2007 by J. Patrick Hughes and Lisa Mundey of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. General Gilchrist discusses the mission of the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan under Lt. Gen. David W. Barno and Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry. After explaining command relationships in the theater, General Gilchrist discusses the presidential inauguration, the reconciliation of Afghan warlords and militias, counternarcotics, security sector reform, the training of the Afghanistan National Army, and the preparations for the parliamentary elections. He describes in detail the relations of the command with the Afghan National Government, Coalition and interagency partners, and the United Nations.*

DR. HUGHES: **It's the twenty-fourth of January 2007. Interviewing General Gilchrist at the British Embassy. Dr. J. Patrick Hughes, interviewing. Dr. Lisa Mundey, also. Sir, I was wanting to ask you about your time prior to getting to Afghanistan. What sort of duty position were you in? What sort of experience did you find useful when you finally hit the ground in Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: My previous duty I was the technical director of the Defence Procurement Agency in the U.K., and I had a wonderful title called Master General of the Ordnance, which goes back to 1425. Basically, I was the person in charge of military acquisition, army acquisition, in the U.K. for about four and a half years. And I'm a tank officer. I volunteered to go and do an operational tour because that's what I joined the army to do. I actually asked to go to Iraq, but they decided to send me to Afghanistan.

DR. HUGHES: **How did you learn that you were going to Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Our Senior Appointments Committee reviews these things. As is the same in your army, I got a notification that I was to go. I had plenty of time. I think of interest to your history, I am the third member of my family to have gone to Afghanistan, the

others having gone in the 1800s, and many of my family having been in the Indian Army and been on the Northwest Frontier and so on. So, my grandfather was with the 52d Sikh, and then the 12th Frontier Force; a cousin of my father's was a Frontier Force officer; and my grandfather was an Indian Army colonel; also, my great-grandfather, an Indian Army general, and so on. So, it's sort of in the blood, a bit. I can't remember precisely when I got notified, but it was probably March or April '04.

Originally, the deployment was going to be July/August '04. We agreed that my predecessor should stay there to see through the presidential elections, so that we didn't have a gap in the middle of it. So I arrived directly after the presidential elections, which then gave me more time than I had anticipated to get myself prepared, which was good. So I read a lot. I spoke to a lot of people. I spoke to historians, and I also got myself an Afghan ex-pat who tried to teach me Dari, which is not an easy language to pick up in a short time. But actually, I used it to spend a lot of time talking about culture, working out how to approach people, what made Afghans tick that wasn't necessarily obvious if you didn't know about it. And so, I spent, I suppose, about two months going up there two or three times a week, speaking



British General Gilchrist addresses troops of Combined Joint Task Force-76 in Kabul, 6 February 2005.

to him, and learned a lot about how I ought to approach Afghans that I might not otherwise have known had I gone in raw. And so, that was very helpful. I had a little smattering of the language, and I had read a lot of history, recent and past, and I think I was reasonably well prepared for it when I got there.

DR. HUGHES: **I assume that included the military and political situations there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Yes.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you get briefed on that at any point?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Oh, yes, in London, at our Permanent Joint Headquarters. I was attending on a regular basis and then got briefed just before I went. I went to the intelligence people and got a lot of intelligence on what was going on. So I think I was as well prepared as I could have been.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What was your command relationship? You know, what was your position in the command there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: I was the deputy commanding general of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan [CFC-A]. So I was General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno's deputy. We felt that there was simply too much for any one person to do there because we were trying to do the whole of the security sector reform, and so we split the responsibilities between us. He gave me a framework of what he wanted me to do, and so I took a chunk of things and he took another chunk of things. Clearly, there was a crossover in these areas. The first thing I did was the presidential inauguration, which was interesting; and then, basically, I had all of the security sector reform tasks—police, army, judicial, and so on—all those strands. I took an interest in counternarcotics because it's clearly part of the problem, and you can't solve the problem out there unless you solve that. Also, the U.K. had the lead, and I just wanted to make sure that was properly coordinated. It was very disjointed when I was there, and I'll come back to that later. My role, really, was to go around and speak to the ministers, speak to the intelligence agencies, and to try to drive the policy forward in each of these areas.

We also decided that we needed a campaign plan which was a coherent campaign plan. I'm sure General Barno's spoken about this because it was a unique affair, and I think it's very important that it's captured. Between all the people you speak to, you'll get the picture of how this came together. We agreed that you could not win a counterinsurgency campaign unless you looked at all of the lines of operation and all of the elements of government power that need to be brought to bear to deliver, in effect, a stable—whatever kind of—democracy that's going to suit Afghanistan at the end of the day. And

so, initially, when we first started it (and you can work out all these lines quite easily; it's not going to take a massive intellectual effort to work it out) it's actually getting—and this was my first experience in working interagency, with the U.S. interagency—getting the interagency elements to work together with the military was an interesting task. And the way we achieved it was that Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad and General Barno formed a sort of strategic committee, and below that, they had a group that, basically, I chaired with the deputy head of mission, which looked at all these strands of activity and recommended to General Barno and to the ambassador on where investment should go or where efforts should go. So they drove the strategy. We delivered it and we recommended back to them where things needed to go in order to deliver their aims. And a clever bit about this was that—and I don't know how this happened—but I managed to get some, I think you call them "fungible" funds (that's not an English word; it's an American word), which means that they had some autonomy over where the money could be spent. So if we felt that actually it was more important to go into health than it was to do roads, then they could do something about that, which was very helpful. And what we discovered was that most of the other agencies had no idea how to plan, which might sound odd. So we put with each of them a military planner or two. So, USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] had a military planner who produced, to their direction, the campaign plan that would deliver the things that they were set up to do, including where the money was going to be spent, how it was going to be spent, and so on. And each of the interagency parts—the health, the education, and so on—all of those were done as individual plans, and then our role was to make sure that the plan rolled forward coherently, and that where bits were slipping, then we would invest in those bits to try to bring them further forward. I think it probably is unique in American experience to do that kind of interagency coordination in that much detail, and with the head of mission having that much autonomy over the whole process. It was a very sensible way of doing it. Sadly, later, it all slipped away.

DR. HUGHES: **How would you describe—the American Army calls it operation tempo—the pace at which you operated, the routine that you were able to deal with the various different pieces of the mission?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: In the headquarters? Well, we were there to do an operation, so it didn't really matter. I suppose I was in the office at six or something like that, when you start the day off, because you needed to be there reasonably early to do contacts back to the States and to the U.K.; and then we would work basically through the day until nine or ten o'clock at night and finish; and then all over again. What we did do, which General Barno was very good at, was that we made sure that psychologically

there was a break every week of some sort, so that your clock worked. Psychologically, I never even thought about this, but this is why, I think, church was started and prayers and so on in terms of breaking cycles, so that you know when you finish one cycle, you start the next, so psychologically, it's quite reassuring. So every Friday, we had a later start and a dress-down day. It was a day we weren't going to go out to the ministries and really be working outside. So it was a day of housekeeping and sorting out and doing all the sort of things you needed to do to keep your personal administration and all that in order. So that was the cycle, basically. It was a Saturday-to-Friday cycle, with Friday being the down day and, well, almost no external activity in Kabul for us on those days.

DR. HUGHES: **How would you characterize the mission for the command when you arrived, and did it change?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: The Combined Forces Command mission was slightly different than the CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76] mission. You know, we were there to basically provide the strategic theater-wide view of things and to deliver the strategic elements of the plan, whereas CJTF-76 would deliver the tactical end of the plan. And so, we were setting the shape and foundations for how things would develop through the government. And because there was relatively little State Department input over there, we were doing quite a lot of heavy lifting in terms of the meetings and so on, and giving help and advice and direction. General Barno was very good at what, in the U.K., we call "mission command": telling you what it is he wanted you to achieve, telling you what weapons you've got to go and do it—"weapons" being people, in my case—and then letting you get on with it within those boundaries, reporting back regularly. And that worked very well, because it meant that I could have multiple strands running and he could have multiple strands running. Provided we coordinated it a bit, the whole was better than the sum of the individual elements. Without getting too personal about this, his successor wasn't as good at that mission command as he was, and so many of those previous strands of activity fell by the wayside and we ended up concentrating on very few, so we weren't putting the whole weight of the government power behind the process. We actually ended up only putting it behind one or two key ones, but we needed to handle the spread that was required. And so, did it change? Yes. As far as I'm concerned, it changed quite dramatically from the first six months to the last few I was there.

DR. HUGHES: **What were the priorities when you got there? There had just been the presidential election.**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: There had been the presidential election. So, immediately, it was a "This inauguration must be perfect and nothing must

go wrong. And, oh, by the way, I can't tell you who's coming, but there are some senior people coming, and if any of them die, then you're going to get on the next airplane home" sort of thing. So that concentrated my mind. So we went through and we did all that right, and it was good. It went very well. And, you know, it was an interesting exercise because it was the first time the Afghans had ever laid on anything like this—well, not for years, anyway—and, actually, it went perfectly at the time and everything else. So, that was the first thing that consumed me, pretty much for the first few weeks.

But then, I suppose, the spectrum of things I got involved in was security sector reform and all of the elements that made up that. I got involved, as I said, in the counternarcotics side of it to try to coordinate that. I created a reconciliation program, a program which is still running but not as well as it could. I drove the disarmament of illegal armed groups to make sure that when we went to the parliamentary elections we would have fewer problems than we had had previously. On the DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration] side, I was the rep who did the disarmament with the Japanese. And so, I mean, it's a broad spread.

DR. HUGHES: **I would like to ask you about each of them, but maybe before I do that, what were the major milestones, the major phases, of your tour there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: The phases were the inauguration; big chunks of the inauguration; and then the parliamentary elections. So if you take those as being the big lumps, there were a number of milestones we needed to achieve before each one of those could take place. They weren't specific missions, but I knew I had to get a reconciliation program under way. I had very little direction. The State Department couldn't really work out how to do it. So I basically, with my POLAD [political adviser], sat down with the Afghans and worked out what the market could bear and then wrote for the Afghans their putative instruction that would then be the reconciliation program; and then I had to clear it, reverse engineer it, to clear it back through the State Department so it then became theirs, so it could then go through the bureaucratic process, which is fine. It all worked. Creating the structures for that was complicated enough and a time-consuming exercise. It took a long time to really get them bought in, and I had to go around each of the ministers of each different tribal persuasion and ethnic grouping to make sure that what we were doing would actually fit across these ethnic groups because there was no point in doing something that was good with the Pashtuns and not good with the Tajiks or Hazarans. And so, it was an interesting bit of spaghetti to untangle, but we got there. I mean, we did it. And then it was setting up the structure. So that was one of the milestones. You had to do that because unless they started to reconcile

and understand there was a process whereby fighting could stop and people could be brought back in, you couldn't take this forward to the next phase, which was parliamentary elections. The program was called "Program *Tachim e-Solh*" [Dari for "Strengthening Peace Program"], or PTS.

DR. HUGHES: **Before we go to the parliamentary elections, what role did the Coalition forces play in the inauguration—the presidential inauguration?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Pretty large. Inside the city, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] forces were in charge. Outside the city, it was us, basically. But there were some very senior American visitors who came, and I was given firm instruction that it was all to work, and so, basically, we made it work. Although NATO were there doing things, I was making sure they were doing what we wanted them to do. The Afghan army was doing things. I made sure they were doing what [we] wanted. We did rehearsals. We went down and checked that they were actually doing what we said they were going to do and corrected it, making sure that communications worked, tracked everything through. We made sure of that, particularly over the high ground where these high-ranked visitors were going to come flying in from Bagram and so on. That was a complex exercise that involved Special Forces, the Afghan army, the Afghan police, and NATO, and so on. It's just making sure that everyone knew what everyone else was doing, so they're not going to shoot each other, and make sure there was coordination and make sure that if something did go wrong, then we had the reaction sorted in such a way that it will work out, and we exercised it. And when you speak to [Col.] Dave Lamm, who was the chief of staff—and he worked through this with me—I actually put him in the presidential palace with the Special Forces as part of it: "If it all goes wrong, mate, you're in charge of whatever happens," which he enjoyed [laughs]. And, you know, silly things like derelict buildings that people hadn't cleared. It was sort of a bit of a Northern Ireland experience coming back to me about things lying on the side of the road. All the routes in from the airport, because there were dignitaries coming in, had to be cleared and maybe pushed back, and bomb dogs. It was complicated, but good fun and nice to have done.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that you were involved in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration effort. What was your role in that?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: General Barno had given me that, which is an amazing sort of thing to take on. And so, the Japanese were the G8 nation in charge of it. The Japanese ambassador ran a meeting once a week. I also attended that meeting as the CFC rep, and it was from that that we worked out how we would go through and do the whole of this DDR process. And then we would issue the instructions out, should there have been any changes

in the process. Much of it, by the time I got there, was just monitoring that what had already been set in progress was working, and when it wasn't, going out to make sure it did work.

DR. HUGHES: **Who was doing what in this program? You said "give directions out." Who were getting directions? What were they doing?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Well, theoretically, the Afghan Ministry of Defense was in charge of making sure all these militiamen who were taken in by the army were then taken to the right place and disarmed and then given the money and everything that was supposed to go with support from the UN Afghan New Beginnings Program. So it was making sure that the Afghans stayed honest. Quite often, we'd find the numbers increasing dramatically, but actually the numbers turning up weren't there, and it was all one of those scams that they tried to play. And so, it was just a matter of making sure that we had the intelligence out there to see, actually, who should have been turning up and who did turn up, and whether A did meet B, and did the right number of weapons get handed in? So it was a monitoring issue. Some of my guys are monitoring it inside the headquarters and reporting to me, and I was titularly in charge of making sure it all happened.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You had talked a bit about the reconciliation program. What was the outcome? Was that successful?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: To an extent, yes. Firstly, we weren't allowed to call it a reconciliation program because, apparently, the Communists had had a reconciliation program.

DR. HUGHES: **History again.**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: So we had to come up with this name, and we tried all sorts of English words, but eventually we went with Dari, which was Program *Tachim-e Solh*.

DR. HUGHES: **And the results of that effort?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Well, firstly, we had to get a structure to make it work. I think that's where I was persuaded to do something which, I think in retrospect, I slightly regret having done. We wanted to have a notable person who was independent from the cabinet, who was not seen to be one of the inner circle—and it was a pretty tight inner circle at that stage. They hadn't had elections, so everyone was basically [Afghan President Hamid] Karzai's mate. It had to be somebody who was of sufficient stature so that, internationally, they would be seen to be acceptable. So, we chose Professor [Sibghatulla] Mojadidi to be that person, and he was a wonderful man, but he knew how to work the system. I think he had worked the system over many years, and it was surprising the number of people he knew who

were from various parts of your government—that surprised me. But he had been president, so, a great man. He had been the first president after the jihad, and so he had that stature. At the time, he was living in Denmark and so was "clean." He was titularly in charge of it. We hoped we would be able to manipulate it with him not actually wanting to do too much but, sadly, he decided he really did want to get deeply involved. Then we then had to create a structure of offices out in each of the provinces that really had the biggest Taliban problem, and so on. So it all became a bit more complicated than I wanted.

By the time I had left, we had brought, I think, about a thousand back in—I can't remember the exact numbers—but none of the really key players. I mean, a couple of key players came in during that time. But it started to work. And then I can only assume the emphasis went off of it because I don't think—it's a thing I keep reading they're trying to rekindle. So it was a useful model, and it's a model that works in Afghanistan because the tribal elders were made responsible for good behavior of those who reconciled; and the way we did it was, basically, the reconcilee and the elder went to the chief justice, and the chief justice made the elders agree that they would first accept this individual as part of their tribe, and then they would ensure the good behavior of that individual. They realized they were responsible for it; and if the individual didn't behave properly, then it was the elders who would be the ones held responsible under the law. That worked pretty well, and it worked in that tribal environment. It was a good way of doing it, and we had very little re-offense, which was quite nice.

We also used it to help reduce the number of detainees. So, using the same process, we listed the detainees in order of nastiness, because I didn't have any better way of doing it, and in the order of time they had been in the various detention centers, and then took the least nasty and longer serving and tested the system. We pulled out several hundred in the end, and it was the same process. They would come out of detention, be released into Afghan custody, taken to the chief justice; the chief justice would get together with the elders, who had already been contacted that they had to, again, go through the same process, and then off they went. That was a good model for emptying the burgeoning detention cells.

DR. HUGHES: **Shifting, you indicated that one of the real big problems facing the Coalition there was counternarcotics and that you took a particular interest in that area. Could you describe the situation, the challenges, what responses we attempted?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Yes. When I got there, there were little, sort of, islands of activity around the place, none of them really coordinated or connected. The ministry hadn't formed up, and there

was literally no coordination and a lot of interagency fighting—not only between your agencies, but between your agencies and our agencies, British agencies. So it was just dysfunctional. It just wasn't working. We weren't getting any traction at all. So I chaired a weekly meeting which brought all these people together, and we had a room bigger than this full of people, who all thought they were involved in this particular activity. What that enabled us to do was to at least talk around on what everyone else was doing, where they were able to. We were then able to coordinate between them and then, eventually, gradually move it to a more organized process. And so, I put down on paper what is now the new organization, which works. What we discovered was that your interagency wouldn't share intelligence in Afghanistan, because the C meant "Coalition" to them, as opposed to "combined forces" and, therefore, they didn't want their intelligence leaking, so that wasn't helping the issue. A lot of our intelligence was shared with the U.S. and then made NOFORN [not releasable to foreign nationals], so I couldn't read it, even though it was U.K. intelligence. And so, we had a dysfunctional process, although we had what was called … we created an interagency kind of—we called it the counternarcotics intelligence fusion center. There wasn't much interagency about it, and there wasn't that much fusion either, because the people I put in that couldn't work on the intelligence that we delivered. So, I had to work out a way of improving it and, really, the thing that needed to happen was there needed to be a better coordination process between the counternarcotics effort and the counterinsurgency effort. If you didn't tie those two together, you were going to tread on each other's toes and somebody was going to get hurt. And, quite often, there was a potential—it wasn't there then; it probably is now—in migration to one and the other, and we'll have the same people. So, you needed to coordinate that. So you needed an interagency operations coordination center to make sure that that bit was properly done.

And then, we had to create a sort of independent strategic intelligence center where people—your agencies, our agencies—were prepared to talk to each other, and that couldn't be in Afghanistan. So that is now in London. That setup is called the Joint Narcotics Analysis Center, I think it's called. It works in London. Basically, there, we have your interagency effort, our interagency effort, working, looking at the strategic picture, which is then working on the raw intelligence, and that is then sent in a—whatever the right word is, "disseminable"? I don't know what it is in American—in a way it could be disseminated out to the other nations. It went down to the counternarcotics fusion center, which then had intelligence that they could all work on, because they had been cleared at the upper level. So, you've got a strategic mapping of all the networks right across the world, doing everything. And then, the bit that was the Afghan bit could then be dropped into Afghanistan in a suitably expurgated

version so that they could use it, and then they were then able to operate and do arrests and so on. That could be done in parallel with setting up some work that was already going on when I arrived. The justice sector for counternarcotics is what they call "a vertical slice of the justice sector" there, which is being taken away, trained, vetted, and then when one of these guys comes in, deal with it without him being bribed out of court, which had happened previously. That actually works pretty well now, and all of that setup is in place. It's maturing. I suppose it's been in place now for about a year, and I think it will start to make a difference during this next calendar year. It's not made much yet.

DR. HUGHES: **Was part of that effort alternatives to the people where their lives depended upon growing that stuff?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Well, we had a five-part counternarcotics strategy, which we all contributed to, and so you had "Alternative Livelihoods" as one of those; and then, eradication, obviously, linked closer to it; and interdiction. I've forgotten what the other two are. I think one was education, and something else—government? There are five strands to it. The key element of this was making sure that—David Barno used to draw these circles of dependency. He's probably drawn them for you, I suspect. You know, if you haven't got security, then you can't … all of these things are interdependent upon each other. Without security, you can't have Alternative Livelihood; and without the Alternative Livelihoods, you can't do the eradication; and without the eradication, you can't get rid of the narcotics. It's a whole cart-and-horse thing. Security is the first thing you have to do because you can't get any of the NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and other agencies working to deliver the Alternative Livelihoods unless you do it. So, what we started off with the year I was there was cash-for-work programs. We couldn't deliver the Alternative Livelihoods, but what we could do is get people off the fields and stop them from growing the poppy and start to work on roads and irrigation schemes and so on. The process is really—the trouble is your Congress is very impatient. It's a very long affair, this. You've got to create an economy, and there isn't one at the moment—not one that you would really recognize—which means you've got to have, you know, roads; you've got to have a market; you've got to have—

DR. HUGHES: **Infrastructure.**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Actually, what we were trying to do was to build that infrastructure and build the structure of an economy, so that once you've got irrigation, you've got the roads, you've got the markets; and you had economists working with the country; you could then get the agricultural economists in—hopefully, once you've got the security—to deliver a product that was actually salable; and you have sort of a virtuous circle. But, sadly, everyone's very impatient, and these long-term things

don't work very well. And then, when the security situation dips, then your ability to deliver these things gets more difficult. And that's roughly, I think, what's happened in the last year; the security situation has got worse. It's been more difficult for NGOs to get in, and so the delivery of Alternative Livelihoods has not been as good as it ought to be.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that you were particularly concerned with the security sector reform. What was involved there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Police, army, minister of interior, minister of defense, and border police, justice, and customs.

DR. HUGHES: **So, [Afghan] National Army and [Afghan] National Police?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Yes. I was the guy who liaised, mainly with [Minister of Interior] Ali Jalali, [Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim] Wardak, and their crew to make sure that we were delivering what was required and they were doing their part of that requirement. We were tied, initially, by a lack of investment by the Germans in the police force, which then we eventually got some money from the U.S. to actually start to produce the police forces, which helped. But there were always the background organizational structures and those things that need just to be talked through and worked through. They hadn't worked out whether they wanted a national police force or whether it was going to be a national one with regional elements to it, sort of like the British police force, or whether it's going to be more like an American police force—well, you don't have an American police force; there are thirty-two police forces in this town—where it could be more regionally based. We decided it's basically going to be a national, but "national" more like a—when I say it, it wasn't going to be a gendarmerie. It would be more of a constabulary now. I get a suspicion that might have moved a bit. I mean, a lot of my time was just spent in meeting, coordinating these activities, and making sure that all these strands were moving in the right direction, coming together, and, where people weren't contributing, going back to the campaign plan, making sure that pressure was put on them. And the Germans weren't doing their bit; I had to be nice to the German police ambassador and persuade him that more was required. It was largely just coordination of effort to make sure all of the G8 nations were delivering their end of the activity, and the Afghan government was doing their part of activity, and, where it wasn't happening, working out where the gap was was my responsibility.

DR. HUGHES: **Some people have contrasted: a greater success with the Afghan National Army than the Afghan National Police. Was that your experience?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Yes. Because we are military, we are much better at training the military, and we're not any good at training police because we're not policemen. So, if you start from that premise, then, yes, it's very—you know, we're almost certainly going to be better at doing the army than we're going to do the police force. There are other reasons, as well, which is we started the army before we started the police force. In a counterinsurgency, you could argue you should do the police force as quickly as you do the army because you need law and police presence and so on. We didn't do that. What we did with the army, though, was we put them all through a selection process, so that very few of the militia came through; so we, in effect, trained a brand-new army. Afghans are good soldiers. They're quite tough. They fight well. And so, we were able to create an army quite quickly.

We actually created it too quickly, and Dave Barno wouldn't have seen this because he had already left by the time it became obvious. I did a study into the Afghan National Army. There is a study about this, which you can find for your historic records, which tells you what I found, or what I thought the market would take of what I found, which is slightly different to what I actually found. What had happened was that we were due to do one *kandak* at a time, a *kandak* being a battalion, and the SecDef thought this was a way of getting troops out of Afghanistan quickly. So, one to two at a time, to three at a time, four at a time, five at a time, to six at a time [tapping on table]. He wanted to try to get us to ten at a time. The trouble was there was only enough money to do this as a graduated process, which was one at a time; and then move to two at a time; and then move to three at a time. We could never get beyond that. So, although we accelerated the training, the kit wasn't there; the barracks weren't there. So, you had all those soldiers, but we didn't have any infrastructure or anything that made them an army. So, although we pushed them out well, and where they needed to be going to do things, they did it very well, we actually had only excelled in one area and hadn't brought up anything else. That wasn't very obvious to us in CFC-A, which is why I went out and did this study because once I went out and looked, it was very obvious. And I think the other element, I would say, is that by necessity, we put the National Guard into that training mission, and by the very nature of the National Guard, they may not have been as good at it as regular soldiers. I couldn't make it any stronger than that. But I think that this is sort of a compare and contrast.

DR. HUGHES: **One would suspect that the National Guard would bring more police expertise to the table.**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: I'm sure they did, but we employed some of your wonderful contractors to do that for us.

DR. HUGHES: **And the contract people were not up to the mission?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: The problem was—I don't mean to make this as a political statement; it's not meant to be, but it's just factual—the concentration that moves to Iraq—there was a huge requirement for police training in Iraq, and that was taking the large share of the good people. So, by the time they were trying to get people to come out to increase the numbers for Afghanistan, you're starting to scratch the bottom of the barrel. I think that's just fact rather than anything else. Again, there're a finite number of these people, and I think we had gone beyond the point of sensible return.

The contrast was that the police force … we tried to train the people who had already said they were policemen. We didn't vet them, initially. We just pulled them in, trained them, and sent them back out again. And so, what happened was you had a corrupt police force. You take a few people away and train them, they come back; two or three days, and they're really good policemen. And then somebody would get them under pressure and say, "This is part of the deal. We're here to tax the locals," and so on, and they'd become corrupted. So, when we rekindled the police force, we didn't have the power to vet everybody. It just wasn't possible. What we were able to do was take them away as groups of people and train them all at the same time and do an element of vetting in the training process. So, if the officer in charge was as corrupt as hell, then you could send him out and put someone else in. Not, to answer you, a roaring success, but better than doing it as a drip feed. And, really, with that level of corruption they have, the best thing to have done would have been to sort of pick a bunch of Pashtuns and chuck them in the Hazara area and to bring in a bunch of Hazarans into the Pashtun areas, but that might have caused a whole lot of different problems. So, you had to deal with what you had. I think they're getting there, but corruption is rife in that part of the world. It's an economically broken country, see? In a failed state of that nature, corruption is always there, and narcotics doesn't help, either.

So, the success of the army was they came in; they had to do some tests; they were vetted; they were trained; they went out. The officers had to take reading and writing tests and some military skills tests. We didn't have that luxury with the police.

DR. HUGHES: **We talked about the inauguration. What about the parliamentary elections? What was the role of the Coalition forces and, in particular, your role?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: My role in it was to coordinate, with NATO and the UN and the Joint Elections Management Body, all of the coordination and structures and things that went into the election. And we were fortunate because we had the model in the presidential elections, and we'd moved on a bit further, so

there was a model that we could utilize. We decided that for this election, it had to be an Afghan lead everywhere, and we didn't want NATO or Coalition forces involved in the front line of security, which was quite a stretch, but it was the right thing to have done. It meant that people felt good about the elections in an Afghan way. I wasn't there for the elections because I needed to come here. So, my successor came out in the August time frame, and then he did the rest. But I had done all the setting up, so we had all the structures in place. We had done rehearsals. It was all basically ready to go. The next phase they were going to go through was this sort of communication tests and reactions to various things and so on. And in that was just another series of tortuous meetings, but important.

We had to go through the poll sheets. I hope you've seen the poll sheets—books and books and books of people's names. It's very interesting. You have to look at it to see the complexity of the elections. President Karzai was offered various different electoral processes he could use. We would have loved him to have used some simple, easy system, but we came up with a convoluted process—which I can't remember what it was called now—whereby you had a booklet with everyone's photographs and names; but as only 20 percent of the country can read, that was a problem, so they all had to have a symbol that identified what they stood for. So, we then had to find hundreds of symbols that would separate them from each other. And then, the process was that they went in and had to cross one box in this great bible that they were given. In Kabul, you may have had a hundred people for one seat. So, quite a convoluted effort.

We had to go through all of that and work out what the logistics were of getting all that stuff out; how many airplanes we needed to fly around police; how you're going to collect it; how you're going to guard it; where you're going to count it; how you're going to protect the counting houses; how you're going to prevent the Taliban from interfering with the process; how you're going to prevent the locals from interfering with the process; how do we know where corrupt politicians are; and how are we going to get out in the outlying places that, actually, none of us had ever been to before? There were parts of Afghanistan where no American or European had been, probably, for a hundred years. All very complicated, but, actually, it all seemed to go on extremely well. So, it really was just a massive coordination process. As one of the grown-ups, I was there to make sure that it all happened. I had to work closely with the two-star at NATO to make sure that happened.

DR. HUGHES: **I'd be very interested in your perspective on how the different forces that ended up there—**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: A single, nontransferable vote. That was the SNTV. That's what it was called. That was the election process. But the good thing was lots of people wanted to be members of parliament, which was great.

There was a vetting process I ought to talk about, which is where the illegal armed groups came in—because this is all intermingled. I decided, along with some of my Afghan colleagues, that we had to do something about the amount of groups that were armed and roaming the countryside. You could call them … they were sort of second-tier warlord people, and they were extracting fines from people and just generally misbehaving and causing lawlessness. And so, we had to come up with a process whereby we could disarm these guys and make it a legal issue that anyone associated with an illegal armed group could not put themselves up for election to be a member of parliament and, by tying the two together, get the leverage we required to actually start disarming some of these groups. This was DIAG, the disarmament of illegally armed groups. And then there was a—you hand over a weapon, and you got some money for your weapon. You didn't actually get money for your weapon. You got a package, which was not money for the weapon, but you know what I mean. It couldn't be seen to be one. It had to be something slightly different. And so, the vetting of the candidate process was based around the intelligence we could all collect. We said who we thought the people were who were commanding these illegal armed groups and who were the members of the illegal armed groups—almost impossible to tell. And then we had a process whereby they would put their names in. The names would then be vetted by the international community and by the Afghan security services. We again came up with a list, and then it would come to a group I sat on, which was run by the deputy president and at the ministerial level, which would then decide what sanctions we would apply to each of them, or what notice we would give them. Sometimes, it was only going to them and saying, "You're not becoming a member of parliament unless all your people turn up tomorrow at this point"; and we would send out a bunch of UN people who would then monitor the disarmament. And if they didn't meet it, then their name got pulled.

So, how successful was it? Well, we got in a lot of weapons. How many nasties did we stop becoming members of parliament? Not many. Not many. One or two. But that was the theoretical process.

DR. MUNDEY: **I started to ask you about the relationship between the different forces that were there. Most significantly, what was your perspective on how the U.S. and British got along?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: We always get on well, but it wasn't really a U.K.-U.S. relationship out there. I had a number of British officers who worked in CFC-A, and we were just embedded officers doing American jobs in an American headquarters and providing a different viewpoint. And so, in terms of the headquarters and how that worked, very well. We had people in key posts. I was the deputy commander. I had the person who was the chief plans officer. I had the person who was in charge of helping me do the DDR. He was one of mine, and then did the DIAG, disarming the illegal armed groups. That worked pretty well, and we were able to give a different perspective to, sometimes, the American view. You know, I think at that stage people were still pretty kinetic in their thought processes, and we tended to be less kinetic in our thought processes. So, it was a good match. The guy who drew up the campaign plan was somebody—if you are allowed to go to the U.K. to meet these people, you should do so—was a guy called George Norton. He was one of the plans officers.

In terms of the relationship, the Brits actually were in Mazar-e Sharif in the north and in Meymaneh in the north. And so, in terms of how much do we get to see them? I would go to see them as the … I wasn't actually nominally the senior British officer, because there was a colonel who had that title, but I would go up there and see them. We had our headquarters in Camp Souter—another historic name—in Kabul, where we had our sort of logistics hub. The main relationship was actually between CFC-Alpha and the NATO headquarters. That was the interface that I worked, and it wasn't always good.

DR. HUGHES: **How so?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Well, you've heard the expression "European cheese-eating surrender monkeys" [laughs]? So, we did have some work to do to try to persuade some of my colleagues in CFC-Alpha that, actually, there was a place for NATO, and NATO had a role to play. We had this transition process we were running through, so it was a counterclockwise process where when I arrived, the north and Kabul were NATO, and then we were going to do the west and south, and then east. And so, we had to get closer into NATO. I think General David [Barno] hadn't had terribly good relations with the NATO commander. We then had the Turks that came out, and that worked much better, because there's quite a lot of Brits in the Turkish headquarters. They were perfectly cordial to each other, but it was surprising that whenever there was a meeting, David Barno was always somewhere else. So, I sort of worked that relationship. I got along pretty well with General [Jean-Louis] Py—a very nice bloke. So, I sort of worked that interface. I worked with the senior military representative, who was Mr. [Hikmet] Çetin. He had been the Turkish foreign minister, and he came out as a senior representative. And so, a bit of delicate politics that went between us. But we

operated in different areas. We didn't have to tread on each other's toes, so we didn't tread on each other's toes. So, it was almost like two independent operations within one country, with coordination being geographic, rather than actually a cross-military effort. And, clearly, as they swept around the country, we had to improve that, which we did, and we had to meet up with the two deputy commanders—and I think they've got about seven deputy commanders now in NATO. In those days, there were just two, and I picked up with them—the chief of staff and myself. We worked hard to make sure that, at each interface, there was a connection, and people met up once a week and discussed issues of importance.

The other area we worked together was at the Provincial Reconstruction Team Executive Steering Committee, which nominally David Barno chaired with [Afghan Minister of Interior] Ali Jalali, and the NATO commander was sort of co-equal. I found myself chairing all but two, I think, in the whole nine months I was there. So, I basically did that coordination, which let David Barno then do other things. So, that was where quite a lot of this work [was done], where issues were raised on the table. It's where the NGOs came in with all those sort of statutory complaints, and the tree huggers and peaceniks that were out there. You have a nice meeting like this, and you'd have to listen to each one in turn and note it, and "Thank you very much." But it worked because then they all felt better because they had their say and felt that somebody at least partially listened to them. That meant that you had, I think, government, NATO, CFC-Alpha, and NGOs, and all the lead nations were there, so that all the ambassadors of those nations were contributing. So, it was quite a good get-together.

DR. HUGHES: **Obviously, there was an interface for the elections, but relations with the UN and the UN presence there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: They were pretty good. The UN, basically, were in charge of the elections in terms of the process and so on, and we were in charge of making sure that the security worked. But, actually, they needed quite a lot of help with [it] across the board. I got along very well with Filippo Grandi, who was the deputy, who, I think, went to Palestine afterward, and Jean Arnault, who was the senior representative. They were very good, but I think that the problem that the UN had in Afghanistan was that they haven't given someone to Karzai who can be Karzai's mentor. So, although that's a bit of a diversion from what we're talking about, I think that's one of the missing links, is that Karzai hasn't got a grown-up, particularly after Khalilzad left, that he could turn to, who could give him advice. There was advice between the two of them, and it was done in a way that was subtle, but that doesn't exist, sadly, and it still doesn't exist. I think that's

one of the problems, is persuading Karzai to do the difficult things, and he does need more mentoring.

So, relations at the UN were pretty good. We did a lot of work with them in terms of threat maps and risk taking, making them understand that you can't just paint a province red because probably 90 percent of that province isn't red: "That bit's red, but the rest might not be"; and by doing that, enable them to get out in the country and actually start to do things. I think that's changed a bit because I don't think people are taking as many risks as they were then. We basically decided that a risk-taking process is the way to go, and until we had people killed—which we've had a couple of contractors killed—that worked pretty well. But the security part, it's quite difficult, but we worked a process that enabled them to get out. So, I would say, generally, a pretty good relationship, particularly on the election side. It was very, very close.

DR. HUGHES: **And probably one of the biggest—how were relations between the Coalition forces and the Afghanis?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Good, I'd say. We had the occasional misunderstanding, which you should expect. Occasionally, one of us was summoned and we would be told off. It worked pretty well.

I don't know whether anyone explained the structure, but OEF [Operation ENDURING FREEDOM], or CFC-Alpha, did not have command of some of the black forces over there—generally, a section of people who were doing things independent from what we were doing. Most of the trouble tended to arise from that because the coordination wasn't there, because they're very secretive and don't want anyone to know what they were doing. So, you'd spend a long time sorting an area out, spending a bit of CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] money to get people to become compliant and so on, and the next night, you find that two houses had their doors blown in and the people were arrested and taken away, which you didn't know anything about, and it would then take another two or three months to recover from that. It was those sorts of things that got us in trouble. But, generally speaking, I thought it was pretty good. I made a lot of friends in the Afghan government. They, nearly all, are really keen to get it right, for the right reasons.

DR. HUGHES: **Good. You saw the transition from General Barno to General [Lt. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry. Could you describe that transition?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: I find it very difficult, to be honest.

DR. HUGHES: **Were there changes in mission policy?**

DR. MUNDEY: **Yes. I was just saying maybe there're just some general comments that can be made about, maybe, shifts in priorities? Kind of just in terms of what were the most important things, issues that he was dealing with, which might have been different than General Barno?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: I think I'll characterize it this way. I think General Barno had a good understanding of what was required in terms of a counterinsurgency campaign and understood we needed to have better traction. You had to have all these other things. That's why this campaign plan was so important, and why the interagency process is so important, and why the coordination between the ambassador and Barno. Why, Barno actually moved to live in the embassy, so that he was close to Khalilzad and spent a lot of time with Khalilzad, and he realized that Khalilzad was pretty much the center of gravity in terms of Karzai's world because they spoke on a regular basis. So, in terms of us having a properly coordinated country plan, in U.S. terms, that was very, very important for the cohesion that brought that plan together.

And it enabled me to have a bit more time to tie the other bits of string together and get on across the other strands that the campaign plan coordinated. We haven't spoken about some of the things that were in there, like border security zones. I'll use that as an example of where things changed. We'd all decided—and, in fact, it was [Under Secretary of Defense for Policy] Doug Feith, I think, who really got the grip of this one—that you had to find some form of getting income into the government because there wasn't any government income, apart from the stuff we were paying them ourselves. There wasn't any taxing system or anything. One obvious way of doing it was to secure the borders and put customs in place, and then do the usual customs activity—obvious, really, but all the customs officials are corrupt; the border wasn't secure; there were bribes around; all sorts of things. So, we decided we would—I decided—we would run an experiment, and David Barno was quite happy with that and gave me the autonomy to do it. The money came from this committee to do what I needed to do. It had to be done very deliberately.

So, we took a bunch of border police. We trained them specifically for the mission. We equipped them for the mission. We took them out to the border crossing near Herat called Islam Qalah, where Ismail Khan had been the lord and master of his particular part of the empire, and he ran a nice little scam out there. So, every lorry coming through from Iran dropped fuel into a large underground tank, which was their custom dues to him, personally. And then there were bazaars and things in the sort of zone between the theoretical part where Iran stopped and a bit where Afghanistan started. There were easy ways around customs. So, it's not, I mean, an

outrageous thing. It's terribly simple. We replaced the border guards with trained border guards and took those border guards back to be trained and placed somewhere else. The border guards we put on were from a different tribe and ethnic background, so they did not have any loyalty to any of the warlords that lived in that area and, therefore, were more difficult to corrupt. We put the fences back up. We emptied the oil tank and got rid of it. We closed the bazaars, and then I made them drive through the customs station. Money started coming in, and it turned around pretty quickly. In two months, or maybe three months, of this experiment, we had a pretty good, something like 100 percent, increase in customs revenues, and this was without actually making any real effort. So, as far as I was concerned, it demonstrated that you could do something relatively simply at relatively light cost. We had already been able to rebuild all these customs places, anyway. It was a matter, then, of just going around the country and doing one at a time. It would take time to do it, but it seemed the obvious thing to do.

When General Eikenberry came in, he looked at the campaign plan, and he said, "That is ridiculous. That is like the Soviet Five-Year Plan. We won't have any of that." So, he got rid of a whole lot of strands of this, and so it came down, I think, to three or four strands that he would follow. The things that dropped off were things like the border security zone, which we had funding for. Counternarcotics fell off, and a whole lot of other things. So, the difference was that David Barno and I were able to multitask because he would do a bunch of things and I would do a bunch of things … although I told him what I was doing, and he would say, "No, a bit more of that; a bit less of that."

So, I found it quite a different atmosphere. I think, in round terms, a counterinsurgency operation, which can only be conducted across all these lines of government power, or instruments of government power, was no longer being conducted in that fashion. The coordination disappeared because the commander no longer lived in the embassy and therefore was not in the ambassador's pocket. I didn't meet the new ambassador, so I don't know anything about the ambassador, but I guess that the new ambassador, I'm told, was told that he was sent there to regularize Kabul and make it more like a normal station. It was light years from a normal station, but that was what he was told to do, and I think he's succeeded in doing that, which meant that the military was not part of his organization. So, the interagency planning help and everything else all came back to CFC-Alpha and ceased. A lot of the structures that had been there [to] keep the coordination of all those other strands that came together were disassembled, which meant that there was uncoordinated activity going on, and some activity just stopped. To be honest, if I hadn't been there for a large period of that time, just chasing them and making

sure that these things were moving, then people wouldn't do them without the coordinating mechanism. I was trying to motivate the other agencies and just didn't have the energy to do it without my staff working with them.

DR. HUGHES: **So, when did you leave Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: August '05.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you give any advice to your successor?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Oh, yes. I gave him a handover. He came out for the first few days, and we had a good chat and talked it through. He had a very clear-cut mission which he concentrated on, which was getting the elections sorted out, and then the inauguration of the new parliament and so on. So, he concentrated on that as a package and, actually, because he hadn't needed to start things like Program *Tachim-e Solh* and DIAG and so on, they were not top of his list. So, you know, he had a clear, simple task, a single task, as opposed to lots of multiple things to do, I think.

DR. HUGHES: **What would you characterize as your greatest achievements in the time you were there?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: I don't know. I was kind of proud of the reconciliation program because that started with a clean sheet of paper, with no advice from anyone, but it worked. I think I set the conditions for successful elections. I didn't actually do the elections, but in terms of all these other strands of activity that need to be coordinated in order to get militias disarmed and vet the candidates and lots of stuff—that was quite a complex set of interactions, and I'm quite pleased that it all seemed to work quite well. I was pretty pleased with the border security zone. I was very sad it didn't carry on. Those are sort of the lumps of big things that I think I did that helped. I was pretty pleased that the counternarcotics structures that I suggested are now being created and are now endorsed and happening. That should actually start to deliver some real effect.

DR. HUGHES: **Were there particular challenges you remember that, you know—**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Everything is a challenge in Afghanistan. I think that the challenge is you've got government ministers who don't really know what it is they ought to be doing because they've never been a government minister before—and I've never been a government minister before. They didn't have terribly good advice. And they really did need to be told to do things. So, it was a subtlety of talking to them on a regular basis and making sure that what they did became their own idea, and they delivered it. You actually did need to go there and sow seeds and then come back and ask him how the seed was growing, without keeping looking in on it. You had to

do that with all the ministries. I didn't mind that. But that, I think, was really probably the biggest challenge. It's a very unsophisticated group, some of whom were importees. They lived abroad for thirty years. They weren't really seen as Afghans by Afghans. They seemed to be Americans coming back in who spoke Dari, and getting them to be Afghan and thinking in Afghan ways.

Stopping some of the worst suggestions from some of the agencies was a challenge. There was a company brought in to help Karzai put his message out, and after about three weeks, I read these messages. I said, "There's absolutely no way anyone in this country is thinking this way." It was structured in a sort of European-American fashion, you know? Well, they're not that sophisticated. They haven't had a government for thirty years, so they have no idea of it. So, you're controlling those sorts of things, which were only going to get us a bad name, because then the rest of the world would see it as if we were pulling their strings completely—but you don't have to tell them that and make it obvious that we were. So, it was making people be aware that everything had to have an Afghan face. You couldn't do it all for them. They wouldn't do things as well as we would, but you take the Lawrence [of Arabia] adage: they had to do it for themselves and do it in the way that they felt satisfied with. I tried it so as not to ladle Jeffersonian democracy ideas on a country that hasn't got a hope of even saying really what "democracy" means—all those sort of things that you just spent your time just generally going around, and slowly, slowly catch your monkey. Yes, it was fun.

DR. HUGHES: **Lisa, do you have any questions you were wanting to ask at this point?**

DR. MUNDEY: **No, I think we were very comprehensive in that. I think that the one last question that we have here because it's always elicited some very interesting stories: Did you have a funny story when you were in Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: No, I didn't particularly think so. Obviously, I mean, a lot of things happened. Airplanes break down, and you get to spend nights in odd places. So, all sorts of odd things happened, but because, you know, I was a boring staff officer, I spent all my time sitting in Kabul with not much of any great amusement happening. I can't think of any, in particular. When I look, there are some things I found peculiar, but not amusing.

DR. HUGHES: **Is there anything we should have asked you? Did we miss something big?**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: You asked me some about something amusing—SecDef VTCs [video teleconferences]. This was a real cultural shock for me. David Barno had to give a VTC with the SecDef at first, every week, and then gradually we'd do it every other

week. And you should see these guys—and they're great men, grown up, intelligent, sensible, but like jellies when it came to going in front of the SecDef. But the worst thing was that it took my staff away for about a week at a time. So, when it was once a week, the staff were doing nothing else but preparing the VTCs for the SecDef, and I don't think anyone in the U.S. had any idea of the staff effort required for what was basically a thirty-minute VTC. One of these presentations went through thirty-five different versions, and you just think of just the quantity of manpower used up to create that—just frightening. And I suppose the other culture shock is the fact that the secretary of defense was commanding, personally, the ground commander. Although General [John J.] Abizaid sat in on these VTCs, it was definitely the SecDef's VTC, which was sort of a longer screwdriver than I'd ever seen before.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, okay. Well, that's all the questions I have. Thank you very much, sir. I appreciate not only the interview, but what you've done. Thank you.**

MAJ. GEN. GILCHRIST: Well, I enjoyed it.



Col. David W. Lamm (USA, Ret.) *served under Lt. Gen. David W. Barno as Chief of Staff, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, from July 2004 until July 2005. He was interviewed in the Pentagon by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 14 March 2007. Colonel Lamm begins the interview with a discussion of his previous experiences at U.S. Army Central Command-Kuwait and as an instructor at the National War College, as well as his acquaintance with General Barno before his assignment to Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. He discusses his arrival in theater and transition with his predecessor, Col. Thomas J. Snukis, and his initial impressions of the command's insufficiently manned, underresourced, and overworked staff, as well as improvements that occurred during his tour, including the stabilization of personnel, the securing of additional funding and resources, and improved communications capabilities. Colonel Lamm explains the command's organizational relationships with Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, Combined Joint Task Force-76, the U.S. Embassy, and the Afghan National Government, as well as General Barno's personal interaction and strategies for dealing with these organizations. The interview concludes with Colonel Lamm's assessments of the command's accomplishments during his tour and his comments on changes after General Barno's replacement by Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the fourteenth of March 2007, and I'm interviewing Col. David Lamm (U.S. Army, Ret.) about his tour of duty as the chief of staff of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan [CFC-A]. Colonel Lamm is currently working in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Director of Information …**

COL. LAMM: Information Operations and Strategic Studies.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Thank you, sir. First of all, are you sitting voluntarily for this interview?**

COL. LAMM: Yes, I am.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And do you have any objections with Army or other researchers using this material as long as you're cited correctly?**

COL. LAMM: No.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Thank you, sir. You were at the National War College before you went to Afghanistan, correct?**

COL. LAMM: That's correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Tell me about that transition. How did you find out that you were going to be asked to go over to Afghanistan to CFC-Alpha?**

COL. LAMM: Basically what happened was General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno was looking for a chief of staff. He had a couple guys on the plate. At the time, he was told that the position of chief of staff in Afghanistan didn't require a former brigade commander. That frustrated him a bit, and so he was back in the building and had run into, in fact, the Army IG [inspector general], which was General [Lt. Gen.] Paul T. Mikolashek at the time, and I had worked for Mikolashek in Afghanistan a little bit. But my previous tour, before coming back to the National War College, I was the ARCENT-Kuwait [U.S. Army Central Command-Kuwait] commander forward, so I had a lot of experience in the region. We had moved a lot of troops up into Afghanistan, and as far as Mikolashek was concerned, my tour of duty over at the National War College, in his view, was sort of like "He's wasting his time over there. He really needs to be out, doing Afghanistan." So, basically what I heard was Barno got my name from General Mikolashek and then called me, had the aide call me, and said to come over and talk to General Barno. I came in, sat down, and he asked me why I wanted to be his chief of staff. I said, "Well, that's news to me [laughs]. I really don't. I've got a great job at the National War College." But then we just discussed what he needed to do—the size of the headquarters, the right kinds of people, how he would try to get around the problems of hearing this former brigade commander stuff, not enough SAMS [School of Advanced Military Studies] graduates in the -5 and the -3 shop [staff sections for plans and operations, respectively]; then, basically, how we would look at the counterinsurgency and go about that business, and the interagency lash-ups, which dovetailed nicely with what I was teaching at the National War College, which was basically the core courses of strategy,

interagency coordination, and then counterinsurgency stuff. So, it tended to work. We had that discussion for about an hour and he said—well, I said, "Look. Let me go home and talk to my wife, and I'll give you an answer tomorrow." So, I went home. The wife said, "Yeah, go away for a year. It's not a big problem" [laughs]. It turned out to be a little longer than a year, but it wasn't a big issue. So, I gave him a call, and I think it was in May, and then in June I was down at CRC [Continental U.S. Replacement Center] and off and running.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You'd had a little bit of experience previously with General Barno, had you not?**

COL. LAMM: No. Our experience was in a common culture. We were both in the 82d Airborne Division on or about the same times. I was an ops officer in the 1st of the 504th, and then later in the 504th, I was the brigade -3—so, battalion and brigade -3. He was down the street, roughly the same time, in another unit, so you know of each other, but you didn't work for each other. He once mentioned to me, a few months after being in the job, that the common culture's very important. You start out on the same sheet of music about how you approach



Colonel Lamm in his office at Camp Eggers, Kabul, 9 June 2005

problems. So, the only time we were also in the same place at the same time was in 1983. He was with the Ranger Regiment in Grenada, and I was with the 2d of the 325th. I was in the lead assault battalion, so we linked up very early with the Rangers. So, serendipity and at the same place at the same time, but not working together.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you didn't have an established professional or personal relationship with him?**

COL. LAMM: None.

DR. KOONTZ: **When you're walking in the hallway, you would not have recognized each other?**

COL. LAMM: Well, no. I would say no, probably not. If you're in the 82d and you're walking by and you see him, you knew he was a battalion commander down in, you know, the 2d Brigade or 3d Brigade, but that's about it.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. At this time when you're at the National War College and General Mikolashek offers your name as probably a good choice as chief of staff, what was your knowledge of what CFC-Alpha was doing at that time? How aware were you of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan?**

COL. LAMM: I was fairly well aware of what was going on inside of Afghanistan. I had sent a few of my officers, as General Mikolashek came in to move forward, to Third Army, to Doha, right after 9/11. They got there around Thanksgiving time. Of course, by this time, we had moved a lot of stuff into Afghanistan, and by the end of Thanksgiving, early Christmas—just before Christmas—we already had guys who were rolling into Kabul. So, you know, I was familiar with what had happened there: the Bonn process, the constitutional *jirga*, trying to set up the interagency pieces. I also had a deskmate across the hall from me, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who had been the ambassador in Afghanistan at the same time I was in Kuwait moving military forces to keep people up, and I knew Crocker from before. He was in Kuwait as an ambassador. So, I was pretty in tune with what was going on in the ground from the macro, strategic perspective. I did not know about aegis of this headquarters being set up, other than they were trying to establish a POL-MIL [political-military] headquarters to sort of bridge the gap between the U.S. strategic goals and the operational military goals, and one of the findings, evidently at CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command], was that the [Combined Joint] Task Force-76 [CJTF-76] down at Bagram—Bagram was just too far away to do close, tight interagency coordination with the U.S. Embassy. So, I was aware that there was a requirement to do that and that this new headquarters, nascent headquarters, might be a place that that could get done.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, General Mikolashek puts your name in the hat. You have an interview with General Barno, and you mentioned some of the things that you talked about in that hour-long interview that you had, and then your wife gives you your hat and kicks you out the door. What kind of preparations did you undertake or undergo before you got on the plane and left?**

COL. LAMM: Well, the formal preparation was the CRC, which basically by this time, the CRC group at [Fort] Benning—they were at the common-denominator level of actually getting people ready to go to Iraq, so what was talked about Afghanistan was an afterthought. So, my formal preparation to get ready to go to Afghanistan consisted of going back to the War College real quickly, talking to my buddies, my fellow professors, and getting some books to read: Christina Lamb's book, *The Sewing Circles of Herat*, which was a contemporary book that was out; the other book that was indispensable was Dupree's *A History of Afghanistan*; and then *The Great Game*, another book that was out; and then from a counterinsurgency perspective, Lewis Sorley's book had just come out, *A Better War;* and then if you're in the counterinsurgency business, *Lawrence of Arabia* is always good to read. So, you know, I was able to cram that in as best I could. I had another good asset at the War College, and that was a guy by the name of Mike Parmly. He's now, I think, our State Department representative in Cuba, but Mike Parmly was teaching a course on Afghanistan. He had been there as a State Department person, so he offered me a perspective on how the embassy was working and those sorts of "eaches" and interagency lash-ups, or the lack thereof at this time, as he would have said.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, you're doing this academic training. You're canvassing your colleagues and you're doing your reading up. Did you have any contact with anybody on the ground at CFC-Alpha at this time?**

COL. LAMM: I picked up the phone and called Scott [actually Col. Thomas J.] Snukis.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And he is your predecessor.**

COL. LAMM: Yeah, he was the chief of staff at the time. They had moved a core of about sixty people from the air defense unit of the 25th Infantry Division [ID] to sort of flesh out the headquarters, and he was robbing Peter to pay Paul. He had pulled some guys in those days from the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, OMC-A. He himself—his billet—he was supposed to be the chief of OMC-A, but they moved that, robbed that billet, and pulled him over, and he had about six guys. You mentioned [Col. Tucker B.] Mansager—Barno, Snukis, and they very quickly had a ramp-up and got a handle on things as they were moving. So, they had put together a

skeleton staff. They had really begun getting all the facilities in pretty good order—you know, the land and the buildings and so on and so forth. So, it was working along pretty well. It was a rotational staff, though—lots of people getting ready to leave, most of them. Mansager, Snukis, already out the door, and then we were faced with this interservice, IRR [Individual Ready Replacement] sort of hybrid headquarters where folks were sort of coming and going every three to four months, and that's one of the things we had to address real quick—to get the manning document right and go from there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You've mentioned several things, and we're going to come back to those a little bit later. You're on the phone with Colonel Snukis. Did he give you any kind of pointers or advice or guidance or warnings—you know, anything specific that you should—?**

COL. LAMM: No, just get here as quick as I could [laughs].

DR. KOONTZ: **He struck me as being a very practical type.**

COL. LAMM: Yeah: "Get here as fast as you can!" You know: "You'll learn all the theory on the ground," you know, the practical advice and theoretical. And he, as well, had a similar career background that I did. I mean, he was in a light infantry unit and so on and so forth. He may have known Barno for some time before.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let's get you on the plane. How did you get to Afghanistan?**

COL. LAMM: Well, I fly down to Fort Benning. You do CRC for two weeks, come back up. We went from Benning to Baltimore, which was nice because I got to spend the weekend with my family here, and then hopped on the plane in Baltimore, flew in to not Mazar-e Sharif but into … we're only about two hundred miles from the Chinese border. It's the rotational air base in Kyrgyzstan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Was it Manas?**

COL. LAMM: Manas, exactly right. And then from Manas, a C–17 into Bagram. Then, of course, you're the chief of staff and Snukis wants to get out of there as fast as he can, so there's a helicopter waiting for him at Bagram, and they fly you the twenty minutes down to Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **I should have asked you this before we got you on the airplane. You mentioned that while you were at CRC, Afghanistan was kind of … I think you said, "an afterthought" was your exact description.**

COL. LAMM: Yeah. The common denominator was Iraq.

DR. KOONTZ: **Can you give me just sort of an example of how that worked?**

COL. LAMM: Yeah. For instance, the security situation in Kabul is a lot different than the Green Zone in Baghdad, so in fact, this is the chief—I had to mull through this. I mean, there were immediate reaction drills for everyone to go through on what happens when you hit an IED [improvised explosive device], and, in fact, we hadn't had an IED in Afghanistan in a long time. All the staff officers—somebody decided that everybody going over there, staff officers, no matter where you're working, would have to clear an obstacle with a grappling hook and throw it over the barbed wire and pull the barbed wire away. I mean, it was a common-denominator Army training that was covering all the bases for all the soldiers, private through O-6 [colonel], no matter where they were going to work. You know, the Army's a big bureaucracy, and you had to appreciate the way they get their people: "Hey, we didn't have this. This guy got hurt because he didn't know that." But, I mean, they did a great job of doing the med records, getting all your uniforms squared away, getting your med records all squared away, the finances and so on and so forth, so there were some admin things they also did. But the training—and my guys complained about the training coming into Afghanistan, and then we had some issues we can get into later on about how soldiers were trained to drive in Iraq, but if they came to Afghanistan, they raced down the street. It was a whole different way of getting about town, between Baghdad and Kabul. So, good Army training—just the common denominator and the coin of the realm at the time, and probably still is—at CRC is the Iraq theater.

DR. KOONTZ: **On top of just the common-denominator Army training, as you described it, did you have any kind of cultural training or any kind of preparation for being in Afghanistan itself or interacting with the Afghan people?**

COL. LAMM: No. Not through this process.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Colonel Snukis thoughtfully sends that helo out for you, picks you up, takes you into CFC-Alpha. You're there. What happens? How do you get acclimated?**

COL. LAMM: The first thing you do is you go to bed for about five hours or so you get a good night's sleep, then I met with Snukis the next day. Being sort of the same mindset that you don't need two chiefs around at the same time, we both agreed it would be a real short overlap. He had already worked out with the boss, which was a good idea, to take a sort of an inspection tour around the country, not to look at facilities or procedures in any such way, but rather to look at the overall counterinsurgency strategy that we were working on: "Is it getting implemented? PRTs [provincial

reconstruction teams]?" and so on and so forth. It moved from regional control and pushing soldiers out, as opposed to having them living in small castle areas—you know, highly secured areas. So, he did that tour for about two weeks—and it just takes you that long to catch airplanes and fly around the country—but he visited most of the country, and the feedback he gave me was "Yeah, you know, by and large, things are coming along. There's a lot of work to do." He reported to the boss the findings, so we were fairly confident that things were going the way we wanted them to. It was June, so we were in the middle of the Taliban campaign season, if you want to call it that, but if I remember, in 2004, in June and then early July, I mean, there wasn't much violence. He really could get around. It wasn't too much of a problem.

So, while he did that, I do what most chiefs do. I had the secretary of the General Staff and the assistant chief of staff type up a calendar, and then the first thing you do, you go in to see General Barno to get his commander's guidance. He's got a reputation of being very, very hard to work for. I found he was pretty easy to work for, as long as you were willing to take the initiative and get things rolling. So, I met with him. He laid out what his intent was; what he wanted to do; what he wanted in the chief; what we were going to have to do with personnel in the headquarters; you know, some of the things that were hurting funding for CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] and other things; and lashing up very closely with the embassy. Then, basically, after getting that guidance from General Barno, you just grab the staff up, schedule them one by one, CJ-1 [staff section for personnel] through CJ-9 [staff section for civil-military affairs]. Comptroller is huge; SJA [staff judge advocate]; you know, the surgeon, the whole group, one by one. And what I did is I went to their place. That way, I could walk around, find out where they all worked, see the facilities, so as opposed to having to just sit in one—actually, it was the defense mechanism to keep from falling asleep because you just sit in one room for one day and people are coming to you, it's a little boring, whereas if you're spending a couple hours with some folks, you need to get up and walk to the next place and, you know, grab a bite to eat in between. That works out better, so that's what we did.

DR. KOONTZ: **I want to back you up and ask you something about that cross-country trip that you had with Colonel Snukis.**

COL. LAMM: Oh, I didn't take that trip. He went alone, and I was doing all this.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, he's out, and then you're acclimating yourself to staff. You mentioned kind of briefly that initial commander's guidance that General Barno gave you. What specifically was he telling you?**

COL. LAMM: Basically, that the purpose of the headquarters was to lash up—was really to act as a POL-MIL headquarters at the strategic-operational level, not the operational-tactical level. And the problem that they had had was that by the senior military headquarters being [Combined Joint] Task Force-76 at Bagram and being a long drive, and at least a thirty-minute flight … that basically being out of the city of Kabul and away from the U.S. Embassy, what you do is, you default and you begin to focus on operational tactical things, military things, and we all saw the role for the headquarters and the solution to the insurgency in Afghanistan as a political, economic, governance solution as opposed to a kinetic military solution. So, on that we all agreed.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, you get your guidance from General Barno. Then you mentioned that you went through and met all of the people on your staff. Did any of those little staff meetings stick out in your mind as something that, you know, "This is working really well when I got here" or "This is something that needs a lot of work," once you got on the ground?**

COL. LAMM: Well, all of the staff was undermanned—grossly undermanned. In the -3 shop, as an example, for a three-star headquarters with these types of operational, strategic responsibilities, they did not have one SAMS planner—not one. They were barely able to keep up with current ops to the CG's [commanding general's] satisfaction. The CG could often go to the embassy and hear that something had happened down somewhere else. You got it through ops channels, and vice versa, so that lash-up wasn't good. There was a special office called the EIPG, the Embassy Interagency Plans [Planning] Group. Its Air Force colonel—they were rotating every four months, I think, every four months. That needed to be a longer-range position. We'd gotten ourselves a major and moved a couple of them in there, and they were there for a minimum of six months, but they were the last shop for measuring. As we developed a strategy, they would keep track of the measures of effectiveness and the number of things for each of the lines, what we were calling the military plan lines of operation, and what the embassy, in a mirror-image of that plan, called the lines of action. We'll go over the strategy later, how we built the plan.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you mentioned it was very important for you to meet the comptroller. Why was that?**

COL. LAMM: Money's everything. Resources are everything, and most importantly, in this environment, what were the resources that we could lift and shift fires on? We had the train and equip authority for the Afghan National Army, but no such authorities for the Afghan National Police. We were going to begin coming up on election period, where securing the local population so they could go to polling places, so

that we could secure polling places, so we could secure UN trainers, was going to be very important. We had to figure out a way to make the money a bit more fungible than it was. We had to be able to creatively use the resources that we were given so that we could impact the entire interagency operation in Afghanistan, not just the military operation. And, basically, we found a guy later on, about three months in, who could do that for us, and then we had great success doing that. So, your military comptroller tends to think … well, he's doing military comptroller stuff, you know, MIPR-ing [sending by Military Interdepartmental Purchase Request] the money, for military units only. I had to figure out how we were going to control CERP money. He could do that, because that was the Commander's Emergency Response Program, CERP. And then the other piece was "Okay, what other money's in town? What does USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] have? What are they working on?" And then, you see, the comptroller wouldn't necessarily—he didn't know that, so what we had to create in the embassy was sort of an interagency resource team. I could see that right away, because there's aid money coming in—there are other State Department monies; there's FMS, Foreign Military Sales; there's USAID—what are all the U.S. programs that are coming to bear on Afghanistan, where are all those resources, and what do they add up to? And then, working with other ambassadors, which Barno did, what are the international donors doing? So, you needed all that. If the Japanese are doing DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration] and they needed a road built … you know, Saudis and the Japanese consortium may be building a road, so Corps of Engineers money's big. What's the Corps working on? What are the big projects? Because what you don't want to do is usurp money to build a clinic in a village and then find out two months later that USAID was going to build a hospital there. So, you want to be able to go to one place to de-conflict that. It was obvious early on that the comptroller shop in the CFC—in fact, we really didn't have a comptroller shop; we had a guy doing money. We built a comptroller shop, but then what we had to do was link that up with our interagency resource guy at the embassy.

DR. KOONTZ: **As you're going through members of your staff, was there anything that leaped out into your mind, something that you wanted to change immediately?**

COL. LAMM: Yeah. We had to solidify the staff principals into one-year tours, and we had to stabilize other key members on the staff and basically create a manning document that was approved by the Joint Staff—you know, the JMD [joint manning document]. You know, you're going to have some money coming to you, and now you've got to have the people so you can implement programs. So, getting the JMD approved—there were many JMDs out there. Snukis had—I mean, they thought they knew what they wanted. They had a document

that had about four hundred people on it, and I think one had two hundred people on it. So, we had to go through the staff: "Okay, what do you really need to work efficiently?" And here, you have to watch staffs. You could wind up with a huge staff, and then you'd build your own bureaucracy that you battle yourself. One manning document called for about four hundred, which was eventually approved, and basically the way we did that—we weren't getting any traction on getting the document approved, so what we did is, we asked the Joint Staff to send the team over to validate our joint manning document, and we were very lucky. We had an old Marine Corps general who had some experience in counterinsurgencies, and then we had General Gary [E.] Luck (Ret.), and they were both out of JFCOM [U.S. Joint Forces Command]. When I took them around and had them go out to the staff, they were like, basically, sort of incredulous—I mean: "How are you getting all this work done?" I said, "Well, you know, it's eighteen-hour days, but that's okay. There's nothing else to do. But we do need the document approved so that we can go get one-year rotation folks, six-month rotation folks, and we can lock it in."

What we were doing is we were begging and borrowing from everybody, and we needed our own document that was approved. Most of that begging and borrowing we had to do with Bagram, you know, General [Maj. Gen. Eric T.] Olson, 25th Infantry Division. In fact, he sent—one of the begs was for one of their SAMS graduates, a young major they sent to us, who became indispensable very, very rapidly—just the one guy. When it came to do with some quick contingency planning they had to do, he was very good, so that was it.

Looked at the resources—get at the embassy, get an overview, a lay of the land, of all the funding that was coming in, and the international pieces, as well, so we could put U.S. dollars to work most efficiently, and then we got to operate our headquarters. Liaisons with all the different ministries in Kabul, and Barno was very liberal about that. [Lt. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry, when he came in, pulled a bunch of that back, but we had liaisons out of the civil-military relations shop. They had [a] C-9 in every ministry in the Afghan government—women's rights, women's issues, schools, education; you name it, we had a liaison over there. So, we had to lock down the personnel. That was the key.

DR. KOONTZ: **How long did it take to get, for example, that one-year rotational basis for your staff principals?**

COL. LAMM: It took us … from the time I got there until Luck got there, it was two months. The document got approved, and then what we did, by October, we had gotten approval—yeah, it was October, late October—we had gotten approval to pull some key staff out of the Army War College, and, basically, that piece went like this. We would—in fact, the one I pulled

by hand was Col. Mike Chesney. He worked for me before at Fort Hood and on the Joint Staff when I was here. I worked with him. He was at EUCOM [U.S. European Command]. I was on the Joint Staff, and we worked very closely together, and he was one of the key guys I was going to need. And then there were a couple others—a new comptroller, a new public affairs officer—we had looped along in that whole information ops realm because the perception part of the war was huge, so we wanted to get all that fixed.

So, basically, the deal was, those guys were in the Army War College class for a year. We pulled them out at the Christmas break. They came to Afghanistan, did a one-year practical exercise on the ground with us, and then returned the next January to start up with their class, so their families would be at the War College up there in Carlisle, which is an idyllic place to have a family—I mean, it's just wonderful—they were there two years, so it was a win-win for them and their families. For the families, it was win-win. For them, the officers, it's a win-win because the one year in Afghanistan got the joint ticket punched, okay, as opposed to coming to the building for a minimum two, or for other places, for three. So, what that did is now you've got personnel guys over at PERSCOM [U.S. Army Personnel Command]. They're highly invested in this because they know they've got a hot rock that they want to move quickly through the ranks—not to accuse personnel of ticket punching—whether they got a guy they want to get joint qualified, they can get that all done in one year in Afghanistan. So, basically, it was knowing how that architecture would work on the personnel side that got us a windfall. I got about four or five key staff guys that way, and they were good guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. We've got your JMD squared away. About how big was the staff when you arrived, and how did that number change? You said you were undermanned.**

COL. LAMM: Yeah. Oh, yeah. With Snukis—they started with six, okay, and they were mowing along and doing sort of the theoretical stuff, and he had a cadre of probably about ninety to a hundred at any one time there.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, was it about that same size when you got there?**

COL. LAMM: Yeah.

DR. KOONTZ: **How big was it when you left?**

COL. LAMM: About 350, and that was too big. Optimal was probably the late fall, early winter of 2004. After the first of the year, we had asked to have some people held back, because, I mean, we had logistical constraints and housing constraints and so on and so forth. So, we said, "Look, it's really doing pretty well," but having that extra capacity allowed us to give some

folks to OMC-Alpha, which was now undermanned for what they had to do, and it worked well because at the same time, we had gotten approval from the secretary of defense and the U.S. government to train and equip the police. So, OMC was about to double in size because they would have not only the Army training mission, but they would have the police training mission, and that came along as we began to develop our strategy.

It really fell out of the presidential elections and what had happened to the Afghan National Police out in Herat, when we were trying to solidify some security issues with Ismail Khan, a warlord out there. It really came to light, and then success sort of breeds success. The training for the elections went very well; the election day went very well; the inauguration went very well; so when we went back into the well a third time and said we really need to fix the police, they said, "Okay, you've got it for the next two years." That extra capacity came in handy because then we could—OMC could start building—at that time Maj. Gen. [USAF John T.] Brennan was in charge of training the Army, the OMC-A chief. Then they called it CSTC, Combined Security Training Command.

DR. KOONTZ: **By the time that you left, were you still, as you said, robbing Peter and paying Paul by taking guys out of CJTF-76?**

COL. LAMM: No. We had our own manning document that backfilled all those positions we needed on the staff. It was important because in March CJTF-76 was going to rotate out, so by the winter, February, we had to have our own folks on the manning document on requirements, because all of the folks that we had stolen from the 25th Infantry Division [ID], they were leaving in March. They were going to rotate back out, and the SETAF [Southern European Task Force (Airborne)] folks from Europe were coming in.

DR. KOONTZ: **I was going to ask you this later, but this might be a good time to ask it anyway. Did you notice any changes when the 25th ID rotated out and SETAF came in?**

COL. LAMM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we did. And in SETAF's defense, [Col.] Bill Mayville, who was the chief of staff there; Jason Kamiya, a major general, was the CG. They were good guys. Their two DCGs [deputy commanding generals] were sort of pickup guys that they didn't know before, well, becoming part of the headquarters. And then, basically what that staff was, for CJTF-76 under the SETAF, was a composite headquarters which consisted of a brigade—it was the old 173d [Airborne Brigade], the brigade that came out of Vicenza—with plugs in it from all over USAREUR [U.S. Army, Europe]. They met and trained together for a few weeks at Grafenwoehr. We sent folks to Grafenwoehr, my -3 and others, to sort of speed them up and get them ready, but that was it. The brigade

headquarters, plugs, a couple months' training—and not all of them attending the training, not all of the plugs—and then, boom: "You're in Afghanistan. Go!" The 25th ID was a division headquarters that didn't need any plugs. You know, it was a big division and didn't need any plugs to help it along, and they were together for whatever period they were together. When they were notified that they were going to Afghanistan, they locked all the positions in. Then they all trained together for four or five months, got ready to go, and then they spent a year together on the ground. So, that staff as an entity, every key position, was probably in their position for two years, one and a half to two years, and there's no substitute for that. It was a very efficient, very good-running headquarters that just hit the ground running and it was very, very good. So, the SETAF guys had a lot to overcome, but did admirably well, in my view.

My personal feeling—after looking at counterinsurgency environments—is that we are probably doctrinally wise to rotate companies in and out, maybe every year, but brigade-and-above staffs, regional staffs (we had a brigade commander in each one of the regions) my view would be—and the CFC staff—my view would be that those folks you could move under an individual replacement system, but the key leaders, if we're serious about this, like World War II, you need to go there, and then when it's all over, they can come home. In that kind of an environment, the nuances of who gets along at the ministries—is the National Security Council adviser, Dr. [Zalmay] Rassoul, friends with [Minister of Interior Ali] Jalali? It takes you so long to pick that up that to be rotating every year is not a wise thing to do. Of course, the strategy over there suffered for that, in my view.

DR. KOONTZ: **About how long did it take for you to notice that SETAF was getting the ball rolling, or had—**

COL. LAMM: Well, a couple things. They had come with the notion that, I suspect, it was all going to be about soft power, and there's a mix of kinetics and soft power. The 25th had to be trained to go from hard to soft. That might be easier to do than the other way around. But, yeah, I mean, two and a half, three months on the ground, they were okay. But I think it takes about two and a half to three months to get things rolling, to get to know the AOR [area of responsibility]; and at the tactical level, it's the local guy—does he know where his minefields are? We sustained most of our casualties in this right-seat ride period. I know from Afghanistan, and it's very true in Iraq, that the transition periods are dangerous periods. The other problem we have is we tell the enemy when those transition periods are going to be because we publish it back here—you know, when the next units are rotated—so we don't do ourselves any favors.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, to get lurching back, you were talking about earlier the manning at CFC-Alpha, and you managed to stabilize your staff at anywhere between 100 and 350 people. What was the physical infrastructure of the CFC-Alpha headquarters like?**

COL. LAMM: It was grim. It was a double-wide trailer, two stories tall [laughs]. That was the command building. But it was fine. Everyone had carpet, and it was clean. And then what we did is, basically, we took over a neighborhood about a mile and a half from the embassy, about a mile from the embassy. We took over a neighborhood, and we put barriers up. Snukis did most of that great work. We expanded that a little and made some improvements. But the fact of the matter was you could literally be an Afghan, stand in the street, and you could throw something over the wall, and from the wall to where Barno worked was about a hundred feet. So, it was not a Green Zone fortress with lots of standoff, okay? I'm used to that. I commanded Camp Doha in Kuwait—huge fields of fire, lots of standoff all the way around it, except for a little bit on the port side, where the commercial area was—but this was a compound carved out of a downtown neighborhood. Our neighbors were the German school. Right across the street was the UN compound. In fact, we shared a wall inside the compound area with the World Food Program, and on the other side, with the UN De-Mining, and I could talk [about that] a little bit later. We had a very close relationship with the UN, for personal reasons, because I knew the chief of staff there.

Yeah, we were just in a neighborhood. We threw up some makeshift walls, and we got down to business. That meant that each—the -3 shop was connected but had a very small operations center; and then, basically, the -2 [staff section for intelligence] was in another building; the -5 was in another building. They were in different houses inside here, and our billeting was in houses inside there, and then what couldn't live on Kabul compound, we had about eighteen different contract houses scattered around Kabul, between us and the embassy, that our folks lived in, and they took a shuttle bus into work—shuttle cars, taxis, so on and so forth. We had some contractors pick them up and drive them back and forth to work and then take them home at night.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the security situation like in your little neighborhood there?**

COL. LAMM: Well, obviously, it was—we never had an incident at the wall or around the walls, so from a physical security—let me say this. From the U.S. standard of physical security, what we were doing, we were a nightmare because, basically, large vehicles were passing in front of one wall all of the time, and then after the DynCorp bombing in—when did that happen? It happened in the fall, I think, in September, just before the

elections. The DynCorp compound, which was wide open—it just had an office—somebody blew a car bomb. We couldn't close the street between the UN and our compound that ran laterally because the German school was there and, of course, the palace was here—but basically, there was a guard there that would look. But large trucks, water tankers, you know, would pass by all the time. So, from the perspective of physical security, from a standards perspective, we were just a nightmare, just a nightmare.

From the perspective of was it adequate security for the tasks that had to be performed? I would say, yeah, and you had to tailor that. We were in the business of telling the UN that you need to stay in country—this is after the UN bombing in Baghdad—"You need to stay in country. You need to continue training election workers and other folks. You need to stay here with your head in the game," because they were going to pull up and go, because they had left Baghdad, and there were a couple incidents in the south that started to worry the UN headquarters in New York, and they were really seriously considering pulling out of the whole operation at one point. Barno had a very close relationship with the high representative, Jean Arnault, and the chief of staff over at UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan] was a guy by the name of Larry Sampler. Larry Sampler was an ex–Special Forces guy I had known from Fort Bragg, and he was the UN chief of staff there. You had to convince a bunch of civilians that Afghanistan is a safe enough place for them to come run an election. You can't live in a fortress, so we purposely made some force protection decisions that from a U.S. standard would be deemed a little risky—i.e., when you met with UN folks or you were traveling with them, no flak vests or battle rattle. It was soft cap, your DCU [desert combat uniform] or your battle dress uniform, and just a Lexus, not an up-armored Humvee, and that's how we did liaison. That's how I moved around Kabul. Yeah, there was one rifle in the back seat. Normally, the drivers might have a sidearm, but the ambassador didn't like weapons in the embassy—neither did Barno—so we didn't bring them into the embassy as a general rule. And so, basically, we tailored the security situation to what we had on the ground, and we took a little risk doing that. But the UN did stay.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Again, this is something that I should have asked you a long time ago. Just asking one last question about your staff there: What was the joint and Coalition presence on the staff like?**

COL. LAMM: Oh, it was completely joint and Coalition. You had everything from Afghans to French, Germans, Canadians. The heavy lifters in the plan shop were British officers. In fact, the CJ-5 was [British Army Col.] George Norton, absolutely brilliant, and his predecessor was [British Army

Col.] James Stopford. I sort of handpicked and moved over the chief of staff to OMC-Alpha underneath General Brennan, and prior to him, we had a tall Air Force guy—his name escapes me, but I'll remember it later. The chief of staff over there was Bob Sharp, a British O-6 who attended the National War College the year before and was one of my students. So, Bob and I knew each other very, very well and got along just fine—just a brilliant guy.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You get on the ground; you've gone through and met your staff principals; you're working on the JMD. How would you describe your duties as chief of staff? What were your immediate tasks that you were doing, other than trying to coalesce your staff?**

COL. LAMM: Well, not only just coalesce and get team building with the staff, but I had to do it with the interagency, as well. So, I had to get to know the people up at the embassy. There were some key players up there. Dr. Deborah Alexander—she was, in fact, the functional expert on elections at the embassy. She would be indispensable. Patrick Fine, chief of the USAID—chronically short personnel. He'd asked me early on, you know, "Could you spare me any people?" and I said, "Well, I've got to take a look at this." It became very obvious shortly thereafter that if the USAID piece was broken and he couldn't monitor the contracts that he was letting, that we were going to have trouble implementing the rest of the reconstruction piece. So, I worked with the CJ-7 [staff section for engineering] John O'Dowd, who was Colonel O'Dowd at the time, and basically he gave Patrick Fine a handful of Army majors, engineers, to help monitor the USAID projects. So, it was a matter of letting everybody on the staff know that this was an interagency/Coalition sort of place, that a functional expert like Debbie Alexander could come to General [British Army Maj. Gen. John] Cooper, who was the DCG, or General [British Army Maj. Gen. Peter] Gilchrist after him, or could come to a staff member and say, 'I'm going to need all this for the election," and then my subordinate staff didn't have the right to tell that State Department person no. He had the right to say "I would recommend, no," but he also knew that he had to give that full request of what she wanted, or what any interagency person wanted. They had to deliver the whole message to me with the recommendation, and if they didn't, I'd kill them—not literally, but, you know, we would have some words—and the notion there was to let the folks at the embassy know that all the resources in the country were everybody's resources. This was going to be one team at work here, and if some minor major in the J-5 shop told Deborah Alexander "No, we're not going to do that," she knew very, very quickly that nobody except Barno or me could tell her no. And, generally, from the elections perspective, I don't know of one time we told anybody no,

to include the UN. So, we were able to give resources to the UN offline and then build that whole election process.

So, we had to build the team, and that was the most interesting part of all. I don't know whom else you interviewed. I know you interviewed Snukis and Barno. I'm not going to make any reference to those folks in the way they worked as a team, but the problem was they had really beat up the staff. Basically, they were just worn out. And Barno can be a pretty wicked taskmaster, and if that's the case, then the chief of staff has to be a foil and insulate the staff from some of that stuff. I mean, it was basically Leadership 101 sort of stuff. You know, staff comes in and goes, "You know, the -3's been sleeping under his desk. He's like a basket case." "This one's about ready to go." You've got to insulate the staff from the boss because he'll just wear you out. So, that was my job—to place myself and then basically tell the boss, "Let me know what you want. I'll run the staff. You work the high pieces with the ambassador, and as long as you trust me to get it done, then I think it'll work out fine," and I think Barno agreed in general principle to that. That was easy to do. We got along just fine. But it was a matter of building the staff back up, and their confidence, and then the country team—the whole country team. That was the major task. That was the major task. There was no shortage of talent there and know-how or expertise. It was a matter of really getting folks together and—I don't know how else to say this—but to make their work fun. They were not having fun. They were miserable, and my view was "You're going be somewhere for a year, and you're going to be in the middle of Kabul and running around in Afghanistan. You need to make the work fun," and, I think—I mean, even Barno began to appreciate it: "Hey, you know, this is fun." I mean, we still have reunions with people. Not a lot of folks coming out of Afghanistan or Iraq are having sort of fun reunions in towns when they get together. But that was my major task—rebuilding the leadership and the confidence with the staff; and at the embassy with the ambassador; and then, key Afghans—Jalali, you know, the minister of interior, the minister of defense. I mean, I would even go fairly frequently to see them. If they called down to the headquarters and Barno wasn't there, [Afghan President Hamid] Karzai knew I would do. And Barno was gone for a couple months in the winter, back here on business, which is the problem of going over to see those guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You've got this staff which, as you said, were kind of worn out—**

COL. LAMM: They're toast [laughs]!

DR. KOONTZ: **That's a good adjective. You also mentioned a while ago eighteen-hour days. What was the battle rhythm like on the staff?**

COL. LAMM: Well, there was no battle rhythm. I mean, when you have no people, it's tough to stick to battle rhythm. It's all sorts of work that had to be done. The general view was that you couldn't do anything that would make Barno happy and, basically, they had to be told, "We can get all the work done. I'll get you some more people, and, yeah, you can make the boss happy, and we have a few things coming up here that will make him happy." We got to work with the UN and train up—so it was a matter now of looking out at the calendar and going "Okay, how do we establish trust and confidence with all of the team players here and build the team?" Well, you got to play the game, and you got to win it. So the first one is "We're going to train up election workers, maintain security, build roads, run PRTs." But one of the things out there that the Taliban said that we weren't going to be able to do was that they would interdict and disrupt the UN training of election workers countrywide, so that the election, in fact, would never occur. Just the admin pieces of getting it going were going to fail. So, we devoted ourselves to getting the training done and preparing for the election, which included some firsts. I had a young major come in, actually a Canadian officer, working very closely with Debbie Alexander and General Cooper. He came in and said, "You know, we should treat this just like any other operation. Let's have a CPX [command post exercise]." We brought in some folks from JFCOM and other places and, by gosh, we built a CPX. We red-teamed out the security pieces. We red-teamed out the commo architecture for the Joint Election Management Board [UN Joint Electoral Management Body, or JEMB]—Afghan and UN led, always us in the background—and you find out they need more computer equipment. They need fiber optics run, so they can do a command and control center. In fact, the headquarters built the JEMB computer suite and control system for the Afghans and a command and control section for the UN across the street from us.

I mean, I was actually out there watching them with a backhoe, thinking, "I could trench across the Afghan streets so they could lay fiber over in the UN." Now my friends in OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] look at me funny and go, "Well, who gave you the authorities to give equipment and do this stuff with the UN?" because the normal bureaucratic trail is you would have to go back here to the Department; get approval in the Department of Defense; they would have to go to State; State would have to go to the UN representative here, to get all that done. Nah, it's the wonderful thing, having a presidential envoy like Khalilzad in your country. We figured out what we needed. Debbie Alexander, General Cooper, I, or the boss would go in—in fact, we sat down, we briefed the ambassador: "This is the plan. We're going to run a training exercise to involve the Afghan government, the UN. We'll put in all the

infrastructure, we'll show them how to do it, and we'll lead this thing from the rear"; and then, basically, that's what we did.

So, we ran two CPXs. For the training, in fact, I was looking at the CPX. Next thing came: "How do we secure this?" "Well, we'll do it with a number of rings." Local police will take care of polling stations; backing them up would be the Afghan National Army; and then no more than forty minutes away would be the U.S. forces, in extremis force. Well, the UN had serious concerns about that, so basically what we did is we built a map of every polling place in the country—thirty-five hundred of them—all of the counting stations (I think there were eight counting stations), and we laid all of that out and had it all matrixed up. There was an alert roster. And then, the UN said, "Well, how do I know I can contact you if I'm in trouble? We don't have radios," or whatever. And I said, "Well, I guess you're going to need cell phones." "But we don't have money for cell phones," the UN said. And I said, "Yeah, but we do," and, basically, we used some counternarcotics money to buy cell phones that we would use later on in the counternarcotics program, but we bought them cell phones. We had a very understanding and very forward-thinking player upstairs at the time. Kurt Amend was at OSD—he was an OSD civilian—and then Mary Beth Long, who is the principal deputy upstairs right now, she patrolled the counternarcotics pot of money, which had lots of policing money in it, so we could get all these things done. If securing the UN elections meant working with the police and there was a big pot of police money that was in the counternarcotics budget that was money for infrastructure—to build police stations, to build police infrastructure—we did not yet have authority to train and equip police, but we had money in the budget to work with the police on counternarcotics.

So, basically, we started early: "Where are the polling places? Well, let's make sure we put those where we're going to build a police station and get the police station built," and so on and so forth. So, we rushed and moved on all that—cell phones, alert rosters—and then what we did is we brought all these folks in after the CPX, or before the CPX, and briefed them, and so all the international ambassadors had a piece. They had a piece of the pie; they were in there; they met over at the UN, where all these ambassadors would go. They sat down in their seats at the headquarters and we went over it, and then we did a classic AAR [after action report] afterwards, and then we ran the election. That was a huge success. And, you know, if you're the CG and that goes very, very well, he's happy. People get awards, they get patted on the back, and everyone's happy. And then the election was, by all accounts, a bizarre success in many ways. We had no incidents of violence or deaths directly. We had one guy in a tractor run over a land mine trying to come to vote, and we

had some rockets shot off, but none in the capital, and this was after the Taliban was adamant: "We are going to disrupt this election"—and they didn't. There was no problem at all. That was a big win for the staff. So, it was the little things—getting ready for the elections, running elections.

And then the other one was, right after the elections in December, the inauguration ceremony for Karzai. The Taliban also said, you know, "We'll do something catastrophic! We'll kill all those buggers in one spot, and then we'll start taking the country over." Many heads of state—Cheney, Rumsfeld, their wives, the whole ball of wax. It was all really planned by the staff at CFC, with the Afghans, right down to the eaches. And I remember Barno smiling. Rumsfeld looked at him and he goes, "You know, this thing is running so well, I thought I was in Germany." And so Barno snickered, and that was a big one for the staff. And then Barno, that winter, was gone a couple months, but things went very well. It was a quiet winter. Did a lot of work. He came back, and then we started blowing right into the parliamentary elections that were coming up. So, that worked very well.

One other incident that really proved the staff mettle and our ability to work with -76 and the embassy, which happened in August—it happened in September, before the elections—is the ambassador decided it was time for Ismail Khan, a major warlord in Herat, to go. And in about forty-eight hours' time, the SAMS guy was drawing all the planning of how we were going to move the forces, deploy the forces, working very closely with -76, and, in fact, in a 48-hour time frame, maybe seventy-two hours' total, moved the entire 3d of the 4th Cavalry from its positions in the south and east all the way out to western Afghanistan, seized Shindand Airfield, separated Assadullah Khan and Ismail Khan, while the ambassador was talking—I mean, it was a wonderful interagency operation. The ambassador talking to Khan: "Could you take a position in Kabul?" "No, I'm going to stay out here and make trouble," and "Okay, fine." Then he woke up one morning, and we had deployed, very, very smoothly, fifteen thousand Afghan National Army soldiers and Afghan National Police out to Herat. They took the airfield and moved up to Herat, seized all of his heavy weapons, his tanks, placed his palace up there in a cordon. We had about twenty-four hours of some petty violence with Ismail Khan's thugs. It turned out that my clever folks in the National Directorate of Security, Amanullah Saleh, and our agency partners basically afterwards set up a sting operation for the troublemakers and said, "You've done such a great job! Ismail Khan would like to reward you by paying you for your services. Come to this place at this time." They all showed up and they got arrested, like we do here in the States with TVs and that sort of thing. So, that was a major operation that occurred.

I remember the boss was in and out of the country at that time. He came back. The warlord was under house arrest. The new guy was installed there. We used some CERP money and built the Herat Burn Center for women, something we worked very closely with the National Health Service on. And Peter Saleh was an ex-Iranian health minister, was in the Afghan Reconstruction Group as the Ministry of Health adviser, and they had been wanting to build a burn center for the Herati women out there. You're familiar with the issue of the Herati women?

DR. KOONTZ: **The women committing suicide, or burning ...?**

COL. LAMM: Well, they disfigured themselves or committed suicide, but normally most of them live, and that way they're badly disfigured. That way, they don't have to get married to the arranged marriage guy. And we were going to build a burn center out there for quite some time, but as long as Ismail Khan was going to take credit for it, the ambassador didn't want to do it. Many didn't want to do it. So, what we did is we removed Ismail Khan and then, very rapidly, we built the burn center out there, which empowered the new governor very rapidly. When we installed the new one, they could announce that "We're going to get this burn center built and take care of the folks out here."

DR. KOONTZ: **Ismail Khan's still in Kabul?**

COL. LAMM: I think he's the minister of power and energy, or something like that. But he's—obviously, all these guys still have political connections out west, as does [Abdul Rashid] Dostum up in the north. And what that showed part of the election was, there was always this criticism of Karzai and the government in Kabul, just being "He's the mayor of Kabul and can't control much else in the country." When the rest of the country, just prior to the election, sees a major warlord like Ismail Khan go down, you tend to look around and go, "Well, you know, maybe this government's just not in Kabul. Maybe, if they can reach out and touch Ismail Khan, they can reach out and they can touch a lot of us." And as the presidential election went on, what we found—there was some synergy—what we found was that the other warlords, like Dostum and [Muhammad] Atta, began to really negotiate with the ambassador and the international community about rapidly tying up and completing the DDR process. In fact, they were doing it in the middle of the winter, before the parliamentary elections were going to take place the next year. So, that helped out immensely.

DR. KOONTZ: **How would you characterize CFC-Alpha's relationship with this kind of nascent Afghan government as the parliament's getting elected and President Karzai is getting inaugurated? You mentioned Ismail Khan's removal as sort of an example of the government's growing power.**

Did you notice any kind of changes or competency in the Afghan government during your tour?

COL. LAMM: Oh, yeah. The Afghans had some immensely talented people. I mean, Karzai; Ali Jalali is an American-trained guy—in fact, he was an American citizen, he was the minister of the interior, so he was immensely helpful—Rahim Wardak is huge; [Lt. Gen. Sher Muhammad] Karimi was the chief of staff with the Afghan army, who was very helpful. Even a guy like Bismullah Khan—General Barno had a close relationship with him—in fact, I've had dinner with Bismullah Khan. We had close relationships with Dostum up in Mazar-e Sharif. So, Barno would get around; Cooper would get around; my staff would get around; and they would meet all these guys. I had Col. Jon Lopey, who was with the California Highway Patrol, a reservist who came in—they were going to do something with him, and I said, "Wait, let me get this straight. You're a captain in the California Highway Patrol?" "Roger." "You're going to be in the C-9, and you're going to be the new police liaison officer." That was Jon Lopey, who went to Herat with the police and the army, and two other majors we had in the headquarters who really put together, with the -76, the whole operation out there to remove Ismail Khan, and he liaised with the police and the army and so on and so forth. So, there was a very close relationship that began to be built between the staff as this election process and everything started going on and we got the staff on the ground—between the staff and the Afghan government—at all levels, not just the Barno-Karzai, Barno-minister level, or my minister levels, but with working people in the government, police chiefs, and so on and so forth.

Police chiefs needed—for the elections—they needed riot equipment. We went to Herat. The police only had AK47s and helmets. I mean, they looked like soldiers, and Lopey said, "Look, they need police gear. They need batons." We were very lucky none of the police—it wasn't a very well-disciplined group—ever shot at the crowd. It could have been a real disaster because the police were very rudimentary trained and only armed with AKs and helmets, and Jon came in and said, "Look, they need riot gear, the shield, the baton, the helmet, and the face stuff," and I said, "Holy moley! Give me a list," and it was about $4 million worth of stuff. And they had a great CJ-4 [staff officer for logistics], and I said, "Look, here's what I need. This is going to cost $4 million. Let's look at the counternarcotics pot again, and you can get these police in some riot gear. We may need them for the election." So, they went out, and Lopey would actually have three guys who were actually counting equipment as it came off trucks, doing the inventories, passing out with the cops, and then he coordinated with -76 to get MPs [military police] down there to basically train all these Afghan cops in basic riot formations, how to use their equipment, and then get them all deployed for the election. So, from September

to October, he basically is getting all that done, and at the beginning of September until the elections in October, Jon Lopey and a handful of guys in the -9 shop, with the Afghans themselves, are getting it done. We didn't have any sergeants and soldiers to send. We could get some MPs from -76, and they would help, but, basically, what Jon was able to do is work with the Afghan police and, basically, lead the police and do that. We had great relationships with the women's ministries. We had a female colonel who dealt with the women's ministries, health ministries. My SJA had an officer who was the liaison to the Supreme Court of Afghanistan. What did the supreme court need? It needed a filing system; it needed a couple computers; it needed file cabinets and bookshelves; and they would go out and do all that stuff.

So, it was a very dynamic group, but Barno and Khalilzad were superb in this way, in that neither of them were into micromanaging anything, which is very helpful because, quite frankly, on any given day, if you were to ask me what the hell Jon Lopey was doing with the police, I couldn't have told you. All I could have told you was "He's doing real good stuff, and he's going to call me from Herat in two days." Sure, I could get a hold of him. In general terms, you knew what they were doing, but you—basically, the trust and confidence you established were an essential point, that you were able to let them operate and do all of their stuff without bringing them in and giving them the grilling all the time. And I had no time for it. There was too much going on. So, it was like the good old days. You gave them marching orders and said, "Get out there and do good things! Don't do anything immoral or illegal. Other than that, you know the big picture. We've got to have a successful election in October, and whatever that means in your lane—if it means getting a hospital built somewhere, if it empowers the government, if it means getting police training, then that's what you got to go do."

DR. KOONTZ: **And you did get that successful election in October.**

COL. LAMM: We had a good election. A good election. I mean, it went without a hitch. I think they were missing ink in one of the places at Kabul that Christiane Amanpour made some headway with. Actually, it was pretty comical to watch the international media. They came to Kabul expecting a freight train wreck, and when it didn't happen, they left town. They said, "Well, there's no story here. Nobody's getting killed trying to go vote. We're just going to go home." So, she did a quick story from Kabul, and they all left.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. CFC-Alpha exists to coordinate the military and State Department civilian side—you know, POL-MIL integration, as you said. What was CFC-Alpha's guiding strategy when you got there, and did that change any?**

COL. LAMM: They had, basically, the nexus of the strategy figured out on a slide called "The Three Wars of Afghanistan," and the three wars involved [drawing a sketch] the first one, which was kinetic, which was what we called "bug hunting." Okay, there were bad guys—al Qaeda, Taliban—that are never going to reconcile. They're never going to see the light, and those folks, we need actionable intelligence on them; we need to go find them; we need to apprehend them; or we need to kill them. That's that circle over there. The circle on the far right, as we look at the page, are a whole bunch of centrifugal forces that really caused Afghanistan to come apart at the seams, anyway, and had nothing to do with the Taliban—well, nothing to do with al Qaeda and terrorists. That had to do with warlordism, poppy—the relationship between poppy growers and warlords, so on and so forth—and those were the forces that would tear the country apart: religious, mostly tribal, and that sort of thing. In the center was really the major war, the insurgency, and it had the people as the center of gravity. So, the center of gravity for that far-left one is intelligence, good intelligence. The center of gravity on the warlords is military—kinetic power to some degree, some political. This centerpiece—how do we isolate the Afghan population from the insurgents, okay? That really placed the population of Afghanistan as the center of gravity, and we needed to do everything as an interagency team to figure out all the ways in which we could separate the insurgents from potential sanctuary, and that meant making friends with the people and taking care of securing the people.

I've had a lot of time to reflect and read and write. That is a major difference between what we were doing in Afghanistan and what I saw us doing in Iraq. In Iraq, the major mission was protecting Americans, and we built castles and Green Zones and so on and so forth to do that, and we left the Iraqis hanging—the common Iraqi. The mission in Afghanistan was to use our Army to train the Afghan army to support the Afghan army and police and the Afghan government to secure and protect the Afghan people, and as a result we had—you know, the strategy was well on its way to being implemented, but the plan was we would assume regional control of areas. So, there'd be a colonel in the south, a colonel out west, and a colonel in the east, and everything that happened in their sandbox belonged to them. The PRTs worked for them. All the Special Forces that were there worked for them. If we were going to conduct an operation for a mid- or high-level Taliban that may be conducted with a Tier 1 special operating force, we would make sure that -76 was briefed and that the ambassador was briefed before that would happen. So, that was all seamless. We empowered him to do everything there—spend CERP money, coordinate with USAID folks on the ground for what roads would be built and how they would synchronize security and road building; that all landed on pretty creative guys like [Col.]

Gary Cheek, who had the southern area, and so on and so forth, and [Lt. Col. Michael] McMahon, who was later killed in an aircraft accident, who had the western area. But they did that piece, and the job was to secure the Afghan population and then working with the Afghan government to provide good governance.

There's a book by Barnett Rubin called *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. In the Introduction, I think about four pages in, is what I—there was a chart in there, which I called the Index of Misery, and, basically, Rubin postulates in the Preface that Afghanistan's a real poor country, but what he has in there is he has the life expectancy age, the number of women who die in childbirth, the number of children who get to age one, number of people with less than a thousand calories a day, number of people who have never seen medical care. So, he's got this whole misery index in there, and Rubin says this is a real crux of the problem. As long as so many people live like this, it's going to be an easy place for Taliban and these folks to come in, spend a little money, improve the standard of living just a little, and then, boom, you've got a sanctuary in a faraway place and 9/11's happened. I looked at that misery index, basically, with a C-9 and the rest of the staff and said, "Working with the USAID and the State Department and all these other folks, if we can fix these things that historically have been a real problem in Afghanistan … we don't have to make it West Germany, but if we can show incremental improvements over the long haul, the Afghans will come to respect and enjoy us." And at one time, we had about a 78 percent approval rating in the south. Just after the elections, it was very, very high. You know, the Taliban's saying, "Don't go to the polls. You're going to get blown up." I mean, the Afghans just blew them off and went to the polls.

So, that's basically it. The strategy in place with the circles. There were some pillars, some league nations—narcotics, U.K., Japanese at DDR, and so on and so forth. But all the big pieces were there. It was just a matter of getting the staff spun up and then getting them focused on all the little pieces that are going to come, and the big lifter in all of that, about four months into my tour, was Col. George Norton. It was the CJ-5 and Norton who basically wrote the counterinsurgency strategy for Afghanistan, all four hundred pages, he and his shop. At the time he started, he only had five officers in the J-5. By the time we got the staff built up, he had about twenty. He was able to do this kind of work—twelve lines of operation, across the whole DIME, diplomatic, information, military, economic, with the military piece being a pretty small part, and social development, education, good governance, security, police, the major parts. He had a little bumper sticker: "If you want peace, establish justice."

So, he wrote that plan, and then what we did with the plan was we briefed the ambassador and got his approval for the plan,

then we brought in a guy by the name of Marin Strmecki. Marin Strmecki works for a think tank. He's very close to Khalilzad and the administration. We brought him in, and, basically, we demilitarized it. We vanilla-ed it because a military plan with lines and charts and lines of operation isn't going to sell with our interagency partners real smoothly, or other ambassadors. So, we vanilla-ized it, we demilitarized it, and it became the MPP, Mission Performance Plan, at the embassy. They call it something else now, but, basically, it became the embassy's plan, and then we formed it around vanilla-fashion, and it was easy, because once the ambassador said, "I like that. Let's do it," and got a vanilla wrapper for it, everybody else … you know, it was a fishing expedition. The other guy we sold on that was Ambassador [Christopher] Alexander, who was the Canadian ambassador, and we got by in the international community. So, it was briefed to the interagency and the international community. Everybody bought into it, and then we briefed [General John P.] Abizaid, and that became the plan. Unfortunately, eight months later … he'd gone to Afghanistan after Khalilzad and Barno had left and asked the guys, "Where's your plan?" They said, "Well, we don't have one." So, there's some—maybe it was my mistake.

But in the interagency business, institutionalizing that sort of stuff is very difficult because what I found out was just that 90 percent of it's personality-driven. So, as long as Barno and Khalilzad, the station chief, the Afghan government, Jalali, Wardak, Karzai, and key ambassadors like Alexander and Jean Arnault, the UN ambassador, the UN representative—I mean, they were determined to make this work, and the force of their personalities really short-circuited these stovepiped bureaucracies that went back to the UN in New York and Washington: State and DoD [Department of Defense]. When those guys were gone, particularly Khalilzad, the stovepipes began to regrow themselves, sort of like a bad crop of bamboo—you know, just uncontrolled—and before you know it, everybody's operating in their own stovepipes and all the synergy you get from working together just goes away.

DR. KOONTZ: **Looking at it from the interagency angle, were there any issues that you would point to where CFC-Alpha or General Barno had a strategic plan or a strategic goal where you came across opposition from the embassy, or where they wanted to do something that would be at cross purposes?**

COL. LAMM: In the beginning of every issue, there are differences. You know, counternarcotics is one. The State Department INL—[Bureau of] International Narcotics and Law Enforcement [Affairs]—right after the presidential elections, they'd come on board and said, "Look, we've got $780 million U.S. dollars. Afghanistan's a narco-state. You've got to clean this up right

now. We've got this whole plan to aerial spray," so on and so forth. And Barno looked at this and he said, "Holy moley! I don't want my guys running around being weed killers. This could be a big problem." The good news was very, very, quickly Barno and Khalilzad were on the same sheet of music. We both saw that as very destabilizing, right after the presidential election, to have the U.S. or actually allies come in and actually physically do this. So, what Karzai asked was that he would convene a narcotics *jirga*, bring in all the elders, read them the riot act. We came up with a number: "Let's cut the hectares under cultivation by 30 percent." Barno and Khalilzad agreed. We agreed to do this—in fact, this is a good example. Some folks in the U.S. government wanted us to do everything, really wanted the military to get heavily involved in this. Cooler heads prevailed—Khalilzad from the political side, Barno and Abizaid on the military side—but here's what we agreed to: "INL, you bring your teams in and so on and so forth. We'll even write the counternarcotics strategy for the next five years," which we did. Mary Beth Long was in counternarcotics, and I called her on the phone, and I said, "We will write the plan because INL cannot write the plan and get this synchronized," and then we agreed on a number of things: "We'll provide intelligence, we'll have an intelligence fusion center. We can do that. We'll provide you lift as required and that's in consonance with our operation. So, if we lay out the strategy and you know when you want to do it, we can schedule aircraft and move your guys around. And then, we will always be there, like we are for everybody, for any in extremis support." So, that was one of these deals where everybody in country was unique, where everybody in country was sort of on the same sheet of music—Khalilzad, Barno, Abizaid—on how we wanted to approach this narcotics problem, but the problem was in Washington. I mean, they just wanted to get the weed whackers out. Well, even the Brits, who were in charge as the lead nation—which has gone away, by the way; they had the lead for counternarcotics—even they didn't want to aerial spray, so we had to fight all of that off with Washington.

I am trying to think of another instance—here's how this worked. In the morning, I would meet with General Barno at about seven o'clock. Seven-thirty, be over at the embassy. I'd get all my updates between six and seven-thirty, go over with Barno and some key staff people, the public affairs officer, a G-3 ops guy, the Special Forces ops guy—that's the black Special Forces ops guy—and then the public affairs officer, and that was it. It was an ops update, and Barno knew that the press was huge here, so the PAO [public affairs officer] was always there. We did the ops update and we'd get all that, and then we would go over at nine, and from about nine to ten every morning, he, I, the ambassador, station chief, and a note taker that the ambassador would have in there … they would sit down, and they would meet, and they would talk over everything they were going to do. They were all

very open and transparent with each other. Khalilzad said, "I got a call last night. These psychos back in Washington want to do X. What should we do?" They would talk that out, and, basically, the notebook's just like this: "Okay, what is it we want to do?" and then I would issue the stuff out for the rest of the staff, to include key embassy staff. So, it was functioning with both chiefs, which worked out pretty well: "What do we want to do? Where do we want to put assets?" because DoD brings 90 percent of the assets to these soirees. So, that worked out pretty well. But I don't remember a time where they—quite frankly, I can't think of a time when they openly disagreed about something and didn't get it worked out. And *nothing* ever, ever had to leave Kabul for jurisdiction. There was a—I mean, it was understood that "We're sort of a secondary theater of operation. We're all in this together, and here we are, and so we'll just get it done right here," which is unique and refreshing in many ways.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were you there when General Barno left?**

COL. LAMM: Yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Tell me about the changes—or, what changes were there when General Barno left and General Eikenberry came on board?**

COL. LAMM: Everything changed. And I liked General Eikenberry personally—and I think many other folks [did]. I don't know who else you've interviewed, but there was what I would call change for change's sake. It was almost a de-Barnofication of the operation. In many ways, it was a bit frustrating. I stayed there for about a month and a half to do the overlap, but here's my sense. Immediately, General Eikenberry wanted to work in traditional channels with the security sector as his main effort. Other things weren't going to be quite as important. Although he probably thought he was maintaining a strong relationship with the embassy, the fact that he moved his office and physically moved his residence from the embassy to Kabul compound sent a psychological message to folks that I don't think many realized at the time how profound that was. The fact that Barno lived at the embassy and maintained an office and spent most of his working time in an office next to the ambassador, and then, basically, he spent most of the morning there. Just before lunch, Barno would come over to Kabul compound. We'd ping around, do a bunch of stuff with the staff so you wouldn't have to shift the staff up to the embassy, work on routine stuff, sign OERs [officer evaluation reports], do all of the admin stuff that a commander's got to do, and then generally have dinner at the embassy, not at Kabul compound. He would have lunch; he had breakfast at the embassy; dinner at the embassy; he had lunch at Kabul compound, and I normally had him for lunch. And so, he began his day and he ended his day, the bulk of his day, thirty feet from the ambassador. And when

your whole staff knows that, and more importantly, when the rest of the interagency people who tend to want to get stovepiped real quick—when they see that this guy's best friend in country is the military guy and my guys see that Barno's best friend in country is the ambassador, it makes the interagency coordination real easy, because they knew the next morning, if Debbie Alexander needed something, I was going to get them to adjudicate because I didn't want to go in the next morning and say, "You know, we're having this hissy fit between the staff." That stuff had to get worked out, and it got worked out real fast. I think that that—could you have kept the same deal going and lived somewhere else? Yeah, you could have, but they weren't meaning the same.

At the same time, remember that Barno left. Khalilzad left to go to Baghdad, and the new ambassador who came in—in fact, I began hearing this before I left—they were going to "normalize" embassy operations. Well, Afghanistan's not a very normal place, and to think that you were in Paris or Beijing or Moscow—you weren't going to normalize anything in Afghanistan. That meant "Defer to State, interagency working groups. If there's a military question, I'll send it up my chain. I'll go across the department here in the building, and it'll go back down to Eikenberry." That isn't going to work. It just isn't going to work in a counterinsurgency environment. The bad guys can move too quickly to allow you to do that. So, that was the profound change—moving out and then focusing in on the headquarters.

I mean, Eikenberry told me, "Look. My maneuver elements, my commanders that I'm going to influence this operation with, are going to be the CFC-Alpha staff." Well, really, the people he needed to be maneuvering with were the other ambassadors, the high UN representatives. That guy's got to operate on that level, the grand, strategic level, keeping the allies in the game, keeping the UN in the game. Any good chief of staff will keep the staff functioning because my responsibility is to other embassy players laterally, and then to CJTF-76 and the muscle-moving parts. So, I think that, conceptually, he felt comfortable operating a level lower. Now, I spoke recently with Maj. Gen. [USAF John T.] Brennan, and Brennan's view was that General Eikenberry had been, in the previous incarnation—two years since, earlier, he had had General Brennan's job. He was the OMC-A guy in Kabul, and my suspicion is that what General Eikenberry did, he defaulted to what he was very comfortable doing, and that was training police and training the army—Brennan concurs with my assessment—whereas getting out and being a coequal and cajoling ambassadors and UN representatives to do stuff he was very uncomfortable with, didn't want to do it. That's my assessment. But in that environment in Afghanistan that larger piece that Barno was very comfortable with doing—that, I think, made all the difference in the world. I mean, for

a military guy, you are way outside your box here. You know, you're way outside your normal comfort box.

DR. KOONTZ: **When you left in—was it July of 2005?**

COL. LAMM: July, yeah.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was your overall impression of what CFC-Alpha had accomplished?**

COL. LAMM: Oh, well, I'm biased and parochial [laughs].

DR. KOONTZ: **We all are!**

COL. LAMM: Yeah! I was extremely proud of the whole staff, and I think that the staff itself was very proud of what it had done, or it wouldn't still be getting together in town here. I mean, we still have get-togethers. And when Barno retired, the former chief of the Afghan Reconstruction Group, a businessman by the name of Lou Hughes, and Ali Jalali had a big get-together, and Khalilzad came, and we invited a lot of the key people in. We've had a meeting or two—not a meeting, but a party at Barno's house. So, we were, first of all, immensely proud of what we had done, and, basically, the major tasks were, you know, the election, the two elections—setting up and getting the two elections going, getting governance going in Afghanistan; and the only way to do that was getting the president elected. And, I mean, had we not been able to accomplish the presidential election … it would really have unraveled very, very quickly if Taliban had been able to disrupt the election. If anything would have happened during the inauguration, it would have been a big signal that "Here the new president can't even control Kabul." And then we worked through it and we were all set up, had the CPXs done, and all the planning for the parliamentary elections. In fact, Debbie Alexander was gone, but everybody in the -5 shop had learned so much from her that they had become experts on running elections. So, that tended to work out very well.

The other big events were the warlords. How Khalilzad and Barno worked the warlords—that was absolutely masterful. And we had a great advantage here, because Khalilzad spoke the language and was a native Afghan at one time. So, he could pick up the phone and yell at the guy in Dari. I talked about Ismail Khan and Amanullah Khan, and we did do them, and how we worked them. But one of the real big warlords, as the parliamentary elections were coming up that winter, we didn't know quite what to do with, and that was Dostum. Dostum was at Mazar-e Sharif and really controlled the north, and had always controlled the north. I mean, it was Dostum, basically, whom we linked up with early on—a lot of the Special Forces guys and guys that were coming out of K2 [Karshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan] went in

there. That began the Northern Alliance, because Massoud had been killed. So, he had huge power and, I mean, if Massoud had been around, he would probably have been the president and not Karzai, by the way. But, anyway, Dostum was a pretty powerful guy, a well-connected warlord. He's no humanitarian. I mean, he isn't a good guy, but one by one, we were isolating warlords, as opposed to taking them on all at one time. One by one, we would isolate them and take them.

Bismullah Khan went—in fact, Barno personally talked to Bismullah Khan on the eve of the election when the UN and Karzai announced that Bismullah Khan could not be the vice president. And Bismullah Khan was a big warlord, and we were worried, well, he'll get his tanks, and the guy could take the government down and he'd drive the tanks down the streets of Kabul and raise all sorts of hell. The day after the announcement was made, Barno went to Khan's office and talked with him. And he was—Barno told me—he was deeply upset that he wasn't going to be able to run as the vice president, and Barno said, "But look. I mean, you could be a politician. You've just got to take the uniform off," and Khan looked at him and said, "Really?" Then he said, "Well, yeah. You have that in your country. Wesley Clark's been running for office." "You've got to retire, put on a suit, public citizen, but you can't be a warlord and run for vice president. That's the way it is, you know?" And Bismullah Khan shook his head, and he's been wearing a suit ever since, you know. He's the chief of staff now, so he's very influential in the military, but he sees himself as a civilian leader. So, he went first, and then Amanullah Khan and Ismail Khan. We began working on the south.

But basically, what happened to Dostum is Dostum got sick, had liver failure, because you know—a good Muslim guy—he was drinking a bit, and most of his life. He lived a hard life, and basically he had liver failure, and his handler called me up one night and said, "Colonel"—we met at the dinner—"Dostum, he's dying. He's very sick. The doctors here don't know what's wrong. Can you help him out?" And I said, "Yes. What we'll do is, take him to Bagram and we'll have him checked," and we had a very good medical facility at Bagram. So, they fly Dostum from Mazar-e Sharif down to Bagram, and I get a call from the chief of staff down there—I think it was Col. Chuck Cardinal, was the chief of staff—and he goes, "He's going to die. Liver failure," and I said, "Well, can we keep him alive?" And he says, "Yeah. We gotta get him to a Level 1 medical facility," and I said, "Well, what in the hell are those?" And he says, "Well, Walter Reed," and I said, "He's going to Washington? We've got to treat a warlord at Walter Reed? The ambassador isn't going to go for that." And I said, "Wait a minute. How about Landstuhl?" And so we sent Dostum to Landstuhl, and they cured him. They fixed him, and they worked out the equipment he would

need to stay alive, and he basically came back. He was back about a week and a half, and he called the ambassador and he said, "I want to come to Kabul and have dinner with all of you." Barno was out of town at this time. And so, we had dinner and he announced, "That's it. You guys saved my life. I want to become a political person. Can you DDR all my heavy equipment in the middle of the winter?" So, basically, that's what we did. We went up there, got all his heavy equipment, and Dostum's got some nominal position inside the government—still a powerful guy, connected. But that's sort of how we went about the eaches of getting rid of these guys one by one. So, I don't know what question you asked me that got me down that path.

DR. KOONTZ: **I was just asking you your assessments of what you had done. You pointed to the elections, the inaugurations, DDRing the warlords …**

COL. LAMM: Oh, yeah. DDR was Japanese. Our role in that was cajoling warlords to give it up. The election, the successful presidential election, the training, the election watching, a political process, if you're a warlord and you're watching this political process grow, that not even the warlords or the Taliban is able to interrupt (and we never get any indication of if the warlords are going to interrupt it) because quite frankly, in a parliamentary election, you're probably going to get—it's like Chicago, and they're going to get the local guy in, anyway—but the kicker was, they watched this, and it was a successful presidential election, and they go, "Hey, this parliamentary election's going to happen." And there's a UN mandate out there: "Oh, by the way, the UN has decreed you cannot run for political office if the UN says you're a warlord." And it comes—how does it know you're a warlord? You have a local militia. So, you've got to DDR the militia and turn in all this heavy equipment.

So, by the time the parliamentary election was rolling around, the Japanese had like a 99.9 percent success rate in policing up heavy weapons. They had policed them all up—FROGs, Scuds, tanks, missile launchers. You wouldn't believe the crap these guys had. And basically, it was the synergy of that election and that political process taking off that convinced these warlords: "Hey, I got to truck it in here, or I'm going to be on the outside. It looks that way now. I'll be on the outside, and if I want to be a new political warlord in my area, I'm going to have to get elected, or get my people elected." And I think that's the major success—the major success that brought in the warlords, turned in the equipment, contributed to security and government, was watching this political process of the elections go by. And then, having the right military force on the ground to secure that process as you went along. So, it was a combination of all those interagency things that made it work.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I've monopolized two hours of your time here. If I could ask you one last question, when your son gets out of the Army, or when your daughter gets done with her grad studies in Arabic studies and you've got grandkids bouncing on your knees, what's going to be the one story that you're going to tell them about Afghanistan—something funny, something that touched you, something that, you know, really made an impression on you?**

COL. LAMM: Yeah, I'll give you a sort of—the command-sponsored orphanages. It was in the dead of winter, and we were patting ourselves on the back—the -4 and a number of folks in the -9 shop—that were working on the orphanages. I mean, we had a liaison with orphanages and, in fact, the command sponsored one of the orphanages. We had gone down one day. We'd gotten coats from the AAFES [Army-Air Force Exchange Service] guys that were left over from Europe for years, probably lying around the warehouse as donations and other things, and we had gotten all of these coats and mittens and hats. And the winter of '05—I mean, '04 to '05 was brutal. I mean, it started snowing on Thanksgiving, and we had snow up to the waist in Kabul compound until the spring. It was beautiful, but it was cold, and we were passing out these hats and gloves up at the—this is in Kabul—and I look down, and none of the kids have shoes on. I mean, they're out there in their bare feet, getting a coat and mittens and gloves. And I said, "Man. ..." And, my guys were aghast, too. I mean, it never occurred to them: "They need shoes." So, they worked very quickly, and then we made a boot-and-shoe run. So, that was very interesting.

But I think the one thing that I will remember—and that was a success in its own way, from a very human aspect, and I didn't get to do a lot of that because I'm chained to a desk, so that touched me in a very personal way—but the best event that we had there, that really had everybody in the building high-fiving, and even Barno came in glowing and hugging people, was the First Lady's [Laura Bush's] visit to Kabul. The First Lady's visit to Kabul was one of these other seminal events that just drove a stake into the heart of the insurgents. First of all, we planned that with three or four guys. The station chief, myself, and a handful of people knew she was coming, and the first thing was her handler said, "This is the first time where we've gone anywhere where it didn't leak." And I said, "Well, it hasn't leaked because nobody knows. The next thing we're going to have to do is execute without a whole lot of people knowing." But we had an A-list cut out and big visitors coming, but we were a little put out because it was the First Lady. She went, visited—obviously, obligatory, at the end of the visit, stopped by Bagram and had some dinner with soldiers, but just for a short period of time. She spent the entire day at the Kabul's Women's School for Education and, of course, as the chief, Barno's with her—everybody's out with her, all the key leaders, Khalilzad, all the bigwigs are

with her. I'm just waiting for her to get into Afghan airspace and get the hell out of Afghan airspace, but it was just a great visit. It went extremely well. It made huge political capital for us. The Afghans were absolutely thrilled. But then, never underestimate Khalilzad. As this very micromanaged operation is going on to get her to and from places, her convoy pulls out to take her to the helicopter. I'm watching on the Predator, and the damn convoy stops in the middle of the street in Kabul. The door opens up, the ambassador's car, and the First Lady and Khalilzad hop out of the car. They'd told me they were going to do it. I said, "Well, okay. Let me take a look around," and they walk across the street into an Afghan bakery, buy bread, come back out, and drive away. Well, it's not what us ops folks would have liked, but it was a great moment for the ambassador. He was thrilled. Obviously, by doing that, the First Lady's walking around the streets of Kabul buying bread, it sort of sends a message to folks everywhere: "Hey, you know, it's not a bad place to go." Obviously, I could drive around Kabul and nothing happen to me. The ambassador could, and you know—just with your driver—but to have it be the First Lady, basically, citizens look at that and say, "If the Taliban or al Qaeda really wanted to make a statement, they could have. That was the chance. And we've watched these elections; we've watched the inauguration; now we had the American First Lady walking around the street buying bread. Maybe this new government is the way to go." So, yeah, that visit was the best time.

I will tell you, one of the funniest lines was Major Beaton, a Marine major—he had been in country about eight months. That young major, it was his visit: security, where she was going, where she was staying, where she was eating, where the planes are going, the whole thing, because we're a small staff. You know, I've got an ops chief—[Col.] Cardon Crawford, whom you've probably heard of—and he's running it, but this major, it's his visit, and basically, afterwards, he came up. He was almost in tears, and he goes, "I just want to thank you for letting me do this." And I said, "Well, it's your job." I mean, "No one else could do it, buddy, and you did a great job." And then he looks at me and he goes, "Sir, you know, you should have come down and met the First Lady. Her handlers wanted you to meet her because you were putting this thing together with us." And I said, "No, my job's here." And he goes, "Well, you really needed to come down there"—and this was the funny line—he goes, "Sir, the First Lady, she's hot! I mean, she's really good-looking, and her folks who are with her are really hot!" And I looked at him (of course I'm snickering) and I said—I got the -3's sitting here with me—and I said, "You know, you've been deployed too long. It's time for you to go home and see your wife." He said, "The First Lady's hot!" I said, "You know, that's about right." So, that was that. That was the funny story.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, great. Is there anything else you'd like to add?**

COL. LAMM: No, I think we covered all the bases. I do, at the end—because I'm into this quite a bit—the interagency and DoD are spending a lot of time and a lot of effort trying to figure out how to institutionalize and build processes to conduct these counterinsurgencies and nation-building operations, and my gut feeling is that we're making it much more complicated than it needs to be. First of all, good officers like Gary Cheek and the guys in -76, staff officers, they know what to do inherently. American officers, they know what to do. They know the way things ought to go. You don't need a whole lot of specialized training. I mean, they'll get in there and they'll figure it out, and they'll get it going, and you'll learn more on the ground doing it than you're going to learn at NDU [National Defense University] in a classroom, anyway. I can say that because I've taught at those places.

The key that the interagency has to figure out is how it builds teams and puts them in there and then empowers them to do what they need to do, as opposed to having them beholden all the time to some policy guy back in Washington. There's got to be a policy dialogue all the time so that you're in sync. But in these sorts of situations like Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places, that guy on the ground's got to be able to make national-level decisions with the people on the ground and just execute without wasting a whole lot of time getting an interagency operations group, you know, in D.C.: "Big stuff! Yeah, that's got to come back here." Small stuff like "Do we send Dostum to Landstuhl?" We didn't even ask that question in Washington. Do you know how long it would have taken us to get the answer on that one? I told the guys, "What are we going to do? Don't even bother! Don't even bother. I mean, they'll be calling the German Embassy: 'Do you want an Afghan warlord there?'" Turned out, the Germans loved him! He's like a rock star over there. But, yeah, basically, you knew that as a presidential envoy, Khalilzad could cover you—you know, just cover your rear as you did these things, and as long as he and Barno and everybody else are on the same sheet of music, it really empowered you to do a lot of stuff, very rapidly, that you don't see a lot of in many places. So, that'd be the last tidbit.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. All right, sir, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this.**

COL. LAMM: No sweat. It was a pleasure.



Col. Tucker B. Mansager *served as the political-military officer of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan from July to October 2003, when he transferred to serve as Chief, CJ-9 Section (Civil-Military Affairs), in Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. He was interviewed by telephone on 20 April 2007 by J. Patrick Hughes of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Colonel Mansager discusses the work of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan in coordinating security sector reform and the mentoring and development of Afghanistan's Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Afghan National Army. Task Force PHOENIX trained the rank and file troops of the Afghan National Army. Colonel Mansager mentions the office's staffing and command relationships with U.S. Central Command and the Department of Defense. One of the original six members of the staff of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, Colonel Mansager relates the difficulties of building a new staff to coordinate strategic policy and liaise with the U.S. Embassy, the Afghan National Government, Coalition partner nations, and the United Nations, as well as with field forces such as Combined Joint Task Force-76 and provincial reconstruction teams. The interview concludes with Colonel Mansager's comments on the challenges and rewards of interagency operations.*

DR. HUGHES: **It is the twentieth of April 2007. I am interviewing Colonel Mansager by phone. This is Dr. J. Patrick Hughes, interviewing. Sir, could you give your full name and your duty position?**

COL. MANSAGER: My name is Tucker Mansager. I am a colonel in the U.S. Army, and I am currently the installation commander for the Presidio of Monterey and the commandant of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Good. And you are sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

COL. MANSAGER: I am.

DR. HUGHES: **And don't mind it being used for an Army study?**

COL. MANSAGER: No, I do not.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Sir, what was your duty position and station before you deployed to Afghanistan?**

COL. MANSAGER: I was the assistant Army attaché in Warsaw, Poland.

DR. HUGHES: **And how and when did you learn you were going to deploy to Afghanistan?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, we had been working in Poland for some time, getting the Poles to cooperate both in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to begin with, and then in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, which obviously started—I was there in March of 2003 when the war started. So, we had been doing a lot of work with the Poles to help build the Coalition, and I had gotten sort of tired of sending my Polish friends off to Afghanistan and Iraq, and so I contacted my branch manager. I am an Army foreign area officer [FAO]. I said even though that is out of

my area, my area being Europe, I would volunteer to do a tour in Iraq or Afghanistan. And, strangely enough, I came out on the [Army] War College list. I had been slated to go to the Hoover Institution. I went and picked up a car that I had bought in Germany. I shipped it just before Easter of 2003. I came home. I shipped it to California where I thought I was going to be. I came home. I checked my e-mail on Easter Tuesday, and there was the infamous e-mail from your assignments officer saying, "Remember how you volunteered to go someplace if we wanted you to go? Well, we would like you to go to Afghanistan." So, I found out probably in late April of 2003 that I was going to go to Afghanistan in July.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Did you know at that time that you were going to be political-military [POL-MIL] officer in the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan [OMC-A]?**

COL. MANSAGER: No. The original orders came down with me being the security sector reform coordinator in the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan. So, that is what I was anticipating doing, going over there, although many people had warned me that you get over there and you sort of do what you are told to do, but the actual orders, I think, said security sector reform [SSR] coordinator.

DR. HUGHES: **What your actual role was going—?**

COL. MANSAGER: Exactly! Well, in fact, there was a little bit to debate about it for a while, and I don't want to get ahead of myself, but the actual security sector reform coordinator, by designation from Secretary [of Defense Donald H.] Rumsfeld, was Maj. Gen. [Karl W.] Eikenberry, the chief of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan at that time. So, that title was taken by a two-star general, not a lieutenant colonel, at the time. He had an assistant who is a Brit, a British lieutenant colonel. So, even the assistant to the SSR coordinator was filled. And so, I got there, and I think the bottom line was, Maj. Gen. Eikenberry being a fairly renowned Army foreign area officer himself, wanted to get a foreign area officer on his staff to do POL-MIL things, but in the process of figuring out what the slot would be called and everything, I think they just looked for something that was familiar.

DR. HUGHES: **You obviously—with your experiences in Poland, you already had a consciousness of something of what was going on in Afghanistan. How did you get smart in the area of Afghanistan?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, I did know a little bit but, you know, not a whole lot. We worked on getting the Poles to commit forces and getting them to allow overflight, but not on the details inside the country. So, I just did a lot of reading, and I was thinking about that—what I read—and, unfortunately,

I can't remember the authors. But I read stuff like *The Great Game*. I also read Louis Dupree's *Afghanistan*. There is a military history of Afghanistan. I think it's *The Military History of Afghanistan from Alexander to the Present Day*," and then a fellow foreign area officer recommended—in fact, I think he had been maybe the first defense attaché that went back into the embassy at Kabul, a guy named Henry Nowak—had recommended *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, believe it or not. He volunteered to go in, and I believe he was the guy that helped open the embassy back up and, based on his experience, he thought, "You know, there's a lot of stuff about warlords and things that Stillwell was dealing with in China." So, I read that as well. And then my only other real personal preparation really was making sure I was physically fit and my family was squared away for the year that I was going to be gone.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Did you get any official briefings for that?**

COL. MANSAGER: Yes. We came out of Poland, got my family back to the U.S. and settled them in Arizona, where we're from, and then I went out to Central Command in mid-July and got a good series of briefings on what was going on there; and what a provincial reconstruction team was because the concept was just coming up then; and who was who and what the tribes were, and things like that. So, I probably had a good week, I think, sort of working with the J-5 [staff section for plans] folks in Central Command. In fact, we will get into this later on. [Lt. Col.] Robin Fontes, who succeeded me in the position in Afghanistan, was actually the J-5 desk officer who briefed me before I went in. So, it worked out really well in that regard.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Did you go then from the Central Command headquarters to Afghanistan?**

COL. MANSAGER: Right. It's sort of circuitous, right up to Baltimore and over to Frankfurt and into Turkey. Actually, I went to Manas, Kyrgyzstan, to Ganci Air Base there in Uzbekistan for about a day or two as they were trying to coordinate the flights into Afghanistan. I finally got there on the twenty-fourth of July, I think, in 2003 in Bagram.

DR. HUGHES: **It sounded like they really didn't have a predecessor in the command there before you. Is that true?**

COL. MANSAGER: Right. It hadn't existed. As you know, at least in Army assignments, it is all sort of a mystery. Nobody will ever tell you exactly how they came to you. Sort of the anecdotal evidence I heard was—you know, General Eikenberry, he's a China FAO. As you may know, he was a defense attaché and assistant Army attaché. He speaks Chinese fluently. He wanted a foreign area officer of some kind. In Afghanistan, it

is actually in the 48-Delta region, sort of South Asia, I think it's called, so guys that deal with Pakistan and India and things like that would have been the natural pick. Apparently, they offered him several folks from that region, and for whatever reason, he didn't accept them, so they sort of broadened the circle to include guys like me, a 48-Charlie European FAO. And so, I got there, and that is why I think they were sort of "Well, what do we do with this guy now that we have him?" I think General Eikenberry had an idea, but since none of the other guys on the staff were foreign area officers, they didn't know exactly what capabilities the FAO brought to the fight that they were in.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What was the mission and scope of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, of course, I would always defer to General Eikenberry, who was in charge, but my perception was just—I mean, the biggest thing we were working on was to rebuild the Ministry of Defense [MOD] and the General Staff [GS], and we provided sort of staff and combat development support to Task Force PHOENIX, that was actually training the Afghan National Army [ANA] and the various U.S. units—largely National Guard—rotated through. There was active duty and reserve units that would fall in to train the ANA out at Pol-e-Charki on the outskirts of Kabul, but sort of the equipping of those guys, that's another—it was interesting. You know, I was in Poland, trying to get Warsaw Pact kind of equipment for the army in Afghanistan. Then I got to Afghanistan and had to call back to Poland to my friends to try to pull this stuff forward. So, OMC-A worked on equipping them, and then they worked on sort of developing the TO&E [table of organization and equipment] and the tactics, techniques, and procedures, sort of, but really more of the organizational stuff of the ANA—how big should companies be, how should they be structured, what are the weapons that go into it, and then getting the weapons. We did that for Task Force PHOENIX. There's a Marine Corps colonel while I was there named Rick Schmidt, who was the guy in charge of that particular division.

And then the other major effort, and the one that I was much more involved in because of being an FAO, was the reconstruction of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff for the Afghan military. One of the other things I should mention to you, particularly because of the person of General Eikenberry—he was, as I mentioned, the security sector reform coordinator for the United States in the security sector reform, which consisted of building the ANA, which the U.S. is responsible for; counternarcotics operations, which the Brits were doing; rebuilding the judiciary, which the Italians were doing; demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of the militia forces, which the Japanese were doing. I think there is another one in there, but I can't

recall—oh, the Germans were building the police. So, he was the American general. Eikenberry was the American rep to that international body that was trying to do that as a result of the Berlin Accords [actually, Bonn Agreements]. And then, you know, the other thing, which is to say Bagram and Kabul are not the same. There's about an hour's drive in between them.

So, General Eikenberry was actually—even though Lt. Gen. [John R.] Vines, the CJTF-180 [Combined Joint Task Force-180] commander, was the senior U.S. Army officer on the ground—Maj. Gen. Eikenberry was the senior U.S. person in the capital. So, when something happened and they needed to see an American real quick, it oftentimes fell to him.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. The Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, how was staffing when you got there?**

COL. MANSAGER: It was—you know, as I was looking at this—it was not bad. It was, to some degree, combined. We had, as I mentioned, a British officer, who was the assistant to the general for security sector reform. There was also a British lieutenant colonel who worked with Col. Rick Schmidt in the division that dealt with building the ANA. I just want to make sure that that's clear. It was very clear that Task Force PHOENIX, which, interestingly enough, was not directly subordinate to OMC-A but was subordinate to CJTF-180, did the training with those folks. OMC-A built the structure. Let's put it that way. So, we had a Brit inside that and a couple other folks, a couple other allies floating around, as I recall. But it was fairly austere. I got a picture of us someplace, and there is probably not more than—oh, I don't know—fifty people on the whole staff, as I recall, in OMC-A proper.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What branches of the military were there?**

COL. MANSAGER: It was dominated by the Army, but there were a number of marines. Like I said, Rick Schmidt, who is one of those very few colonels that we had—we probably had maybe three or four colonels, I guess, in the whole organization. So, he was in charge of a major division there. He was a marine. We had a Marine lieutenant colonel, Joe Moore, who was like the logistics officer, trying to get all of that equipment for the ANA. We had a couple Navy Seabees that would come through on a pretty quick basis, but we had a couple naval officers and then a couple Air Force officers. The admin officer, sort of the secretary for the General Staff, was an Air Force officer. So, we had all of the services represented, but it was far and away, I think, an Army organization. We had a good number of reservists and national guardsmen in the team, as well, from the Army. So, there was a pretty good smattering of everybody.

DR. HUGHES: **What was the experience level?**

COL. MANSAGER: I would say, you know, for some folks, it was very good. In the experience—let me sort of say, experience in doing what? In doing this particular job, probably not much. You know, this is a job that I don't think anybody could have really trained to have done before they came in there because even—and as I mentioned, I'm an Army foreign area officer. So, we do what is commonly called Office of Defense Cooperation [ODC], defense security cooperation activities, that kind of stuff; and sometimes you've got things like an Office of Military Cooperation, if it's big enough, like in Turkey, for instance, headed by a general. But this OMC did nothing like an OMC in a noncombat zone. So, the experience level for doing this particular job was fairly minimal. I think the guys that were building the structure for the ANA probably had some more experience because we do that for our own Army. We build structure in TO&Es and TDAs [tables of distribution and allowance] and things like that, but for rebuilding the General Staff and the MOD, there is not a whole lot of experience for that. I should also point out—we were talking about the organization—we did have a large number, a growing number, of MPRI [Military Professional Resources, Inc.] contractors who were brought over to serve as advisers and things for the rebuilding of the General Staff and the MOD. And then the other thing I would say about experience is that there is a large number of reserves and national guard guys, and this early into it, in 2003, so we hadn't activated that much of the reserve and guard. They hadn't gotten sort of in the battle rhythm that they are now where you effectively can't differentiate the experience level between an active duty guy and a reserve guy because we have been fighting the war six years now, but back then, you could sort of tell a difference between folks that had been on active duty their whole career and guys that had just been pulled out of Fort Leonard Wood and sent over to Afghanistan.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What was the relationship of the office to Washington, D.C.?**

COL. MANSAGER: I think General Eikenberry and we had a pretty straight channel back up to the secretary of defense, under secretary of defense for policy. We were sending sort of weekly reports back on what is going on there. By the time I got there in July of 2003, to be quite frank about it, I think Washington had probably lost a little bit of interest in Afghanistan, to be quite frank with you, because that's July 2003. We had just been fighting the war in Iraq, and a lot of attention had shifted over there. That is not to say that we were neglected, but, clearly, people had their eyes on Iraq a lot. I should mention the Coalition. I mentioned the folks that were in our team, but we also had a lot of folks as we were going through that we were building up in Task Force PHOENIX and the Coalition, and we did a lot of cooperation with the Coalition

forces or embassies there in Kabul to try to build support for some of this stuff we were doing as well. But our relationship with Washington, I think, was good; but I think Washington by this point in time was a little bit distracted by Iraq, to be honest with you.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What were your duties and responsibilities?**

COL. MANSAGER: They were sort of—you know, it's the beauty of going in and making your own job up. Ultimately, I worked an awful lot of General Staff and MOD reform, working on the international aspect of that. So, the whole idea—General Eikenberry, I think his intent at the time that we were there was to make sure it was a Coalition effort and not a U.S. effort—you know, it is Afghanistan and the Coalition, not the U.S., and not the U.S. and Afghanistan; it is the Coalition and Afghanistan. So, a lot of the stuff that I did that I could use my FAO skills on was going out, and we would work. We had to build the structure for the General Staff and the MOD, and we had to get everybody to buy into it. We couldn't impose it on people—not properly, anyway—so we had to develop this structure, and then we sort of went around, and we went on a traveling road show and sold it to the major players. So, first the international guys. So, we would talk to the United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan, UNAMA. I guess Secretary [Lakhdar] Brahimi was there at the time. We talked to the EU. Then we would go around talking to the major embassies, the French and the Brits in particular, the Germans, and get them to sort of sign on to this thing, and then we would take it around to all the different major ministries inside the government. This is before the election and before the second *loya jirga*, the constitution *loya jirga*. So, these were folks that had been sort of appointed in the aftermath of Bonn, of the Bonn Agreements of 2002, I guess, and so they represented different ethnic groups, and we needed to get them all signed on. So, that is a lot of what I did. I did a lot of prep for that. I would go with the general when he would brief them. I would take the notes. We would write them up and send them back. I did a lot of sort of, in some regards, the strategic communications work to figure out, how do we approach the French on selling them on MOD, GS reform, and getting them to maybe provide some advisers and things like that, and getting them to play a bigger role in the training of the Afghan National Army. As I mentioned before, General Eikenberry was really intent on making sure that it was the Coalition and not just the United States. Even if the Coalition wasn't stepping right up, he was willing to go in and ask them for stuff. So, that is a lot of the stuff that I did in OMC-A—did a lot of writing, a lot of talking points for folks. And, in fact, I would usually draft stuff when we would have VIPs in. So, the chief of staff of the Army would come in, or different visitors would come in, and they were going to go talk to the Afghan government. Oftentimes, I would draft up things for somebody else to say

for us back to the Afghans, so that they would hear the same message from a different voice, if you see what I'm saying.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you have a routine of meetings or reports or whatever? Was there a routine in an average week?**

COL. MANSAGER: I would say not a whole lot. I think we had one big command and staff meeting a week, and I recall that being on the day off. The Muslim Sabbath is Friday. So, that would usually be the day, that if you got a day off, that would be it. That was sort of a designated day off. It was never a regular weekend. You never had two days off. So, if there was a downtime at all, it was Friday. I recall command and staffs being on a Saturday, and then General Eikenberry would have either two or three meetings on Sunday regularly with the most senior guys, two of the most senior guys in the Afghan organization. There was a guy named [Nasarullah] Baryalai, whose first name I don't know, and he was sort of a deputy minister of defense to Fahim Khan, and so he was a little bit more approachable to get to. And then General Eikenberry would also meet with the chief of the General Staff, who was an Afghan general, [Asif] Delawar. So, he would go in, and these are the talking points that I had prepped for him, you know, obviously working with the staff. He would go in and sort of, for lack of a better term, sort of beat up on these guys about "We need to move forward on whatever these particular issues are," whether it is getting volunteers into the ANA or equipping or releasing some of the weapons over or doing any of the myriad of things we had to do. He would do that on Sunday, every Sunday, for, gosh, two or three hours, sometimes with each one of them.

And then as I was going through my notes, the other thing, battle rhythm-wise, quite regularly while I was there, he and a small group of folks—I traveled with him a couple times—would take a trip on that Friday that was the nominal day off. He would then go out and visit different parts of Afghanistan. I went with him to a town called Baghlan, which is north, on the other side of the Hindu Kush from Kabul. He would go to different parts of the country to sort of drum up support for the ANA and do the same kind of things we were doing inside Kabul. You know, largely, I think even though Secretary Rumsfeld had declared major combat operations over, CJTF-180 was still very much in the right looking for terrorists and looking for the Taliban, and in many ways, I think General Eikenberry was the big POL-little MIL portion of going around and dealing with the politicians and getting them to give way and support reform of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff and the building of ANA and things like that. So, he would do that on Fridays, and Saturdays would be command and staff. Sundays would be these sort of long meetings of the very senior Afghan folks. And then on a frequent basis, but not regular basis, we would have lower-level meetings with individuals inside the General

Staff and the Ministry of Defense on the Afghan side who were responsible for taking particular steps to reform those two organizations. So, we would go over there probably once or twice a week—you know, because of the Afghan schedule, it could vary just a little bit—to review their progress, and then based on all those things, I would write up different SITREPs [situation reports] to send up to Washington to let them know what was going on.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. During the time that you were with the office, what were the major events or issues that you dealt with?**

COL. MANSAGER: I think the single biggest one was MOD and General Staff reform. Step one was getting people to agree what positions there ought to be in the General Staff and what positions there ought to be in the Ministry of Defense; and once they agreed with that, getting them to agree to an ethnic—not balance, because the country is not ethnically balanced—but an ethical equity within those positions, without immediately jumping to "I want this guy to be the minister of defense. I want this guy to be the chief of the General Staff." "Well, let's agree that there is going to be a chief of the General Staff, and is there going to be a deputy or isn't there going to be a deputy? Is there going to be a G-3 [deputy chief of staff for operations], or is it going to be something else? Some of them are common sense. You have got to have an operations guy. You got to have a plans guy. But then there's—reasonable people can disagree about the structure. So, that was probably the single biggest thing that I did, and I was only there—I was in OMC-A for only three months—but that was probably the biggest single issue I think in making sure that we got that right and we got everybody to sign on to it, both at the international community and in the Afghan side and the beginning of that implementation, I would say.

Let me go back. There was one other meeting that we did on a regular basis in OMC-A, that General Eikenberry did. We used to call it the "core meeting," for lack of a better term, where the U.S. military rep being General Eikenberry, U.S. civilian rep—at the time, we didn't have an ambassador. Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad hadn't come yet. The previous ambassador had gone home. The chargé d'affaires was David Sedney. General Eikenberry would meet also with the special representative of the secretary-general, who I am pretty sure is [Lakhdar] Brahimi, and the U.K. ambassador sort of on a regular basis to talk about issues that they could affect to make sure that we were sort of speaking with one voice, particularly U.S., U.K., and UN Brahimi was the special representative of the secretary-general of the UN to Afghanistan. He went on to do a little bit of work in Iraq, but he was the UN rep, for all intents and purposes, in Afghanistan during the time that I was there. His deputy was a Frenchman named Jean Arnault, and we dealt with him a lot, too, because Brahimi was very busy. So, we had that

meeting about once a week, but you could never tell what day you could get everybody back together. The key issue, I think, that was the single biggest thing that was going on there—and then I think a lot of the other things were sort of minor, but there were all the political-military kind of issues that were going on in the country at the time. You know, President [Hamid] Karzai fired the governor of Kandahar Province during that time, which was sort of a bold move for him because the governor of Kandahar Province is a pretty renowned guy. I think his name is [Gul Agha] Shirzai. So, it was pretty gutsy of the president. When the president fired him, that was sort of a big deal, you know. He also told Ismail Khan, who is the provincial governor out there in Herat—there was some fighting within—he quit calling himself a corps commander, and he used to, I think he used to use the title "emir," too, but the president told him to stop doing that. That was sort of a big deal, you know, for President Karzai to step up like that. So, we were dealing with those kind of issues to make sure that open warfare didn't break out between guys. But that is sort of a day-to-day kind of things going on for the senior U.S. guy in the capital. Once again, General Vines just sort of running the kinetic part of the war, but I think General Eikenberry, in a lot of ways, was doing these other things.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Were there particular challenges that the office faced while you were there?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, I think we had sort of an immature staff—you know, guys that, because you rotated in and out and everybody had—I should have pointed this out. You talked about our service representation. Everybody had different rotational schedules. I was the only guy there, at least planned to be there, for a year. I knew when I signed up I was going to be there for a year. This is back when people weren't going for a year. I was actually on PCS [permanent change of station] orders effectively to Afghanistan. It was very weird for people to deal with that. But all the services—you know, the Brits were coming for (I can't remember) three or four months; I think the Air Force was coming for maybe four months; maybe the Marines were there a little bit longer; but I was sort of the continuity in that regard, and that wasn't particularly helpful. Not that we all had to be there for the same amount of time, but when you had such a turnover, that was sort of a challenge. Effectively, it kept the staff new all the time, you know what I mean?

In some ways, we had some challenges with our command relationships. I am sure on a wiring chart, we were assigned to—I don't know!—somewhere in there, we were probably assigned to CJTF-180, because they were the higher headquarters there. At the same time, at least some of the folks in OMC-A were on—gosh, I should remember this, but it has been a while. It is called an NSDD, national security

something [decision] directive. It is basically the TO&E of an embassy. So, guys like General Eikenberry were actually, I believe, subordinate to the ambassador because in a normal embassy, in a normal OMC or ODC in an embassy, you would be subject to the chief of mission, the ambassador, in charge. So, there was a core group of eight or nine of the guys inside OMC who were technically sort of assigned to the embassy, not to the CJTF. Then, as I mentioned before, we had Task Force PHOENIX, which was in charge of training the Afghan National Army, both in basic training and educating their officers and things like that, and those guys were subordinate to CJTF-180. However, we were the ones that were doing sort of the staff work for them to build their structure for the Afghan National Army. So, that was sort of a challenge, you see. It had some conflicting things. I think everybody understood the overall intent, but it led to things being a little bit unclear sometimes. Then I think the final thing that challenged us … you know, Afghanistan is just a fascinating place, and everybody you talked to would say the exact words that you wanted to hear on the Afghan side, but that doesn't necessarily translate to what they would do or what they meant. So, those are sort of our big challenges, I think.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Then how and when did you become selected for a position with Combined Forces [Command-Afghanistan]?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, I got there end of July, as I said, and by about the twelfth of August—I was looking through my notes. By the twelfth of August, we heard—well, first—well, I guess the most important thing was that we had heard that General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno was going to come in to take over the OMC-A job because General Eikenberry was going. He had been there for more than a year when I got there, and I think he was tired, and I knew he was fairly ill, you know, from—it's just a rough life. It turned out at the same time the new chief of staff of OMC-A was going to be a guy named Tom Snukis, who is a colonel in the U.S. Army, still on active duty, works at Joint Forces Staff College. He was going to come in as chief of staff. Well, strangely enough, Snukis had been the S-3 in 3d Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, in the 82d [Airborne Division] when I was the Bravo Company commander and when General Barno was the battalion commander. The stars went that way. So, General Barno was going to come into OMC-A, and ultimately he did, sort of down the road a little bit, and then got the directive to stand up Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, and so there was a little bit—I think General Eikenberry left. We had a guy named [Brig. Gen.] F. Joe Prasek. He was the CG [commanding general] out at Task Force PHOENIX, an active duty general, but I think his forces came from the Oklahoma National Guard or something like that. He sort of filled in for a while as the OMC-A chief

while also being the Task Force PHOENIX CG, and then there towards October, I think it was—I guess General Eikenberry left the twentieth of September—and by October, General Barno was in, and he started off at OMC-A, but I think by the time he came, he already knew he had marching orders to stand up this Combined Forces Command and assume overall command away from CJTF-180. So, he came in, and I had escorted him when he came in on a fact-finding tour. Before they were going to assign him, they let him come in and sort of look around, and I had escorted him around. I had known him back when I was just company commander for him, and then we touched bases a couple times when he was the commanding general of the Free Iraqi Forces training effort that went on in Hungary. It wasn't initially going to be in Hungary. They were looking at various places, and so they ended up contacting me, so I had been in contact with him a little bit before about that.

He showed up, and as CFC sort of took form, he basically grabbed me and took me with him, for a couple reasons: one, because he knew me; but two, because OMC-A was going to go really back to—it was going to get out of the, sort of—the POL-MIL business with CFC standing up. That was CFC's job, really, was to do the big POL-little MIL thing. OMC-A had done that because, I think, of General Eikenberry's background and his residence in the embassy and in Kabul, as opposed to Bagram, but basically, OMC-A was going back to doing what it really should be doing, which is focusing on MOD and GS reform and building the ANA. So, that POL-MIL function actually migrated to CFC with General Barno. So, I ended up going with him.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You obviously got in fairly on the ground floor for the creation of the command.**

COL. MANSAGER: Yes, I did. Well, I was there. Snukis was there as the chief of staff of OMC. General Barno's EA [executive assistant] came in, and I am sure this is—I don't know how it came about—but lo and behold, Lt. Col. Mark Stammer had come in as I was leaving 3/505 as the S-4 [staff officer for logistics] of the battalion. So, we all knew each other from that. He came in as General Barno's exec, basically. General Barno brought an aide with him. I think we ended up having to borrow a PSD, a personal security detachment, and, really, that was effectively it for a while. The initial intent was for it to be sort of a pocket staff and have reach-back to everybody. We can reach to CJTF-180 and get them to do this for us, and we could reach to OMC-A and get them to do this for us.

It was just sort of a brain trust. I am sure there were a couple other folks in there, but it was really small, and then really quickly, we discovered that that just wasn't going to work. First, General Barno had some big ideas for Afghanistan, and the word that describes him is pretty relentless. He is a

very nice guy, but once he gets what he wants in mind, he is going after it, and having to wait for things to go to Bagram and come back—and, of course, folks in Bagram are also working for a two-star that's up there. By this point in time, I think, General Vines had left and General [Maj. Gen. Lloyd J.] Austin was put [in] charge. So, they were sort of caught. So, slowly but surely, we started to migrate folks, certain elements, up from Bagram to CFC. We brought up most of the CJ-5 [staff section for plans], to include the British CJ-5, a guy named Col. Ian Liles, and a couple of his real smart guys, a lieutenant colonel named Tony Rodriguez, who was his American lead planner, SAMS [School of Advanced Military Studies] graduate and everything. We brought up some intel guys, and what we really didn't bring up, though, was sort of the operations folks. We brought up one CJ-3, a guy named [Col.] Eddye Daley. But it was a really small operations thing. What it was really focused on was, sort of, intel and plans, and as we started to do that, we had to sort of bump folks out. So, OMC-A, who had been sort of the senior folks with the two-star in charge of them, started to have to move out of some of the buildings they had been [in] for a long time as we started to spread that thing out.

I came in sort of as a POL-MIL officer, and, slowly but surely, we actually grew a POL-MIL division. I had several—I had General Barno fairly early into it—basically disassembled the Combined Joint [Civil-]Military Operations Task Force [CJCMOTF]. I was a beneficiary of a couple of those guys. They were reserves, like civil affairs folks, but they did a lot of FAO-type work. So, I got a couple of them out of there and got to stand up sort of a small three- to five-man division, depending on how long people were there for. I also got a British POLAD [political adviser] from CJCMOTF. She was a DFID [British Department for International Development] officer.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What were the challenges building the new command? Obviously, you are getting people, and you are starting out on a new mission.**

COL. MANSAGER: Yeah. Well, you know, the analogy that we drew that I wrote in one of my books—have you ever been associated with the 82d Airborne Division at all?

DR. HUGHES: **A little bit.**

COL. MANSAGER: Okay. Well, there is a thing called—there used to be, anyway—a thing called the parachute holding area. So, when you were getting ready for a big jump, like a real tactical jump and they had to lock you down so that you didn't blow OPSEC [operations security], they put you in the parachute holding area, the PHA; and the PHA was nothing but a bunch of empty old barracks with beds, you know, so you could rest before you did your training, before you did your jump, but it was

nothing. So, you basically got the keys to it and you occupied it with whatever you had. We used to describe standing up Combined Forces Command [CFC] … you know, here is a two-star promotable, going to be a three-star general. He is a corps-level commander in charge of all of Afghanistan, and he has got an AOR [area of responsibility] that extends into Pakistan and up into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, right? Standing up CFC was a lot like being handed the keys to the PHA—you know: "Here it is. Figure it out" [laughs]. I think for a while we didn't have like an establishment order. I think the command was established on the third of February '04, where we actually had an activation ceremony, but, basically, I think General Barno was operating on orders from General [John P.] Abizaid to get things going. So, that was a pretty big challenge. We were having to borrow staff—"borrow" isn't the right word—take staff from CJTF-180. So, that didn't endear us to them very much, and, of course, as far as they were concerned, they were the carnivores, as they like to describe it. You know, they were the meat eaters, the guys out shooting people, and we were the sort of herbivores trying to do this touchy-feely, POL-MIL stuff. So, I think there was a little stress there in that regard.

The physical structure—all of a sudden, things started to grow. It had just been OMC-A there in Kabul, and now a lot more folks are moving in. You know, a three-star general brings certain things with him that a two-star doesn't or that maybe a two-star like General Eikenberry, the way he operated, didn't need those kind of things. So, that got to be sort of a challenge as well. I think the other challenge that we did very well on, really, though, was establishing good relations with the embassy because we had a very small footprint with the embassy before, and now our footprint expanded quite a bit.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What were your duties and responsibilities?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, this is where I really finally got into sort of the FAO business. I did all the kind of stuff I was doing before. In many ways, I was sort of like an EA to General Barno in that I went to all the meetings, literally almost every single meeting that he went to, to take notes and make reports out on them. I would prep him for meetings when he had any kind of interaction with folks outside the U.S. government. When he would go to meet, you know, the minister of defense or President Karzai or the French ambassador or General [USMC James L.] Jones came through, the SACEUR [NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe] came through, or we would go to see General [German Army Goetz] Gliemeroth, the commander of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, while we were there, I would do all the research and prep, and, you know: "Here's the guy. Here's the kind of things we want to talk to about," and stuff like that. ISAF was originally a UN mission. I think the Turks did it; the Brits did

it, but the Brits did it on their own; then General Gliemeroth came in with a NATO mandate to command ISAF, and that is what it's continued to be ever since then. So, I'd do all that prep for him, and then I did an awful lot of work sort of on the international relations side.

I described—his AOR went all the way off into Pakistan and Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and, of course, Pakistan was the biggest piece of that. So, I would work a lot of those kind of issues, particularly when we would go and travel, to make sure he was briefed up on those kind of things, what the issues were. We had a relationship. That was something that actually started, and the lead was usually from CJTF-180, but it migrated to us, a thing called the tripartite commission, which was Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States. Initially, it started as a border conflict–resolution body because the border is not very clear there. We were trying to keep peace between both sides, and if somebody had strayed across the border, we would go in hot pursuit or something. They set up sort of this three-sided meeting force to make sure that we didn't actually hurt each other. We tried to grow it during the time I was there into more of a security confidence-building arena to get, from the U.S. side, to try to get Afghanistan and Pakistan to talk to each other. They wouldn't really talk to each other, I don't think, without the U.S. sort of sitting there over them in many regards. That was fascinating. So I did a lot of work with that. There was a political adviser who was actually assigned to CJTF-180 that for a while we borrowed, and then, ultimately, we stole him for CFC-A. So, those are the kind of things, the really classic FAO stuff. Even though I didn't know much about Afghanistan before I came in, you know, I knew a little bit about international relations. I knew how embassies worked and how embassies worked between each other. So, those are the kind of things that I did.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Did you have a battle tempo or routine there at the command?**

COL. MANSAGER: Yeah. We certainly established one. I don't have it written down, but Tom Snukis was the chief of staff. He really did his best to impose discipline on it because he had seen OMC, which did not have maybe the most coherent battle rhythm going on, and he was really—his mantra was sort of a "plan the work, work the plan" kind of thing. So, he really had that. On a daily basis, the boss, General Barno, and I would attend country team, and the country team meeting is led by the ambassador with all the reps from the embassy around it—so, the political officer, the station chief, the chargé or the deputy chief of mission, I guess, when the ambassador is there, those kind of guys. We had a law enforcement liaison there that was trying to help rebuild the police. We had USAID there, the [U.S.] Agency for International Development there. I am sure there were some other folks in there. There was sort of a

small econ section, an economics section, and then General Barno from the military. And after a while, when Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig [P.] Weston came in as the chief of the Office of Military Cooperation. He would also attend these country team meetings, and so you'd talk about coordinating U.S. policy kind of stuff there, but it was sort of a big group.

So, after that, there would be a different core meting. I talked about a core meeting earlier. This core was the ambassador, General Barno, and the chief of station, effectively, and maybe the deputy chief of mission. That is oftentimes where a lot of the business really got done because there was just stuff that didn't need to be talked about in a big forum that these guys would talk about. I would usually attend those and make sure that if there was something that we needed and knew, based on what ambassador—at this point in time, Ambassador Khalilzad was pretty much there—we'd get it out.

We would have a staff meeting. I can't remember what day of the week it was, though. I think we only did it about once a week. And then later on, towards October-November time frame, we started doing sort of a weekly strategic update for General Barno that was modeled on the meeting that General [Creighton W.] Abrams used to do in Vietnam. If you read the book *A Better War*, by a guy named [Lewis] Sorley, it's about Creighton Abrams in the last couple of years, 1968. At the time, General Barno had read this book, *A Better War*, and he gave it to all of us to read. So, we started just sort of a weekly update where we would go around Afghanistan and talk about issues and things like that. I would say, while I can't describe the details of it, it was definitely a much more stable battle rhythm of what we were doing in there.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What were the major events during your time with the command?**

COL. MANSAGER: I think that the biggest single thing was this development in implementation of our [Security] Strategy South and East, which consisted of five pillars, and I have been going through my mind exactly what they were now. I am sure they are written down someplace, but one of them was increasing the competency of the security forces, meaning the ANA. One of them was a regional development zone that we wanted to try focusing our efforts in one particular area to make it better and then move that effort somewhere else. We chose Kandahar. General Barno, through all of our perception, really was—there was a lot of stuff coming into Afghanistan, a lot of resources of different kinds, whether it was cash or food or whatever, but it spread like peanut butter across the whole country, so nobody really noticed any difference because it was diluted or spread thin. So, the idea would be "Hey, let's concentrate this in one area. Let's do police

reform here. Let's secure this." I think the thing would be sort of like the oil spot that they are talking about in Iraq, and then we will spread out from there. So, that was another big pillar. Another one was sort of an enduring presence of the forces. If you had looked at a map or an operational graph of Afghanistan back in December of 2003, you wouldn't find a lot of unit boundaries on it. Basically, 10th Mountain [Division (Light)] was there. It was really about a brigade at 10th Mountain, and they basically owned the whole country. Obviously, that is not necessarily the best way to do things. And so one of these pillars was "Hey, let's get regional zones, so this battalion owns this area and this battalion owns this area, and then the battalion breaks down their area for their companies and their platoons, so that we are out there in an enduring presence, rather than basing out of Bagram and Kandahar going out and doing a raid or doing an operation and then withdrawing back to Bagram or Kandahar. Let's go out there and stick around," and that was a big—oh, that was the other thing, expansion of PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams]. There is the other one, expansion of provincial reconstruction teams. I will talk about that one. And then the fifth pillar was engagement with—initially, it was an engagement with Pakistan, but then it actually sort of morphed into a regional engagement. So, the idea of being—really, I think, a lot like what we hear about Iraq now, we were trying to get out and do good in the countryside and be there and not withdraw out of that, part of that by giving battalions an area of responsibility; part of it by establishing these provincial reconstruction teams in significant areas; and then, supporting them and supplying them and bringing some stability and extending the regional, the national government in Kabul out there. Sort of the marching orders for most PRTs are "You are doing this on behalf of the government, on behalf of the Afghan government, not the U.S. government." So, that was the single biggest issue I think that we did—coming up with that plan and then implementing it.

But then, other things—we had the constitution *loya jirga* while we were there, which was a huge deal, and then we had at least some preliminary elections while I was there that people said we couldn't pull off. I can't remember what that was. I wasn't there for the presidential elections, but we had to register voters for it, and nobody thought we could do it. I talked about tripartite. That was sort of a big issue, and then I think sort of the establishment of the command was a big issue—just getting the command going and establishing what our terms of reference were, not only with the U.S. forces inside and the Coalition forces inside Afghanistan, but also in the area of responsibility because there hadn't been a lot of engagement necessarily with Uzbekistan and Pakistan and stuff like that. So, it was a fascinating time to be there.

DR. HUGHES: **There were some issues that you have probably addressed elsewhere, but what would your comments be on the collocation of the diplomatic leaders and the military?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, I think that was really essential to making stuff happen. Before, as I said, the senior military leader was in Bagram. The senior civilian leader was in Kabul, and even if it's only sixty miles or something like that, that is a long way for them to interact, and it is a long way for their staffs to interact. And so, I think that just puts you all together. You can walk down the hall, knock on their door. The staffs can walk down the hall and knock on the door. It makes you feel much more of one team when you are doing that, and I think that was very wise. We had the chairman of the Joint Chiefs come through at one point, and they had pointed out in Iraq, at least at that time, that was not necessarily the case, and they thought that this was a good idea to put them together in that regard. And it is not just the individuals, but also the staffs that go with them.

DR. HUGHES: **What about consensus building?**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, that was—you know, I talked a little bit about that with like the General Staff and MOD. Reform, that was in OMC; but with our [Security] Strategy South and East, we did the exact same thing. We took it around inside the interagency in the embassy first and said, "Hey, what do you think?" These guys are very smart guys, particularly when it comes to things we're not expert in—you know, the politics and the economics and implications. So, we sort of farmed it around inside the interagency first inside the embassy; and then we went to the deputy chief of mission, got his buy-in; then we went to Ambassador Khalilzad, got his buy-in; then we sort of worked our circles around. We worked with the international community, UNAMA, like I mentioned before, and the major embassies that were out there in the EU. Then we went out and we started working it with the—we didn't do the same drill. You know, General Eikenberry, we visited every minister there was to talk about this General Staff and MOD thing. General Barno basically worked with the established MOD, chief of the General Staff, and President Karzai to say "Hey, this is what we'd like to do. We think this would be a good idea" kind of thing, and that got everybody's buy-in. If they had a little comment, we incorporated it. I think it was a pretty sound plan to begin with. It was hard to object to much of it. So, everybody has some ownership of it, and so I think that worked real well.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay, good. I gather there was the embassy staff. The ambassador got planning support from the military?**

COL. MANSAGER: Right. You know, the State Department doesn't really have a J-5 kind of organization, a plans and policy, long-term kind of organization, certainly not in an embassy. Maybe in main

State they do, but I have been in a couple of embassies, and they don't have anything like that, and maybe that is part of their mindset with the cultural differences. We think, "We have operations and we have plans." They are sort of always in the operations business. So, I think General Eikenberry started the idea, and General Barno followed through. We called it the EIPG [pronounced "e-pig"], the Embassy Interagency Planning Group. Yeah, it didn't spell "EPIG," but that is what we called it anyway. Basically, General Barno took the CJ-2 [staff officer for intelligence] out of -180, who was going to be the CJ-2. They got somebody else. Col. John Ritchey, I think, was his name. He was the head of the EIPG, and they gave him four or five captains and majors, and, basically, "Here you go, Ambassador Khalilzad. This is your planning staff." That helped in many ways because they didn't have—first, the embassy was very small, very small for—you know, we compared it to the embassy in Saigon. We were drawing a lot of analogies to General Abrams in Vietnam. Oh, gosh, we were like a tenth of the size of a wartime embassy, so they didn't have many extra folks to begin with, so this helped in that regard. It showed our commitment to working as one team. It showed "We are not separate. We are one team working towards one objective here," and it helped us out because it would help them think through problems rather than sort of asking for information or changings and things like that. These guys, we could relate to them, even if they are inside the embassy, according to the military decision-making process and things like that. So, I think that made a huge difference not only in their physical planning, but in the perception of our commitment to one team, one fight, to that concept. And it also, of course, gave us insight into what people inside the embassy were thinking that we might not have otherwise had because they were still going to share information with us and ideas and what the ambassador is thinking so we can stay on the same track.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. I only have about three more questions, but I know you need to go.**

[Interruption to proceedings.]

Continuing an interview with Colonel Mansager, 20 April 2007. Sir, we were talking about your time with the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, and the next question I had was, given all the different agencies you talked about working with, what were the cultural differences? I will phrase it that way.

COL. MANSAGER: Well, I think that the—of course, the biggest agency that we worked with was the Department of State, and there's a great paper that was actually written by my predecessor several times removed up at the Hoover Institution who I think now is a—I think he is a general, a guy named [Brig. Gen. Rickey L.] Rife, and he cowrote this paper with the Department of

State up at the Hoover Institution, which is a [Army] War College fellowship. They have got one from every service and a State Department rep. And so, he cowrote a paper on the differences between the Department of State and the Department of Defense called "Defense Is from Mars, State Is from Venus," and it talked about the differences between them, and there really are—the types of people that migrate to those kind of jobs, and they do the Myers-Briggs analysis on people and things like that. But, you know, there is just a big cultural difference between DoD folks, you know, uniformed officers, and State Department officers. I think some of the things that I would highlight would be there is a lot of individual work at the State Department, and folks are generally recognized and promoted because they do great individual work. They write cables and do individual stuff, whereas, in the military, we are taught from a very early age that it is the team concept. While you get promoted individually, you oftentimes get promoted because of the team that you were on, that you had a good cooperation and stuff like that. And it is not that they weren't cooperative, but they just had a different mindset towards working with things. There were a lot of folks working individual issues there.

I mentioned earlier that there was—they don't do a whole lot of long-term planning of any concrete nature. I mean, the concept of world peace, I'm sure, is a long-term plan in some regard, but how do you get to those, and what are the phases of that operation, and what are the intermediate steps, and what are the shaping functions and things that we have to do? So, I don't think that that's part of them. So, when you bring a military structure into it, then, of course, there is just sort of a—rightly or wrongly—there are preconceptions that one side always has about the other. In many ways, I think the State Department sort of looks at the military guys as sort of knuckle-dragging Neanderthals; and, for better or worse, a lot of military guys, particularly if you are the Army infantry kind of guys, you look at State Department as sort of Princeton, bow tie–wearing, pipe-smoking intellectuals kind of thing, and there's certain aspects of both of those. But I think the good news about working in Kabul with the embassy was that I think we both learned a lot about each other to find out that, in fact, we have more in common than we do have differences, and once you learn about the differences with the other agencies, oftentimes you can work better together because of that diversity that you have there. I am a big fan of the interagency process. It was a little bit easier to work with guys in the OGA [other governmental agency]. They seemed to have a similar outlook as we military did.

I would say one of the differences, you know, that we were talking about, they were having a tough time getting folks to come to the embassy. Department of State was having a tough time getting people to come to the embassy, and, of

course, we were told to come, and we were there for—you know, generally speaking, Army guys were there for at least six months. State Department guys rotated out a lot. So, there is a big cultural difference there. Again, that made the embassy almost always very new. There was always a fresh staff, even fresher than our staff was. So, those are some of those differences there. Then we had other folks that weren't even in the Department of State. They were Department of Justice guys, things like that, working the legal issues, and they were yet another, I guess. I used this in one of my papers. We said, "State is from Venus; and DoD is from Mars; and those NGOs and PVOs, nongovernmental organizations and private volunteer organizations, those guys are from that bar in *Star Wars*." They're a totally different group of folks. Even if they are Americans, they are very—you know, I worked with the International Rescue Committee. I think that was one of the nongovernmental organizations working there, and their attitude towards what is going on was just totally different—even their perspective from what we were doing, whether it was not even wanting us to drive white SUVs, you know, civilian vehicles, the white Toyota Land Cruisers. That is what they drove, and they didn't want to be associated with us in uniform driving those, but that is sort of how we went around, in civilian vehicles, because we didn't have Humvees over there and things like that. And, sort of wanting to operate under the protection of the security that uniformed folks brought, but not too close and not wanting to associate themselves with it, but more than willing to take advantage of it. So, that takes a little bit of getting used to, if you are not used to dealing with folks like that.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. How did the different agencies interact? Can you give me some examples as you were building the [Security] Strategy South and East? Obviously, different agencies had different ownerships of that.**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, as I mentioned earlier, one way that we helped with that was we didn't just hatch the plan in secrecy. The military guys didn't just hatch the plan in secrecy and say, "Here it is." We went out and got buy-in from folks, first inside the embassy, and then the individual office level, whether it was the political officer or the narcotics and law enforcement guy or any of the different folks inside the embassy, so that they could look at it and give us their opinion of it and tweaks if they had any for it and thereby getting buy-in. So now, they have got some ownership to it. So, if the plan fails, then that is part of theirs, too; and if the plan succeeds, it is part of theirs, too. That is really, I think, how we set the groundwork.

Then, after we got going through everybody else and getting final approval to move forward with some of the things, probably the biggest one that required a lot of interagency cooperation was this regional development zone [RDZ] down in Kandahar because that required us to make sure

we started working, standing up a provincial reconstruction team. We had to surge sort of military around Kandahar to make sure it was secure. The police guys needed to work faster to get a police training center down there, and those were at that time—I think now the Ministry of Interior and the police training is actually under military control, but at the time it was not. The Germans were doing some police training, and then we had a guy inside the embassy that was working with contractors to train police. So, we had to get him to work on that. Then we had to get the USAID director, the [U.S.] Agency for International Development, to focus more of the USAID effort in Kandahar as well. I am trying to think of some of the other examples. We had to get the UN to support that, but because of the way we built the plan and got people in sort of on the ground floor and got some buy-in, by the time it came time to do those things, there wasn't a whole lot of discussion about whether we were going to do it. It was just exactly how to make that happen, and I think that made it fairly successful. It was always the RDZ, the regional development zone, was always sort of designed as an experiment. We wanted to see if it would work, and then if it worked, we were going to pick up that same model and move it, probably move it north, because we wanted to make sure we kept balance between the Pashtuns in the south and sort of the Tajik north. We wanted to make sure that they didn't think the Pashtuns were getting something that they weren't getting. But the problem is, with something like that, it is a longer-term experiment. You can't do all of these. First, it takes a while to get all the stars lined up, and then it takes even longer to see the results—how quickly do you see results economically? And security is a little bit easier to observe, but particularly economically, which is what we were really trying to work at—you don't see those results in a month or two or three. You talk about six months or a year or two years. So, that was still going on when I left, and I don't know how it turned out.

DR. HUGHES: **Earlier, you mentioned that you wanted to talk on the subject of the PRTs, the provincial reconstruction teams. I would be very interested in what your observations were there.**

COL. MANSAGER: Well, you know, they were just—provincial reconstruction teams, as I was coming, getting my briefings in CENTCOM, they had just sort of gotten the approval for that concept, and it just stood up the first maybe two or three, I think, in Afghanistan. As I recall, I think Konduz was one up in the north, and there were a couple other ones floating around, but then when I got on board for that first couple, three, months, they were trying to stand more of them up. The idea was to make them sort of an interagency team, but as I mentioned before, we couldn't get anybody to go over. We wanted agricultural guys in them, USDA guys, Department of State guys, some military guys, civil affairs, some security guys,

that kind of stuff, but the only guys that the U.S. government was compelling to go to Afghanistan were the military guys, so they were, by and large, military organizations.

When I first got there, there was a big push to get NATO to expand and sort of take over more PRT and stand them up on their own, as well as take over more of the overall mission going on in Afghanistan, and for a while there, going to General Eikenberry, we seemed to think that that was actually going to come to pass fairly quickly, but it just got sort of stagnant there in that September-October time frame and really sort of ground to a halt. General Barno came in, and we might have had five or six PRTs in September 2003, almost the majority of them in the southeast portion of the country. One was up in Mazar-e Sharif. The Brits actually ran that one, and then Konduz, and then I think there were a couple in the southeast around Ghazni, but I can't recall off the top of my head. But General Barno made this expansion, NATO and PRT expansion, one of his pillars of this [Security] Strategy South and East, which was to get more PRTs out there, so that we could expand security. We could expand the reach of the central government so we can get the money and the help where it needs to be from people that are sort of living in that area, and he pushed very hard to get interagency representation on those teams. By the time I left, we were starting to get a couple of State Department guys, I think, maybe one or two agriculture guys there, but that was a long swag to get them to do that. But we also happened—I went up to participate in the handover of the first PRT to NATO, and I think that was the Konduz PRT, as I recall, and that was a really big deal. This was like the start of things, and I recall that being in December, maybe, of 2003, something like that, and nothing happened for a while after that. But I know as I was starting to leave in the June-July of 2004 time frame, there started to be more plans. We were talking about the Italians going out to Herat, and we stood up a PRT there. They might take that one over, and I think the Brits stood up a couple more up around Mazar-e Sharif, and we got the one going in Kandahar. We figured we would probably hold on to that one since it was sort of in a contentious area. We were more than willing to have command of PRTs—the U.S. was—that were in less stable areas, I guess, down in that southeast corner, and then let the NATO guys handle the ones that were in more stable areas like Herat or Mazar.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. When you were getting ready to leave, you have already said that you were replaced by Colonel Fontes, who had briefed you going in. What sort of advice or guidance did you give her? When you passed the baton, how did you describe it?**

COL. MANSAGER: You know, I was thinking about that. She knew more about this area. I think she had been a defense attaché in Tajikistan

before, so she had a lot of background. There wasn't a whole lot, and she was monitoring it from CENTCOM. In fact, I had been corresponding with her, not only knowing that she was going to be my successor, but she was effectively the CENTCOM desk officer for Afghanistan, so she was pretty spun up. I think mostly what I talked to her about was the dynamics inside the organization and the dynamics with the embassy and things like that. I tried to share with her whom she could turn to in the embassy to be a straight shooter and get good information from. The world that she was going to take over was going to be different because, in many ways, I was probably in the position I was because of my previous relationship with General Barno, but then that had sort of become institutionalized. The POL-MIL guy is sort of in the inner circle there, whereas in another command, you might not be. She might not be. I worked with Tom Snukis, and I think General Barno was very welcoming and did not allow her to be squeezed out of that just because it was a different person; and that was probably the biggest thing, is that the POL-MIL person there—and I think she did do this, because she ended up going; she got out of CFC and went down to command a PRT—but I know she stayed inside the circle there, which is important, you know. I think that was the biggest advice I gave her was "Don't let folks squeeze you out of this. The job that you are in requires that you have close and regular contact with the senior leadership, and don't let them, just because you're a woman or you are new or you don't know the boss from years back, don't let that affect you, because the position is too well established now," and that is really, I think, what I tried because she knew more about Afghanistan than I would ever know, I think.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Looking then over your entire tour there, what would you consider your greatest challenges?**

COL. MANSAGER: I think the biggest ones were—well, the single biggest one, I think—was always trying to stand up an organization, whether it was standing up a POL-MIL kind of organization within OMC-A when I first got there or helping to stand up all of CFC-A later on. There is a certain amount of organizational energy that goes into building the organization. We used to liken it to a "We are building the aircraft carrier while we are sailing to the Persian Gulf" kind of thing. So, that was one of them. My personal biggest challenge was staying ahead of General Barno, because he was such a smart guy. He was operating with a Pentium chip, and we were all sort of with 486SXs. He was just a smart guy with a lot of ideas and energy, so that was a challenge. And then I think, personally, there was a challenge of making sure that you felt you were contributing, that you were actually doing something. We were very busy. I have been reading through my journals that I kept here, and I was working long hours, doing lots of stuff, and even a couple of times in my journals, I said, "Are we making progress?" So, the frustration there is, how do

you know? And the secretary was beating us up. Secretary Rumsfeld was always asking, "Where are your measures of effectiveness? How can you make progress?" In some ways, you can apply measures of effectiveness to some things—how many ANA battalions have you trained, right? But you get into that numbers game. It is sort of like the body count game. Well, they are trained. Are they equipped? What level are they trained to? Are they manned full strength? So, when you are dealing with sort of intangible stuff like political-military affairs, you kind of wonder every once in a while, "Am I making any progress?" I think that was sort of a challenge.

Accomplishments-wise, I think my—there is a foreign area officer journal, and I wrote an article called "FAOs Unbound," because I had been trying to get—as an FAO, I have been trying to do something out of my area just for fun, for mind stretching for a while, and the FAO guys always write back and say, "No. You're a European FAO. You're going to Europe." "Well, listen. I speak Russian." "It doesn't matter. You're a European FAO. You're staying in Europe," until they needed me, and then they sent me completely out of my area to Afghanistan. So, I took the opportunity at Hoover to write an article that says, "Listen, FAOs come with a set of skills by virtue of their master's degree in a language and international relations. They have worked in foreign language." Even if I didn't speak a word of Dari when I got there, I had worked in a foreign language and understood the complexities of translation and interpretation and working through a translator. Even though I had not been in the embassy in Kabul, I had been in an embassy in Warsaw, and I knew the difference between a general services officer [GSO], who is an admin guy who runs the structure that you are in, and the regional services officer, a regional security officer [RSO], who is the security guy to make sure the ambassador doesn't get killed, and knowing the difference between a GSO and an RSO was a big deal there. So, back to significant accomplishments, there were no other FAOs there when I got there that had this skill set. So, I think my most significant accomplishment was being able to sort of stitch this—be almost a liaison between the organizations in the beginning, to be able to speak military to the military guys and be able to speak sort of State to the State guys, and be able to set that organization up. That is something I am fairly proud of, and I wasn't the only one, but I could work the relationships there and then get the right people to talk about the right topics and things like that, and I think that was probably one of the biggest accomplishments. The other one was our MOD reform and General Staff reform. I think that went pretty well back when I was in OMC. It got stabilized. We continued to work at it, and that was one where I helped design it to some degree, but what I really helped do was sell it and get people to buy into it, and that was quite a sales job, you know, to different ethnic group ministers and different

countries and international organizations and stuff. So, I would probably count those two among my most significant accomplishments.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Is there anything else I should have asked you?**

COL. MANSAGER: I'm trying to think. Things finally started kicking off. We talked about NATO expansion a little bit and how it did start to sort of move as we were going on, and then I went off to the [Army] War College and didn't keep following up on it. You know, no, I don't think so. General Eikenberry played a real key role in sort of setting the stage for the POL-MIL side of things. He had had this experience and saw what needed to be done, and General Vines gave him the room to maneuver because I think General Vines was focused more on the kinetic aspects of the war. So, I think General Eikenberry really set the stage for it, and then General Barno, who is not an FAO at all—General Barno had no foreign area officer experience; I wrote about this in my *Joint Forces Quarterly* article—but what he did have was a broader understanding of things and a willingness to not merely approach things from a strictly military perspective that allowed him to deal with the embassy in a more open way and in a more collegial and unified way. I think that is the beauty of what General [David H.] Petraeus ought to be able to do in Iraq. He has just got a broader perspective on things like that, for getting along with folks like that. I guess that is probably about it, off the top of my head.

DR. HUGHES: **I greatly appreciate that. Well, I want to thank you very much. This concludes the interview.**



Col. Thomas J. Snukis *deployed to Afghanistan in July 2003 as Chief of Staff, Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan. Three months later, he became the first Chief of Staff, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, and served in that position until July 2004. He was interviewed in Norfolk, Virginia, by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 1 March 2007. Colonel Snukis received a short-notice assignment as Chief of Staff, Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, and recounts his hurried preparation and training before deployment. He discusses the office's expanding organization and growing capability to train the soldiers and leaders of the Afghan National Army, as well as its command relationships with U.S. Central Command, Combined Joint Task Force-180, and Task Force* PHOENIX. *After his reassignment to the nascent Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, Colonel Snukis oversaw the expansion of the command from its original six-man staff to a staff of several hundred, and he comments on the challenges posed by building the command staff, which included shortages of trained personnel, logistical resources, and communications. He also discusses the leadership of Lt. Gen. David W. Barno and the establishment of his strategic priorities, including the "Five Pillars" strategy to rebuild Afghan politics and society. After outlining the command's organizational linkages to the Afghan National Government, the U.S. Embassy, and its subordinate military task forces, Colonel*

Snukis concludes the interview with his transition out of the position and an assessment of the command's successes during its first months of operation.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the first of March 2007. I'm in Norfolk, Virginia, at the Joint Forces Staff College, and I'm interviewing Col. Thomas J. Snukis, who is an instructor in the Joint Advanced Warfighting School. I'm interviewing Colonel Snukis about his experience as the chief of staff of both the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan [OMC-A] and Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan [CFC-A]. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

COL. SNUKIS: Yes, absolutely.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have any objections with Army or public researchers using this material as long as you're cited correctly?**

COL. SNUKIS: No, not at all.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Thank you, sir. To start off, what in your professional experience prepared you, or perhaps got you on the list, to take the job of chief of staff of OMC-A?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, I mean, the preparations obviously started back from the day that you sign up and join the Army. Went to the United States Military Academy, and my role as a cadet in the training and the education received there, and then my infantry training as infantry platoon leader, staff officer, company commander, up through battalion commander as an infantryman, more than prepared me for my job over in Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. When did you find out that you were going to get that position?**

COL. SNUKIS: We saw—let's see. July is when I left. I found out in June.

DR. KOONTZ: **What were you doing at that time?**

COL. SNUKIS: At that time, I worked at the [U.S.] Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC]. I was the director of Army experimentation.

DR. KOONTZ: **What did you do in those few weeks that you had to transition from your job at TRADOC before you left for Afghanistan? Did you do any kind of—**

COL. SNUKIS: You know, actually, that was inaccurate. I was the director of Army experimentation, and I then went to Fort Eustis,

Virginia. Was in the Army Training and Modernization Directorate, and I was the Army—I'm Army training and modernization director within the Army Training and Support Command at Fort Eustis. I had gone from TRADOC to do that. I got notified from TRADOC as an individual augmentee that I was going to go and be the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan chief of staff. What did I do is, about a three-week period before, I went to Fort Benning to do my initial training. I didn't really do anything different. I prepared my affairs back here. I read some things, some articles on Afghanistan; got a statement of the problem, what was going on; did research on the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan; started and sustained e-mail coordination with the guy that was the current chief of staff over there that I replaced, spoke to him on the phone two or three different times; and that was about it. I didn't really have a whole lot of time to think about it.

DR. KOONTZ: **At the time that you left the United States and went over to Afghanistan, what was running through your mind as to what you were going to do when you hit the ground there? How did you conceive of the job, and how did you want to approach it personally?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, I knew what a chief of staff did. I knew that I would be in charge of a staff. The mission of OMC-A at that time was the training of the Afghan National Army [ANA], which entailed training from the Ministry of Defense all the way to the boots on the ground. So, I knew that I would be in charge of an organization and a staff that—or, in charge of a staff for that organization—that would operate and conduct operations within those parameters. So, I mean, the thought process was "Hey, what's Afghanistan like? What's going on? What's the terrain look like? What's the mission entail? How are the guys that I'm going to be working with? How's my boss?" I knew who he was. I hadn't met him before. General [Maj. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry was going to be my initial boss. Those kinds of things were kind of what went through my head. Nothing, no real apprehension about it. I was more than ready to go. I was happy to go. As a matter of fact, the way my career had been going, I was almost—not in fear, but kind of worried that I wasn't going to have the opportunity to contribute directly to the war in any effort, in any individual way, and it was, like, I took it with no hesitation.

DR. KOONTZ: **Do you have any idea why you were selected for this position?**

COL. SNUKIS: I think it was a—it was not a by-name request. I know that for a fact. It was a tasking that came down through TRADOC headquarters. I think they looked around at the available colonels that they could use for that tasking, and my skills and background matched up better than some others, plus availability, plus the fact that I was volunteering. I didn't

mind going. I had a family. I mean, I still have a family, my wife and two children, and it was tough on them; but they knew that it was something that I needed to do. So, I don't think there were any special considerations. It was kind of "Hey, we need to fill this, and he's one of the available guys," and I think everything else just kind of married up on the best for it.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, let's get you to Afghanistan. Tell me about the deployment process.**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, pretty straightforward. Went down to the CRC [Continental U.S. Replacement Center] down at Fort Benning. I did basic training there. I mean, it was nothing to prepare me specifically to be a chief of staff, which, I would say, folks need to work on, I think, and they have been correcting over the years. I mean, I was issued equipment; qualified on my weapon; went through health screen; got my shots. Had very minimal cultural training. We had about a half a day's worth over at Building 4 at the Infantry School. Got a protective mask and protective equipment, fit that. Went to the gas chamber to test the fit of the mask, and … just the basic, really basic employment-type of tasks. It wasn't anything specific to go to be the chief of staff or own a high-level staff job like that, but it was sufficient. You know, the training at Fort Benning was tailored for the lowest common denominator, so a lot of stuff, I mean, I'd done many, many times before.

[Interruption in proceedings.]

But from there, then, I was going to be the OMC-A chief of staff. They diverted me down to Tampa, and I had a week's worth of meetings with the CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] staff and the guys that I would be working with directly at CENTCOM. So, I got a detailed country brief. Got to meet my J-5 [staff section for plans] counterparts, guys in the J-2, J-4, J-6 [staff sections for intelligence, logistics, and communications]. So, it was a tailored, week-long process that set me up then to go to be the chief of staff, which I thought was very, very effective.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, I've got two questions on your train-up. You said at Benning you got some very minimal cultural training. Do you remember any specifics from that?**

COL. SNUKIS: No, they gave us a cultural—one of the books that they have. I don't know if I have it sitting here. I think it's sitting right there on that shelf over there. But there was nothing that really—I mean, it was a real—that was what they gave us.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, they basically just kind of walk you through the Country Handbook?**

COL. SNUKIS: Country Handbook, and that was it. And really, I mean, there was nothing that jumped out. Was there anything that I applied that they taught me? No. Maybe that's just because I was a bad student, but there was nothing that really jumped out at me that I needed.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then tell me a little bit more about this train-up that you had with CENTCOM and getting hooked up with your J-staff.**

COL. SNUKIS: Essentially, there was—they assigned me—there was a captain, an individual augmentee at CENTCOM, that was working out of J-5 shop. Essentially, he was kind of my handler or whatever, and he put together the schedule, got me set up, you know, with all the admin type of things. But I went in and actually got to talk to the folks running the Afghan desk, the J-5 guys focused on Afghanistan, what was going on in Afghanistan. The security assistants, security cooperation guys that had been working Afghanistan gave me several briefs, talked to me about the personalities involved, both U.S. and Afghan. I got a good general J-2 overview of Afghanistan and the region. J-4 side, we talked about the donor nations some, the work that we were doing with the nations donating equipment and supplies and things to help build the Afghan National Army, how some of that stuff worked. It was generally just a good overview of the current situation of what was going on in Afghanistan, and, like I said, normal days, probably eight-hour days, with the opportunity then to kind of study and reflect on my own on some of that stuff. So, overall, it was a good little program, I thought.

DR. KOONTZ: **It's probably jumping ahead a little bit, but what was the connection between CENTCOM and OMC-A? How did that tie-in work in theater?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, I mean, CENTCOM, obviously, ran the operations in Afghanistan. OMC-A … you know, if you look at the relationship, really, OMC-A was a State Department deal that OMC-A itself—but Task Force PHOENIX, that actually did the training of the Afghan National Army, and they worked for CENTCOM up through Combined Joint Task Force-180 [CJTF-180]. The command relationships weren't necessarily that clear, but they were more working with CENTCOM, and OMC-A working with the State Department, but with CENTCOM as well, although it wasn't a straight-line OPCON [operational control] as you would see it in the command relationship slide. And then, also, OMC-A, not subordinate to Combined Joint Task Force-180, but obviously … General Eikenberry, at the time a two-star, and General [Lt. Gen. John R.] Vines, who was running -180 at the time, they talked and communicated fairly frequently. So, the CENTCOM tie was that CENTCOM had the overall C2 [command and control] of everything.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let's get you from Tampa to Afghanistan. How did that happen?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, it was pretty straightforward. I mean, it was a civilian flight from Tampa to Baltimore; and then the Patriot Express from Baltimore to Germany; and then Germany to Manas Air Base, and that was contract air; and then at Manas, we picked up a C–130 and took it into Bagram. From Bagram, I was met by some guys from OMC-A, and then did a deuce-and-a-half ride down to—or, a five-ton truck ride down to Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **How long did the air legs take?**

COL. SNUKIS: I guess, overall, it was about a three-day process.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, you get to Kabul, and you're now part of OMC-A. What were the missions and kind of the scope of operations? What were they doing at that particular time when you arrived?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, I mean, OMC-A was summer of 2003 now, July 2003, end of July 2003. The headquarters itself was expanding. It was growing into its expanded role. Obviously, it had initially been—it had started off as an eleven-man element that was chartered with this whole security cooperation piece and security assistance. But, obviously, to build an army from scratch generated a requirement for a larger staff. We were in the process of growing so there was overhead, things that had to be done, infrastructure, updates—you know, places for people to live, places for people to work, computers. An operation center had to be stood up. So, kind of in the midst of all that. At the same time, we had recruiting teams out recruiting, showing the Afghans how to recruit for the army. You had Task Force PHOENIX, was in place, which was training the Afghan National Army, what they called *kandaks* at the time, essentially equivalent to a battalion-level force. So, they were standing those up, and we were also in the process of starting to develop a mentor program for the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. So, not only were we building combat battalions, but we were also looking at putting together a Ministry of Defense General Staff, and also the infrastructure attendant with that—you know, bases, training areas, military academics, or academy, in this case, preliminary work on what an Afghan air force would look like, and all the problems and issues and challenges attendant with that.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. About how big was the staff when you arrived?**

COL. SNUKIS: OMC-A staff was less than a hundred, and I don't know, I can look. I think OMC-Alpha was less than a hundred

at that point in time, and the majority of those were—majority?—all of those were individual augmentees.

DR. KOONTZ: **And this is a joint operation, correct?**

COL. SNUKIS: It was joint, yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **Could you just kind of give me a guesstimate as to how much was Army and how much was other sources?**

COL. SNUKIS: The predominance was Army. There was a handful of Air Force, handful of Navy, handful of Marines. But the predominance was Army.

DR. KOONTZ: **And was the OMC-A staff all uniformed, or did you have civilian contractors in there as well?**

COL. SNUKIS: OMC staff was all uniformed. Contracts were—we had KBR, Kellogg, Brown & Root, that ran the food, infrastructure, repair, and things of that nature for our compound, at the time called Kabul Compound. It's now Camp Eggers. But as far as—but then we did have contractors that came in. They weren't part of staff, as it were. I guess they called them trainers, but they were MPRI [Military Professional Resources, Inc.]—were mentors. A handful—six to ten—were mentors for the Ministry of Defense and General Staff.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, at this point in time, you don't have, say, MPRI or DynCorp or something? They're not working with the Afghan troops or anything like that at this time?**

COL. SNUKIS: No. The Afghan troops—Task Force PHOENIX—now, see, I didn't have as clear a view on the full-up Task Force PHOENIX composition, but the guys that I dealt with were all military out of Task Force PHOENIX, and I don't remember ever seeing any, at that point and time in 2003, contract trainers.

DR. KOONTZ: **And was there any international participation in OMC-A at this time? Other than the Afghans, obviously.**

COL. SNUKIS: Yes. French, Romanian. There may have been a handful of others, but you know, they were kind of out on the fringe. French and Romanians were the ones that jumped out, and just a handful of those guys as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about taking over the staff at OMC-A. How did you transition into taking your position?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, initially, I arrived—the chief of staff that was there, essentially, I mean, we had a face-to-face session together. Lasted maybe two hours or so. I went and linked up with the staff primaries. Those guys walked me through their areas. Worked with the guys running the compound. We

had an outfit from the Pennsylvania National Guard. It was our garrison commander, and it was about twenty-some-odd guys that ran the garrison, had an in-brief with them. Went out with the engineers to look at some of the key training sites and the planned infrastructure builds in the Kabul area. I went out to Pol-e-Charki, which is where Task Force PHOENIX was, had an in-brief from those guys. And that all maybe lasted about two or three days, and the chief of staff that was there departed, and I took over.

DR. KOONTZ: **Do you remember who your predecessor was?**

COL. SNUKIS: Don Bridge. Col. Don Bridge, Army aviator.

DR. KOONTZ: **And my next question is, after you go through and you meet your staff primaries, you view the compound, you view some of the subordinate units, what's your estimation of OMC-A? What's going through your head as things that are working well, things that need to be improved, something like that?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, as I told the staff—this is just a paraphrase, now—what I tried to tell was, one, that what they had done to that point was, in my view, very, very good. I could see that because they essentially started from scratch, zero. Built the compounds so that they were operating on the go while they're trying to put together a joint manning document [JMD], while they're trying to put together a compound, while they were still working to build the Afghan National Army and do the liaison required. But at that stage of the game, I saw that we could then take them to the next level, and we needed to go to the next level, and that was just a little bit more focus on how we were training the Afghans; the equipment that was coming in, how that was distributed out from the different nations, the donor nations that were bringing in artillery pieces, rifles, all the different things that we were outfitting the Army with; uniforms, how we were going to develop uniforms, boots. All the things that probably Washington back in the day had to worry about with the Revolutionary Army, we were dealing with the Afghan army, and what we wanted to do was get Afghan solutions for them. So, instead of contracting out and bringing boots from the United States or having boots made in the United States or in some other country: "Hey, let's see where, first of all, can we find an Afghan manufacturer that can make boots to a standard that's worthy of the Afghan National Army?" Just insignia—I mean, what kind of rank insignia did these guys wear? They went to a distinctive green beret to separate the Afghan National Army from some of the militia units that were still up and operational. Those types of things kind of dominated each and every day. And then, obviously, the acceleration—the sense that the quicker we're able to generate trained, equipped, and professional security forces within Afghanistan would give us, obviously, the

ability to do some other things with our force and our—the capabilities that were on the ground as the United States, whether we kept them there or supplemented or did other things, as we got the Afghans combat ready and prepared to go out and accept the responsibility for their own security. So, those were the kind of things that dominated each and every day. So, we run the gamut of trying to supply ourselves and get infrastructure for us to be able to do our jobs, and people working with the Afghans, and laying that out for their armies, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'm curious about this idea of mentoring the guys from the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. What kind of efforts was OMC-A doing to sort of build up the leadership echelon, I guess, for lack of a better—**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, I mean, I think it was—first of all, there was a whole process, and it was mostly completed by the time I arrived, but General Eikenberry had developed this process, one, to vet leaders who should be, first of all, what was the makeup, the tribal makeup of the leadership; who should be vetted; where would they command; what positions would they take—and there was a huge process that went into working with the Afghans and their U.S. counterparts to determine a list, and then from that list designate who would fill these new positions as they were coming up. So, that was one of the first steps. There was an interim group, and then there was a group that they said, "Okay, here's what we really want it to look like." So, there was a lot of effort involved with that, and mostly General Eikenberry handled that personally, along with the Afghan leadership, and then from there, the mentorship kind of developed, where we brought these contractors in, and active duty.

Col. Rick Schmidt, Marine colonel Rick Schmidt, I know for a fact, was the senior mentor for the minister of defense at the time, General [Abdul Rahim] Wardak. Rick Schmidt was his counterpart, was his right-hand man, and not that he would—General Wardak was U.S.-trained, had been to Command and General Staff College, had spent some time in the United States. I think even some of his family lived in the United States. But Rick, then, would go to work with him in the morning, would be there, would sit next to him. As issues came up, he would counsel, mentor, give solutions, offer suggestions, recommendations, and vice versa. In General Wardak's case, he was a top-notch professional, continued in the army. Actually, he was a chief of staff for the army at the time, and then he became the minister of defense. He's the minister of defense now. But, essentially, would go into work with him, would also socialize with him, the mentors would. And then we also had—Rick was the one active duty guy that comes to mind—MPRI contractors, then, married down in the General Staff as far as the personnel level, the -1 [staff section for personnel] level; the -2 level, the intel guys;

-3 level, the ops guys. Essentially, same kind of deal, a guy at the top, the G-1 of the Afghan army, as it were. You know, we had a mentor: "Today, here's the things that a G-1 would do," boom boom boom boom, and they would go through each and every day with their counterparts in essentially standing up the Afghan army.

DR. KOONTZ: **How did OMC-A interface with Task Force PHOENIX? How did that organizational relationship work?**

COL. SNUKIS: I mean, essentially … I don't know. It's very difficult to explain. I mean, Task Force PHOENIX had its charter. Task Force PHOENIX initially was run by a brigade-minus element of the 10th Mountain Division. Col. Mark Milley also had an active duty—Brig. Gen. [F.] Joseph Prasek was the commander, Task Force PHOENIX commander. And I wouldn't say it was a loose command and control relationship, but Task Force PHOENIX was subordinate to OMC-A, but OMC-A didn't direct the day-to-day operations of Task Force PHOENIX. General Prasek did that. He was the trainer. I think his background—I think he was a Joint Readiness Training Center commander at one point—and they ran the training of the Afghan National Army. There was friction there, and I didn't really—in my time as the OMC chief, one, trying to learn the job and trying to gain a handle on the staff … the advice, the friction level between OMC-Alpha commander and the Task Force PHOENIX … I didn't have a good opportunity to get a good understanding of that during my time there. Task Force PHOENIX always sent a rep. We had a liaison assigned to us from Task Force PHOENIX who always knew what they were doing and when they were doing it. Our -3 capability, operations-level capability, the tracking, or what I would say an operations center, really wasn't fully developed. It was immature, so our ability to track and command and control what they were doing was virtually nonexistent at the OMC-A level, at least during my time with them. And I mean, they essentially had their charter. We had to schedule—we knew how the battalions were going to be built, when they were going to be built, the timeline that that fell under, how the basic training worked, how the advanced training worked, how the platoon leader, the officer training was going, and the schedules of those and the graduation pieces of that, but essentially almost in a monitoring mode, not a directed mode, as it were.

DR. KOONTZ: **Given your limited interface with Task Force PHOENIX and the Afghans that they were training, what was your impression of the Afghan troops that were being trained at that point in time and formed into *kandaks*?**

COL. SNUKIS: I just had discussions with Mark Milley on several occasions, and he was right there. I mean, he was with them day in and day out. Let me say, they're kind of like the American Indians. They could fight. They understood how to fight.

They fought in their own way. They had been doing it for many years, in different forms, obviously, and then bringing them together, though, to put them into units was a new task, now, too. So, some of the cultural issues that they had—they were good soldiers. The fitness level—they were hard overall, I guess. As an infantry perspective, I would say because their life was hard to that point, they weren't fit hard like our infantrymen were as far as the ability to carry heavy loads and move long distances and the stamina required, but they started developing that way. They seemed to be motivated. The esprit de corps seemed good from the times that I was able to get out and about and visit folks.

There were issues. I mean, obviously, the recruiting of the army from the different sectors of the country, bringing different tribes together and things of that nature. So, there was some of that there, the residual issues, but they all seemed pretty proud, and when you talked to the guys at the end of the day, they said, "Hey, these guys are pretty much…"; they stand and fight when required, and that was proven out when I went to CFC-A, then, to see the Afghans in battle. I mean, for the most part, the reviews from the guys that were out there with them were generally favorable. So, a pretty good group to start with, but they obviously lacked some—like on payday, no check to the bank kind of deal or anything like that, so to get payment to their families they would go home. So, if they lived in Herat, which is all the way across the—you know, it would take X number of days by bus to get to Herat, X number of days to get back, and plus they would spend some time there, so around the payday, you'd lose a guy for ten, eleven days. The accounting aspects? Their leadership said, "Hey, no worries. He'll be back." We tried to then account for these guys on an AWOL basis, or in some cases, a desertion basis, dependent upon how long he was gone, and then all of a sudden he would show up again. Their leadership wasn't all concerned about it, but because it didn't marry up with the way we did business, we ended up having to struggle with that. You also had guys that you would lose—I mean, guys would come in, you'd train 'em, and then they'd go away, get their first paycheck and you'd never see 'em again. A lot of guys who weren't used to the aspect of being away from home—you know, if they came from the western part of Afghanistan and were in Kabul training, it wasn't—I mean, and not unlike our soldiers, a guy that comes from Georgia and is out in Texas training or something like that, the homesick aspect of it played pretty hard for those guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. We talked earlier about that mentorship program that you had with the Afghan Ministry of Defense. What other kind of organizational or job-based relations did OMC-A have with the Ministry of Defense? Did they send representatives to come in and observe things or anything like that?**

COL. SNUKIS: No, there was—it was kind of a one-way flow. I mean, it was us observing them. We started—we got—this is more my transition to CFC-A. We finally got an Afghan LNO [liaison officer], but it was—he came and worked in our headquarters, but he was kind of—they weren't accepted into the fold as of that point in time, and maybe that's changed. I'm hoping it's changed. We were trying to work them into that, and then the sensitivity of operations, the free share of information and all that, really didn't take place. Where that took place more so is at the higher levels. So, there was, like, General Eikenberry and Wardak and [Lt. Gen. Sher Muhammad] Karimi and some of the other generals that were running the program at the time. That's where the exchange of information came, but actually having the guys come over and watch us—actually, I'm not sure we would've given a great picture, based upon the individual augmentees. The ad hoc way that we put our organization together probably wasn't a good model for him at that point in time.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And you leave OMC-A in October, correct?**

COL. SNUKIS: No. Actually, I was just kind of looking back over that. I didn't really officially leave OMC-A until November. I was like dual-hatted as the OMC-A chief of staff and what consisted of the CFC-A staff at that point in time, which was only six strong until about November, at which time then General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno said, "Hey, I need you to focus full-time on CFC-A," and essentially, I gave [up] my OMC-A duties—they went away.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, there's a period of maybe almost two months where you're doing both functions?**

COL. SNUKIS: Pretty much dual-hat, yeah.

DR. KOONTZ: **That must have made your job harder.**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, it was fun. I mean, it was a challenge, and it was really—and it's one of the things I try to teach our students here—is they want everything clean, and everything's not clean. It's just a way things—I mean, if you want to go into that, May of 2003, the secretary of defense stated, "Hey, we're in Phase IV operations in Afghanistan." You can go back, look at the *Early Bird* and all that. Essentially, there was no written order, there was nothing else that came out about it, but in the press he said, "Hey, we're in Phase IV of the operation." Well, if you looked at what was taking place with Combined Joint Task Force-180, other than what the work OMC-A was doing, -180 was still pretty much heavily engaged with the Taliban, al Qaeda, and any other—HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin]—or who else the threat was at that time. There was still a lot of combat action going on, and in our lexicon, Phase III being, you know, the decisive combat, dominate, combat action–type tasks, but SecDef said, in May 2003, said,

"Hey, we want to go, and we want to get the reconstruction stabilization movement within Afghanistan," and rightfully so. The way to do that—then, the general, the senior Army commander in Afghanistan, was located at Bagram Air Force Base at that time. That was Lt. Gen. Vines. So, essentially, the SecDef probably communicated through General [John P.] Abizaid at CENTCOM, who communicated through General Vines, and said, "Hey, we need to start becoming tighter and more in tune with what's going on with the stabilization and reconstruction, so I need you to tie in with …"—for instance, okay, Country Team Kabul, the embassy of Kabul, which at the time did not have an ambassador, which was being run by the DCM [deputy chief of mission], David Sedney. Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad had still not showed up at that point in time. The United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan, which at this point in time was a—Lakhdar Brahimi was the special representative to the secretary-general, and then he was followed up by Jean Arnault. But you've got to tie in to those guys, tie in to the nongovernmental organizations throughout Afghanistan, tie in with the other countries—and the countries involved in Afghanistan and reconstruction of Afghanistan at that point in time were Germany, who was working police reform; Japan, who was working the disarmament, what they call disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration piece; you had the Italians, who were working rule of law, or judicial reform; you had the Brits, who were doing [the] counternarcotics piece; and you had the U.S., who was building the Afghan National Army. So, those were the pillars of what they called security sector reform.

So, at that point in time, then—this was about September time frame—General Vines turns to his staff up there at Bagram and says, "Hey, what I want you to do is develop a pocket staff with reach-back capability with me as the commander, and I'm going to move my center of operations from Bagram"—still leave his deputy back there at Bagram to run the task force operations, the combat operations, as it were—"and I'm going to move my center, this pocket staff, down to Kabul, so I'm closer to the embassy, so I'm closer to the UN, government of Afghanistan," etc., etc. This is September time frame. About that point in time—and I think I wrote it down here—I think about—General Barno, I think, was being looked at to run something in Afghanistan, and they still didn't know if it was going to be CFC. CFC wasn't even a name at that point in time. I think that was around—General Barno was scheduled to visit some time in September. Yeah, fifth through fourteenth [of] September, he was coming to visit, and I'm not sure at that—and I never really did talk to General Barno, what the whole dynamics and all that was, but I knew he was coming over to do something. I don't know if he was going to take over from General Vines or what. The third of October, General Vines got sick, or he had had something that popped up on a

physical. He needed emergency surgery. He left Afghanistan to return to the United States, never to come back, at least as the role of some sort of Phase IV–type commander, and then in October, that's when General Abizaid then turned to General Barno and said, "Hey, you're a candidate to be a combined force commander or whatever in Afghanistan, and here's the charter," and he kind of laid out: "I want you to be the link to the embassy. I want you to jump-start the Phase IV stuff," etc., etc., and that was around the October time frame.

So, General Barno came over and visited, fifth through fourteenth [of] September, went back to D.C. I'm not sure how all that worked, but we were in constant communications. Again, I'm still the OMC-A chief of staff. We don't even have a staff, as it were. We had some of the guys coming down from the task force at Bagram—his pocket staff, as it were, about twenty guys. They were starting to trickle in, and then about the October time frame, General Barno said, "Hey, here's what we're going to do." He had a VTC [video teleconference] direct up with General Abizaid. General Abizaid laid out his guidance for what the command should look like, and we got started to build Combined Forces Command-Central Asia, at first, was the first name that we came up with, and then it just went to Afghanistan. But still, we did—even our combined joint operating area actually had a regional focus. We reached out into some of the -stans and into Pakistan, not including the Kashmir region. All this was happening very rapidly, and that was about the October time frame.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Before we build up CFC-Charlie Alpha, I guess, at that point in time, I have one last question about OMC-A. You're only there for a few months, and then as you said, the last couple months, you've really dual-hatted.**

COL. SNUKIS: My focus was more on trying to get this whole phase—I mean, still we don't, because OMC really was the only—plus then, I was able to tap into them, because General Eikenberry—there was a gap, and then General Eikenberry left in August, I think, and General Prasek was supposed to move over to be the OMC-A commander, or chief—it wasn't a command—but he was spending the majority of his time with Task Force PHOENIX, because that's, you know, he had been with PHOENIX, that's where he had invested most of his time. So, there was really a gap. So, I mean, if you looked who was in charge, I mean, really, other than—I mean, I was like senior guy then at that point in time, because General Eikenberry was gone. General Prasek was there but relied on me to keep OMC-A running because he was focused more on Task Force PHOENIX. So, we were trying to do all of that, and then this whole churn about this headquarters in Kabul came out, but really only thinking it was going to be General Vines, who at that point in time had sixteen

months in Afghanistan—I mean, who knew Afghanistan better than probably anybody out there other than Afghans themselves. He was—the plan was—he was going to stay, I think, but because he got sick and had to do this emergency surgery, that's how all that—and from my perspective, and I don't know, and I never asked him and never really had the opportunity to go back and ask him if that's what happened. But, yes, we're still doing—I think I got off track here with your question, but OMC-A is still going, and there's still churn, but they're continuing to do what we stated they were doing up front.

DR. KOONTZ: **What I wanted to ask was, given your short time there as chief of staff and the diversion of more and more of your focus and time over to CFC-A, is there anything that, looking back at OMC-A, anything that you wished you could've done if you had more time?**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, if you had more time, there's more that you'd like to do. I felt pretty happy with what we did in the short period of time that we had. The key thing that we were able to do is we started institutionalizing some of the things, some of the processes, some of the actions that they were doing. For instance, recruiting visits. Well, to go out and recruit across Afghanistan, you need transportation assets. The task force assets were fairly limited, and they were using those for Phase III–type activities—you know, going out and conducting raids and ambushes and moving troops and equipment and doing those types of things. For the OMC-A recruiting team to get out, they contracted an Mi–24 that had been left over from the Soviet days and would fly them around. Well, the way they did that was they would say, "Hey, I want to fly from here to Kandahar on such-and-such a date" and contract, and the Mi–24 would show up, and—I don't know; we paid a certain fee for this for every month—they'd hop on the helicopter and fly down to Kandahar.

Well, the struggle with that was there was no coordination, no synchronization with any of the activities that the joint task force was doing because we didn't have a mature operations cell to be able to make that coordination. So, where I'm going with that is that was one of the things that we put into place to say "Hey, there's no independent or unilateral operations going on here that aren't coordinated" because what we don't want to have is a friendly force, friendly fire–type incident and/or a requirement for combat search and rescue if this helicopter goes down and Bagram joint operations center isn't even tracking the fact that we have Americans on an ex-Soviet helicopter flying around Afghanistan. So, those were some of the things that we started to put in place, and really where I came in and said, "Hey, there's a need to get this stuff institutionalized and written down as a way"—essentially, our standard operation procedure for OMC-A. So, if I had more time, I would continue to have refined that and worked

that and get out and about and actually see these things in action and continue to refine that. I guess I would've been—at that point in time, I felt, "Well, hey, I don't really want to leave that, but this CFC-A thing seems to be bigger than that at this point in time, so I think it's better to move on." But that's—really, if I'd had more time—that's probably what we would've done, to continue in the same way.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You mentioned earlier that when you were selected as the chief of staff for OMC-A, you were not a by-name request.**

COL. SNUKIS: Right.

DR. KOONTZ: **You had some professional and personal experience with General Barno beforehand.**

COL. SNUKIS: I did.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were you a name request this time?**

COL. SNUKIS: No. Well, I was there. I mean, the bottom line was (and I'm not sure at that point)—I know later in his tour, we put in names for six different by-name requests for chief of staff, and he didn't get any of them—but at that point in time, I was there. I was in place. I don't know if he asked for another chief of staff or not at that point in time, and initially he didn't say, "Hey, do you want to be the Combined Forces?" It was just kind of like "You're now the Combined Forces. You're now the chief of staff for my organization." Now, whether he had asked for someone else before me or not, I don't know. I had been his operations officer back in 3d of 505th in the 82d Airborne Division, based in 1992—'91, '92—time frame, when he was a battalion commander. He liked the way I operated there. I mean, we had a good relationship there. We did our National Training Center [NTC] rotation together. But I never got—it wasn't like "Hey, I want to"—and, oh, by the way, since he was in charge now in Afghanistan, he kind of just said, "Hey, you're now the…." I never had orders. I never had a piece of paper that said I was—you know, I was still over there as the OMC-A chief of staff. I just wasn't doing that job, and as a matter of fact, there was never, other than my award that I got, there is really no paperwork that says that I was the chief of staff, and the fact that people know pictures and things of that nature, but there's no official orders that said that was the case. So, whether I was a by-name request or not, he knew me. He was comfortable with working with me, I think, and if he had asked for someone else, they obviously denied him, and I ended up staying there then. I was only supposed to be—I actually went over as the OMC-A chief, who was a six-month individual augmentee at that point in time, so I was supposed to—and I just ended up staying close to a year. I didn't do quite a calendar year, because—and that was when

he started, already started leaning forward and looking for a chief of staff to replace me, and the way the system was set up, it just wasn't supporting him at that point in time.

DR. KOONTZ: **You kind of touched on this a little bit, just a few moments ago, but tell me about your—how would you characterize your relationship with General Barno beforehand?**

COL. SNUKIS: I mean, it was a professional relationship. We weren't—it wasn't like he was a mentor for me. I worked for him. I communicated with him over the years. When I was a battalion commander in the 82d, he commanded the brigade down at Fort Polk, Louisiana. I was down there for a precommand course and some things, and I went by to see him and talk to him. I'd get a Christmas card every now and then, get a letter from him every now and then. I'd send him a letter every now and then. But it wasn't like—he wasn't a mentor. It wasn't like I was riding his coattails or anything like that throughout the years, but when we worked together, especially back in the 82d Airborne Division, I think our philosophies were pretty similar. He had been in the Rangers. You know, I had been a Ranger company commander and a Ranger staff officer, so, I mean, our backgrounds were very similar to that point. He liked the way I operate. I liked working for him. I learned immensely from him, and we had a real good professional—he understood my strengths, I think, pretty well. He understood my weaknesses, and he was able to work with those, and I think overall he felt pretty good about it. He might tell you something different, but I think he felt pretty good about having me there and working with him at that stage of the game, and I, him.

I mean, you know, he was very thoughtful—great intellect, was able to see the big picture; and also was sensitive; and, because of his tactical background, he understood clearly what the soldier and the joint war fighter on the ground was going through. He clearly understood the special operations aspect of things. He had a great relationship with General Abizaid. I think he had been a platoon leader for General Abizaid at some point in the Rangers. General Abizaid was his company commander. So, there were things, you know, he could do with a phone call to General Abizaid that potentially could take weeks of staff work to make happen. So, I think we had a good, solid professional relationship. I went to his retirement dinner that [Ali] Jalali, Minister of Interior Jalali, put together for him, along with a couple guys from the embassy staff, what, last year? Was invited to that, invited up to his retirement and things of that nature. So, we had a good professional working relationship.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let's go ahead and stand up CFC-A. Again, you'd sort of touched on this a little bit earlier. You're dual-hatted, and you're doing both of these things. What are**

the big problems that you have to tackle to get this new command stood up, other than "all of them"?

COL. SNUKIS: Well, let's look at the key ones. One, manning. No, there was no joint manning document for Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. We built it.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you started with six people?**

COL. SNUKIS: We started with—yeah, I saw six. If you started, it was General Barno, his aide. He had—what do you call them, now? I can't even remember—a personal security guy. There was a sergeant over at the embassy that we kind of rolled up into the CFC piece that worked out embassy stuff for us. That's four. Myself was five; and then a guy named Mark Stammer, a lieutenant colonel. He had worked for General [Brig. Gen. Stanley A.] McChrystal on the Joint Staff. He was in between assignments, was going to be a battalion commander, had been selected for battalion command and came over as an individual augmentee, and he was essentially the exec, the EA [executive assistant] kind of deal for General Barno initially. And that was what we started the command with.

So, we started, and General Barno would always like to say, "Hey, we had this staff, and from Day 1, we had the mission." It was like "Hey, here's the mission. Go out and do it." So, there were six guys, so, I mean, obviously, we had to man the organization. We had equipped the organization, and some of that was we ended up—we just—we took over the top floor of the OMC-A building, and General Barno came over and said, "Hey, this is my office. This is where I'm going. I'm taking this," and it had to be. So, the computers, the staff—additionally, then, we started adding some guys. The political-military guy from OMC-A, Col. Tucker [B.] Mansager, who was Lt. Col. Mansager at the time, had been a company commander for General Barno in the same battalion when I was the ops officer, so I knew him. He had been working at OMC-A. He essentially did the same thing. He now became CFC-A's political-military guy. Then, Stammer, as well, was actually the S-4 for General Barno, and I think may have commanded a bit after I had left them. So, Stammer had come in, but it was kind of luck. Stammer wasn't a by-name request. It was a luck of the draw. He was coming to Afghanistan, anyway, to work for General [Maj. Gen. Lloyd J.] Austin, who came in and backfilled—General Austin was the commander of the 10th Mountain Division. They backfilled the XVIII Airborne Corps staff in as the Combined Joint Task Force-180. So, Stammer was going to come in and work for him; it turned out where Stammer ended up working for General Barno, then. So, that was the initial part of staff. We then assumed this pocket staff that General Vines had already put into motion, and most of those guys again thinking, General Vines thinking, most of the war fighting was going to be done up at Bagram, whereas

Phase IV, the stability and reconstruction stuff, would be down at Kabul. So, he sent part of his J-5 staff down, the plans staff and some civil-military guys, and, like, one J-2 kind of guy and one J-3 kind of guy. So, it was a very slim, Major Timmons, Rich Timmons, was the J-3. Capt. Steve Davis, Marine Corps Reserve, was our J-2 at the time, just initially to stand up, and one warrant. He had a warrant with him, as well. But that was the initial piece.

We then started looking at—and General Abizaid wanted to keep the staff down, because, obviously, the stress and strain on the force, you know, headquarters were starting to proliferate. He said, "Hey, General Barno, can you keep the staff down?" And General Barno said, "Hey, take a look. See what we can do with less than a hundred guys." So, we put together then a joint manning document that reflected about a hundred-man staff. That was vetted through—actually, and we had to vet it up through Bagram. We actually vetted it through the joint task force. It got into the Joint Staff and CENTCOM hands, and, yeah, they said, "Okay, yeah, all right, great. We recognize these as requirements, and we'll start to fill them for you," and some of them, a lot of them, were built. Then we built Coalition, too. There were Coalition officers in some of the jobs as well. Like, the J-5 then was going to be a Brit. What do we have? We have a Frenchman on the J-3 staff. We had a New Zealander who was going to be the J-2, which were all attendant with all the security problems at that point in time. It still wasn't—that stuff hadn't been sorted out. So that was built, and this was going into the—this is now November or December time frame, and then 10th Mountain started sending us some guys. You know, General Barno was working with General Austin saying, "Hey, look. For us to do what we have to do…." So, we started getting some guys from 10th Mountain.

I then took Stammer. He came out of position as the EA, and the general's aide was working. I took Stammer and another major off the staff, which at the time now had grown probably about forty or fifty, and put them in charge of building the joint manning document and said, "Your number one position is to build a joint manning document so we can fill this headquarters." At that point, then, we got different guidance, or additional guidance, from General Barno, who said, "Hey, to do this right and to do the things that we've been chartered to do, we've got to build a full-up three-star–type headquarters staff," so that I think the initial JMD we came up with is about 293, and that was to cover down LNOs for the UN, LNOs for the embassy team, LNOs for the government of Afghanistan. There was a whole laundry list of things then that became Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, trying to synchronize and coordinate the Phase IV–type tasks that we saw that were going to be on our plate.

DR. KOONTZ: **During this point in time when you've got a pretty small staff—as you said, you're on the first floor of the OMC-A building.**

COL. SNUKIS: Actually, second floor, but to be specific, I don't, you know …

DR. KOONTZ: **What's a normal day for you like during this period of time, if normal's a ...**

COL. SNUKIS: That's a fair question. Normal day for me? I always—as a chief of staff, I used to like to tell everybody my job was everything short of real work. It was directing everyone else to get things done and to meet requirements for the general, and then as things matured a little bit, for the ambassador and for all the other folks, for the requirements for information and things of that nature. But, generally, my day out, I would wake up at four-thirty. We were living at the time on the embassy compound. I didn't have a—I initially was in a safe house, and then I ended up moving into a little trailer in the embassy compound. A four-thirty wake-up. I was in the office by five. From five to eight was my time to do—it was my e-mail time, was my time. I would eat breakfast normally, a good little breakfast opened up, but it was my quiet time where I didn't have a lot of guys. And then eight is when the full-up battle rhythm started. I mean, our meetings would start. I had a short staff huddle every morning from eight to eight-thirty. Most of the time, I would run that, initially. Actually, initially, I would always run that. Sometimes I had to go out and attend a country team meeting, but essentially from eight until about 2000 is when we officially shut down our staff battle rhythm, as it were, other than the ops guys. And then from 20 to 2200 would be my time again with the computer and doing all the bits and pieces as far as finishing up the e-mails and getting prepped for the next day. And then by 2300, we had to be back into the embassy compound, because they shut the compound down. So, by 2200 we tried to shut down. Normally, we were leaving the compound by about 2230, 2245, heading back to the embassy. So, it was about at 05 to 2245 hours.

Within that … I mean, the days, there really wasn't a standard day, other than the initial staff meeting in the morning, initially to set the direction, and then the battle rhythm kind of evolved from there as tasks emerged and things matured. But each and every day was different. Some days, I would be with General Barno, with the embassy staff. Some days, we went with him on several of his trips—initially up to Konduz for a DDR ceremony, the disarmament, demob, reintegration ceremony up in Konduz, and up to Bagram on several occasions to meet with the joint task force staff, work with them. We also had special operators in there, so there were other things going on, meetings that had to take place, our other governmental agencies that we work with.

So, throughout—and especially when it was just General Barno, I, and a small staff that was—it was pretty much react to contact each and every day, although we were, like I said, trying to lay the foundation for the organization with the JMD infrastructure stuff. I'd meet with the garrison commander because we obviously knew if we were going to grow the staff, we had to grow the compound. Should we grow the compound where we were? Should we build a new compound somewhere? What was the cost? Did staff studies on that, the analysis, saying how much would it cost to have a new compound, how much it would cost? What other equipment do we need? What are communications—one of the big things up front were the communications requirements. How can General Barno—you know, does he have a red phone that he can talk to the CENTCOM commander? Communications that he can take with him out to the hinter regions of Afghanistan? How does he communicate back and forth to Bagram—all the different communications nets, to include the computer nets to do that. So … what was the term General Barno used to call it? Essentially, we were standing up a unit and doing the mission all at the same time in a combat zone. It was pretty crazy.

DR. KOONTZ: **This isn't a fair question to ask, but how do you function as a chief of staff without a staff?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, you become the staff, essentially. And then the other thing that I did, and what I was able to do—and it was tough at first, because the authorities really didn't translate well—but we collaborated with the [Combined] Joint Task Force-180 staff. General [Brig. Gen. Byron S.] Bagby was actually the deputy commander at the time, so I worked with him. Colonel Bartell came in, was the chief of staff. Art Bartell, now Brig. Gen. Art Bartell, was the chief of staff. Daily multiple conversations, e-mails with him, face-to-face meetings. Either I'd go up to him, or he'd come down to me. Numerous conversations with [Brig.] Gen. Tony [A.] Cucolo, who was the ADC [assistant division commander] at the time and place, and then when those guys changed out, 25th Infantry Division came in—this was several months down the road—there was still that collaboration that took place with the chief of staff and the ADCs and the CG from the 25th Infantry Division, which was [Combined] Joint Task Force-76.

But that's really, I mean, what I had to do. So, I would feed—General Barno would generate taskings and generate requests for information, so I'd run what staff I had, which was minimal at the time, trying to feed those, and then collaborate back to [Combined] Joint Task Force-180, back to CENTCOM sometimes, back to the Joint Staff sometimes, depending upon where things were and questions were originating. So, really, at that point in time, if I wasn't

running the staff, because the staff was very small, I was running myself and collaborating and reaching back to the [Combined Joint] Task Force-180 staff, which frustrated them, because they had all their tasks and things to do on any given day as well, and we started putting in additional requirements on top of them, and initially caused some friction and some frustration.

DR. KOONTZ: **Can you give me an example of that?**

COL. SNUKIS: There was a series—Thanksgiving, okay, because that's November. We went out and we did a visit. Myself, General Barno, his aide got on a helicopter and flew out, just about, to a bunch of the different sites and visited with the soldiers and had Thanksgiving dinner. It was a long day, early start, like an 0600 start. We didn't get back to Kabul until, I don't know, 21, 20. It was past dark. It was 2100. In the course of that visit, several concerns, challenges, issues, insights, observations developed, and it was a laundry list of things that General Barno had seen, I had taken notes on, that needed action—either requests for information: "Hey, why do we have a certain type of equipment here, but we don't have it in this location?" "Where are the up-armored Humvees for this site?" "Why are we located here?" Different things. "Why are these troops outfitted a certain way," or why are they organized a certain way, or who they're dealing with. What about the Afghan militia and how that—the pay scale for the forces, you know—how Special Operations Forces fit into that, and the Special Forces. Anyway, it was a laundry list of things that I then had to go back and transmit to Colonel Bartell and say, "Hey, I need answers to these things," boom boom boom boom, so, which caused them—in the end run, they saw the value of it, but in some cases they already knew the answers, so it was a duplication of effort because they felt that General Barno was maybe stepping into their business; but, in reality, from my perspective, because I was looking at it a little bit higher than they, was he was just trying to gain a situational awareness and an understanding and needed that information to flesh out in his mind so he had a good grasp of what was going on—not only Phase IV, but obviously, Phase III plays heavily into how Phase IV takes place. So, that's really an example of that frustration that occurred.

Now, the utmost professionals always got the information. Maybe between colonels we talked or whatever, but always produced, always focused in on what needed to be done, and essentially at the end of the day, we were all trying to get to the ball in the same end zone. Pretty impressive, when you look at all the complexities and the amount of moving parts on any given day and any snapshot of time. I thought it was pretty impressive, and by the way, the fact that they were the big dogs—now, when you layer in a headquarters on top of someone, there's always that natural lower-to-higher friction

that occurs at all levels, in peacetime and war. I don't know if that—does that help?

DR. KOONTZ: **Yes, sir. That gives me kind of a—that's a good example. I should have asked this a while ago. What kind of guidance did you get from General Barno when you're standing up CFC-Alpha? Did you sit everybody down and say, "This is what we're going to do"?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, again, there really wasn't anybody else to sit down. [Referring to notes.] We received a brief, and I don't know if I've got the date—yeah, eleventh of October, looks like. General Abizaid had a VTC with General Barno, and he laid out some specific guidance. Then General Barno transmitted that to me, and essentially, that was then the guidance for staff. I don't know if you want to go through any of this stuff or not, but here's essentially the guidance General Barno put out, and General Abizaid told him, said, "Hey, within the next. …" Essentially, he laid out a series of guidance to General Barno, and then he said, "Hey, within the next two weeks, how about laying out a road ahead for how you see CFC," or seeing a command—and again, it wasn't even Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, hadn't even been established as a name yet—but he said, "Operation-wise, how do you see Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan will do business?" General Abizaid to General Barno, and it'd come back to me in a couple weeks.

Well, General Barno kind of looked at it and said, "Okay, let's identify resource issues, people, the staff, coordination issues. How do we collaborate with the embassy team? How do we collaborate. …" There was the Afghan Reconstruction Group that came in that was layered on top of the embassy team. "How do we coordinate with them? How do we synchronize our activities, military," and if you want to use the trite DIME [diplomatic, information, military, economic] example, "Within DIME, how do we do that? What are we trying to achieve? And that's where I see CFC Headquarters making their money." So, he started laying out. He said, "Hey, we've got to set the conditions, okay? Before we can set conditions, let's identify what the conditions need to be." So, that was a guidance. He said, "Hey, we've got to do that." He said, "We've got to build a good relationship with the other governmental agencies."

There's a lot of distrust right now, and at that point in time there was, between the Afghans and the Pakistanis. He goes, "I see that as a key task"—an essential task as it were—is "building, establishing the trust across both sides of the borders." And essentially, what occurred out of that was a tripartite Afghan-Pakistan-U.S. tripartite discussions, talks, training that really helped solidify that and got going. That's how that was translated and that guidance. He said, "I need to develop a good relationship with the ambassador." He

goes, "I need a media plan"—essentially, the STRATCOM [strategic communications] piece, you know, how am I going to, because one of his, General Abizaid told him, he goes, "I want you to bring some of the stuff in Afghanistan to the forefront." Essentially … let me see if I can find the exact—raise the public posture, because it's—essentially, Afghanistan was an economy of force. Really still is, and at the time it had kind of fallen off the screen a bit after the initial toppling of the Taliban, etc. General Abizaid told General Barno, said, "Hey, I want you to raise the public posture." Then General Barno turns to the staff guy and said, "Hey, I need to develop a media plan." He goes, "Increase the staff, "obviously. Different skill sets. Add additional civil-military operators. Essentially saying, "Hey, figure out what is working around us right now." He said take a look at, analyze, General Abizaid to General Barno, and then to us. He nested it down, said, "Hey, what if we extend the battle space into the -stans? What would be the impact and the benefits of doing that—and, obviously the pitfalls. Do an analysis of what if we extended our battle space and started including the -stans." He said as far as taking a look at the counternarc piece—essentially woven into the fabric of Afghanistan—"By different accounts, about 70 percent of GNP comes out of counternarcotics. How can we impact it? When should we? Where's the timing and the tempo, should we impact it? If we can impact, how do we impact it? Where should it go? In some sort of coherent strategy for Afghanistan, if we need to put that together?" The list was pretty extensive.

Now, again, we didn't have—so, essentially, what I started was a running tally, a task list, as a chief of staff, and as we started getting capacity—because we didn't have full-up capacity, because a lot of it I passed off to the task force, which was the only thing I could do if we wanted immediate impact. And then a lot of it we started listing down on the to-do list, as it were, and as we started getting capacity and gaining capacity, we were able to start checking some of these things off. First order of business, he said—and what was developed was what they called [Security] Strategy South and East, and that was a look at synchronizing the military power with the other elements, the national power, to include Afghan and international power, to focus on the border regions south and east, which was where the majority of the conflict at the time and the violence was occurring—to say, "Hey, how can we leverage USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] projects?" The focus then, "Do regional development zones in conjunction with combat zones, security zones, so that we can enhance this whole thing called stability," and the slide that he used in the guidance piece was essentially two words on it, and it was security and reconstruction, and then an arrow from security to reconstruction and an arrow from reconstruction to security, essentially saying, "Hey, if I enhance the security

I'm going to be able to, in Afghanistan's case, construct and not necessarily reconstruct; and then if I can reconstruct or construct, that's going to enhance the security because guys are going to be carrying shovels and spades instead of AK47s and RPGs [rocket propelled grenades]"; and that's what he tried to put into place. Vetted that with the UN, and at that point in time, we had about a twenty-man staff. That generated from the J-5 shop with Col. Ian Lyles, who's now a brigadier general, Brig. [Gen.] Ian Lyles of the British Army, who is kind of the guy who fronted that with General Barno. I mean, essentially, in conjunction with General Barno, they sat down and crafted that strategy. But that's the guidance he gave us up front, and it just continued to grow from there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. We've talked a great deal about getting CFC-A stood up. Is there an event or a point in time that you can point to where you could say "Okay, now it's working" or "Now it's mature. Now we actually have an operational command"?**

COL. SNUKIS: I don't think I ever could. By the time … I mean, I felt we were operational from Day 1, but I knew our limitations. So, as we continued to—I mean, I never felt—I knew it wasn't like any organization I ever belonged to, that I ever was a part of, but I felt that we were operational and making an impact from Day 1, and a lot of that was on General Barno's shoulders. I mean, the fact that he was there and the things that he did … he was able to see some things, and based off of his background and experience and things that other people weren't able to see, he was able to start connecting the dots. And even with the limited staff, as we were able to put some of those things into practice, I felt we were making an impact.

I never felt that I was ever anywhere near what my battalion was as a battalion commander or what my battalion staff or what our battalion staff was when General Barno was a battalion commander. I never felt that we hit that because, again, we were all individual augmentees. On any given day—and this was still in the days of the ninety-day rotations for the Air Force. From month to month, even when we started filling billets, it was different guys with different levels of experience. We never built around a core element. It was broken to start with. It was not the right way to do it. I understand why it occurred like it did, but you should've had a trained core headquarters, kind of like this whole standing joint force headquarters concept, that came in, and then you could have glommed and added on and built onto that with the individual augmentees. General Barno and I, even though we had history together, that was over ten years ago. Well, shoot, yeah. It was eleven years since the last time I'd actually worked with him. We should've trained together, worked together, kind of understood—to go into, to truly be a functional team—instead of "Hey, okay, here's

another group of guys coming in. Let's integrate them into the headquarters." I never felt, leaving in July, end of July, beginning of August 2004, that we hit. Maybe others felt that way, but that we looked like what we should look like, or what I would expect the staff to look like.

DR. KOONTZ: **You described the command as being operational with limitations. Other than the limitations of personnel and the uncertain JMD and all that kind of stuff, were there other limitations you could point to?**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, sure. Communications. We went for a time to whereas General Barno couldn't even communicate to the embassy. The embassy was about less than two miles away from our compound. We had to go through Germany, the way the comm system was set up, to talk to the embassy. So, there were all kinds of delays within it. There was frequent loss of communications. He didn't have, again, the requisite secure communications that he required. He didn't have the red phone. We ended up getting those, and there's a technical term for it. I'm not a commo guy. I can't remember what it's called, but there's essentially—you know, we had to run different lines. So, communications issues. We had transportation issues, as far as moving General Barno from point A to point B. The task force always had to send a helicopter down for them, which they ended up dedicating them, and they worked that very well, but really not the ideal. To move him from point A outside the country of Afghanistan, which he had to do on several occasions to go work in a donor conference and some other key conferences, commanders' conference and things of that nature, was very, very difficult because we didn't have the mechanisms in place. We didn't have the dedicated transportation to get him from point A to point B. So, those limited us.

Our knowledge—and not just the personnel numbers-wise, but the skill sets of folks coming in. I mean, you had individual augmentees. You had the Individual Ready Reserve folks. Some folks hadn't had uniforms on in six, seven years. Guys that came in with an incomplete knowledge and understanding of the staff planning process, putting together the plans and doing operations, so it was a train-as-you-go kind of deal as well. Again, no complaints. I don't want to sound like—the Brits would say whinging about it—but it was the reality. It was just that was what we had. And I think folks understood that, and in a lot of cases, they made concessions for us as well, as far as someone reporting. Good example of a limitation: VTC. First VTC we operated with was some backpack kind of screen that my TV at home has a larger screen—and I don't have one of these big-screen things. I just have a regular 26-inch TV that has a bigger screen than the VTC. Took us several months that we were able to get a trailer in and better ability to do VTCs back to—I mean, I can remember the first three or four VTCs we did

with the SecDef were done on this very small screen in the back of this, what had been an interpreter's living quarters. So, those kinds of things just made everyday life a little bit more difficult. I'm trying to think what other limitations there would be in the comms piece, in the people piece, the skill piece. The organization—I mean, the organization wasn't staffed. We were building the JMD as we were trying to do plans and operations and things of that nature. At a minimum, someone could've said, "Hey, here's your JMD. Let's go ahead and fill it and go from there." And so that, while it caused frustrations and challenges, it kind of also made every day interesting.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the origin of the "Five Pillars" strategy that General Barno implemented?**

COL. SNUKIS: What was the origin of that? I'll tell you the origin. General Barno used to initially—and that was one of the beautiful things when you had a small group of guys. It's easier to generate things and get things done. I mean, there's limitations that come with it, but there's also positive aspects to those kinds of things, and one of those was the fact that every Friday, he'd bring in just a handful of guys and have what he called a strategy session. The origin of the Five Pillars essentially emerged from—he used to get a butcher chart up there, and he'd put a problem set up, and something he was thinking about, and he'd draw the old cloud charts, put different things in there and put a cloud around it and this, that, and the other thing. And it kind of emerged out of one of those sessions, combined with a paper that Jean Arnault had done on, essentially, the strategy that the UN saw that would be effective for the Afghans; which then the Five Pillars kind of turned into [Security] Strategy South and East, but the pillars were the graphic representation of it.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Then what steps did the staff have to perform to get that strategy implemented and get the various components running with it?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, what steps did we have to take with them? First of all, you've got to communicate. We had to change the way that we were doing business in Afghanistan at that point in time. If you look at how things evolved … I say the strategy, but the operational construct, the operational design on the ground, really was the fact that we would go in and identify targets; we'd hit those targets; we'd do what we needed to do. Maybe that was a week, two weeks or whatever, and then we'd pull the force out. Because the country of Afghanistan's the size of Texas, twenty-some-odd million people, the geographical limitations—and we're only running about sixteen thousand troops at the time—it's tough to cover down on the whole country. So, we would go in; something would bubble up, something

would pop up; we'd go in; we'd identify it; we'd hit it; we'd stay for a while; and then, we'd come back.

General Barno kind of saw the facts and said, "First of all, I need to change the command and control of this thing. I need to go to a regional and ownership-type strategy, regional commands, and you'll go in, and your command headquarters might be in Kandahar, but you own this region, which is drawn on the map according to these boundaries. And, within that, I expect you to understand who the leaders are, what the problems are, what are the governmental resources that are being put into this region," and what we tried to do was synchronize all the elements—again, with the national power, to make sure that what USAID was doing was in concert with what we were doing militarily; which is in concert with what the OGA [other governmental agency] was doing; which was in concert with what the political, the econ section of the embassy was doing; which was in concert with the Brits, who were running counternarcotics. You know, to do that, you had to bring a lot of different people together. So, first of all, the first order of business, and what the staff was really designed to do was, one, to get it into U.S. channels. So, we had to go and reorganize the command and control, and then also additionally, we needed to get it into the UN, the embassy, the government of Afghanistan. And essentially, it was about a four-month process to vet this whole [Security] Strategy South and East and get buy-in from across all the key players in Afghanistan, and that was a lot of what the staff did as far as setting that up, setting the tempo, getting General Barno prepared to go and meet with Jean Arnault to get him prepared to go meet with the Canadian ambassador, to get him prepared to go meet with the British ambassador, to develop—we developed a PRT working group, provincial reconstruction teams, which that was another part of the strategy, was to enhance and increase the reach of the central government, and that was by putting additional PRTs out in some of these rougher areas.

So, I mean, the staff work all revolved in and around understanding the situation and then operationalizing this whole Five Pillar piece and actually getting it in and into practice on the ground, and across not only the joint task force, but then all the other players—we used to call them IBUs—all the itty-bitty units that were out there that you needed to get control of and at least understand what they were doing and how their goals were converging with our goals. I mean, everybody kind of had the same vision, I think. It was just the paths, in a lot of cases, were either parallel or divergent instead of everyone converging on the same goal. And that—and right away, in the middle of that, you were still building the headquarters and the medical facilities and food and infrastructure and building a JOC [joint operations center] and those type of things. You're operating out of the back of a closet, and you're trying to

get into something that's much more functional. So, all those challenges still existed.

DR. KOONTZ: **How did CFC-A interact with the Afghan National Government there in Kabul? How did that relationship develop?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, it was at a bunch of different levels. I mean, General Barno's relationship—I mean, he developed a relationship with [President Hamid] Karzai, was in many meetings with Ambassador Khalilzad and Karzai. Now, not every meeting that Khalilzad was in with Karzai with Barno there, but first of all, General Barno developed a real close working relationship with Ambassador Khalilzad. He had an office in the embassy. He started his day in the embassy. He did the country team meeting every day in the embassy. Then he did what they call the core group meeting, which was a select few of the key—CIA station chief, General Barno, OMC-A chief, Ambassador Khalilzad, normally the DCM, USAID director, and maybe a note taker or two. So, that followed the country team meeting…. So, he had his office there, developed that relationship with Khalilzad, and then from there did things with Karzai, did things. Then, would go to Task Force PHOENIX, would work with the Afghan national leadership. Did a lot of stuff with Wardak at the Ministry of Defense level, then.

So, I mean, a lot of it was personal engagement from General Barno's position, but then, also, the J-5, Colonel Lyles at the time, Brigadier General Lyles now, would get out and about. Our political-military had connections. We had our UN LNO, and then we also had—and it was starting to form. It was getting to what they called the CJCMOTF, the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force. CJCMOTF had a handful of guys, about thirty reserve colonels, civil affairs–type guys who had—there was a bunch of ministries in the Afghan government, but kind of covered down—were almost like the mentors to these guys, but from the military perspective, if you catch my drift. And then they were tied in also with the Afghan Reconstruction Group, so the connections were there. Were they as strong as they could be? Was the synchronization as powerful as it could be? I don't think so, but those ties were developing, and probably if I went back and looked at it now, are much stronger and have continued to develop from that time forward. So, I think it was a multidimensional approach to tying into the Afghan government.

DR. KOONTZ: **From your experiences in dealing with representatives from the Afghan National Government at that time, how would you characterize its effectiveness?**

COL. SNUKIS: The government itself?

DR. KOONTZ: **Yes, sir.**

COL. SNUKIS: Not very. That's just Snukis' opinion, and I have a limited perspective, but most folks would tell you they were one deep. If you looked at the minister of the interior, he was a top-notch guy who could've been a minister of the interior for anyone. If you looked at the minister of rural rehabilitation and development, top-notch guy, could've been a minister or a cabinet official somewhere in any government. But when you started looking at the government itself, and understanding the history of Afghanistan, they just didn't know what right looked like. Their education—you look at their literacy rates. They're low. They didn't have a functioning central government. They were, I mean, they were standing up from scratch. So, the guys that were there were good guys—although there were agendas there, as well, so you had the tribe, but the centrifugal forces as it were, you know, the ethnic tribalism, the Pashtuns and the Tajiks and the Hazarans, and so you had all this. You had the warlord issues, still, within the central government, and then guys taking power away from the central government, as it were.

So, a lot of issues that they were struggling to get through at that point in time, but, I mean, the guys that I dealt with were good guys, were patriots, loved Afghanistan. I mean, a lot of them had been ex-pats, had some good positions in the United States of America and elsewhere throughout the world, but came back to Afghanistan to jump-start this country and get it moving, and at great personal sacrifice and danger and security and this, that, and the other thing. So, while on one hand, I'd say already as good as the guys in the U.S. government, no. But is the potential there? Absolutely. Or, wasn't there when I saw it, and again, there're a lot of forces that are pulling away from—we're still seeing it today.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you were only there for a matter of months, but did you notice any kind of improvement in the Afghan National Government during your tour?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, yeah. I think so. And there were visible signs, too. I mean, Kabul itself, you know? Kabul, from Day 1 to Day 360, whatever it was when I left, there was visible evidence each and every day that things were growing, things were being built, things were being cleaned up, you know? And there was a buzz of activity that you could kind of see increase each and every day. I mean, I'd love to go back and take a look at it now, see what it looks like, because I bet it's even changed more. But I mean, definitely you could see that they were—and I mean, it was embryonic. They were just standing up. But I saw in a year's time, I saw evidence of change. Good evidence—I mean, positive evidence.

And the struggle is you always have these other forces that were—you know, you go two steps forward, and things that were trying to suck it and make it go three steps back. Something would occur—you know, an explosion or deaths or an attack here. There's something always trying to undermine the central government, you know? While I was there, they got—the constitutional *loya jirga* took place in December 2003. They got a constitution approved. Most figured they'd never do that. We established [the] voter registration piece while I was there, got the election plan going. The election went down then in September 2004, which was delayed a bit, but they got that piece, then they had the—and that was the national election. They were able to get through that, and then they ended up doing the lower-level elections then after that, as well. So, not an easy thing to do when they hadn't done it before in the past. So, definitely progress being made.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Whenever you get any kind of command relationship, personalities are always going to be important, and you mentioned the strong working relationship that General Barno had with Ambassador Khalilzad. How did CFC-A, other than that, operate in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy?**

COL. SNUKIS: We were enmeshed. I mean, our battle rhythm in a lot of cases dependent upon the staff section was coincided with what the embassy was doing. We had folks, actually, what we called the Embassy Interagency Planning Group, the EIPG [pronounced "e-pig"], which was led by an Army colonel. Is there any other—I think it was all Army. What the heck was his name, now? He was a military intelligence guy, came over and had been working as the joint task force J-2 in the J-2 shop, came down to us as a quality guy because they got a new J-2 in, and he ran the EPIG and they essentially put together a mission performance plan for Embassy Kabul. That was one of their charters and then the other one was the kind—essentially, General Barno to say, "Hey. Here, look. I'm supporting, I'm giving you these guys to go in their staff." On the POL-MIL side, those guys met daily with the embassy. General Barno, if General Barno wasn't there, General [British Army Maj. Gen. John] Cooper, who came in later in the time as our deputy commander—and/or if General Cooper wasn't there, someone, key senior member of CFC-A staff attended every country team meeting and core group meeting when they were in town, so there was all kinds of efforts made. We had folks that did coordination with USAID for security. We established essentially a—not a 1-800 number but a hotline number that the embassy could call to coordinate embassy movements and embassy activities out and about in the hinterland through our J-3, once we got that up and operational, and then up to the joint task force J-3. So, just about at every given level. As a result, General Barno said, "Hey, we're going to create a culture here for

cooperation with the embassy and these other governmental agencies," and he worked very, very hard to cultivate that relationship. It started at the top with him and Ambassador Khalilzad. We had monthly embassy updates, ambassador updates for the military situation. I mean, obviously the daily stuff, but, I mean, on a monthly basis, we'd come in and give a two- to three-hour overview brief of trends and activities and things that occurred. General Barno treated RFIs [requests for information] from Ambassador Khalilzad just like they were an RFI from either General Abizaid or the SecDef or Chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (USAF) Richard B.] Meyers, or any. So, it was on the same priority level, so we had to answer it, same timeline, same priority level, as any of those other key leaders, so those were always—and it permeated, and it was understood that we were part of a team, and, again, it started at the top.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were there any difficulties in coordinating with the embassy, either in terms of differing priorities or, you know, civilian function with military function trying to sync?**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, every day, and it got better. We actually—the cultures are different. Afghanistan at the time wasn't necessarily getting—and this may be a stretch, but folks would say—here, this is anecdotal from hearing other State Department guys come in, sit in at the country team meeting in Afghanistan. Top players, good guys, but the overall, the other embassy players initially maybe weren't what I would call varsity players. Maybe not the same quality. You have your country team in Japan or your country team in Germany or things of that nature. But, anyway, so what I'm saying is, many issues resulted from that because I think there was some inexperience, some misunderstandings between how the military did operations, and just the cultural—things that they thought were important versus what we thought were important.

Quick example was the Ring Road ceremony, which they had completed a segment of the Ring Road from Kabul to Kandahar, and President Karzai—and actually President [George W.] Bush. It was a big thing for him at the strategic level, as well, and they wanted to have a big ceremony to mark the completion of the Ring Road—the segment from Kabul to Kandahar because it's not totally complete yet. Well, USAID was the lead government agency for the ceremony. Well, they went through, and we were tracking it again. This was very small. This was December of 2003. Again, CFC was still a small staff, but USAID was the lead government agency because they were in charge of the contract and this, that, and the other thing. Well, they put the ceremony together. It was parking, the agenda, the speeches, the finger foods, and all this kind of stuff. Hey, it was all squared away, and bottom line was there was no security for this event.

I mean, clearly a strategy-level-type event, but USAID had done no coordination for security. We essentially went into a crisis action mode several days before the ceremony. We had been tracking it and been working it, but never—they said, "Hey, we've got it squared away, we've got it squared away." Bottom line was they didn't have it squared away, and we ended up doing some things and had to adjust some missions to cover down on the security for this, even though it was kind of at a distance. So, it wasn't overbearing, but it was just—that was a frustration that emerged and showed the differences between what they thought was important and was important, but unable to sometimes make the connections and, hey, there're other things that have to go to make this a successful event.

So, I thought we did a pretty good job, or tried to do a pretty good job, of balancing each other. I mean, there were many occasions where they came in and gave us counsel and guidance on some things that we had just done to purely military; it would not have been as effective as with their input and their guidance and their focus. Different focus, as it were, so there's constant friction.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of changes took place with the change of the task force, when CJTF-180 disestablishes and CJTF-76 is stood up?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, initially, there was none because that whole thing changes. 10th Mountain was still there, and then 25th came, I think, if the timing's right. I might be off. The big change came with the transition from 10th Mountain to the 25th, I guess, would be the—but on one hand, we were in place now. It was an easier transition than it was when we went in and 10th Mountain and -180 were in place, and we weren't. So, there was still—because at the end of the day, when you went down to Bagram, you could tell the differences, and there was still a difference in the staff. 25th Infantry Division, when they came in with General [Maj. Gen. Eric T.] Olson, they trained together. They rehearsed together. They did mission rehearsal exercises. They prepared together to come to Afghanistan. They were a team, whereas we were still a collection of individual augmentees. You're striving to be a team, working hard to be a team, but every—actually, every week—guys rotating in and out of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan because of the way the policy was set. And again, the skill levels of guys coming and guys who hadn't worn uniforms in eight years versus the guys from the 25th Infantry Division [ID] or 10th Mountain Division, who had been wearing a uniform and had been trained for X number of years prior to coming here. So, the only change we saw was the change in leadership, the ability for them to learn some things that 10th Mountain already knew from being there, and to get used to and to settle into the operational environment—which any of those transitions,

there are some bumps in the road, but overall that went fairly smoothly, I thought, at least from the chief of staff perspective.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were there different priorities or different expectations for the 25th ID that weren't in place for the 10th Mountain?**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, I think so, because of the way the operation—because now we were in Phase IV, it was stated. The 10th Mountain had obviously tracked things and done things differently based upon the operational environment and the context that they came into. The environment had changed when the 25th Infantry Division had arrived, and so there were different expectations; and there were different expectations for the way things should be done with the 25th Infantry Division. I think they struggled maybe a little bit to understand that, but, I mean, once they were on the ground and up and operational, I think they quickly grasped that the environment—and some of their kids had been there, I guess, in the past, but the environment was different upon their arrival than it was upon 10th Mountain's arrival. So, there was a different—you see, that environment had already changed, whereas 10th Mountain was kind of on the—they were on the cusp. They were there when it was changing, especially with the C2 structure and everything else, whereas 25th came in and that structure had already been established and up and running. So, in my personal opinion and professional opinion, I think it was easier for the 25th to come in and assume it at that point in time than it was for the 10th Mountain.

DR. KOONTZ: **That change of command, the TOA [transfer of authority] of the subordinate task force of CJTF-76, happens in April. Then you leave in July?**

COL. SNUKIS: I leave in July.

DR. KOONTZ: **July. Tell me about the transition, your personal transition, when you left as chief of staff.**

COL. SNUKIS: Wow. Really, a guy named Dave [W.] Lamm, Col. Dave Lamm, came in and replaced me. Dave had been an instructor at the National Defense University, professional Army infantryman. Was not on General Barno's list, and not because he wasn't a quality guy, but General Barno just didn't know him. Several other individuals were on General Barno's list. He had forwarded that list, and essentially those guys were tasked and doing other things within the Army, so they did not release those guys to be—which still to this day boggles my mind, but that's for other people to determine. That wasn't for me to determine. But General Barno had gotten several names. He had interviewed one or two guys. They didn't fit, and then he interviewed Colonel Lamm and felt that it would be a good fit, and then he came. Essentially,

the transition was similar. He was a little bit better, I think, because as a National Defense University instructor, he was kind of tracking the strategic aspects of Afghanistan, was teaching a lot of that stuff, was immersed in it. Several phone calls, several e-mails, he'd say, "Hey, here's what's going on. Here's what's happening." General Barno actually had the opportunity to sit down with him, talk him through, say, "Here's where we're at. Here's what we're doing." I don't know the details of that conversation, but General Barno had met with him prior to his coming to Afghanistan. And he came—I don't think he went to CENTCOM. I don't think—I can't remember now. But then Colonel Lamm came over, and we had about a week: "Hey, here's the staff. Get out and do some things, go see some stuff." Took him up to Bagram, Kandahar: "Here's what's going on." He got a chance to go around a little bit, and then essentially we had about another week together to whereas we're going to transition and it's kind of like "Hey, it's time. Let me just take it," and it was right. It was time for him to take it. And then General Barno ended up sending me around, and essentially I did a whirlwind tour of the entire country of Afghanistan, all our units, all the different fire bases, and gave him kind of a little update on my way out of the country. So, from my perspective, a smooth transition. I don't know, Dave Lamm might say something a little bit different.

But again, the staff still wasn't matured to the state I would've liked it to have been at. We were still experiencing turnover, massive turnover. I think if you looked at it, I think General Barno … we ran some numbers at some point in time, and over the course of a two-month period, essentially in two months, was 100 percent rotation. It was about 100 percent turnover of people. You know, I mean, the percentages worked out. You might as well just call it a full-up 100 percent turnover.

DR. KOONTZ: **What would you point to as the significant accomplishments of CFC-A during your tour?**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, I think the significant accomplishments of CFC-A during my tour—well, one, standing up the organization to synchronize all of these other activities, the other elements in national power, synchronize what combat actions we're doing with where we needed to go with the country of Afghanistan. The elections were obviously key. And then putting together a plan and a foundation that folks could then work off of and guide daily operations through the course of the coming years, as it were. I think that was probably—and taking it then to a—the Five Pillars, as it were, to the area ownership and the regional development zones; and some of those haven't even fully reached the full impact and power of that increase in the PRTs, the reach of the central government. I would say that was the key piece, and the ability to bring all of those other key players, to include the government of

Afghanistan, Embassy Kabul, UN, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], other nations together with the U.S. plan. The other key organization that we dealt with on any given day was the International Security Assistance Force [ISAF], as well, which had the security piece for Kabul, and then we actually transitioned up when I was here to the north piece, Konduz and some of the upper reaches of Afghanistan. ISAF took over, as well, and then subsequently the plan was, and which they've enacted now, counterclockwise fashion took over the remaining pieces of the country from the Coalition. So, I mean, right now, as you know, ISAF controls, or is in charge of, Afghanistan, or operations in Afghanistan. Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan doesn't even—I don't think it exists now.

DR. KOONTZ: **If it does, I mean, it's a rump. I'm not sure if it's actually been formally disestablished.**

COL. SNUKIS: Yeah, I don't know if it's formally been disestablished. I haven't seen any papers on that, but, yeah. So, General [Lt. Gen. Dan K.] McNeill and ISAF have it now, so, I mean, there's probably a whole laundry list of things that we could say, but getting the elections going and getting a coherent strategy—or, at least from my perspective—a coherent strategy put together for the south and the southeast, and I guess if you look back, 2003, 2004, most of 2005 are pretty good. There were some other transitions that took place, and then some blips occurred, and I don't know if that's an anomaly and things are going to settle back down, or if in fact some of the work that had been done is being undone today. I don't know. I'd have to get over there and take a better look at it and get some better intel versus just the stuff that I'm reading in the newspapers and seeing on the *Early Bird*, so.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I've monopolized two hours and five minutes of your time. I'll let you have the last say. During your time in Afghanistan, is there one event or one story that sticks out in your mind either as really important, really emotional, something really funny, something that you're going to tell your grandkids when you're bouncing them on your knees one day? What's the one thing that sticks out in your mind?**

COL. SNUKIS: What's the one thing that sticks out in my mind? There's really no one story, I guess. There're multiple stories that I've told throughout the course, you know? I would say the thing that sticks out in my mind is the fact of the resilience and the persistence and the will of the Afghan people. It's kind of funny. The guys … I mean, the one guy that I kind of struck up a friendship with worked in the chow hall, and folks always talk about the culture and the language and trying to speak their language. I never had time to learn. I wasn't out. I dealt with them in the chow hall. I saw these

guys, you know, but I was focused on getting our job done. But with this guy here, it was kind of like I was trying to teach him English. So, different slang words and things of that nature—not the obscene ones, but just different sayings, like "All right!" or things that someone in the U.S. would say, and just to see this guy on any given day and "Hey, how you doing? What's going on, man?" and stuff like that, and him coming back with the same response. Then, as I'm getting ready to leave—obviously a hard worker, doesn't have much to his name, but he had a pair of sunglasses, and he heard that I—he just comes over and he gave me his. I said, "I don't want your sunglasses." He said, "No." He goes, "I want to give them to you." And it was like, that just kind of stuck out. Like, he didn't need to do that, and it was like, if you look at it, a pair of sunglasses, for a year of your life away from your family and everything else … but the guy was sincere in doing it, and it was just one of those things that kind of jumped out at you and said "Hey, we can make an impact here," and we are making an impact. And it may not be the right—I don't know if everyone likes our methods or the way we're doing it, but this is a good people, and there's some positive that can happen within the world community if we bring these guys along and get them to the point where they're contributing members, as it were. So, I don't know, that's kind of a—I guess if I had thought about it a little bit more, there are some other funny ones, but that, I think, probably captured it more than any—it was more of a year-long deal than just any one incident, you know? That definitely would be one.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir. On behalf of the Center of Military History, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this. You told us some important things, and you did some important things, so we're glad we got on record.**

COL. SNUKIS: Well, thank you.

DR. KOONTZ: **Thanks, sir.**

COL. SNUKIS: All right.



4

Waging War

Maj. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya *served as Commanding General, U.S. Army Southern European Task Force (Airborne), with duty from March 2005 to February 2006 as Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force-76. He was interviewed on 23 January 2007 in Suffolk, Virginia, while serving as Commander, Joint Warfighting Center/Director, Joint Training, U.S. Joint Forces Command, by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. General Kamiya discusses his training background before his transition into command of the Southern European Task Force. He mentions his predeployment site survey to Afghanistan and the implementation of lessons learned from it into the task force's training before deploying to Afghanistan. After the task force assumed command of Combined Joint Task Force-76 from the 25th Infantry Division (Light), it emphasized a full spectrum of operations. General Kamiya describes the joint nature of Combined Joint Task Force-76 and the task force's interactions with Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan, and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, as well as with local Afghan governors and officials. He comments on the role of provincial reconstruction teams in rebuilding and developing Afghanistan, as well as his appraisal of the basic concept of the teams. The interview concludes with a discussion of the enemy forces in Afghanistan and General Kamiya's thoughts on waging a counterinsurgency.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the twenty-third of January 2007. I'm interviewing Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, who is currently the commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center and director of training, and I'm interviewing about his tour of duty as commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force-76 [CJTF-76]. All right, first of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Yes, I am.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And do you have any objections with Army or public researchers using this information as long as you're cited correctly?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: No.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Thank you, sir. How and when did you find that the Southern European Task Force was going to deploy to Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Probably in the January '04 time frame. When I was still the commanding general of the Joint Readiness Training Center, I began to hear rumblings about this potential deployment. I was alerted for assignment to be the commander of SETAF [Southern European Task Force] in the March '04 time frame, while at JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center] in Fort Polk. I assumed command of SETAF on the thirtieth of April of '04.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, there's a period of a few months in between when you first heard that SETAF was probably going to get that rotation for the CJTF?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Yes, that's correct. It was only in the background noise of what you typically hear in terms of the sourcing of forces.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you devote any kind of sort of mental energy towards preparation or anything at that time?**



General Kamiya

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: First, on a general level I thought that the kinds of training that we do at JRTC was very complementary to preparing for what may come. Of course, in January '04 I had no idea that I was going to be the commander of SETAF and, in fact, I didn't have any idea where I was going to go after JRTC. However, given the demands around the world, I put my heart and soul and energy into making the training environment at JRTC the most realistic as possible given the operational environments in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and by that time most units that we were training were all headed towards those two AORs [areas of responsibility].

DR. KOONTZ: **Was there any kind of process of folding in lessons learned from the theater into the JRTC routine at that time?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Yes. We had our observer/trainers periodically going to Iraq and Afghanistan. We got the help of the incumbent unit overseas that the unit in training was supposed to replace. We were working with the higher headquarters to make sure that the scenarios represented the most recent aspects of the operational environment as possible. We worked with TRADOC's [U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's] Center for Army Lessons Learned [CALL], since we had a CALL element there at JRTC. We were able to keep the training scenario and environment refreshed continually. Of course, the specific training objectives for exercises were determined by the division commander that the brigade combat team was assigned to, so training objectives and everything that comes with those objectives were all negotiated, if you will, with the division commander. So, JRTC was very much the supporting effort for the division commander's training effort.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let's get you out of Louisiana and take you over to Italy. Tell me about that process.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Well, soon after I took command in April '04, General [Burwell B.] Bell, the commanding general of USAREUR [U.S. Army, Europe] at the time, invited me to his headquarters for a staff update on where SETAF was in forming and training for the next mission. I think, by April, it was formally announced that SETAF was going to be the next CJTF headquarters. I recall the state of … probably too strong of a word, but shock when General Bell showed me a template of the JTF [joint task force] and its units and the number of units that were not, in fact, sourced yet [laughs]. It was a typical task organization chart. Red reflected unsourced units, and black reflected sourced units, and I'd say at least two-thirds of that chart was red. For me, serving as a SETAF commander was my very first experience in Europe. I'd never been stationed there before, so besides understanding the complexity of forming the JTF, I also had to find out what relevant training resources

were readily available to the team. Within a month or two months, I went on a tour of the Graf-Hohenfels Multinational Training Center. I saw their capability to replicate the Afghan environment, actually participated and drove the scenario for the 173d Brigade Combat Team's rotation there that took place in October. So, while General Bell's initial briefing gave me a good feel on where we stood on the forming of SETAF, my immediate thoughts were on "As this thing forms, how do we train it?"

I went to Afghanistan for my own, on what we call a PDSS, a predeployment site survey. I think that took place in the June or July time frame. I can't quite remember right now, but I went there for a couple reasons. One was to validate that the kinds of forces that my task organization reflected were in fact consistent with the operational requirements of the mission. The second goal was to more thoroughly understand the environment. So, I spent about a week there with my planners. We went not only to the JTF headquarters, but also to RC [Regional Command] East and RC South. I had office calls with Lt. Gen. [David W.] Barno at the time, and just simply began to learn about the mission. I came back and was able to formalize my training based upon what we saw. We then published a training plan and moved on after that.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Can I back you up and ask you some questions about that, sir?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Sure.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. First of all, you said you had two reasons behind the PDSS: to validate the forces and the task organization, and then to sort of get your arms, I guess, around the environment. What did you learn about those forces, and then what did you learn about the operating environment from this PDSS?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I learned that the task organization was about right. First of all, this wasn't a contingency JTF, where you were building from scratch. This was a rotational JTF, so you had a template from which to operate, and the template was about right. There are a couple of questions about whether or not you needed command and control consoles in Black Hawk helicopters, for example. But I came back, and I told my boss, General Bell, how I felt about that, and the trade space, the limitations of the added weight to the aircraft, and the operational limitations it would impose, and we came to a solution regarding that particular question.

Overall, what I grasped … what struck me, really, was this whole interaction of kinetics and nonkinetics, and how we have moved so dramatically beyond the ANACONDA days where it was primarily a kinetic, traditional military force-

on-force fight into an environment that demanded much more sophisticated methods of getting at your mission. That then led to the promulgation within the JTF of the importance of the balance of nonkinetic and connectives, which, of course, helped shape your training program. I felt as though we needed a training program that was very balanced, that did not weigh too heavily on the force-on-force aspects, which arguably is a core competency and in the comfort zone of most military forces. I wanted to push my leaders and organizations into uncomfortable zones where they were forced to deal with this whole yin and yang of interdependencies, interoperability, of the kinetic and nonkinetics. As we went through the JFCOM [U.S. Joint Forces Command] training process with the MRX [mission rehearsal exercise], you know, they captured the dichotomy in terms of the diplomatic, information, military, and economic elements of national power and how a JTF commander has to learn to orchestrate and try to harness the energy as much as possible to apply to a specific problem.

DR. KOONTZ: **Can you give me a specific example of one of the kind of the nonkinetic effects that you observed and that you tried to implement into the training?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: On one hand, it was the essentiality of the relationships that we're building with Afghan National Security Forces, with the Afghan National Army [ANA]. Frankly, I consider that nonkinetic. It was interoperating with them on a daily basis. Another vital aspect of our work was with PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams]. This work involved looking toward more strategic and long-term approaches to change involving the interagency representation inside the PRTs, and how they all work with the local governor or local Afghan leadership to bring reconstruction and development to the population.

To help visualize the idea, General Barno used a chart that had reconstruction and development in one oval and security in another oval. He used to say, and I firmly agree, that people sometimes simply look at problems in terms of reconstruction and development *or* security. That is, some people believe you can't have security without reconstruction and development, and vice versa, you can't have reconstruction and development without security. In fact, in the environment in Afghanistan, there is an inherent interaction between the two and where those two circles overlap is what I call the "operational sweet spot." How a reconstruction and development project or how a traditional military activity can complement both security *and* reconstruction development is where the highest payoff is. Going back to your original question about nonkinetics, one aspect was the development of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Security Forces; and on the

other hand, from a more traditional way of thinking, we looked at how a CJTF's reconstruction and development activities could bring infrastructure to the Afghan people and, at the same time, enable the government's processes, enable the Afghan ministries of how to think through developmental needs for different areas, and the list goes on and on and on. At the heart of all this, I would ask my troops: "How do you obtain the most effects with a single muscle movement?" Looking back, it's really the heart of the effects-based approach to thinking. It's the same kind of thought process that if you're moving into the house for the first time, and you've got all these boxes, and your daughter walks up the stairs going to the bathroom or something without a box in her hand. You say "Hey, how about the next time you go upstairs, take a couple boxes with you so that the energy used to going up the stairs to use the bathroom or whatever can also be applied to helping us move in at the same time?" It's that kind of way of thinking. How can a nonkinetic activity enable a multiplicity of strategic-level, campaign-level effects that the commander was trying to achieve? It's really a great question you asked, and I always come at it from a … you just can't get at it with an overly simplistic answer. The opportunities are immense.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And then you also mentioned General Barno's chart, and you also mentioned that you met him during your PDSS. Tell me about that meeting.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: It was a great time for him to lay out how he saw the campaign and gave me the opportunity to describe the predeployment plan as we knew it back then. So, again, it was just another piece that helped. The whole interaction with General Barno and others a critical element that helped shape in my mind the operational environment in which we would have to operate.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did he pass on any guidance at that time to you?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: He relayed the importance of the nonkinetic/kinetic approach. It was important to remember that it wasn't always about breaking down doors. He described for me some of the negative effects that could result if you defaulted all the time to the kinetic ways of going about your business. Again, just as a means to emphasize the complexity of the environment.

DR. KOONTZ: **And did you interact with anybody from the 25th ID [Infantry Division] at that time?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Yes. I had what I call normal briefings from across their J-staff, and I had a session with [Maj. Gen.] Rick Olson, the commanding general, at the beginning part of the visit and at the end of it.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you go to Afghanistan, and you get your sort of feet on the ground, you get a sense of the operating environment. What happened after he went back to Italy?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Again, we solidified the task organization, which was continually being developed and sourced. By the way, U.S. Army, Europe, sourced about half or slightly over half of the units that comprised the CJTF, so that made it a whole lot easier, I think, for me as the inbound commander. Again, there's confirmation of the task organization, and then there's the formulation of the training plan—not only the training plan for the maneuver units, but also for the CJTF staff. Our first staff academic training session was in July. We hosted it there in Italy. So, I was able to do the PDSS prior to the series of training events we had to train the JTF staff. The timing was very important.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me about training up the CJTF staff. What was involved in that?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: The SETAF is a standing headquarters of about 200 people, primarily Army. So, we had to transition from a 200-man staff into a JTF, and I believe our numbers in terms of our headquarters in Afghanistan was about 730. These staff folks come from hither and yon across the Army and the joint force. In July, when we had our first training event, we probably had just the SETAF members. There was a sprinkling of joint experience on the team. As you well know, the SETAF had gone to Liberia not too long before this, so there still was some residual experience of how a JTF staff operates. By far the majority of folks there were relatively new, like myself. My chief of staff was [Col.] Bill Mayville. He just relinquished command of the 173d, which meant going from a maneuver BCT commander to a chief of a JTF, which is a big leap in terms of requirements.

We had a series of training opportunities in order to address the ramp-up in manning over time. Because all of the staff was not physically there in July, we adapted our training methodology to reflect more of a continual training experience. We had the academic phase in July. We had our first MRX-like experience in November, which was supported by BCTP at Graf-Hohenfels in November, and then we had our final MRX in January, right before deployment. We were about 60 percent filled in November during our first train-up, or first collective train-up, and it was about 80 percent filled the following January. A part of that delta was already in country because of the different service rotational policies, but we still did not have all of our individual augmentees physically present with us even as late as January. Understanding this, we knew that there had to be some type of sustainment training for these late deployers. This was not a simple matter of forming and training a JTF, deploying it into theater, being there for an

entire year together, and then coming out. It wasn't like that at all. The service rotational policies significantly impacted how we trained. For example, the Air Force rotation is four months, the Marines are seven months, the Army is twelve months. When you assume the mission in Afghanistan, you have a continual training requirement as new people come and go. And every week, we had a hail-and-farewell as part of our normal battle rhythm, and it amazed me to see the amount of people leaving and coming every week. My point here is that the training went beyond the normal paradigm of academics, Mission Rehearsal Exercise 1, Mission Rehearsal Exercise 2, and then deployment.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned the complexity of having all of the joint elements in your staff, and you said that staff was mostly Army. Can you give me a rough percentage on …?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Of the JTF staff, I'd say about 70 percent was Army.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then, secondly, you described this sort of developmental process with the BCTP [Battle Command Training Program] in November, MRX, etc. What kind of things did you notice as the training progressed and as the CJTF headquarters continued this training regimen? Were there any kind of patterns that you could discern?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: The biggest thing was in the J-staff learning how to interoperate. You'll find that a JTF may be organized vertically in terms of a commander, deputy commander, etc., but it operates through boards, centers, cells—an information operations cell, an effects coordination cell, etc. So, you operate horizontally. You come together across J-staff functions to focus on one aspect of the mission—effects, civil-military ops, etc. It wasn't until the second exercise, the final one in January, that the staff really began to gel in terms of understanding their interrelationships towards a common end. The chief of staff, Bill Mayville, began to understand the complexity and nature of his job. And, frankly, while I knew how to command a division given the experiences I'd had before this, but commanding a JTF in the environment like Afghanistan required new learning for me, as well. I realized that you have to be inwardly focused; but more importantly, you have to be outwardly focused as you try to interconnect JTF activities with outside organizations and with interagency partners: USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development], Department of State, U.S. Embassy, etc. So, I began to take a hard look at that and learn as much as possible. It was during this time that I published two pamphlets. One was based upon our read of the book *The Four Factors of Prosperity*. It talked about the importance of development of systems in the context of a counterinsurgency. It discussed the importance of roads as a means to enable economic systems, and other education systems, etc. This pamphlet, I think, helped shape where

our reconstruction and development priorities would be once we were in country. We shared this pamphlet with our USAID and Department of State counterparts once we got into country. The other pamphlet was, again, just thoughts based on professional reading of the complexity of the environment. It was somewhat considered commander's intent, a pamphlet sharing some of what's going on in my commander's mind. It was required reading for my subordinate commanders, and it served as the basis for a lot of discussion we had in terms of how to approach the mission.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You've mentioned the training of the JTF headquarters. What about the training of the maneuver units?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: The 173d Airborne Brigade during peacetime is the only brigade combat team that is really assigned to SETAF. So, of course, I shaped the development of their individual and collective training that culminated, I think, in their exercise at Graf-Hohenfels in the October time frame. After that, they became a response cell as we trained the JTF staff during the November and January MRXs.

The other units, maneuver and otherwise, prior to our deployment all fell under the command and control over in V Corps, which is in Germany, and division commanders elsewhere. Because of this construct, we made sure that these commanders to whom these units were assigned to in peacetime and predeployment understood the intent, the guidance, etc., that I was giving them as a JTF commander. It's a little bit of a clumsy time where you're not quite deployed yet and you know Unit X, who will be subordinate to the JTF in country, is still responsive to the division commander or V Corps commander in Germany or elsewhere. It worked, and we didn't skip a beat.

Our two ADCs [assistant division commanders] also visited units in CONUS [continental United States]—an engineer brigade forming our subordinate engineering units, or other units—so that they could see the JTF headquarters leader being involved, and we could also see firsthand how they were being trained. Some of these units came from the reserve component, and it was very important to me, particularly when the unit was a maintenance company one day, reflagged to an MP [military police] guard company, and all the MOS [military occupational specialty] training before that—I wanted to make sure I had a good feel for when I was getting a unit and exactly what I was getting. I didn't quite understand and appreciate how units which are formed on relatively short timelines in a relatively ad hoc way can present potential vulnerabilities for the commander in that environment.

DR. KOONTZ: **Could you give me an example of one of those vulnerabilities?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I don't want to name specific units, but we had a unit where it was involved in allegations of detainee abuse. When we decomposed the problem, that unit was formed at a relatively hasty basis, to a different type of MOS. Its leaders were added to the unit relatively late in the process. It was dramatically different from a homogenous unit that's trained, formed, and equipped in CONUS and spent years together and then deploys together. Typically, whenever we had a problem like that, in most cases the unit was formed, trained, and deployed in that ad hoc or rushed way.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Well, we've spoken at great length about the training. On the eve of deployment to theater, how would you overall assess the training that had gone on to prepare for Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I felt that given the time we had, we prepared as best as we could. We had about ten months to get ready and, of course, in the ten months of this training, we were also rearming and refitting. As you may recall, the 173d had just gotten back from Iraq the year before. We were still trying to get vehicles, communications systems, all the move-shoot-communicate stuff and get rearmed, refinished, refurbished, on the ship, and deployed. You're familiar with all of that process. There's a lot going on besides just the training and the forming. There's a whole bunch of activity. I felt that given the time we had, given the resources we had that were within my control, we had done everything possible. The rest was up to just on-the-job training or relying upon the 25th Infantry Division, whom we were replacing. We had about a two-week transition period to fill the gaps as our staff flowed in and their staff flowed out. That's relatively normal in a change of responsibility.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about the deployment to Afghanistan. How did that process work?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: It went relatively smoothly. The only glitch, and that may be too strong a word, was one of our infantry battalions who was on the original task organization was made to hold as a PTDO [prepare to deploy order] battalion and not deploy with us. That caused us to change the flow of our forces relatively quickly. For example, the 25th ID had a battalion task force in the Oruzgan Province, and when the PTDO battalion was taken away from us, we had to make some adjustments, so there was no one-for-one replacement of that battalion at Oruzgan Province. At the same time, we anticipated a buildup of enemy activity in the northeast corner of the country, in the Nangahar-Konar area. As the forces originally were designed to flow into RC South, we shifted in the midst of deployment forces and had them

deployed instead to the northeast of Afghanistan. Again, it was a direct reflection of an operational adjustment that was required because of the enemy activity that we anticipated. That was the only adjustment.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You mentioned that the transition of the 25th ID took about two weeks. Discuss that process.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Sure. It's commonly referred to as left- and right-seat rides. The incoming headquarters sits in the figurative left seat, while the incumbent headquarters still drives and does the normal day-to-day business in the right seat. After about a week, or whenever the incoming staff is comfortable, they then change seats. SETAF became the right seat with the 25th ID staff in the left seat. This process occurs at different times and intervals inside the headquarters, so it's not like one day you're in the right seat and the next day everybody changes to the left seat. It doesn't happen that way, because inside the redeployment and flow of forces, the JTF staffs are echeloned in on purpose so you don't have everybody leaving at the same time and everyone on their staff section is new. For Rick Olson and myself, I tried not to make myself intrusive. Rick had already moved out of his sleeping area extended on his office. So, I moved in there. I was able to participate and listen to his normal battle updates, get an update for my own staff in terms of how the transition was going, and then Rick and I had a couple of one-on-one meetings. Rick was very gracious in terms of one of those meetings was introducing me to his POLAD [political adviser], to his USAID adviser, and his cultural expert.

DR. KOONTZ: **In the echeloning process of getting the SETAF people into that command, about how many of them preceded you, about how many filled in after?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I came into Afghanistan about five days before the actual transfer of authority date. The ADC-S [assistant division commander for support] went in first, in terms of watching over the logistics and outflow of 25th ID equipment and inflow of SETAF equipment, followed by the chief and our ADC for operations, and the sergeant major. They preceded me by about a week, I think. By the time I got there, the staff was within a few days of being in the right seat. I would say that the battle update briefings that I listened to within two days after I got there were all being led by SETAF staff elements. As incoming commander, you don't want to get there too early because it's too easy to become a distraction. You find a balance between getting there in just enough time to get a quick update of what's going on, get into your normal battle rhythm, so that when the old commander leaves it's a seamless transition. If you get there any earlier than that, it's too awkward.

DR. KOONTZ: **What did you and General Olson talk about during your left-seat/right-seat process?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: We talked a lot about his relationships with the higher headquarters, his view of current operations, and how he had anticipated the environment and its associated requirements of the JTF changing in the next two or three months, and also the normal evaluation of staff capabilities—not people, necessarily, but "Hey, if I was you, I would take a look at this staff function because I've learned that it's really important, and it was a weakness for us." It was that kind of discussion. Our discussions helped me determine priorities in the first week to thirty days.

DR. KOONTZ: **After the transfer of authority, did you make any changes in the way the task force headquarters ran?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: No. The processes of boards, centers, and cells all were working fine. The only thing that I changed within, I'd say, sixty days of getting there was the way we assessed effects, or outcomes. The JFCOM model and staff process has an effects campaign objective assessments board, a COAB, we call it, during which you're supposed to take your five, six, seven campaign objectives and assess them in terms of where you believe you are: green, amber, red, etc. We did this during the train-up in November and January, but the results of the first COAB conducted in the first thirty days demonstrated to me that we had not yet developed the competency where the process would lead to output or generate action. I asked the chief "Rather than have the staff take on all five or six campaign objectives, just take two of them and run the next thirty-day COAB cycle." It was a laborious process and entailed discussions about what things to measure. We inherited assessment information from the 25th ID, but, of course, the staff made adjustments to enhance granularity, sources of input, validity of input, etc. The bottom line is that at the end of the second COAB cycle, even looking at only two of five or six campaign objectives, the results of that process did not justify the amount of time and energy the staff were putting into it.

So, rather than focusing on the process, we instead focused on a way of thinking. It's not mechanical in terms of a process driving it. Every element of the staff had to continually think about outcomes on a bigger-picture scale. I guess I'd summarize it by saying that it was important to look at the four elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—we in the M, the military, have got to recognize opportunities that our activities are creating for the D, I, and the E. We also have to work with the D, I, and the E stakeholders to make sure that they help identify what activities *they* are generating in their respective areas for the military. I began to teach and emphasize the importance of this way of thinking,

to teach and emphasize that problems that we face in Afghanistan are not solvable by purely military means, nor could assessment be conducted by purely scientific and quantifiable means. In order for the JTF to be successful, we had to rely upon other stakeholders outside of the JTF. We had to rely upon nontraditional means, like partnering with the Afghan National Army, etc., in order to accelerate this capability gap that General Barno, and then General [Lt. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry, acknowledged as they themselves transitioned into command.

So, while we did away with the prescribed COAB process, we developed our own way of assessment that was based heavily on a commander's intuition of what was going on in the operational environment. This really took off and particularly enriched our nightly updates between commanders and staff. In my mind, looking back, we generated the kinds of input and output that the COAB process was designed to deliver in a way that was more comfortable and more meaningful to our own CJTF. When General [Gary E.] Luck came in with USJFCOM to do a follow-on staff assistance visit with us in the July time frame, I told him of the adjustments that we had done, and I think that our input triggered an adjustment in USJFCOM's own approach in that the COAB was not something that should be prescriptive. Instead, it could be thrown out there as a process to be evaluated, to be templated against.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. One of the things I wanted to ask you was your definition of effects-based operations [EBO], and you've just given that to me. But we've spoken to people who were in CJTF-180 and then we've spoken to other people in other incarnations of CJTF-76, and it seems that the definition of effects-based operations can change with time or individuals.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Now that I'm a trainer and being a veteran of the training audience, I think, first of all, the idea of effects-based operations has always been there. I told my folks that we were treating it like some innovative, new thing, that our subordinates were kind of intimidated by it. It seemed like something that's scientific, requiring facts, figures, etc.—and I think that's the wrong approach. In fact, you still see, you still hear about, some emotional baggage about EBO from different pockets within the services. I do not believe that EBO was prescriptive. Rather, as General Luck says, it's more descriptive for a way of thinking. It is an acknowledgement that the joint force has to operate at multiple echelons against problem sets where pure kinetic operations that have governed our training, have driven our training experience over many, many decades, are not adequate and not sophisticated enough. It's the DIME [diplomatic, information, military, economic] and the environment that has political, military, economic,

social, infrastructure, information. The important thing to emphasize is how the military commander has to think through desired outcomes, operational processes, and figure out how to apply the four elements of national power against the problem set. That's essentially what it is.

Let me give you another more scaled down example. When I walked into a psychological operations element inside the JTF, I looked at the trinkets being used to help promulgate the message "peace and unity." There were pens and other items that had the Afghan national flag on it, "peace and unity" on it, etc. One of the popular items was a soccer ball with an Afghan flag on it, and then a Dari or Pashto "peace and unity" on it. So, I took a couple of these soccer balls and other things with me. One day I'm in Paktika Province, in the midst of a crowd. We're there for a *shura* with the governor and his people. I pulled the soccer ball from my Humvee when the kids gathered around, and they grabbed it, and they began playing with it right away, and I thought to myself, "They didn't even bother to read what it said." So, then I went back to the detachment and said, "How long have we been using soccer balls?" And, "Oh, sir, it's very, very popular. It's the most requested item from our commanders, and we've been using it for about three or four years." I said, "Look, guys. Our job in Afghanistan is not to train the next Afghan Olympic soccer team, okay? The soccer ball is a means to convey the message. It is not *the* message." I said, "How would you like it if. …" I said, "Are you married?" "Yes, I'm married." "How long have you been married?" "Seven years." "Okay. How would your wife like it if you gave her the same present for her birthday, Christmas, and anniversary for seven straight years?" The present would initially be novel. She would look at the directions, and examine it, etc., but after the first couple times she looks at it, it becomes meaningless in terms of the message—love, affection, etc.—it was a means to convey.

Effects-based thinking would have opened up the aperture of thinking for these service members regarding what kinds of products and things we needed to develop to make the Afghan people curious, and yet would be something that they would read the message and assimilate it in their psyche. We were measuring the wrong things. We had been measuring "Sir, we've given out a thousand soccer balls." Or, it's like when you go to a PRT and are told: "Sir, we've spent $10 million, and we have a hundred projects." I would ask them, "What systems are you building?" That is "What's your analysis that says in this area of the province you require a Volkswagen vice a Cadillac? Tell me how you came up with it. Based on the needs of the province, based upon the strengths of the province, what do you need, a Volkswagen or a Cadillac? And then tell me how, what the components of the car you're trying to build are: steering wheel, tires, engines, etc., are, and show me how each of

you…you and your stakeholders, USAID, USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture], the military … while you may be building separate components, in the end they all lead to a Cadillac or a Volkswagen and not something where you have a steering wheel that belongs to a Ford F–250 pickup truck and tires that belong to a MINI Cooper. So, don't talk to me about dollars and don't talk to me about numbers of products. Tell me about the systems and the components of those systems, and how each component is going to be made by perhaps—even if it's made by or produced by a different organization or source, in the end you end up with what you want."

I understand and acknowledge the criticisms that USJFCOM has received in the past on being too prescriptive in terms of the effects-based notion, but we have now adopted it to say: "There are a variety of tools out there. Effects-based thinking is yet one additional tool the commander has. And, oh, by the way, those that use it appear to be having success." It's hard, taking a military organization that's primarily kinetic-oriented and changing the culture so everyone on the staff, along with subordinate commanders, are naturally thinking about outcomes on a broader and more sophisticated scale. I could sense this sophisticated level of thinking when I talked to my commanders. For example, it was clear that they demonstrated an understanding of the important relationships between the military and intergovernmental operations when there was a *shura* with the Afghan governor and inviting his Afghan National Police commander, district chief, and other Afghan leaders together to discuss a problem. And, through my headquarters, letting General Eikenberry know that this activity was going to take place, so potentially we could bring the appropriate Afghan minister from Kabul down to participate in the *shura*. That's the kinds of things that you wanted to generate. It was a classic example of how an activity that's sponsored by the M can provide opportunities for the D, I, and the E.

DR. KOONTZ: **If we can change tracks here for a moment, I wanted to ask about how your task force headquarters operated on sort of a kind of daily or quotidian basis. The first thing I wanted to ask is, take me on a tour, I guess, of your DMAIN [division main command post] or whatever you would call the task force headquarters. What does it physically look like, or what's it physically composed of?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: It was built based upon containers. I don't know where they came from, but in [C]JTF-180 days, in fact, I saw the remnants of what it used to be. It used to be composed of tentlike structures, very primitive. My predecessors had the forethought of "It needs to be more. It's going to be a relatively enduring headquarters. It's going to need to operate in a better environment." So, when the 25th ID moved in there

a year before we got there, they actually moved into a new JOC, a joint operations center. It's basically MILVANs [military van containers], customized MILVANs, with floors, air conditioning, etc., that now is inside an old hangar. They built the JOC inside a hangar, so you have a roof over the container itself, and it has all the plugs, the comms, etc., to actually operate as a JOC. Then you have all of your staff sections. They are all collocated inside the JOC. You do have some appendages, some like the PSYOPS [psychological operations] folks I told you about. Their office was located somewhere else in Bagram, but relatively close in terms of the JOC itself.

The JOC itself is a multitiered, multielevated facility where you have a series of desks with computer screens, and in the front of the JOC you have larger computer screens where you show the common operational picture up front. You can pick whatever you want to show them on big screen, but typically it's the common operational picture with icons showing what people are moving to, etc. The other screen is typically internet relay chatting typically mIRC-chat or IM-ing [instant messaging] that's going on in the tactical bases between different stakeholders. And, of course, you have your flat screen TV up there showing, typically, CNN and news.

DR. KOONTZ: **What I wanted to ask is what are the processes that your headquarters used with … or, I guess … I'm trying to think of a way to formulate this. How did you interact with higher headquarters, Afghan National Government, etc., etc.?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: The general model was that CFC-A [Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan]—General Eikenberry, General Barno before him—would handle the operational linkages to the strategic. In other words, they would be the conduit to the embassy, into NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], into Afghan ministries, etc., while -76 would be characterized as a tactical-level headquarters. I found this to be an extremely oversimplistic view and approach to what needed to be accomplished. My means of communicating with General Barno and Eikenberry—and again, I was there only for about month before General Barno left and General Eikenberry came in—was through Tandberg, which is used on a desktop PC for secure and regular phone calls and other things. I had a Tandberg on my desk, as well as in my room. We would experience tactical-level things that would have operational and strategic implications, and I'd always try to call to give my boss a context in which an incident may have happened to ground troops, if you will. So, we had a very, very good working relationship.

An example of how a broader view of our interaction can be seen with our work with OSC-A [Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan] at the time. OSC-A is a subordinate organization to CFC-A which deals primarily with forming and training the Afghan National Army. They're the ones that orchestrate training with the ministries, the mentors, etc. I had an LNO [liaison officer] with them. Also, I was a member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Executive Steering Committee along with the international ambassadors, General Eikenberry or his rep, CFC-A, as well as NATO ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] as the mission transitioned to them. I also had a personal relationship with the DCM [deputy chief of mission], Dick Norland, at the U.S. Embassy. I invited him and the ambassador down for orientation to the CJTF, and we'd actually bounce ideas off the ambassador directly. It wasn't routine in the sense that, you know, it was everyday and we got to be on a first-name basis, but I did get to be on a first-name basis with the DCM.

In that environment and the way we operated in my time there, it became flatter. In other words, given the kinds of activities that my JTF was doing and the opportunities it created for the D, I, and the E, the interaction naturally occurred. It was a more personal interaction between elements in the D, I, and the E. One of the first things I did when I took command there was to take my staff down to meet Patrick Fine, the USAID director based in Kabul, and his staff. We talked about reconstruction and development in Afghanistan—approaches, priorities, how we're going to work together, etc. That personal touch made a difference in the long run.

I asked Rick Olson during our transition, "Rick, how important is it to personally engage with these groups and people at the various levels? During your watch, looking back, how important was it for you to have relationships with the Afghan governors that you have in your battle space?" For the 25th ID, at that time it did not seem to be of critical importance. However, by the time we arrived, the environment was changing so that I thought that personal relationships with the governors of the provinces that had U.S. military forces there were very important. Over my year there, I began to develop at least professional relationships with Governor Bahlul in the Panjshir, Governor Taniwal in Paktia Province—who was killed several months ago—Governor Asadullah in Kandahar, Governor Mangal in Paktika Province, and Governor Arman in Zabol Province, and Governor Sher Alam in Helmand Province. People were sort of amazed when I could list the twelve or so governors that were governors in the areas in which we were operating because there had not been that emphasis in the past for direct contact. I found it extremely important. When a crisis happened, like when the allegations of the burning of

Taliban remains happened, I could fly down the very next day, engage with Governor Asadullah, give him the ground truth about what we think happened, tell him about the U.S. investigation that we're going to hold, tell him that we will share the results with him, etc. And you know, my PRT commanders, my maneuver brigade commanders, all had multiple engagement opportunities even beyond my own with the Afghan governors and their leaders. I got to know every Afghan corps commander in our AO [area of operations], to the 203d Corps commander in RC East, to the 205th Corps commander in RC South.

Going back to your question about how we were able to liaise, it helped us give the tools to try to coordinate the interaction of D, I, and then the E. This is how it happened, and it happened at my level, it happened at the brigade combat team level, it happened at the battalion level, and etc. It was important to me that since I was delving into the D, I, and the E, I would have to communicate and coordinate my actions with General Eikenberry so he could help me and be a facilitator at his level, etc. So, General Eikenberry, in my mind—and you'll have to speak to him, of course—was supportive of the opportunities that we were teeing up for him and others as a way to start developing linkages between the central government and the provincial government and a whole variety of other areas.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'm curious about this interaction with the provincial governors. I'm just wondering—you know, here you are, you're a two-star general of a large, sizable military task force. You've got these governors who are members of a, you know, young, standing-up government, I guess. Is there a protocol? Is there a ritual? I mean, how do these meetings take place?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Typically, if I wanted to meet with a governor, I'd work the appointment through my maneuver brigade commander. So, if I wanted to meet with Governor Asadullah in Kandahar, or Arman in Zabol Province—because those two provinces fell under the jurisdiction of my RC South commander, I worked with then-Col. Kevin [C.] Owens to coordinate the meeting. So, Kevin would get with the governor, would agree upon a date and time and location, and then I'd fly down and engage with the governor. Kevin and I would get together ahead of time and determine what kind of key points to make and what the governor will be asking me for. With this direct outreach, every once in a while there would be opportunities at a meeting or a *shura* where the government will be there, along with other elected officials, or with elements of his population. There, you would work with the governor himself the terms of what his expectations were, desired outcomes, the kinds of things that he'd like me to say, etc. So, that's how it would work. And, of course, I'd come back and report in

an EXSUM [executive summary] of some type to General Eikenberry what happened, and if I thought that he needed to know ahead of time, I would let him know in advance of the engagement.

Some of these meetings were also opportunities for me to begin developing linkages in an indirect way with the Afghan governor and his associated military ANA leadership. I'd go visit the Afghan National Army corps commander. We talk about an upcoming meeting with the governor. We either go together or develop something that would register in the governor's mind that the ANA was a tool for him to use in the area. Again, just the activity of going to see a governor for whatever purpose can lead to increase of the military activity. In many cases, it was basically opening doors for my maneuver commanders or PRTs.

Another example is when we built what we call the Kandahar-TK [Tarin Kowt] road, and that was a road that was started by USAID. The project lost energy for a multitude of reasons; however, because the completed road could cut down travel time from twelve hours to three hours between the provincial capital of Kandahar, going through northern Kandahar, linking up with the Oruzgan Province, Tarin Kowt in the north, we saw some system-building opportunities by completing the road. We had military engineers operating flat loaders and scrapers and stuff, building this road, and at the same time we learned about how the Afghan National Army, while they have engineering companies assigned to corps, have no engineering equipment to operate and did not have the skills to operate.

So, what do I do? I went to see Governor Asadullah in Kandahar. I link him up with the 205th Corps commander, whose base, by the way, was close to the governor's compound. I said, "We have a military engineer unit and a corps engineering unit building the road for you on behalf of your government. General, you have an engineering company which, I understand, has at least one Caterpillar dozer. Why don't you allow us to bring your dozer out to the worksite and give your soldiers an opportunity of how to operate the dozer, because we have soldiers that know how to operate Caterpillar dozers. And, oh, by the way, while your soldiers are out there, why don't you allow us to familiarize them on other pieces of equipment that we have operating at the same time?" So, in about two or three weeks, this engineering company was much more capable than they were sitting in garrison, looking at their one dozer.

The situation gave us, in a strategic communications aspect, the reality that the Afghan National Army element had participated in building that road, and when it was finally

completed, we could celebrate it as a credit to the ANA, the government of Kandahar. It was a credit for the political aspects of the time, as well as a U.S.-Coalition success. In working with Governor Jan Muhammad in Tarin Kowt, the Oruzgan provincial governor, it could be viewed as *his* success as well, too. So, you have a cross-provincial/U.S.-Coalition and ANA success.

Anyway, I can go on and on and on about activities that if you only look at in terms of what your forces are doing, without looking at it in terms of what that activity could do for other aspects of your mission, building governance, wherever it was, you're missing opportunities.

DR. KOONTZ: **How effective do you believe the PRT model worked while you were in Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I think the PRT model is working, although the thought process of building systems, the Cadillac or the Volkswagen that we discussed earlier, hasn't quite been culturally assimilated into our formation of new PRTs. I went back to Afghanistan last October, and as I got ready to train



General Kamiya confers with Jan Muhammad, governor of Oruzgan Province, 20 March 2005.

the 82d Airborne Division to go to be the next CJTF after 10th Mountain, I talked to PRT commanders—who are now, by the way, Air Force and Navy; there're no Army PRT commanders in Afghanistan—and I could tell by our discussions that we were gravitating more towards dollars and numbers of projects again. If the PRT model provides the conditions for success, it is provided that the State Department, USAID, USDA, and other outside DoD [Department of Defense] stakeholders participate, because the kinds of questions that a PRT must decide upon, like what kind of wheat would be a better crop—these kinds of things are way beyond the core competencies of a military commander, so you rely very much on the competencies of [US]AID and other organizations. We did not have a PRT in the Panjshir Province, and we were asked by General [John P.] Abizaid and General Eikenberry to think through putting a PRT there. It's important to note that the Panjshir area is not affected by insurgents to the same level of degree of other provinces. It is the home of Ahmad Shah Masood, the Tajik Northern Alliance, etc. You have a Pashtun-dominated government with President [Hamid] Karzai who is viewed by the Afghans, I think, as being Pashtun-centric, yet you have a province in the northern part of Afghanistan, the Panjshir, that is Tajik in nature.

For a lot of reasons, political as well as developmental, we were asked to think through "How would we put a PRT into Panjshir?" What we thought about it, and what is there today, is something I characterize as skipping a generation of PRT development. PRTs in Afghanistan today are kind of *Beau Geste* fortresses [referring to an early twentieth-century novel and film portraying the siege of a small French Foreign Legion fortress in the Sahara], if you will. They have walls. There are bases. But what we were able to achieve in the Panjshir is a way to focus instead on the capabilities and functions of the PRT so that it became embedded into the provincial governmental system instead of being focused on a building. So, when a U.S. developmental worker comes to work, he or she doesn't go to work in the PRT. Instead, they go to work in the Panjshir governor's ministry of development. So, in the Panjshir today, you don't find a *Beau Geste*–type infrastructure sitting there in the middle of the Panjshir Valley. There are two places where the PRT members sleep. In the early days, they went to work in these containerized buildings with … I think we put two of them together as a temporary facility, but I think now, as the governor's building, his ministry building, is finally built, the PRT now could just move and disappear into the governmental structure. That's what I think the future is. But again, it was only doable in Panjshir because of the unique conditions there, and, again, it didn't happen by circumstance. It began with a meeting I had with Governor Bahlul. To put it bluntly, Governor Bahlul sat like this the entire time [folds his arms across his chest and frowns]. He

did the majority of the talking. The premise was "Ahmad Shah Masood did so much for the U.S. Coalition. Why have you forgotten us?" Through three or four engagements, we were able to discuss with the governor ideas on how to best develop a PRT-like capability into the province, and there it is today. It is led, by the way, by a U.S. State Department individual, and his assistant is military—I think an Air Force lieutenant colonel. It is the one PRT that is led by a DOS [Department of State] individual.

DR. KOONTZ: **Working within the CJTF—it's obviously a military structure. Did the civilian—you know, State Department, USAID, etc.—aspects of PRT, did that cause any problems with you in terms of command and control?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I don't think so. In terms of command and control, no. We were asked by Ambassador [Ronald E.] Neumann to give SIPR [Secure Internet Protocol Router] access down to the PRTs so that each State representative could have SIPR communication. That was done. We had isolated cases of e-mail messages from DOS or some outside, nonmilitary organization or entity going to the embassy or somewhere that would cause some questioning about what we were doing at the PRT, but that was easily overcome.

[Interruption to proceedings.]

I'm sorry, what was your question again, now?

DR. KOONTZ: **We were talking about …**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Oh, command and control. First of all, the civilian entities in a PRT were considered by my PRT commanders as part of a team, so they had complete access. Command and control–wise, each PRT—and there was typically one in every province—was directly under the maneuver brigade commander who oversaw those series of provinces, so there was a clear reporting and command and control structure over the PRTs. They weren't orphans sitting out there. The hardest part about PRTs or other things is in thinking about how reconstruction and development and security overlap, and the activities that represent the highest value are inside where those circuits overlap. For instance, in the beginning you would have some civilian entity say, "Well, you have to escort me to visit this project." We needed to rethink that question and how we approached the requirement. We had to move from that early mindset to sitting down and developing a mission and say, "In the context of my military operations today, tell me where we'd find interest in it, or how can we include a variety of projects into the maneuver part for the day or for the month or so? How can we find points of intersect between R&D [reconstruction and development] and security operations?" So, then you began to slowly, albeit, start to converge the circles and

have both the military and the civilian entities recognize the overlap in requirements and opportunities. It would be unfair to say, "The U.S. Army won't escort me, the USAID member, to look at Project X, Y, and Z." That's really not the way we ought to be asking questions. The initial question would become "How can you get me there? How can I achieve this while you were also achieving some benefit to your military operations?"

DR. KOONTZ: **So, sort of striking a balance, I guess, between aims and needs? Is that a fair way to characterize that?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Aims and needs? I'll default again to effects-based thinking. Let's say that I'm going on a military patrol in an operational area, and besides the enemy and besides insurgents, I think about what else I can be doing, looking at, sensing, etc., that addresses facets of the DIME dynamic. Then, all of a sudden, in the context of a military plan, inside the route of advance or the control route, there are a bunch of areas that I and the USAID person have an interest in. So, I would tell the USAID person, "I'd like to accompany you, and we can adjust the patrol route minutely so we can get at this." So, here you have the ground integration with security and it's not security out here minus the R&D. Rather, it's a homogenous team, and that is something that as a commander, a JTF commander, I had to repeatedly talk about and discuss and emphasize.

Every time a U.S. State Department or USAID individual changes out of a PRT and moves somewhere else, there would be a different dynamic. You have to start all over again, because it very much—like the majority of things—it depends upon the personal relationships. When everything is working right, it's magical what happens on a PRT. It really is. In fact, our PRT up in Nangahar Province, commanded by a female civil affairs officer, Army, with a very ambitious, very astute USAID director, with a USDA individual, was truly, truly magical when you watched it.

I've got to talk to these guys for about fifteen minutes. Can we interrupt here for a second?

[Interruption to proceedings. Recording stops.]

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir. When we left off, we were discussing various and sundry effects—kinetic, nonkinetic, the use of military force, use of PRTs, etc., etc. The enemy in Afghanistan is sort of politically amorphous, in that you've got several different factions. You've got HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin], Taliban, al Qaeda, sort of generic Afghan criminality. How would you define, or how would you describe, your conception of the anti-Coalition forces in Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: I think it's too narrow a focus to describe the insurgent purely in terms of their combatants and all the groupings: HIG, al Qaeda, Taliban, etc. I think if all we do is focus on the insurgents, we are not getting at the root causes of an insurgency. In the south, it's becoming more and more difficult to discern the difference between criminal/drug people and traditional Taliban. I think there's a mix. Thus, when people ask me about the insurgency, I tell them that there's more to the insurgency than what most people tend to think about. It's more than the combatants and criminal element. It's the sense of hopelessness that the people may feel that their government now, with their elected president, parliament, etc., is still not being able to provide a future and a difference from the way things were with the Taliban. It's a perceived failure that their police, the rule of law, is still not there. So, as the police are training, as you're arresting criminals or whatever else, there's still no judiciary systems or jails in which to incarcerate those individuals. It's the lack of infrastructure. It's the lack of jobs to provide for legitimate means to feed families. It's all of that, and General Eikenberry and I used to characterize it as the military is fighting a delaying action, or what could be described as a delaying action, to keep the insurgent at bay, buying time for nonmilitary actors and stakeholders to get in there and develop some of these systems that can get at the real causes of the insurgency. I'm not sure that answered that question or not.

DR. KOONTZ: **Yes, sir. It does.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: With that understanding, it emphasizes that the fight in Afghanistan is not winnable with purely military means. Every road you go down in these discussions, it's all leading to an integrated DIME approach to the problem set.

DR. KOONTZ: **If you could—this is sort of an abstract, theoretical question—make one change to the Army, either doctrinally, structurally, organizationally, etc., to get at counterinsurgency and nonconventional-type campaigns such as Afghanistan, what would that change be?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: Speaking from a joint perspective versus a purely Army one, because you're asking me about a CJTF experience, I think we need to examine this whole notion of the global context in which we're conducting operations. I hear commanders—and I live this day after day—that sometimes, you begin to think that in these COIN [counterinsurgency] environments, the whole paradigm has shifted on us. In the past, we fought military campaigns that were supported by information operations. Now, in many respects, we're fighting an information campaign that's supported by military operations. The message and how it's communicated—through various prisms, cultural and other actions that send messages—are the dominant,

are the decisive weapons. Looking at my JTF, we are still structured to fight military campaigns, and I just get a gut feeling that the way our JTFs are structured right now is not geared to fight, is not organized organically, and we're looking at the staff now to fight in a DIME environment.

Going back to the thinking about information operations, it's multifaceted and we organize in terms of our comfort zone—that is current ops, future ops, and future plans—in how we look at information operations. But maybe we ought to be organizing in a different way where maybe the information operations enterprise plays a more robust role in driving operations. Maybe sometimes there are times where you do a military operation for an information-specific objective. What I learned through the Afghanistan experience is that in an information campaign, it's not good enough to think only about what you want to say. I think we're structured now to come up with what we want to say, but it's more important that we focus more on what we want people to hear. There's a subtle difference there, and we're not set up organizationally in a structure that recognizes the target audiences. Take Afghanistan, as an example. You have a local Afghan audience; a NATO audience; an internal command audience; and, a global, international community audience. The art is in how we focus on what we want people to hear and our willingness to make adjustments to how we say it or what we say. Understanding the subtle difference between what we want to say and what we want to hear is very important.

Case in point: early on in our rotation, we had some kinetic fights, and we killed or captured a couple hundred combatants. So, we celebrated this, and we promulgated the victory: "The tactical victory of Operation X resulted in the killing of a couple hundred combatants." From a military perspective, some of the audiences would share the view that that is a success. But I failed to recognize at the time that there were other communities, other target audiences, that would interpret that message in a way that was opposite from what you anticipated. We focused too much on what we want to say—we killed a hundred-plus insurgents. We wanted the people to hear that because of our interaction with the Afghan National Army, we were able to get to areas of enemy sanctuary where we were unable to reach before, and therefore, as expected, the number of contacts with the insurgents were increasing because we had more operational reach with a gradually enabled Afghan National Army partnership. What we wanted people to hear was that the environment was becoming more and more secure. Instead, what some heard was that it was getting more and more dangerous. There's a subtle difference in this whole aspect of concentrating on what you want people to hear vice what you want to say, but it's very, very important.

I was surprised when people said, "Well, you said a hundred people were killed. Well, that means the environment is awfully unstable down there." In my focus on what I wanted to say, I failed to provide the context in which those insurgents were killed or captured: the increased operational reach, the increased capability, and how many of them were turned in by their own people. I failed to do that; however, I would have had greater success in sharing the intended message, had I thought about it in what I wanted them to hear. I believe this idea is tied to a number of areas where we need to look that could potentially drive organizations and change to the way that we train for the mission.

Another area is in the training environment, where we currently utilize role players. I believe we should focus more on interaction, negotiations, role-playing negotiations with an interagency partner, as well as with host nation government officials such as ambassadors and governors. We need to increase the interaction with the role players who represent USAID, DOS [Department of State], embassy, or other organizations across the DIME spectrum. The commander, through the given scenario of a common problem, would then need to expand his or her thinking and negotiation to more closely link to the DIME environment.

DR. KOONTZ: **Looking back at your experience as the commander of Combined Joint Task Force-76, what would you characterize as the greatest success the task force had?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: It's funny. You know, *Stars and Stripes* and others have asked me that same question, too. I think the greatest success is that we were able to say, when we left after our twelve months there, that we left the place different, and improved, than when it was handed off to us. And I don't say that in a negative sense to 25th ID. I'm just telling you that given what the environment was when we assumed the mission, I believe that the environment was better. We started a partnership program with the Afghan National Army. They were more fully integrated with our operations. We had interaction across the DIME. As I explained further, we had matured our ability to think effects-based 110 percent. We had increased confidence and increased relationships with Afghan elected officials. We had successfully supported the Afghan government's parliamentary elections in the fall of 2005. So, that was, to me, the greatest success. It was no success in terms of a tactical victory or Operation Whatever-the-Name-Is. It's an environment where tactical victories mean nothing. You know what I mean? Tactical victories mean nothing.

DR. KOONTZ: **There's a whole raft of people waiting outside your door to talk to you. Is there anything that you'd like to add?**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: No. Just that I'm in a very fortunate position now to take these kinds of thoughts and roll them into the way we train future JTFs. I'm also given opportunities to go back to the operational environment—Iraq, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa—to learn more about the operational environment and to see what emerging requirements JTFs have now. So, I'm really fortunate. It was great. The year in Afghanistan, for me, was a life-changing experience. There's not a day that goes by that I don't somehow think about something we did in Afghanistan that either I would have done differently, had I known what I know now, or is something good or bad that can reinforce a point that I'm trying to make as I train the next generation of JTF commanders.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Sir, that's a good place to stop. I want to thank you for taking the time to do this and for squeezing me in.**

MAJ. GEN. KAMIYA: This is really an executive summary of my year [laughs].



Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson (USA, Ret.) *served as Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division (Light), during its rotation as the headquarters element of Combined Joint Task Force-76 from April 2004 to March 2005. He was interviewed by telephone by J. Patrick Hughes of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 23 July 2007. General Olson discusses the division's training before deployment and the headquarters staff's preparedness to conduct joint operations. After transitioning with the headquarters of the 10th Mountain Division (Light) in theater, 25th Infantry Division elements conducted counterinsurgency operations and operated under the regional command structure put into place by Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. General Olson comments on the command structure in theater and Combined Joint Task Force-76's interactions with U.S., Coalition, and civilian entities operating in Afghanistan, as well as with the fledgling institutions of the Afghan government. After discussing the presidential election of 2004, the work of provincial reconstruction teams, and dealing with the unstable Afghanistan-Pakistan border, General Olson concludes the interview with his thoughts on the successes and shortcomings of the division's experience in Afghanistan.*

DR. HUGHES: **Recording. This is the twenty-third of July 2007. I am interviewing General Eric Olson over the phone from his residence in Hawaii. Dr. J. Patrick Hughes, interviewing. Sir, you're giving this interview voluntarily?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes, I am.

DR. HUGHES: **You don't mind it being used for an Army study?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: No, I don't.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. How did you get word that units from the 25th were going to deploy to Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I would say that it was about six to eight months before the actual deployment. General [Lt. Gen. James L.] Campbell, who was the USARPAC [U.S. Army, Pacific] commander at the time, told us that we were going to deploy. Initially, it was unclear whether we were going to all go to Iraq, to Afghanistan, or kind of split up. In the event, we actually had the division headquarters, one brigade combat team [BCT], plus the division base, that went to Afghanistan. One brigade combat team went to Iraq.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What steps did you take to prepare the units before deployment?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: We had kind of a standard ramp-up to the deployment. At that time, it wasn't particularly standard, but we had the opportunity to send one of the brigade combat teams that was going with us to JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center]. We had a division war fighter exercise, which they turned into something, I guess, that would resemble an MRX [mission rehearsal exercise] today, but the scenario that was used—it wasn't particularly appropriate for the type of mission we ended up conducting in Afghanistan. But I would say that the primary means that we used to prepare was the—you know—we did seminars. We also did professional development. We went to Leavenworth for a week and heard a little bit about Afghanistan. Then we did division command post exercises as a sort of mission rehearsal exercise. That's how we prepared.

DR. HUGHES: **I read an article where they quoted you as saying that you felt the division was particularly well prepared to deal in the joint arena from your experiences in the Pacific.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right.

DR. HUGHES: **Could you elaborate on that?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Sure. The location of the division at Schofield Barracks puts us right in the middle of a joint community. You know, there's Pearl Harbor for the Navy; there's Hickam [Air Force Base] for the Air Force; the Coast Guard has got considerable presence here; then, at Kaneohe we've got the Marines. So, my soldiers, at the time, had had an opportunity to work with men and women from all the different services. We had a chance, for example—we were on the Big Island, the island of Hawaii, at Pohakuloa Training Area. We had an opportunity to work with the Air Force and control close air and this type of thing. So, we are very well positioned here in Hawaii to work together jointly. It was just because there's the presence of all different services right here, in fairly significant numbers.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What guidance were you given concerning your mission, and whom from?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno came and visited with us and gave us preliminary guidance on the specific mission in Afghanistan. There were really very few people who were here who were able to—there just wasn't a whole lot of experience in Afghanistan here. So, I would say that General Barno was probably the guy who gave us our initial guidance. Plus, we did the predeployment site surveys, the PDSSs. When we were over there, we had a chance to talk to General Barno and some of the other senior military and civilian leaders who were in Afghanistan, so we had a pretty fair idea of what we were going to do when we hit the ground.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. How did you prepare your soldiers and, one would assume, their families for the deployment?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. Well, we'll start with the families because we had a pretty well structured set of family support groups that my wife, Vicki, and I had made a priority since we took command. We always felt that there was the possibility, given the Global War on Terror[ism] and other contingencies in the Pacific,



General Olson (*center front*) joins troops of Combined Task Force BOBCAT on a patrol in Cahar Cineh, Oruzgan Province, 26 October 2004.

that we might have some type of short-notice deployment. So, our family readiness groups were in pretty good shape. I had a chance to talk to the senior commanders and their wives about the importance of family readiness groups. I think the commanders kind of understood my intent there and caught the spirit. I think you'd have to say that the community was pretty well prepared. Plus, we had an excellent community commander in Col. Howard Killian, who made support of the families a top priority. The post really bent over backwards to make sure that the families were as well taken care of as possible while we were gone. In terms of the soldiers, we pretty much just prepared them in small-unit tactics. I wouldn't say that we had any expansive or extensive acclimatization process. You know, this is before the time where there were exercises with role-players and things like that, so we really didn't get into that too much. Our feeling was that if they were pretty well grounded in small-unit tactics, we'd be able to get over there and shape anything—in terms of the operations, shape anything that we needed to fine-tune once we got there.

DR. HUGHES: **How did you configure your headquarters, since you were going over to become a joint task force?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right, we actually became a combined joint task force [CJTF]. There, you know, we had—that was probably one of the more difficult transitions, because, really, the combined joint task force was really a very different configuration than the division headquarters. We did not train and we did not practice battle command in a CJTF configuration, so when we went over there, we kind of had to rely on the left-seat/right-seat ride methodology. The unit that was there ahead of us was the 10th Mountain Division, commanded by [Maj. Gen.] Lloyd [J.] Austin, who's a buddy of mine. So, we went in there, and we pretty much fell in on what they were doing. I'd say the biggest difference between the CJTF configuration and the normal division headquarters was that there are a whole lot more people in each one of the staff sections; also, there are some staff sections that you don't normally man when you're at home station as a division headquarters. So, we fell in, and we had a lot of augmentees that arrived and allowed us to fill out some of the positions in the normal staff sections. Then, we had men and women from other units and other services who actually came and actually filled in the staff sections that we didn't normally man. It was an adjustment. Thank goodness for the left-seat/right-seat ride methodology because I think we learned most of what we were doing from that. Then, we just shaped our organization as the operation went on.

DR. HUGHES: **What roles did you have for your deputy commanding generals?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. I had two deputy commanding generals. One was General [Brig. Gen. Bernard S.] Champoux, and the other was General [Brig. Gen. Charles H.] Jacoby. General Champoux came into the unit to be the ADC-O [assistant division commander for operations]. So, he pretty much naturally fell into the role of the deputy commanding general for ops. Then, General Jacoby did the deputy commanding general for support types of things. Since we didn't run CJTF operations per se—you know, battle command for brigades and that type of thing—what General Champoux basically focused on were operations within the brigade areas of responsibility [AOR]. He was kind of monitoring how those were going and making sure that the brigade commanders, who were running their different AORs, had what they needed. Then, General Jacoby took care of the larger support issues that we had, both theaterwide and in and around that our logistics task force was handling. So, that's how I divided up those responsibilities.

DR. HUGHES: **What was your awareness of the situation in Afghanistan before you got there?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Well, I think where we went into Afghanistan pretty much focused on the Taliban insurgency. I was initially a little reluctant to call it an insurgency because from afar it didn't have some of the classic characteristics or traits of insurgency. But when we got over there, I think we made a fairly quick adjustment because it became pretty apparent that we needed to treat this fight like it was an insurgency, but with the understanding the insurgency wasn't the only source of violence in Afghanistan. Also, we needed to have the understanding that the purpose of our mission over there was to establish a stable security environment, which I think was certainly a big part of it. We were also going to have to deal with other sources of violence. So, I'd say our understanding was imperfect, at best. Coming in, we made some initial assessments and got it close to right. Then, about halfway through, I think we made some adjustments based on a fuller and richer understanding of what was really causing the instability there.

DR. HUGHES: **Yes. You mentioned your predeployment site survey. What did you learn from that? Did it change any of the way you got ready to go?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I think what the PDSS, predeployment site survey, did for us was it really just got us familiar with the different areas of operation. I am not certain that it drove too many big changes. You know, personally, what I did is I used that time to get around and visit some fire bases to understand what those are like and what kind of operations they were running from there and some of the main camps that we had—you know, we had them in Kandahar and [Forward Operating Base] Salerno out in the Khowst area. It really

was more familiarization. I'm not sure it really drove too many big changes in our approach to preparation or, in the event, our approach to execution.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. You've already mentioned some of the methodology. But, how did the transition go between the 10th Mountain and your division?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I think it was an excellent transition. General Austin, basically, opened all of the doors. There were no secrets. You know, the good, the bad, and the ugly were laid out. He gave us plenty of time and plenty of access on the left-seat and right-seat rides. So, transition of the headquarters was very smooth, and I didn't see any issues at all at the brigade combat team level. I watched some of the battalions go in and out fairly closely. There were no issues at all. You know, in transition like that, it's more a function of attitude than it is any set of procedures. So, I was very satisfied with the way that went.

DR. HUGHES: **Did the people of the 10th Mountain give any guidance or advice as they left?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I think there was plenty of advice. There was not so much guidance. But, you know, if you were to ask me for a specific bit of guidance that General Austin gave me, I'd say it was basically to be out and around and on the ground and see what was going on for yourself, as opposed to staying in Bagram and trying to understand the fight from there. I think that was great advice. I walked the walk on that one.

DR. HUGHES: **Could you describe how the combined joint task force was configured? Was there a subordinate task force?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Okay. Yes, I'll give you kind of the relationships there. The combined joint task force—you know, we took our guidance and direction from Combined Forces Command[-Afghanistan]. That was General Barno's headquarters. The CJTF headquarters itself was configured—the large organizations, the large structures in the CJTF headquarters, wouldn't surprise anybody. I don't think so. There was a very small personnel section because we didn't do too much there except bring folks in. So, you know there was the accountability function, but the personnel section wasn't as robust. The intel functions were incredible for two reasons. First of all, because it was an intelligence-driven operation; secondly, it was because there were so many intelligence agencies of various shapes and flavors that were there that we had to make sure we had interfaces with all of them. So, the intelligence section itself, the CJ-2, would have been unrecognizable compared to what we had back in Schofield Barracks. You know, it was pretty much your normal operations section that we filled out, whereas when you talk about an Air Force element inside of a division

headquarters, you know, you clearly have a much—in an operational environment—you have a much more robust section there, but all the functions were pretty much the same. In the logistics arena, we really ran most of our logistics planning and operations out of the logistics task force. We had a joint logistics task force. So, the commander of that was really my primary adviser when it came to combat service support. Then, going on down, we had a civil affairs section, which is something you don't normally have, or you don't have a robust one back at home station. That was a big part of what we were doing. We had an information operations section. Again, that's—I'm not sure that even when we got in theater we knew exactly what to do with information operations. If I had it to do all over again, I'd say that was an area where we could have done a lot of improvement. We had an engineer section, you know, separate and apart from the CJ-3 [staff section for operations]. So, I would say that's how the headquarters was structured. The sections themselves were pretty dramatically different than what we had back at Schofield, but the actual functions were fairly similar.

Then, the last thing I would say is, the relationship between the BCTs and the commanders that were running areas of responsibility in our headquarters. It was a much more decentralized operation. I mean, we gave broad guidance to the BCT commanders, and they pretty much ran their own areas of responsibility. As long as they stayed within my intent—I had pretty good ways of checking on that—as long as they didn't need help from us, we pretty much let them run their operations, and I was very pleased with the way they did that. That was general officer stuff, to see the way those guys functioned. There was no question about it. They rose to the occasion.

DR. HUGHES: **Was the regional command structure in place when you arrived, or was that an innovation while you were there?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: It was in place when I arrived. We actually owned all of Afghanistan, initially. We had the north, which about a month after we got there we transferred over to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. We ended up with three Regional Commands: West, South, and East. Right before we left, we handed West over to ISAF [International Security Assistance Force], as well. When we left, it was just South and East. That was something that was in place. General Barno, I believe, is the one who kind of structured that, working with ISAF and with the political leadership there, too. Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad, I'm sure, played in that. But we inherited that, and I was pleased with the way that worked for us.

DR. HUGHES: **They must have had dramatically differing missions, given the different parts of Afghanistan. How would you characterize that?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Well, in the west, the mission was pretty much concentrated on the reconstruction piece because the security environment there was okay. Now, I will tell you that we had a couple of flare-ups there. But again, this goes back to the point about sources of instability that had nothing at all to do with the Taliban. It was a guy named Amanullah Khan. His militia was fighting Ismail Khan, who technically didn't have a militia, but, in fact, he did. Ismail Khan was the governor of Herat. They went at it. My cavalry squadron sent a pretty big group out there, plus a Special Forces detachment. But, the mission out there, I guess you would say, would be to separate warring factions. In the south, it was interesting. In the south, I think we had some Taliban there, but the biggest threat, I believe, were—they were certainly armed groups. I'm not sure they were Taliban. You know, that's kind of the conclusion we came to. I think they were basically antigovernment bands, if you will, that lived in some of the smaller towns and villages in the south. I don't think there was a huge Taliban presence. But, you know, very clearly, these guys in the south didn't want us in there because we represented the extension of the reach of the central government. Most of the operations we did in there were with the Afghan National Army [ANA]. These people had spent their whole lives, I think, opposing the central government and protecting their turf.

So, you know, we got in several fights there, but I don't think it was about a Taliban insurgency, whereas in the east, I think it was. There was Taliban in Afghanistan. Then there was a lot of running the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan—Taliban groups, plus other armed insurgent groups. There was a Hekmatyar [Gulbuddin], who was one of the rebel leaders there. He had a group called HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin]. So, there was an armed group there. They were clearly insurgents—not fundamentalists, necessarily, but insurgents. Then, we had al Qaeda in that area, but that was somebody else's mission.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. What was your relationship with the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. I think General Barno and I worked out an arrangement which proved—you know, you'd have to ask him if he shares this opinion—but I think it proved very useful the construct that we hit upon. It was him on the strategic-level stuff. I did not do a whole lot of interaction or interface with the political leadership of Afghanistan, with Headquarters, CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command]. General Barno did some work directly back with the National Command Authority. So, that was all his baby. You know, if he

needed something from me, he let me know. But I had no particular aspirations. I didn't think it was useful for me to get involved. The tactical-level stuff belonged to me and to the brigade combat team commanders. That was the day-to-day operations and what kind of campaign we were going to run and where. All that was mine. There were no issues there. Then, the operational arena was in the middle. We kind of shared responsibility for that—you know, how the regional commands were divided up. The shifting of forces between regional commands—I said that we didn't direct campaigns, but if there was something that we'd want to consider truly a campaign as opposed to a separate operation, General Barno would want to check off on that. It was like when we brought the 22d MEU [marine expeditionary unit] into Afghanistan. He gave me some guidance on how he thought we should be using it. Then, I went ahead and put—

DR. HUGHES: **What was that?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: OK. The 22d MEU is the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit. It's a Marine combat formation. It is self-contained. It's got everything. It's got a ground force; it's got both fixed- and rotary-wing support. It's a very capable force package. Normally, they're offshore, but General [John P.] Abizaid decided that, given the operations we were conducting, he was going to allow us to use it because those were forces for the CENTCOM commander. He was going to allow us to use them. So, that's an operational decision, how those are going to be used. Very clearly, General Barno was interested in that. He gave us some initial guidance. Then, you know, we briefed the plan back to him. But most of the operational decisions that affected what we did on the ground he left to me. So, you know, if you go strategic, operational, tactical, the band in the middle, there was the line, somewhere in there. It shifted up and down a little bit. But that divided his responsibilities and what he thought was his lane from mine. If I were to be honest, there were times where he and I had to sit down together and say, "Okay, who's going to be doing what to whom here on these operational decisions?" But he's a very bright and a very flexible commander, so we got along very well in that arena.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you have any interaction with the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan [OMC-A]?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Very little. That was really General Barno's baby. You know, obviously, we were interested in what they were doing, especially as we moved more and more in the direction of getting Afghan National Army units to come over and operate with us. But in terms of what they did and how they did it and what the training regimen was, not so much. Where we did get into some interaction with them was kind of in the equipment arena, the ANA, that we were working

with. Often times we'd find that they weren't particularly well equipped. The things that they were supposed to have had they didn't. The OMC-A helped us with that, but it wasn't something day to day where I'd pick up the phone and call the CG [commanding general] of OMC.

DR. HUGHES: **You were a band of a combined and joint task force. Can you describe some of the combined and joint nature of that? What was it like working with the different elements?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I would say that the first service that comes to mind is the Marine Corps. We had the marine expeditionary unit for about eight to ten weeks. When I came in, we had a Marine brigade headquarters. The commander there commanded one of the regional commands. He had the east working out of Salerno. The Marines, I found, were very easy to work with. They look at things like we do. They're very flexible. It's a disciplined outfit. There were virtually no issues whatsoever between the Marine elements that were there and the Army elements. I think we're just so used to working with each other. We look at things so similarly that there were no points of friction there at all. The Air Force—you know, most of our interaction there was air that was pushed into theater. The CAOC, the Combined Air Operations Center, pretty much controlled that air, but I never had a problem with them saying "Hey, we know you want that, but we're not going to do it" or "We're not going to drop there." There was nothing like that. They were actually very user friendly. The fact that we were somewhat distant from the CAOC, sometimes, could have caused problems, except for the fact that we had an excellent air coordination element and there was a brigadier general in charge of that, which was really kind of a sacrifice by the Air Force to put a one-star there, but he worked out great. So, any issues we had with air support or anything going on with the air, we just took to him. Then, the Navy had some individual augmentees there. There were not a whole lot. You know, Afghanistan is kind of far away from any water, but, we had some individual augmentees. Plus, we had naval air. We had an Orion squadron that came in and supported us from time to time. Plus, from time to time, we'd have close air aircraft that were naval close air aircraft. So, the Navy, I wouldn't say … they were part of the team, no doubt about it, but it wasn't the same kind of integration that we had with the other services. Just to sum up, I think the joint nature of the CJTF was really—this is my impression, so you'd have to talk to others—but it was fairly seamless.

The combined piece was a little more challenging. You had differences in the skill level and how accomplished the different national contingents were and what their experience had been, what kind of caveats they came to the CJTF with. For example, the Koreans weren't allowed to go

outside the wire. You know, others were there on peace-enforcement or peacekeeping rules of engagement. That was especially true with some of the ISAF forces that were there that we were operating with side by side, as opposed to part of the CJTF. But that was still a factor, even some of the national contingencies inside the CJTF. They had different rules of engagement [ROE], or at least they interpreted the ROE differently. So, you know, what we found ourselves having to do in most cases there was give missions to our Coalition partners that were more about strengthening the Coalition than about specific military objectives associated with operations that we were conducting. There were some exceptions to that. The French had special forces there that were top-notch. They ran some great operations. The Romanians had a battalion there. They were really pretty good. They had some caveats, but they were pretty good. They were a professional force and very proud of what they were doing. So, you know, the bottom line there is the C in the CJTF. It was about what I expected, and about what others are experiencing now in Coalition task forces.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned the ISAF. What was the relationship with them while you were there?**



General Kamiya (*left front*) speaks to marines of the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, on 10 March 2005, before taking command of Combined Joint Task Force-76.

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: When I first got there, they didn't come out of Kabul. Their whole mission was focused on security inside Kabul. They didn't really run any missions outside of there. From time to time, they did, but it wasn't their battle space. It was mine. So, if they were going to come out of Kabul into my battle space, they had to coordinate with us. We never ran combined operations with ISAF, but when they were in an area of operations that I cut to them, you know, we at least had to monitor what they were doing. They had had different rules of engagement. Some of the things that they could or couldn't do did have impact on the areas around their AO [area of operations]. ISAF took the north. When we first went there, they didn't really run military operations there. They had a PRT, provincial reconstruction team, in Mazar-e Sharif, but, again, they were there. We knew about it. We kind of monitored what they were doing. But ISAF did not play the kind of role that they are playing now. There was no operational headquarters that we had to work with or for. I didn't have any ISAF commands working within the CJTF. So, you know, some of these CJTF commanders that have come after me, I think, would have better perspective on what it's like to work with ISAF.

DR. HUGHES: **Did you have a, for lack of a better term, battle rhythm or a weekly routine?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. Yes. We had a very good battle rhythm there. The CJ-3 and my chief set it up so that we had battle update reviews. There was one in the morning and one in the evening. I generally didn't go to the morning ones, but the evening ones I tried to make if I was in Bagram. I tried to spend a lot of time out and around, but if I was in Bagram, I'd go to the evening updates. We had a commander's update. We ran that by—what do they call that thing? It was Voice over IP [Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP]. You know, it was a bunch of computers hooked up. That was really slick. When we got there, what Lloyd had been doing is the commander's plugged into the battle update. Then, at the end, he'd go around and see if they had anything. They generally did not. So, I said, "What I'm going to do is I'm going to pull the commanders out of this thing. The commanders and I are going to have a separate update." We did that daily, too. That was kind of a pain for them, but I would understand. If there's a commander out doing battlefield circulation or something, I would take his deputy in a heartbeat. So, that was part of the battle rhythm.

We had a weekly, I guess you'd call it, an intel update, which is probably the most important meeting that we had. It brought in leadership from all of the agencies and organizations that had any intelligence capabilities. We'd all sit around the table. This was done at the Top Secret/SCI [sensitive compartmented information] level. We all sit around at the table and say, "Okay. What are you guys

seeing? We'll show you ours if you show us yours." It was that kind of thing. So, that was a very important meeting. I think we had staff meetings too, but I didn't take those. The chiefs generally did that. That was about our battle rhythm. Once a month, we did kind of an assessment. We got better there, but I don't know if we ever got to where I was comfortable that we really understood the effects that we were actually having on the ground of all our different efforts, but, yes, that was once a month. I forget what we called it. But, my planners really came up with something. They broke it down into five categories and established criteria; then, we gauged ourselves against those criteria. So, we did that once a month. Then, I plugged into General Barno's battle rhythm. He only asked me to be up there about once a week—I mean, down there, down in Kabul. So, that became part of mine. I think that's about it.

DR. HUGHES: **Were there people or agencies that you tended to deal with regularly, outside your own task force?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. Well, there was a task force there that was focused on the counterterrorism mission. We obviously interacted with them on a daily basis, because they were running operations inside of my battle space. It was very important that we knew what they were doing and they knew what we were doing. So, we had regular interaction with them. There were a number of intelligence agencies there. You know, we had what they called the OGA, other governmental agency. We interacted with them. They came to my intelligence meetings. They had a representative in my joint operations center. They came to the task force's meetings. So, there was regular interaction there. Are we just talking intelligence, or are we talking other—?

DR. HUGHES: **Did you deal with the various different nongovernmental agencies?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes.

DR. HUGHES: **What about those sorts of guys?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes, right. We dealt with State Department. Most of the time, it was through General Barno's headquarters, but there were several times when Ambassador Khalilzad and I did things together. They were not part of our battle rhythm. But, you know, I'd say we were up there once or twice a month, just chatting with the embassy people and seeing what was going on there. Nongovernmental organizations, especially in the run-up to the elections, the national elections and presidential elections, which occurred on our watch there … I want to say it was like November or December. We dealt with UNAMA, the United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan, because they were the ones, actually, who were hosting the elections and verifying

that they were in fact fair and free. So, we dealt with them a lot. There were other nongovernmental organizations in the battle space. We reached out to them with varying degrees of success, you know, Médicins Sans Frontières [Doctors Without Borders], the Red Crescent, and the Red Cross. So, we dealt with them. There was no structured set number of meetings or times to meet, but we did stay in touch with what they were doing. We stayed in touch with USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] regularly. I guess through the provincial reconstruction teams, we built very good relationships with the agencies that provided representatives through our provincial reconstruction teams. That was the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Agriculture had some people in there. So, we worked with them a little bit. It was truly an interagency effort. I think all of us who were in the leadership of the CJTF really got an education in terms of what interagency interaction was.

Also, dealing with the Afghan government, General Barno did most of that, but at the provincial level, we did. So, the national-level stuff was up to General Barno. The provincial-level stuff fell to us. We did that through our provincial reconstruction teams. Also, our brigade combat team commanders interacted with the governors of the provinces that were inside of their battle space, you know, their AORs. So, it was a multivariate experience, from the standpoint of the agencies that we worked with.

DR. HUGHES: **How did you balance the different roles of combat and reconstruction? Did you think it was effectively managed for a counterinsurgency-type environment?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right. I think that General Barno set the tone for that. He had what I think was a simple, but brilliant, formulation for the relationship. He may have sketched it out for you. It's kind of a circular diagram that shows one arrow that says "Reconstruction" and another arrow that says "Security" on the hemispheres of a circle. Then, there is an arrow that runs right through the center and it says "Extending the reach of the Afghan Government." To me, that was the thing that kind of set the tone for how we went about business. The theory there was that you can't have security without a reconstruction effort in a place like Afghanistan because the essential services weren't even there. In some of these buildings, they didn't have running water. They didn't have sewage. They didn't have electricity. You know, they didn't have banks. There was nothing like that. There were just these little villages stuck up in the mountains. So, it was no wonder that the people were a little bit discontented. But, if you could bring them some of the essentials, raise their level of satisfaction, and then put an Afghan face on it; or make it, in actuality, an Afghan government that's providing

that, it kind of takes the wind out of the sails of some of the insurgent groups that were there. It also lowers discontent.

You know, these guys that I was talking about to you before that were just used to fighting anything from outside their—you know, they were xenophobes. They would just fight anything from outside their little village or their little district. Those guys, if they see progress going on in the neighboring town and it's the central government that's providing it, they're going to have a tendency to come out of the hills, too. They will say, "Hey, we want some of this, too." So, I think there was a very important link between the two. Now, gauging where it is you want to go, operate in, kill, or capture, and where it is that what you want to do is go there and ensure the protection of the force, but not conduct offensive combat operations … instead, you want to do what some people have called armed peacekeeping, which I think is a good term. That's a fine art. Again, it goes back to what's your intelligence like? We had a very powerful intelligence organization there who would look at a district and say, "You know what? There is no Taliban here, but if you go in there with guns, they're going to shoot at you. You need to engage these people first and find out what they need. Then, go build it for them." So, that's how we approached it. It was purely based on intelligence.

The interesting thing is that intelligence in an operation goes beyond just SIGINT, HUMINT [signals intelligence, human intelligence], and all that. It's also—you know, there's fine line between information and intelligence in these kinds of operations. It's cultural awareness. It's somebody who knows that the people in this district belong to this tribe and they have historically disliked that tribe. So, if you go in there with ANA, Afghan National Army, soldiers who are from this tribe, you're going to get a fight. If you go in—so, really—this is rocket science when it comes to figuring out where you're going to make reconstruction the primary effort and support it with security operations, and where it is that you're going to make security operations the primary dimension and support it with reconstruction. Then, it was all about extending the reach of the central government. We tried every change we could to make whatever we did, security operations or reconstruction, we tried to put an Afghan face on it, because ultimately, we could care less what they thought about the Coalition. The principal concern was what they thought about their own government and the Afghan security forces. So, I thought Barno's formulation there was brilliant. It really guided our operations the whole time we were there.

DR. HUGHES: **When dealing with hostile armed forces, what kind of tactics did you find they used? What sort of countereffortsdid you have?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: I would say that they used no tactics at all. While we were there, it was very rare to see an armed formation of insurgents in groups of any more than ten. I mean, they were at best capable of a stationary ambush. But they did not conduct anything that resembled offensive operations, defense, or anything like that. It was a very disorganized … I'm not saying it wasn't violent, but it was a very disorganized type of force. Their operations showed that. That, in some ways, made it difficult for us, because we were used to fighting—all of us, at that time, anyway, had come up in an Army where we were fighting at the CTCs, the combat training centers. We fought an opposing force that fought by norms, and they had these kinds of formations. So, you know, if you hit the advance guard of a motorized rifle regiment, you pretty much knew what was behind it and how they stacked up. With these guys, that was not the case at all. So, you know, you could be going along down a valley. All of the sudden, you get gunfire from both sides. It was hard to tell how to react, because we just weren't familiar with their tactics. Now, I understand that has changed a little bit recently. I think they've got a larger formation that they're attacking in, and they are using something that resembles tactics. So, I guess if there was—we could still use good small-unit tactics. But, I would say that it was a company commander's fight. There is no doubt about it. But, when company commanders fought, they did so essentially by, say, let's say, moving platoons to the right positions. Then, it was the platoon leaders and the squad leaders who actually did the fire and maneuver. In most cases, we fought being very discriminating about the use of firepower. Very, very rarely did we get into a situation where we would follow the doctrine of overwhelming force. We didn't do that. The reason we didn't do it is because many times the application of overwhelming force resulted in civilian casualties and collateral damage. That kind of worked against our purposes, in my view.

DR. HUGHES: **How effective was the whole disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration [DDR] effort?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. You know, I think we DDRed some of the more well known militias who had leaders that were predisposed to work with the Afghan government, because they had something to gain. [Abdul] Rashid Dostum was up in the north and had a fairly sizable militia. He DDRed because he knew he was going to end up getting a position in the government. He became a special adviser in the Ministry of Defense or something like that. So, the larger militias who pretty much fought side by side against the Russians with [President Hamid] Karzai and with the Pashtun majority, they were pretty easy to DDR. There were some other groups that took some persuading. In some cases, I don't think they ever did demobilize. Amanullah Kahn was one who maintained his militia. So, with the people who were

the outliers, they were kind of disaffected, anyway. They didn't DDR. It goes back to when you talk about disarm and demobilize, you can't do that unless you have offered a pretty compelling incentive or the leadership has made the determination that continuation of the violence is not going to pay as much as whatever it is they can gain by DDR. So, you pretty much have to have a pretty good political process and a pretty good economic incentive in place anyway before you can DDR. You can't do it the other way around. I mean, if you're in a violent conflict, you can't say, "Okay, we're going to DDR and then work on our political problems." So, I would say it was successful—not wildly successful, but it was probably better than marginally successful. That's because—at that time, anyway—Karzai was reaching political accommodations with the leadership of the groups, or these armed militias, anyway.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned the presidential elections, and you had—what was it—Operation LIGHTNING RESOLVE.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right.

DR. HUGHES: **How did that go? How did the elections play out? What was the role of the CJTF?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right. We decided that what we were going to do, through the offensive operations prior to the election that were designed to disrupt any type of planning or preparation that the armed insurgents planned, be they Taliban or somebody else, was to disarm them and rock them back on their heels. This way, they wouldn't be set to disrupt the elections. So, that was kind of the first phase of the thing. Then, to conduct the elections, we worked very closely with the ANA. We tried to get the ANA in the lead when it came to securing polling sites and that type of thing. We were making sure we didn't have bombings or attacks. So, that was security operations. It was not a full-blown defense, but security operations were in place. We had lots of surveillance going on in the run-up to and during the elections to see if we could see anybody in any kind of number that was mobilizing to disrupt the elections. There was a tremendous intelligence effort to go out there and see if anybody knew of anybody who was planning anything. So, that was part of the whole deal. You know, we had information operations that emphasized the importance of the elections to the future of Afghanistan and the safe and effect conduct of the elections was patriotic and it was what Afghanistan needed. So, that was a piece of it. Then, we had just purely administrative support. We worked with UNAMA. During the registration, we got their people out there to get people registered. Then, during elections we carried ballots out. We'd fly them out in helicopters and fly them back. So, it was a very extensive mission on the day of execution there, the immediate run-up to and then

the actual execution of the elections. So, it was, again, a multifaceted operation.

Now, in terms of the success—I mean, the objective was to have elections, have a good voter turnout, and have those elections judged by the international community as being free and fair. I think, by all measures, those were successful elections. It really was the capstone of our mission over there. It became the centerpiece of the main effort. It's probably something that those who participated in it were proud of.

DR. HUGHES: **You undertook a couple of—unusual, for Afghanistan—winter operations.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right.

DR. HUGHES: **There was LIGHTNING FREEDOM and THUNDER FREEDOM. What was involved there?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: You know, it was just … you know, I'm not sure how unique they were. I just don't know. But, the idea there was the traditional spring offensive. Again, it was the notion that if we could go up into their winter sanctuaries and disrupt, kill, or capture leaders, fragment or disaggregate some of the groups that would otherwise be sitting there fat, dumb, happy and preparing for their spring offensive, that the spring offensive would go better for us than it had in years past.

To be frank, we didn't make a whole lot of contact during those operations. This really comes to one of my bottom lines. I am not so sure that we didn't have the Taliban all but defeated. My intel guys were telling me that the Taliban doesn't really exist anymore as any kind of effective force. You know, you can't cover the whole country, but the areas where we went, we just didn't make a whole lot of contact or see a whole lot of armed resistance. You know, you could say, "Well, they were looking in the wrong places. They didn't go to areas were the enemy was. Blah, blah, blah." I've heard all that before. My answer to that is "Right. Helmand, Oruzgan, Northern Kandahar," and areas where at that time it really wasn't so much about the Taliban. It was about these guys I was mentioning before, the armed groups like hillbillies. My theory is why fight these guys? Why not just fix the rest of the country, or at least show improvement, and persuade them to come out of hills and put down their arms? It's better to join us than it is to fight us. So, the winter offensive was when we went to areas where we thought we might find Taliban or al Qaeda. But, we didn't mess with the hillbillies so much.

DR. HUGHES: **Okay. Division artillery performs an unusual role for artillery in Afghanistan. Could you comment on that?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes, the headquarters division artillery [DIVARTY] became a battle space owner. He ran RC East out of Salerno. His staff augmented, but his staff did basically what a maneuver BCT was doing over there in Afghanistan. You know, he interacted with my staff just like a normal brigade combat team would. They ran operations, just like the 3d Brigade Combat Team in the south did. So, they acted as a maneuver brigade headquarters, or as maneuver brigades, operated in Afghanistan. Again, we very rarely ran anything that looked like a brigade-level operation. It just didn't pay. You know, they weren't out there in the force that we required. Though, when marine expeditionary units were in there, that was a brigade-level operation. So, that's how the DIVARTY headquarters were.

We brought over one FA [field artillery] battalion, 3/7 Field Artillery. Those guys, again, were battle space owners. They worked down south with the 3d Brigade Combat Team. Col. Dick Pedersen, who was the BCT commander, used them. They owned Kandahar. So, they ran patrols, just like infantry guys did. They did small-scale operations, just like the infantry did. So, the artillery really was functioning in a nontraditional way during our piece of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM [OEF].

DR. HUGHES: **Just on the more, I won't say trivial, level, but I gather you made a creative use of commander's coins for improvised explosive devices [IEDs].**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. If we had anybody—I hasten to preface this by saying that the extent of the IED problem was not anywhere near what we're seeing now. We had one IED attack, a particularly horrific one, that stands out in my mind. But, yes, if guys had an opportunity, or if they detected an IED before it went off, you know, I'd go down and present a coin or something similar to that. So, there was a lot of incentive to finding that, beyond just protecting the force. Again, the IEDs were the weapon of choice there, at that time, like they are now.

DR. HUGHES: **What sort of relationship did you have with the PRTs? You've mentioned them several times.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Right. The provincial reconstruction teams in OEF, when we were there, and I think to this day, were part of the military organization. The PRT commanders were military guys. They reported through military channels, just like a battalion did. I considered those guys, in terms of the effect that they could bring and in terms of the responsibilities that we placed on them—I considered the PRTs to be battalion equivalent because of the importance of the reconstruction mission. The PRTs, while we were there, were growing. I think when we got there, there were about eleven. We ended up with sixteen. If I recall correctly, they

were predominantly military when we arrived. We put a lot of pressure on some of the civilian agencies to kick in officers from State, from USAID, and some of the other civilian agencies. The provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan were very much focused on support of the counterinsurgency missions. Now, the ones, for example in Iraq, right now—I just got back from Iraq. I was running those PRTs. The ones in Iraq right now are more focused on institution building and capacity development. They are getting provincial governments to learn how to govern and to understand what it is that good governments provide. Then, we help them to get to the point where they are providing it. In Afghanistan, we were a little less concerned about that, you know, rightly or wrongly. We were more interested in making an impression on the population that it was more to their advantage to join us than it was to fight us, because there were benefits associated with joining us. In some ways, that was a little short sighted, if you consider, and I think we all do, that the ultimate goal is to hand off all of the functions to the Afghan government and security forces. If you do that and you haven't built some kind of capability to govern at the local level, you're going to have some problems. But, on the whole, I'd say that PRTs are very successful. I think they made a valuable contribution. We had some good guys running them, too.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that increasingly during the time you were there, there was the presence of the Afghan National Army. How much interaction did you have with them?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Regular. The way that would work is they would cut units to us. It was a platoon- or company- or battalion-sized unit that we would take under our operational control and then work with them. At the time that we were there, they could function up to the battalion level, but it was within one of my formations. So, it was an Afghan battalion attached to one of my infantry battalions. The Afghan commander was taking guidance and direction from either the infantry battalion commander, the U.S. infantry battalion commander, or the brigade commander. They had no ability to sustain themselves. They had poor command and control equipment and that kind of thing. We had good—I'd say a positive—relationship with the ANA, but they were clearly dependent on us for their effectiveness.

Then, the ANP, Afghan National Police … it's almost like Iraq, without the sectarianism. They were really poorly equipped and poorly trained. I suspect that sometimes they were out there for their own good, and not for the common good. So, the ANP, I think, lagged the ANA in terms of their level of development. That was an area where there were a lot of guys trying hard. The Afghan National Army, it wasn't like they had units that were prepared to go out there and conduct independent operations.

DR. HUGHES: **Obviously, the situation on the border with Pakistan was critical. Could you describe what operations were like there? What kind of cross-border things were we dealing with there?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. Yes, the Pakistani border is a very controversial topic. It was then. It is now. There are two schools of thought. One was that all problems in Afghanistan are linked to Pakistan and their inability to control the frontier provinces. The other is that all the problems in Pakistan originate with the Taliban that we allowed to get out of Afghanistan, who are now marching on Islamabad. You see a little evidence that that school of thought may not be totally whacked out, based on some of the things that are happening in Pakistan now. But, back when we were there, we tried to approach this at several levels. This is when it was a strategic and policy level initiative that General Barno let us conduct. Jacoby did a lot of work with this. We made approaches to the embassy in Islamabad, our embassy in Islamabad, and to very senior Pakistani military leaders, asking for their cooperation on the border. It was cooperation in a couple senses. One was to get the Pakistani army to run operations in and around there to attack staging areas such as schools, madrassas, assembly areas were we felt the Taliban was coming out of and moving into Afghanistan. It was Taliban and al Qaeda. The other thing we worked with them on was our operations in and around the border. That was a little dicey, because rules of engagement said that we had the inherent right to self-defense. If we're getting shot at, we can return fire. Sometimes, we got shot at across the border. It was, and is, very, very touchy. I remember one very heated conversation I had with a Pakistani general who worked in their DGMO [Directorate General of Military Operations]. He kept saying to me, "You do not fire into Pakistan!" But, we were getting shot at from Pakistan, so we tried to work with them on that. If we were going to conduct something near the border, many times we would let them know we were going to do that. There were some OPSEC [operations security] considerations there, and I'll go into that in just a second. Then, if there was a border incident, I was on the phone right away, calling the DGMO and letting them know, "Hey, this happened. Here's why it happened. We're going to sort all this out, but you just need to know."

There were times where I'm certain we were in a firefight with Pakistani forces. That takes me to the point that, you know, the Pakistani defense force, in some ways, is a foreign army in the Northwest Frontier provinces. When they come in there, you know, there's huge Pashtun tribes and groups living in the provinces. They're xenophobes, and they don't like the army. They don't like the central government. When the Pakistani army comes in there, they are opposed—not

to mention the Taliban, who oppose them in there, too. There's also an army unit known as the Frontier Corps that mans the checkpoints and the border posts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their allegiance is suspect. The Frontier Corps is notorious for being sympathetic to, let's say, Pashtun insurgents, be they Taliban or whatever else. So, there's no doubt in my mind that the Frontier Corps not only harbored, but protected, some of the guys that were going back and forth across the border and fighting our soldiers over there.

So, we tried to make it work with the Pakistanis. It was very complex, as you could tell from the description I just gave you. Interestingly enough, during our stay there, they ordered a fairly significant offensive operation in Waziristan and the Northwest Frontier provinces, Shikai and some of the places there. Looking back on it, they killed a bunch of guys in there. Looking back on it, I wonder if the way they ran that operation, because they were fairly heavy handed, didn't create more enemies than it eliminated in that area. But, again, that was the Pakistani sovereignty issue. There wasn't much we could do about that, except dialogue with them about our views and what was going on with our side of the border and that kind of thing. So, we worked it hard, and Chuck Jacoby's a good guy to talk to about that.

DR. HUGHES: **When your division left and you turned it over to the Southern European Task Force [SETAF], what was the transition like then?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: It was good. These guys came in. They did not have as robust of a headquarters coming in as we did because [Maj. Gen.] Jason [K.] Kamiya commanded SETAF—they did not have the same kind of structure as we had when we came in, so they had to do a lot more plug-and-play than we did. We did the standard left-seat/right-seat ride. Their chief of staff, [Col.] Billy Mayville, took over the joint operations center before the actual change of command. So, Billy actually worked for me for five or six days, so he got used to doing that. Then, Jason Kamiya came in a few days beforehand. You know, he didn't want an extensive handover, which was fine with me. We had a chance to chat about some things. But, he's a smart guy, and he picked up on it very, very well. So, I think it was a smooth transition.

DR. HUGHES: **What would you consider the most significant accomplishments during the time you were there?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: National elections. I think that was a strategic turning point for the Afghan government. It opened a window of opportunity. Now, whether or not we—the big "we"—took advantage of the opening of that window of opportunity is another matter. I'll leave that for historians like you to

decide. But, the national elections—there was a moment there where I honestly believe we had the Taliban on the ropes. We kind of had a unifying effect that brought in some of the armed militias. We had opportunity to do reconciliation. You know, we said, "Hey, look. This is moving in the right direction. You guys need to join us." We had an opportunity to reinforce our reconstruction effort, if we'd had the resources to do that. We really had an opportunity to close the door on the enemy and put Karzai in the driver's seat. I also think that another accomplishment that stemmed from that was that, as a coherent fighting force, we whittled the Taliban down—this is in Afghanistan, now—to the point where they could not conduct effective combat operations.

DR. HUGHES: **Yes. Were there major challenges that your task force faced?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. I think we failed in the area of information operations, as I was mentioning to you before. I don't think we ever understood how they should be used and what kind of effects can be gained. I think that's an area, just as an aside, where our armed forces need to take a hard look.

DR. HUGHES: **You mentioned that isn't something you normally deal with in that environment.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: It's hard to practice at a CTC, to be honest with you. It's a sustained effort. It has to be very carefully tailored to the culture in which you are operating. It's hard to replicate the conditions that allow you to train information operations effectively in our CTCs or, for that matter, anywhere else. I think the other area where we probably—I guess it was a challenge; we didn't take advantage of an opportunity—that was the reconciliation effort. Again, I think we had some opportunities there. We never figured out, I don't think, how to use military forces to support the reconciliation effort with the Taliban. In the end, that's got to be the national government who actually does it. These guys don't want to reconcile with us. But, the way that the Coalition could have supported a reconciliation effort—I don't ever think we gave the Karzai government either the lead that they needed, or the support that they needed, to make reconciliation go. I think in Afghanistan—and, by way in Iraq, in terms of solving long-term problems that are there—reconciliation is absolutely essential. I don't think in either place we have cracked the code on that and, specifically, how a coalition contributes to that.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, that sort of leads to one of my last questions, which is did you get the feeling when you were in Afghanistan that the focus was on Iraq? How did the respective priorities play out?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Yes. You know, of course, I had a brigade in Iraq. I had the opportunity to go over there and visit that brigade twice from Afghanistan. I never felt like we were either the red-headed stepchild of CENTCOM or the national effort for the Global War on Terrorism. I never felt like that. There were distinct differences, as you know—obviously—that were there in how the two operations were resourced and focused, but I think they were justifiable. I mean, you know, Iraq is proving to be a very intractable problem. In Afghanistan, at that point in time, anyway, the level of ops was manageable. We seemed to be moving forward in terms of national programs, economic and political programs. So, I never felt like we needed more and didn't get it because of Iraq, if that's what you're getting at.

DR. HUGHES: **Is there anything else I should have asked you?**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: That was a good inventory of questions. Let me think for a second. No, I think—the only other thing that you might—I don't know if this is part of your mandate or not, but it's the issue of technology, weapons systems, command and control equipment, and that kind of stuff.

DR. HUGHES: **I'm definitely interested in it.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Okay. You know, if you were going to ask me if we needed anything that we didn't have, I would say—one of the things I would say that we didn't need that people were trying to force on us was the heavily armored vehicles. That, to me—they came down with this thing about "all wheeled vehicles will be armored" while I was there. To me, that was a disaster, because we had areas where it was absolutely stupid to armor our wheeled vehicles. There was zero threat. I mean, there was no chance that we were going to get hit with an IED or whatever. They should have left to the commander the choice of which vehicles needed to be armored and to what degree and all that—you know, the push for MRAP [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicle] and some of the anti-IED systems that are out there—was something that I am glad we didn't have too much of a push. The guys that came after me, I think, were burdened with that. I would say that probably the one thing I would have liked to have more of was surveillance stuff—the Predator and the UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles]. We could have used more of that, especially the ones that were available at the company level. We had a few UAVs at the company level, but not enough really to satisfy the commanders who were there and who would have liked to have seen more of that. So, that would probably be the one technological add that I would have liked to have seen.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, thank you very much, sir.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Well, It's my pleasure. Good luck as you continue with this effort. If you need anything else, give me a shout.

DR. HUGHES: **Well, again, thank you very much, sir.**

MAJ. GEN. OLSON: Okay, Pat. Good. Take care. Bye.



Brig. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux *served as Assistant Division Commander (Operations), 25th Infantry Division (Light), including duty as Deputy Commanding General, Combined Joint Task Force-76, from October 2003 to June 2005. He was interviewed in the Pentagon while serving as Deputy Chief, Legislative Liaison, by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 9 January and 20 February 2007. General Champoux discusses his arrival to the 25th Infantry Division as its assistant division commander for operations and comments on the division's training and preparation for a counterinsurgency conflict before deployment to Afghanistan. He describes the transition between the 10th Mountain Division (Light) and the 25th Infantry Division and the establishment of Combined Joint Task Force-76, which replaced Combined Joint Task Force-180. Combined Joint Task Force-76 performed well in combat, and General Champoux describes the successes of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. The election of 2004 was a critical moment and served as an "information operation" on behalf of the fledgling democratic government in Kabul. Provincial reconstruction teams played an important role in working toward a stable Afghanistan and provided unique challenges and benefits to operations. General Champoux concludes the first session of the interview with his optimistic hopes for the future of Afghanistan and favorable assessment of Combined Joint Task Force-76's tactical performance in theater. In a second session, General Champoux discusses the strategic and operation transition from conventional combat to counterinsurgency, the integration of Special Operations Forces with Combined Joint Task Force-76 efforts, the development of the regional command system, and the 25th Infantry Division's transition with the Southern European Task Force in April 2005.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the ninth of January 2007, and I'm interviewing Brig. Gen. Bernard Champoux about his tour of duty as the deputy commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force-76 [CJTF-76] in Afghanistan. I'm interviewing him in his office in the Pentagon. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I am.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And do you have any reservation with Army researchers using this material, as long as you're cited correctly?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: None.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You were stationed with the 25th Infantry Division [25th ID] in Hawaii before it deployed to Afghanistan. How and when did you find out that the division was going to go over to theater?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I was, at the time, working as the EA [executive assistant] for the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General [USMC] Pete Pace, the current chairman. Because it was a joint assignment, I had to complete my tour there, and so I couldn't show up in Hawaii until October of 2003. All the preparation—a lot of the preparation occurred before that. They did their exercise at BCTP [Battle Command Training Program] in July, and I was able to go down for a couple, three, days of that. I arrived in October. Five days after I got there, we did the actual BCTP exercise. So, in terms of preparation, I had very little kind of preparation. I got there, and we did the exercise. At the time that we did the BCTP exercise at the end of October of 2003, the 25th Infantry Division was going to assume CJTF-180. Of course, it got renamed to CJTF-76, but we were going to have two brigade rotations. Soon after the end of that exercise, within thirty days, there was a change. One brigade was going to go to Iraq. One brigade, plus some other division battalions—



General Champoux *(left)* shakes hands with a soldier after a memorial ceremony for six members of the 3d Battalion, 4th Cavalry, who lost their lives in a plane crash on 27 November 2004.

attack aviation battalion and an engineer battalion—was going to go to Iraq for a year, and we were going to take another infantry brigade, and they were going to do a one-year rotation. So, things kind of changed after that.

DR. KOONTZ: **If I could ask you, did you notice anything during that BCTP that told you anything how the division would perform?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I think there were indications. The interesting part … you know, I ended up writing a note to my boss, who sent it to then–Lt. Gen. [William S.] Wallace, who ran CAC [Combined Arms Center]—he's the commander of CAC at Fort Leavenworth. The BCTP was specifically designed … these are old algorithms, and it was the old BCTP fighting against a world-class OPFOR [opposing force]. We essentially … our preparation exercise was done in the Caspian Sea purposely so they couldn't introduce a blue-water Navy, and so it couldn't really be a fully joint exercise. They tried to do some Air Force integration, but the simulation software and hardware didn't allow for total integration. It was classic. There was a line on the map. We were on one side, and they were on the other side. We fought a Soviet surrogate with rags and bags—a very kind of linear thing, and the way they tried to make it asymmetrical is they allowed the world-class OPFOR to fight in a way that it was unpredictable. So, in terms of—and you've got to understand, I know, in talking to General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno—General Barno came in that October, also, about the time we were getting ready. The efforts in Afghanistan up to that date were fairly kinetic and fairly conventional, although there was a very heavy SOF [Special Operations Forces] effort to do some man hunting on al Qaeda leadership and Taliban leadership. But essentially, the effort up to that point was—although [Afghan President Hamid] Karzai had been installed and they had done all the interim government stuff, it really had been—the military effort had been, you know, big M and the rest of the DIME [diplomatic, information, military, economic] had been, you know, small d, small i, small e. So, all our preparation was very conventional, and it was interesting.

What we were getting from the field, what we were getting from CFC-Alpha [Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan] as General Barno was trying to stand this thing up, was "Hey, listen. We're fighting an insurgency." We had not discussed any kind of insurgency or how we would fight an insurgency. We had put together plans, though. We were well manned. We were well led. We were well trained in a classic sense, but the environment was different than what anyone had provided us in terms of their ability to prepare us. So, the BCTP was a good exercise only in terms of allowing us to work internal processes, the military

decision-making process. We were classically organized for a very linear battlefield. I was in the DTAC [division tactical command post]; we had a DMAIN [division main command post]; we had a DREAR [division rear command post]; and everything was very, very linear. The battle rhythm, which, hopefully, we'll talk about a little bit later, was a classic division battle rhythm under a corps. It was all based on resourcing and just very different than what we were going to see, what we did see, in Afghanistan.

So, from that exercise—after that, because we were on this kind of compressed timeline, when we had to deploy, you can imagine! We were approaching Thanksgiving and the holidays, and we now had to get a brigade that had been ready to go to Afghanistan, we had to now get them ready to go to Iraq. A brigade that thought it had another eight or nine months before it deployed—eight months—we had to now get them ready in a short amount of time, and then we had to go through the deployment of the division to two different areas. I mean, it was a pretty large task. So, Joint Forces Command would do the Unified Endeavor [UE] exercise, and once they found out this all changed, they tried to schedule that. We really couldn't do it. We had kind of a seminar internally that we had organized to bring in as many different folks as we could to kind of expand how we were viewing the battle space, and Joint Forces Command had kind of taken that over. They didn't do a full-scale, you know, UE exercise, but they did kind of moderate it and helped bring in different folks to help us look at the battle space. But, you know, it was really—it was just interesting, especially as a guy that had just fought the war from the Pentagon with a Marine four-star. And, you know, we got here 1 October 2001. So, for two years of war fighting up here, from a very joint perspective, to go and to see how the Army was preparing itself, it was very Army-centric, and it really was that the whole doctrine and the preparation had not caught up with what was happening on the ground.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned your experience in the building before you went to the 25th ID. Did you bring any of that kind of experience or any of that kind of knowledge to—?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: You know, I did, and I look back on it now, and I think, probably, 70 to 80 percent of it was probably good [laughs]. About 20 to 30 percent of it was probably at a level that people just got tired of hearing about it—you know, "Why don't we. …" So, at the senior-leader level, with the chief of staff and General [Brig. Gen. Charles H.] Jacoby and General [Maj. Gen. Eric T.] Olson, it was helpful, because it really—I was just another thought on the political impact, you know, kind of the larger view of things, how that would play. But, at a point—I mean, this is geopolitical and geostrategic, and we really had to get to operational- and theater-strategic level. Some of it probably helped. Now, it

helped me personally tremendously, because I really felt very unconstrained in how I viewed things, and the influence of then-Secretary [of Defense Donald H.] Rumsfeld and how he was causing, really, the military to think differently about things, to me, was very helpful. I mean, it really was liberating. I didn't feel compelled. I mean, I'd been away from the Army. If you look at what I'd done up to that point, I'd never served above brigade until I left brigade command, and then I went at a very high level. So, the tactical piece? I'd always remained in my comfort zone. I'd been an S-3 [operations officer] three times, an XO [executive officer] three times, commanded a couple of companies, had been a battalion, brigade commander—you know, back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back in ops, all ops jobs. So, it was really helpful for me to step outside of the Army and look back at it from a really different perspective and challenge things. So, I think it was helpful. I think some people would probably tell you, "Yes, some of it was probably helpful," and some would be "Champoux was a huge pain in the ass" [laughs]. A lot of these things were probably not germane, sometimes.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, you're in Hawaii. The division is largely prepared, gone through its BCTP. What happens between that—**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: They called it the war fighter exercise.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, after you go through that exercise process, what happens between that and the deployment?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, in earnest, we were getting ready to deploy the division to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Minus a brigade-plus?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: No, these, both brigades now are deploying virtually simultaneously, although the 2d Brigade was going first, to Iraq. 3d Brigade was then going to go to Afghanistan. We started the deployment of 2d Brigade after Christmas and around the first part of January. We started the deployment of 3d Brigade and the division headquarters in February, end of February into March. Our ADVON [advanced echelon] went out, and then we were told, right as we were doing that, that we needed to mobilize quite a few units. So, the main effort, for the division, was to deploy. Because we controlled when the division staff was going to go over and we knew we were going, we had—our planners and our intel folks were really not sequestered, but they really were allowed to concentrate on getting ready to go to Afghanistan. So, they had established contact with CFC-Alpha, with CJTF-180, which was 10th Mountain Division, with SIPR [Secure Internet Protocol Router] and some other things. In fact, we even got Blue Force Tracker there.

You know, we were daily doing kind of situational updates, and weekly going through these kind of sessions with the commanding general on different topics.

But, Christopher, up until when General Jacoby went on his predeployment site survey [PDSS], and then General Olson, we were not talking about fighting an insurgency. We finally got to the point where—in fact, General Olson said, "Don't use that word," and the reason was that the brigade commander had pulled some things up, and we were kind of misapplying the insurgency in a way that I don't think he felt that everyone was at the same start point. So, he once made the comment, you know, "Don't use that term anymore." I had made the comment, "Well, we will call it what we want, but it's something between what the Army's done in the Balkans and something between what the Army did in DESERT STORM. So, we can call it what we want, but there is no line. This is not going to be a linear battlefield, and it's going to be very distributive, noncontiguous, with other elements." And very quickly … you know, at times I think Army leaders are ill prepared to fight in a very unrestricted, unconventional environment, but once they get in there and fight, it's surprising how very well prepared they are to do that. But a lot of the things that we're taught—and if you can imagine how a guy like Champoux was raised, through all these, as I told you, through all my troop and tactical experiences over a couple decades, the defining kind of measure of how I would do as either an operations officer or an executive officer or commander was how my organization performed at JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center] or NTC [National Training Center]. Eleven-day battle? It's extremely difficult to determine a unit's success in an eleven-day effort. So, you know, you're looked at. People take exception to my use of the term "evaluated," but your performance is evaluated based on how well you—you know, how effective you are in establishing these processes to allow you to efficiently, not necessarily effectively, but efficiently get through the military decision-making process and do all these things. Not only that, but the CTCs [combat training centers]—because there are lessons learned, it's an incremental improvement. So, every time I went, all I had to do was go back to see what worked for the last person and show some kind of incremental improvement. And it was always linear, so all the things that were an improvement and a modification of what we learned in Cold War tactics resided in the CTCs and morphed into different environments, affected by our other operations in Panama and Grenada and, to a certain extent, DESERT STORM and some of these other things—and some of the other stabilization operations, but not heavily influenced by that. So, we just made this old military decision-making process fit into these different conditions, so if you did a direct application of that in this environment, you were not going to be successful.

But, surprisingly, I think it has to do as much with education as it does with training. Our leaders are well prepared to do well if they can think differently about it, and the catalyst to think differently about it was Lt. Gen. Dave Barno. The first thing he did was tell people, "Read Lewis Sorley's book, *A Better War*, and start thinking about it that way." The whole world wasn't a nail, you know, so we weren't going to be a hammer. This was a new way to think about it. I mean, there were great leaders that were there before Dave Barno, but he was the first guy to say, "Okay." We talked through some of this. I mean, he really caused us to think differently about it. He caused 10th Mountain to think differently about it. 10th Mountain had been extended for three months to allow us to come in, and they were forced to straddle an old way of thinking about it and a new way of thinking about it, and there was some resistance—and General Barno started, I think, with eighteen people, so he had to pull some of the people from 10th Mountain staff to augment his staff. I mean, it was just a difficult thing. The three-star command used to be in Bagram. Now it's in Kabul. But anyway, as the division deployed, we're now starting to think totally differently about it. Then the division gets over there, and they get the 10th Mountain view of it. I think CFC-Alpha saw this as an opportunity with the new guys: "Listen, we're going to really cause these guys to think differently about it." And so, we did. I don't know if what I just said made sense or not. I got on this CTC rant.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let me ask you a question here, sir. Within your division's headquarters, at the time that you're deploying, how would you characterize the division command's understanding of the insurgency in Afghanistan?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I think, initially, we didn't understand. I think we thought we were going to go kill/capture and defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda and Hekmatyar. In a short window of about sixty days, we really started rethinking all of those things, and we kind of—this kind of ink-spot idea, you know—separating the population from the guerrilla and the idea that this is an insurgency. Some of the other components to the effort that we'll eventually talk about … really, what we were confronted with was voter registration and this election, and then the inauguration and the constitution. Those are the things that became measures of success, not how many Taliban we killed and captured, or al Qaeda—al Qaeda's a different story. But that really became a measure, the true measure, of success.

So, we had this very kinetic force getting put in this environment that had to start to think very differently about it. So, security was going to allow for things to happen, but we were being asked to think differently about security in standing up the Afghan National Army and

bringing legitimacy to that. It was to put an Afghan face on the security and then, through the PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams] and some other things, start to show the Afghan people that they can have a representative government that can secure itself, that can elect a president, that can elect a parliament, that can do all those things. So, you know, once you start looking at it that way, there are a lot of other players in the battle space that we had to learn to work with—not de-conflict, but to synchronize. So, we went off and did this effects-based operation, and that really kind of took over some of the kind of traditional military planning. We kind of dabbled with that and set things up that really allowed us to—it gave us a framework to kind of think differently about the battle space and to start to bring in and integrate these other actors that were in the battle space. We called them "leaf eaters," but it wasn't just the nonkinetic NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], IOs [international organizations], UN [United Nations], the indigenous security forces, police and army; but it was also the Special Operations Forces, both vanilla and black; it was also the OGAs [other governmental agencies] and DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency]. There were a lot of other—FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]—there were a lot of other folks that were operating in the battle space.

You know, if you look at a traditional organization of a brigade combat team, which is what we went in there with, we had the 22d MEU [22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)] that we put in one area; and then we eventually, where we had a battalion in one area, we stood up kind of a provisional brigade under our DIVARTY [division artillery] headquarters and formed, really, two brigades; and eventually formed a third brigade out of Herat. But, you know, it was just the realization that killing and capturing every Taliban out there was not going to get Afghanistan where it needed to be. And, you know, part of it had to be—first of all, there had to be this election. When we got there, there were 2 million people registered to vote. We eventually established a goal of about 6.5 million, and I think we ended up registering between 8 and 10 million. We then had the successful election, which was pretty remarkable, when you think about it. So, part of having this election was to get all the people to vote and to make sure that the Pashtuns didn't feel disenfranchised, which is kind of the core of the Taliban. So, you know, it got to be a fairly sophisticated thing. You're really trying to bring the Pashtuns and the Taliban, to a certain level, into the legitimate government, and you have infantry platoon leaders who have to start thinking about this stuff. It was pretty interesting.

DR. KOONTZ: **You touched on several things that I want to come back to. You've described pretty well the sort of changing mentality of the division headquarters as you move**

into theater. Tell me about the handoff between 10th Mountain and the 25th.

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: It went well. We had VTCs [video teleconferences]. Essentially, in our preparation, they had kind of opened up their headquarters. There was very good personal relations with that entire division, but they were fighting the war differently than the way we were going to fight it.

DR. KOONTZ: **How so? Could you explain that?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, they were operating out of—for lack of a better term—they were primarily operating out of cantonment areas: Kandahar, Bagram, and eventually up in Khowst, and they were doing, you know, operations to go out and find and kill or capture the Taliban, and then they were working with other Special Operations Forces to kill and capture al Qaeda. So, they would operate out of these large cantonment areas and go do things. There were only, when we got there, I think, four PRTs, and when we left, there were nineteen PRTs. So, you know, even before we got there, we decided that we needed to push ourselves out into these areas. If we were going to do some of the things that CFC-Alpha was asking us to do, then we needed to work with the provincial governors. We needed to work with local police, and we needed to be in areas that the U.S. presence was going to deny sanctuary, and we needed to be integrated with everybody that was in that battle space. So, did we take a kinetic—yeah, we still took a kinetic approach—but we were also trying to work on other things, like reconstruction. We had CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] dollars, and we were trying to put an Afghan face on almost everything we were doing, but we were trying to operate in a way that was really more classically counterinsurgency and, to a certain extent … not FID [foreign internal defense]-like, but somewhere between UW [unconventional warfare] and FID, which was kind of different. We were really trying to operate—you know, push ourselves into these different areas and operate in a way that, like I said, denied sanctuary and tried to separate the Taliban from the people, and in doing that, accepted risk in some areas, concentrated on other areas. Of course, the wild card was the border, but that's a whole different subject. We'll talk about that, too.

But just to answer your question, that really caused us to task organize differently and to look at the classic command relationships a little bit differently. We really tried to integrate, kind of, more of a cross-functional approach to things, rather than the classic operational—you know, OPCON/TACON/ADCON [operational control, tactical control, administrative control] relationship. It took us a while to do that, but we—at times very effectively, and at times less effectively, we really tried to take a very cross-

functional approach, rather than a similarly focused approach to go and kill/capture. We always did have that capability, but we got it to the point at times where every stakeholder, when we developed targets, would be in this room, and it became fully integrated. Although we wouldn't sometimes know what some of the other operations were going to be, they would at least know what we were going to do, and so they could measure the effects of what we were going to do on their operation and then could tell us if that effect was going to be helpful or harmful.

They also had kind of a say in how and when we did things, so that we could get an additional effect from our operations beyond just what we wanted to do. Let's use an example: If an organization wanted to go capture somebody, kill or capture somebody, the timing of when they did that, how they did it, and what we did before and after in terms of Afghan involvement before, and then Afghan involvement afterwards … or, you know, building a school or properly placing reconstruction dollars—actually, construction dollars—that could also be tied to somebody else's effort in that area, an NGO or the UN that was trying to register voters. If everybody that was involved in that knew what was going to happen—they were all going to do what they were going to do anyway, but if it was done in a way that was integrated, then it could be a lot more effective.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, did you inherit the CJTF structure that they left?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: We did.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, that stays the same?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: There's a JMD [joint manning document], so we took it as—the core of the JMD was the division headquarters. Then there were individual augmentees that filled out the JMD, and then, of course, we picked up other organizations, too—engineers that became both combined and joint that filled out the headquarters and the structure of CJTF-76.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the task force's relationship with CFC-Alpha?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: We were a subordinate, operational command. We were responsible for conducting operations inside the joint operation area.

DR. KOONTZ: **Let me re-ask that question. How did that command system work? What kind of contacts would you have with CFC-Alpha?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, initially—again, you know, General Barno's trying to stand this command up. We didn't deploy our entire

headquarters, and we actually contributed about, I think, nearly fifty people to this headquarters. Initially, the relationship was—again, you go back. I think General Barno thought that we needed to evolve beyond this very kinetic approach to things, and we did take more of a holistic, diplomatic, and economic and military and information operations approach to the battle space. I think it got to the point—now, you'd have to ask him—I think it got to the point that 10th Mountain was going to get so far, and I think he was concerned that we would see Afghanistan the way they saw it. So, initially, there was a lot of, probably, involvement at a level that was below the strategic/operational level. But when you looked at the size of his headquarters and what their capacity was, and the size of our headquarters and what our capacity was, it was difficult for them to keep up with us. It really was, until he got his JMD fleshed out, and then he really became better resourced. I think he got comfortably reoriented, and there was less of—there was never a relationship similar to a corps and a division where we had a daily battle rhythm and we had to brief him every day. I mean, he was intellectually more mature than that. He understood that was not what he needed to do. His interest in tactical operations was primarily his concern over the operational and strategic impact of the tactical operations. So, you know, he wanted to expand these PRTs. He looked at centers of gravity and made sure we understood where he felt the centers of gravity were to do the things that needed to occur.

We worked so very closely, collectively, at his level and at our level to register these voters. Now, this is through this big spring offensive. We had 22d MEU, and that was—you know, because of the weather and historically what happens here, they go to ground during the winter, for the most part, because you're in the Hindu Kush. Of course, Afghanistan is a pretty rugged country. So, once everything thaws out, they kind of come out of their caves and they decide it's time to go whip some ass. So, in spring and summer, they start this and there's this kind of flow. We had an operation that we assumed from 10th Mountain—I forget what it was called—to kind of deal with the spring offensive. As soon as we kind of started that thing, we realized that the real main effort needed to be to registering these voters. By the time we came out of that spring offensive, with the influence of General Barno, our familiarity with the battle space, our comfort with where we needed to go, understanding that the objective was to register voters, we really started to move in that direction. I think CFC-Alpha—really, I think General Barno thought, "Okay, these guys get it enough to where I don't have to. …" And so, I think all those things kind of worked together.

But when you talk to the relationship—and again, historically, or however you thought—the battle rhythm

is usually resource driven. Say there's an ATO [air tasking order]. There's an Air Force ATO, and you're looking at a classic three-star/two-star headquarters, even in a joint environment. In a conventional linear battlefield, it's all resource driven, because the corps may have multiple divisions. It has to compete with resources throughout the theater. Everything's driven on this targeting cycle to get inside the ATO cycle, to get inside this resourcing cycle. In Afghanistan, we learned—and we got there kind of ready to do that—we realized there's no requirement for that, thankfully: one, because he probably didn't have the headquarters to do it; but also, I think, probably because of General Barno's vision and General Olson's comfort with that, we went into, really, a battle rhythm that was driven based on events. So, we controlled our own resources inside CJTF-76, and we didn't have to go to CFC-Alpha to get air and those kind of things. We had our own air component element. Now, there were certain things we had to have that went through him, but we really were the ADCON for Army operations, too. So, even resourcing, when you do it, it went from us to CFLCC [Coalition Forces Land Component Command], not CFC-Alpha.

And so, the battle rhythm was driven on these events, which is really, I think, kind of brilliant. So, the way we briefed CFC-Alpha on things and the way we planned was for voter registration; then it was the election; then it was the inauguration; then it was the parliament. Those became kind of the campaign objectives, and not how many Taliban we killed or captured or HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin] we killed or captured or how effective we were in killing and capturing al Qaeda or assisting the Special Operations Forces in doing that. It was really very good. So, that further kind of matured the relationship between CFC-Alpha and CJTF-76.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Your duty position changes in May of 2004. You were the ADC [assistant division commander] for ops. You then became the deputy commanding general—**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: For operations. Now, the 10th Mountain had—CJTF-180 had only two general officers. When General Olson and General Jacoby went over on the PDSS, they said it wasn't—and, see, the plan before we went was I would stay as the rear detachment commanding general, and General Jacoby and I would flip-flop. After six months, he would come back and I would go forward. Once they got there, they realized, "Well, you know, it probably makes sense that we have a deputy commanding general for support and a deputy commanding general for operations." Then they talked to the graybeards, and they said, "Really, a JTF [joint task force] should have a deputy commanding general." So, this is kind of what we did. Now, as soon as General Olson got back, he said, "How soon can you deploy?" I said, "I can

deploy tomorrow." He said, "Okay, what I'd like you to do is continue to push the rest of the division in theater." So, that's what I did. So, General Jacoby went over. The chief of staff went first with the ADVON … or maybe not the ADVON, but General Jacoby and the chief of staff, Col. Chuck Cardinal, went to the front end and started to do the relief in place with 10th Mountain. General Olson came in about two or three weeks after that. Two weeks after that, he kind of took over, and then that put him, I think, into April. Then on 15 May, I got on a plane and flew over.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, did your duties change, or how did they, I guess, is the question, with this new responsibility?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, you know, we didn't operate—there was some discussion before I got there of setting up a separate division command post in Kandahar. When I got there, General Olson said, "Listen, take two weeks and just go learn." So, I had carte blanche. I went all over the country. I went to every forward operating base. I spent time with every organization. Also, because of my time with the Rangers, I was asked to do the SOF integration piece, so I spent time with CJSOTF, which was our Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, part of CJTF-76, and Task Force Omaha, which was the black organization. I knew all the people over there. So, anyway, in two weeks' time, I kind of was allowed to go and see things. Then I came back, and General Olson said, "Okay, I want you and General Jacoby to sit down with the chief of staff to kind of sort through roles and responsibilities," and so we did that. Now, we had done that. The dynamic was that General Jacoby had been the ADC for two years before I got there. He was extended a third year. He had been the ADC-O for, I guess, it was about eighteen months by the time I got there. So, I replaced him as the -O, and he became the -S. If you go back to when I was deploying, when I got there, it didn't make sense because I was going to stay in the rear to really organize the ADC-O and the ADC-S along traditional lines. So, we went into General Olson and said, "There are certain things that General Jacoby ought to remain responsible for." And so, we had different roles and responsibilities—"terms of reference" is what we called it—and they were somewhat nontraditional. Some of the independent battalions he took and remained in control of. Because the aviation brigade was being deployed, he kind of had that, initially.

So, we went all the way into this deployment and into this new structure. Then, when I got there, after two weeks I sat down with Chuck, and we talked through terms of reference. We sat down with Colonel Cardinal, and then we went in and sat down with General Olson. We really did take a very functional alignment in what our duties and responsibilities were. So, I had operations and intelligence. He had the engineering and logistics, but he was also the

deputy commanding general, so in the absence of General Olson, he took over command of the CJTF. Now, General Olson spent a lot of time on the road. He spent a lot of time out in the field, and so General Jacoby and I were constantly … you know, really, I'd work for him, and sometimes General Olson would make decisions on what we would come up with operationally, and sometimes General Jacoby would. But, you know, with the commo, almost any time, wherever General Olson was, we could still do our nightly meetings. I guess that's kind of one of these classic things—the difference between command and control. You command wherever you are. The CJTF was the controlling headquarters, but General Olson could command wherever he was; and when he couldn't command, General Jacoby would take command. If for some reason he wasn't at a platform or at a location that he could command, then General Jacoby would assume command. But control always resided in Bagram at CJTF-76, and from that all our reports to higher, our coordination, kind of emanated from there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. We talked about the situation on the ground and the nature of the insurgency. One of the features of the conflict in Afghanistan is that you've got a lot of anti-Coalition forces. You mentioned, there's al Qaeda, the Taliban, HIG, and we also have a level of just, sort of, for lack of a better word, just generic criminality and brigandage, which is part of the Afghan culture. How did you adapt? Can you identify whom you're fighting at any given time, or what your problem spots are?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: You know, dependent on where you were, I think it was easy to determine. Based on what the mission was, it was easy to determine who the enemy was, and if you're operating out in these forward operating bases and you're trying to assist with establishing legitimate governance with either governors or police chiefs, then anyone that got in the way of that was someone that you could target. Now, whether there was a kinetic response to that, depending on the circumstances and who it was … sometimes it was just the Afghans learning how to deal with dissent internally. Sometimes, if it was a cell that we knew that was al Qaeda, well, then it was targeted that way, and it took probably the fusion of that information at a level to determine who and why that was the enemy and who was best positioned to kill, capture, or defeat it.

So, what we talked about before, this kind of cross-functional approach … you had areas of responsibility that were not necessarily—they weren't hierarchical or tiered, you know? They were areas of responsibility that were very decentralized, and there could be different objectives inside a larger area of responsibility that weren't necessarily hierarchical in terms of which we would normally see in

the battle space where we were fusing information of the CJTF, or the division headquarters, and then controlling operations in a way that we had to tell subordinate commands who the enemy was. You know, we gave objectives. Now, at a level, we still had to do that because of who the enemy was. If it was the Taliban leadership operating in an area that maybe the brigade or battalion or company command were focused on—I'm trying to think of the right word for it—you know, elements that were leading to instability in the area, they may not be taking a kinetic approach to it. But, like I said, resident in that area may be a target that we were developing that we had to take care of. So, they were doing their intelligence preparation of the battlefield and fusing their intelligence based on what their objectives were, and they needed the capability to do that because there may not have been an al Qaeda cell operating in their area that they knew about, or even Taliban. But it could be just, like you were talking about, you know, warlords, narcotics-related criminality, or tribal. The thing about Afghanistan, there are parts where there could be a road with two tribes. You know, one side is one tribe and the other side is the other tribe, and they may not want this local authority to be successful for whatever reason. So, we're trying to sort through that. You know—you have to go back to the history of Afghanistan and understand how fractured it was in terms of the ethnic tribes.

So, there had to be—well, I think I mentioned it earlier. We still had to maintain the capability to go kill and capture whom we needed to go kill and capture, and we needed the capability for our subordinate elements to operate in a way that was going to kind of put an Afghan face on what was occurring to bring the security and to accomplish some of the objectives that we talked about. I mean, part of it was the way we were going to do it, not just what had to be accomplished, and the difficulty, at times, was making sure that everyone that had a stake in how we were going to do these operations—it didn't mean that we were not going to go kill and capture HIG, Taliban, al Qaeda that needed to be killed or captured, but everyone needed to understand how and when we were going to do that and what the effect was going to be on some of these other operations. And, don't forget, there are all these other things going on, like the DDR—you know, the demilitarization [disarmament], demobilization, and reintegration of these … [sighs]. We weren't allowed to call them warlords. I forget what the euphemism was. Originally, it was "tribal leaders." We weren't allowed to call them warlords anymore because we were trying to—like Ismail Khan out in the west, or some of these other cats that were *mujaheddin*. And, really, if you go back, the Northern Alliance, although that wasn't really in our area, that had influence, you know? That was part of Karzai's legitimacy. So, everyone had to operate in a way that allowed each other to know how we were operating

and what the effects were going to be. I think that approach was different than what any of us had experienced in the past. And the better we got at this kind of cross-functional approach, I think, the more we accomplished, and the better we isolated the people that needed to be killed and captured and dealt with in a way, from a timing perspective, that was most effective.

I talked a little bit about effects-based operation. That was kind of the genesis for this thing. Our sense of effects-based operations—and, again, this was fairly new. We wanted it to result in something—you know, an action, in a frag order [fragmentary order]—and we had created this process, this mechanism, that allowed us to get a lot of folks involved. Our objectives were linked to CFC-Alpha, and then they were linked to the objectives of our subordinate units. We had input, and we populated this thing, and we came up with metrics. We really struggled with that. I mean, we fought hard. We brought in different people to give us different views of it—you know, the NGOs, the UN, different folks that we would normally not expect to be involved in any kind of planning process—and it was very good because it caused us to concern ourselves with how the effect of our operations would be viewed from other folks. It made a lot of people uncomfortable because it didn't turn into concrete actions sometimes. We got it to the point where we had said, "Well, we're on track." Or, if it was "Well, if we're not on track, what do we need to do to get on track?" But it wasn't something that you would see similar to a targeting meeting, which they tried to turn it into. And, you know, the people that were kind of available because we didn't have—we weren't using the artillery, necessarily, the way we'd use it in a classic linear sense. We had our artillerymen that we kind of put in charge of effects-based operations, and what was the process that they were most comfortable with? Targeting meetings. So, the way it got organized, we had to be careful it didn't turn into another targeting meeting—at least, in our organization.

DR. KOONTZ: **You've alluded to the elections several times, and obviously that's one of the big, important things, so I would certainly want to get that on record. Tell me how the election that took place in 2004 affected CJTF-76's operations.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, it became the primary objective, really. We learned so much in trying to register the voters—and, of course, they extended that—and what it took to determine why people weren't registering. I mean, there were myriad reasons, as you can imagine. Depending on your view of it—you know, eleven blind people touching the elephant. If you were down at a governor's level, he may be telling you, "Well, people aren't registering because they don't think that the posture that Karzai can bring can stabilize the country. You can't

trust him," although that's probably not a governor. That's probably a poor analogy because Karzai appointed all the governors. But, you know, they kind of had a different view of it. If you were a company commander down in an area and talking to mayors and all, it could be a lot of different reasons. It could be a strong Taliban presence that they were concerned about, so you had to go deal with that. It could be that just the logistics of getting the UN—don't forget, for it to be a legitimate election it had to be observed, and the process had to be observed, and the ballots. You know, we're talking about a country that had about a 10 percent literacy rate—10 percent to 20 percent literacy rate—but almost all the literate people were in Kabul, so when you get out into the hinterlands … so, just the pure logistics, and then the security of the ballots and all those things. But, anyway, to get to the point where we could register the voters, we learned a lot. We learned that not everyone was opposed to registering women. We learned, in some areas, it was courageous for women to come forward, and in other areas they were encouraged to do it. We learned a lot about who the players were going to be, both on the Afghan side and on the U.S. and Coalition side. And then we also learned what the issues were going to be to have this election.

So, the election, from an information-operations perspective, what a powerful thing to, first, say, "Well, we registered 10 million voters." And then we had a legitimate election—a country stable enough, with enough security, and all this was done with an Afghan face. So, here was an Afghan security force—not perfect—that was able to stabilize the country enough to have this election, observed by the UN to be legitimate, and to duly elect this government. You know, the first election in the 5,000-year history—pretty powerful, and what a death knell to the Taliban! What a concern to HIG! What a concern to al Qaeda that the sanctuary that they've operated in, now the people were standing up and saying, "Enough is enough!" You know, they're the same people that defeated the Soviet Union. They're not going to tolerate the Taliban without saying, "Hey, listen. We want something better." It was pretty powerful. And then after that, the objective became the inauguration, and the reason is, when you look at how the parliament was going to be formed, Karzai was going to have to appoint certain people, and we're going to have this other huge election throughout the country that we worked on. Of course, it became SETAF's [Southern European Task Force's] responsibility to do that, but it was huge. It was just remarkable.

DR. KOONTZ: **One of the things you keep coming back to is "putting an Afghan face on operation." What kind of work did the task force have with the Afghan National Army or the [Afghan] National Police?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, OMC-Alpha [Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan] trained the Afghan National Army. While we were there, they were actually starting to deploy the battalions, and we finally got up to corps that deployed, and we eventually got to the point where we did combined operations. Most of the time we did kind of combined operations, but, really, they were attached to Coalition forces, U.S. forces, and operated with us. Eventually, they got to the point where they were kind of conducting their own operations. We learned early on how powerful the ANA was in terms of—there was a huge sense of national pride to see an ethnically, tribally integrated army, you know? And at times, we wouldn't believe it, to have a Hazaran right next to a Pashtun right next to—I mean, and the people would ask, "Well," you know, "you're X," and they'd say, "Yeah." "And you're living, you're with X?" I mean, they just really identified. It was the first kind of federal, national, legitimate indication of an Afghan government, and they were really well received.

The police was a little bit of a different challenge because you had local police, and the Germans had the task of training the police. They had regional police training areas, but you had other police that really were—what the Germans were doing they were training them to be beat cops, and what they were up against, once they got out to these areas, they were fighting paramilitaries. So, they had batons and deflective vests, and these guys had AK47s. As you're operating, depending on what level you're operating at, you were trying to stand these up because, again, you wanted the Afghans to see that they can secure themselves, that that was their future. So, we were—through CERP dollars, with the restrictions that were imposed in terms of what we could and couldn't do with CERP dollars—we were trying to buy uniforms or buy police cars or buy motorcycles, and we were trying to get them to operate with our forces in a way, or at least talk to our forces so that if there was something that they couldn't deal with, we could help them. Almost every operation where we did any kind of raid in a village or town or area, we tried to—you couldn't involve the Afghans too early locally sometimes because they would compromise it, but as you're going to the target, you would grab them; or, in the final stages, you would grab the local police, and you would try to involve the Afghan army, and they would have a piece to it, so when they saw something, it didn't appear as the Americans who were in there crashing doors in the middle of the night and grabbing Afghan women and children and wrenching husbands away from families and that kind of stuff—you know, that whole thing. And I'm not doing a good job describing them, but it was very thoughtfully done and it was extremely important.

The PRTs were also important. I haven't talked much about those, but that was a huge effort, and through CFC-Alpha's help and, really, General Olson's commitment to it—in fact, he's the guy who runs the PRTs in Iraq right now. We've got him resourced with USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development]. We've got him resourced with the State Department people. This became kind of a coordinating cell in these areas to nominate projects that would go up and compete for dollars at the national level, would nominate projects that could compete for local dollars in terms of what the commanders had for CERP dollars. I mean, they were pretty powerful. And when we talk about reconstruction, really, you know, a dollar gets you a lot in Afghanistan because it's really not reconstruction. It's construction. In Iraq, a dollar can't buy what it can in Afghanistan. So, when you view it that way, these were kind of viewed as the source of funding and services and the ability for the governor to have kind of a reinforced voice back up to the State Department into the federal Afghan government. To have this and know that he's got kind of parallel lines of communication—both him talking to the president, and his priorities through the PRTs—it became pretty powerful. You know, they were a strong indication of progress, and an outpost, a presence, and an opportunity to deny sanctuary, to separate the population from the guerrilla.

And, really, even the way we operated outside the large garrisons and these forward operating bases essentially did the same thing, and what that does is it allowed us at different levels to know where the threat that was going to try to overthrow the government, or overthrow an area, was. We kind of knew where they were, and then you determine risk. If there was a legitimate reason to go up there, you'd go up there and whack 'em; if not, you know, if it was just isolated areas that they're going to be up there, they're no different than any other area where … we're not going to change who they are. Time will change, the country will change who they are. They'll see the Taliban party. There'll have to be some kind of reconciliation that brings them back in.

DR. KOONTZ: **What I was wondering is how did the PRT efforts—how does that filter up to your level at CJTF-76?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, they were subordinate to us. We had a J-9 [staff section for civil-military affairs] who was kind of the PRT coordinator. At one time, we had an O-6 command that kind of had operational control of PRTs, and we absorbed that into the staff. The regional commanders, whether they were a brigade commander—and we had two of them—or battalion commanders, there was a command relationship between the PRT and that commander. For lack of a better

term, they were a subordinate maneuver element, and the command relationship depended on what had to occur regionally and who was responsible regionally. So, if it was a brigade commander, they had a region, and, actually, the brigade commanders had the regions, but they would subdivide them to the battalion task force commander. So, we sometimes kind of subdivided with company commanders, sometimes operating in forward operating bases, sometimes going out and operating for certain times. So, you know, these guys would go on—these were infantry formations that were doing, you know, the work of the PRT to assess water, services, schools; you know, get the governor down there, figure out how they want to go do these things; determine who else was operating in the battle space. Was it NGOs? How could we help? Or, sometimes, how could we stay away from them, if that's what they wanted us to do? And construction projects, roads, you know, access. You know, wells were a huge issue, digging wells and doing that kind of stuff.

And, to see that all of that has—initially, less of an Afghan face. More of an Afghan face over time with the—what we were hoping is that the Afghan citizen would see progress and would say, "Okay, I can register. I can vote. I see organization. I see indigenous security forces. I see the Americans helping that but not occupying," you know, which was a big Taliban information operation. So, the PRTs were pretty, pretty important. And don't forget, you had the State Department. You had USAID reps in there. You had sometimes USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] reps in there. I mean, they were multifunctional and pretty good.

DR. KOONTZ: **By the time of the end of your tour, how would you gauge your task force's contribution to that sense of progress in Afghanistan?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, you know, it's always interesting to go through transition, and in the Army, every job from command to whatever it might be, you look back at your time and you say, "Okay, yeah, we kind of accomplished these things," and then as someone's coming in to say, "Okay, this is kind of what I learned," and you offer it to him. And then you see how they're going to look at it differently, and you kind of think, "Man, how come I never thought of that?" Let's talk personally. It was the first time in my military career where our efforts—there was some kind of measurable, positive progress. You know, we got there where they couldn't register voters, for myriad reasons. We registered voters. We had an election that everyone said, the UN said, couldn't happen. Everyone said, "It's not going to happen. It can't happen. It's fraught with problems." We had that. We installed the president. I mean, it was very important to have Karzai alive, to be the president. I

mean, they elected this cat. And then, putting the country in a position where Karzai was forming his cabinet and getting ready for the parliamentary elections. It was the promise of the *jirga* that initially brought Karzai as the interim president to hit each one of the gates and, at the end of it, turn it over to somebody.

We thought the Taliban's capability was greatly reduced. We had some people—and I, at times, was in that camp—that didn't agree with it and said, "Well, the Taliban weren't defeated." I caused a lot of people to think very hard about it. Had we defeated the Taliban? It depended how you defined it. The Taliban's ability to conduct operations was nonexistent. I mean, there was nothing that was there. There was no formation large enough to defeat a platoon, that ever amassed large enough to defeat a platoon. We were operating out—now, we were losing soldiers. We were still frightened in certain areas, but, you know, to feel as though you had diminished the influence of the Taliban and accomplished the things you had accomplished, and a legitimate government had promised a legitimate parliamentary election—not a legitimate government, but a legitimate presidential election that was the best advertised one that you could possibly have for the Afghan people, and they were going to have a legitimate parliamentary election—was huge.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'll tell you what, sir. I've got, I think, forty-five seconds left on my appointment. Would you be willing to do a second session on—**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Yeah. I'd love to. What I need to do is get my notebooks, find those things and go back through the stuff and if you'd like, go through the stuff that I'm really confused or not clear on, and we can backtrack.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I've got some other questions I wanted to ask you, and you've given me some things that we can go back and revisit and get more details on that. So, I'll use the last of my four seconds to thank you for Part 1, and I'll let you get back on to your important work.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: All right.

[End of first session. Beginning of second session.]

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the twentieth of February 2007, and this is our second session with Brig. Gen. Bernard S. Champoux, former deputy commanding general, CJTF-76. You mentioned the anti–al Qaeda efforts that went on. Was that primarily Special Operations Forces doing that?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Yes. Now, there was an epiphany—not really an epiphany—but what happened in the past is you would have the Special Operations Forces not necessarily subordinate to CJTF-76. We had a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force [CJSOTF]. They were Army Green Berets and Navy SEALs, and we had other governments. We had Jordanians. We had New Zealanders and Aussies. We had French, but we eventually moved them up underneath that. So, we had combined. Then you had an entire other classified effort under Task Force OMAHA, and they were essentially man hunting. What happened in the past is, before we got there, is when that organization wanted to operate inside our battle space, they would create what they call a JSOA. So, they would create a Joint Special Operations Area of operations. So, they would come in, and they'd say, "Okay." They'd draw a circle on the map, a goose egg, whatever, a trapezoid, and they would say, "Okay, we're operating inside that space. We own that terrain, so anyone that's going to operate inside that needs to check with us."

Now, that's really dysfunctional. What we did is we established area ownership. We established regional commands that had responsibility for regions. In the past, they operated out of large garrisons. They went and they did operations, and that's how they de-conflicted. What we did is we said, "Okay. This region Vermont is this brigade's, and Rhode Island is this brigade's, and Connecticut is this brigade's," and then inside that, they further subdivided the areas into kind of battalion areas of operations, or areas that they'd assume risk on; and then inside that, you had the provincial reconstruction teams that we would stand up; and then inside that, you had the CJSOTF that was operating, sometimes with different command relationships—sometimes directly to CJTF-76, sometimes subordinate to the brigade command; and then inside that, you also had these other Special Operations Forces; oh, and, by the way, you also had a fledgling Afghan National Army. You had other Afghan security forces, and they could run the gamut from former warlords and militias to people that we contracted to help guard our small garrisons and our FOBs—forward operating bases. Then you had, like we talked about before, you had NGOs and the UN and all that kind of stuff.

My job was, one of the hats I wore, was to be the SOF integrator. Because of my background in the Rangers, I knew a lot of the players that were there, and so we really in earnest started to work towards this. At a level, everyone had common goals and objectives—at a level, you know? At the strategic level, it was "This office is nuts on a bulldog." Once you get down to the tactical level, it took somebody a level above that to say, "Hey, listen. There's commonality in what you're trying to do." And so, the old command

relationships that we used in the past—OPCON, operational control; ADCON, administrative control; TACON, tactical control—those became less important. We used strategic terms—"subordinate" and "supported"—and we formed cross-functional efforts and cross-functional teams to do certain things, sometimes for a specified duration and density, sometimes for a longer period; and if they became a longer period, then we'd sometimes maybe change that relationship to be more conventional. How did we get off on this tangent [laughs]? Reel me in, Chris.

DR. KOONTZ: **Establishing this cross-functional approach, which I'm reading as trying to establish that commonality of purpose and get units different—**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Yeah, I think the best way to describe this probably, in the past, everyone worked to de-conflict how they were operating, right? So, we were de-conflicting things by either time or by space or by whatever. The insurgency required us to synchronize these things, so that regardless of who you were and what you needed to operate, either I knew what you were doing so that I could benefit from that, or I would operate in a way that wouldn't hurt what you're trying to do. So, at a level, there had to be some "ad-hockery" in terms of establishing a capability to fuse intelligence and to target things in a way that allowed everyone to understand: "Okay, my approach is to do this for these reasons. My approach is to do this for these reasons." We really got to the point where it was pretty remarkable. This guy, [Col.] Walt Piatt, would, at times, in the area he was in, would command maybe a Ranger company—unheard of. Or, there were times when we would chop an infantry company to the Rangers, and a Ranger major would have a Ranger platoon and an infantry company. And, you could have CJSOTF in there. You just had a hodge—hodge-podge doesn't sound right—but you had people operating in a way that, you know, we'd rather de-conflict things. We were really working together.

Now, you had to explain to someone at times what the common purpose was. It wasn't obvious. But if you could say, "Listen. It doesn't do you any good, every time you operate in that city, village, town, to piss 'em off, and the way you're operating pisses 'em off. So, there's ways we can help you. Because we have an established presence in there we can co-opt people. We can do things in a way that allows you to do what you need to do at a time where you're going to be able to accomplish what you want and not piss off the Afghan people." We worked very closely. The Rangers got very good at it. I mean, they once raided a wedding party because they suspected two insurgents were there. What did they do? You know, they appealed to the Afghan elders on this thing. They brought wedding gifts, which were a couple of generators, and they said, "Hey, listen. We're going to come in here." They brought the local police chief, which

had never been done before because we had a relationship with him. Now, they didn't tell them far enough in advance where he could prevent anything. They said, "We're only interested in these people. If they're here, then we need to talk to them." So, they allowed the Afghans to segregate the people, and then they said, "Hey, this is disruptive. We know this is disruptive on the day of your wedding. We'd like to present these gifts to you." They passed by the folks, and they ended up getting what they needed, and they had the wedding, and everyone was happy. And at the end of it, the Afghans learned our lesson: "If you work with the Americans on some of these things, the bad people that are amongst us don't have the power to do something. We've got the local police chief. With the help of the Americans, he can help us with that stuff."

DR. KOONTZ: **What would you point to as the biggest obstacle in trying to get that synchronization above de-confliction?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: You know, I call it the "mine, mine." You know, we're used to being given a task and a purpose and resources to get a job done in the military. On a linear battlefield, there's a task organization and certain things in that task organization that you train with so that you can operate on the linear battlefield. This environment required you to be very, very flexible. It wasn't linear. It was very distributed and noncontiguous, so you had to think. You had to understand that the old way of thinking in terms of getting a task organization to accomplish a task and purpose wasn't necessarily going to be there. You still need to accomplish that task for that purpose, and so you need to figure it out, and you need to be unconventional in your thinking about it. So, people that took a very conventional view of it, that wanted to do purely kinetic things, that either saw no merit in doing nonkinetic things or thought that they couldn't accomplish things unless they had everything that they should have had to do what they needed to do—that was the biggest obstacle. But leaders that quickly got to the point where they were comfortable and understanding, taking a very long view on it, they kind of understood there were certain metrics that they needed to—and these were not things that you're going to accomplish in twenty-four or forty-eight hours, or even a week, but over time, and that there need to be steady incremental changes in certain areas. The only way you're going to do that is by—even though you're often viewed as the 800-pound gorilla—you had to operate in a way that you're bringing these people on with you. It would be easy to operate without them. It was difficult, but much more productive, to operate with them.

Oftentimes, people want to work to a lower standard, which is consensus, and really what you're trying to do is move them towards an objective. Like we talked about earlier, this kind of commonality is kind of important. You

know, it's a poor analogy, but it's like the eleven blind men with the elephant. If someone said, "Hey, listen. It's still an elephant. You've got the ear. It's important that you got the ear, but together, we're going to get, move this elephant." That's even with people that thought they had a very, very narrow lane. Let's just say the man hunters, the people that are looking for very specific people. First of all, we had to decide in our intelligence that there were still al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Everyone had to come to that appreciation and understanding. Then, if they were operating inside of Afghanistan, how were they operating, or their surrogates? And then, once you start building all that from an intel fusion perspective, you realize there are a lot of people operating out there that are touching these things: "They can help me get to this very narrow lane that I have, which is this man hunting. You know, they can be part of the solution there. They can help me." Obviously, if you're removing an influence that is threatened by a legitimate Afghan government, then you're taking care of your own goals—not your own goals, but you're taking care of the larger operational-strategic common goal. You could work it all the way back up that if Afghanistan was a sovereign, strong country where the people trust the government, then there would be no need for them to support al Qaeda. There'd be no need for them to go back to the Taliban. And so, that helps everybody.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned trying to develop this unconventional, as you said, ad hoc kind of way of operating to get people to synchronize their efforts. And you also mentioned metrics. What kind of metrics do you use to see progress?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, you have to go back in time, too. Effects-based operations were just—that was en vogue. I mean, it was new. Really, Joint Forces Command was kind of the keeper of the thinking on that. We had a more conventional approach called a targeting meeting. So, we kind of started these effects-based—I forget what we called them—but we essentially took CFC-Alpha's goals and objectives, and we kind of broke them down into our supporting goals and objectives that we had. And then, in concert with everybody in the battle space, we started to develop metrics that we could measure that said—and some of these were tough. You've got a room full of people. You could have a battalion commander whose piece of it is working with a newly appointed governor, Afghan National Army, and provincial police, and so his view of putting an Afghan face on things would be to operate in a way that the appearance for the Afghan people was that it was the governor who had the authority, not the U.S. military. It was the Afghan National Army that was conducting operations, even though they may be combined operations with the U.S. forces, and the local police had the authority to do certain things, even

though we're providing them motorcycles, cars, training them, trying to get them ammunition, those kinds of things. So, in terms of putting an Afghan face on things, I mean, you would come up with some kind of metric, like "I had X more police. I had X more governor billets with local leaders"—that kind of metrics. And in almost every area, we took a strategic goal or objective. We came up with kind of operational things, and then we had tactical and operational feeders for that, these metrics. What we learned is, just like targeting meetings, we always want to turn—you know, our initial effort was that all the stuff would turn into action, so you would review all these effects you're trying to accomplish, and then you'd have these metrics. We spent a lot of time so that everyone understood that that really was the metric that we were going to measure. You know, an insurgency can take time. So, we had these—initially, we had them weekly. Then we did them biweekly with the commanding general.

There was some kind of desire to turn that session into orders that would change the course of—oftentimes, it was "We're kind of on track. It didn't have to turn into action. It could just be that we're either getting the desired effect, or we're not getting the desired effect. Here are the reasons why we're not getting the desired effect. Maybe we need to shift some things." But we always want it to turn into immediate action. Sometimes, the best thing we did was give everyone a common view of where we were. You weren't going to dramatically change a task organization. You weren't going to dramatically change a brigade's because you gave them an area, a region to work out for the year. You weren't going to necessarily change the size of that region or change things. It had a little different outcome than these targeting meetings that we were used to in the past.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of preparation and what kind of effort goes into one of those targeting meetings? Take me on kind of a typical targeting meeting: Who's there? What gets done?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I was very careful not to call them "targeting meetings." I've got to remember what we call this group, but there was a work group of every BOS, battlefield operating system, and then we eventually got to where we pulled in anyone that had a stake—any stakeholder. We ended up kind of doing two of them—one on the reconstruction side, which was a lot of your what we call "leaf eaters," NGOs, IOs, USAID, and we actually pulled in a USAID rep inside the CJTF headquarters—and then we had one with all the … not conventional, but the military battlefield operating system, and that occurred on account of the lead person, that was the CJ-3. So, one was the CJ-9, and the other one a CJ-3. So, the CJ-9 did the nonkinetic, although the CJ-3 was nonkinetic, too. So, you had these effects that

you were trying to accomplish, and you had these metrics. They would get together and they would determine where they were. They'd have specific examples of each, and that happened on a Tuesday. By about Thursday—and there was a set time; I think a Thursday was the right day—they would out-brief me, the DCG-O [deputy commanding general-operations]; and then, on Saturday, we'd out-brief the commanding general. I would take a look at it and say, "Okay." You know, it would cause me to go back through this thing, and I think they were very, very effective, but there had to be an understanding of where they were going to lead you. We didn't do targeting meetings in terms of getting kinetic assets because we really owned the kinetic assets.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. A while ago, you'd mentioned effects-based operations. I'm trying to think of an articulate way to phrase this. What would be sort of your personal definition of effects-based operations, and do you think that CJTF-76 was accomplishing them effectively?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I'll answer the second part first. I think we were. I mean, we were breaking new ground. And General [USA (Ret.) Gary E.] Luck came over a couple of times when we were over there, and he said, "Hey, listen. This is a model." Now, this was the first time for a lot of organizations. I think the most important thing about it was not what it produced per se, but how it allowed people to think—the simple nuance that everybody operating in the battle space can affect things, and if you can get to the graduate level where you find ways to get their input and ways to either agree or agree to disagree on certain things and then operate in a way that instead of moving in cross-tangents, people are moving in kind of in parallel tangents, almost everyone can get to a certain strategic level and decide there's commonality. The problem is to get everybody that's operating in the battle space to understand that we're all ultimately trying to accomplish the same thing. Now, there's a different duration of intensity for what we're trying to accomplish, and sometimes things are more measurable than other things. So, I constantly forced people together so that wasn't just this de-confliction. It wasn't just where you went in there and you guarded things because "I can't trust you. You're going to compromise what I'm trying to do," to the point where "Yeah, there are certain things that you want them to know what you're doing, so they know what the effect's going to be, what the probable effect's going to be, and you want them to work in a way that they're going to facilitate that effect and not cause an effect that's going to work against it." So, as I'm talking to you, it sounds really simple, but it goes against everybody's culture. You know, it goes against "Give me a task and purpose." It goes against all those things, and it really opens it up in a way that—you know, sometimes the most powerful weapon you had in

your arsenal was USAID or someone that was working on a reconstruction project; or a State Department person who's working on the PRT that had great credibility; or a governor; or something other than knocking on doors and going in there and lining everybody up sorting through folks and capturing the person you need to, and if they resist, killing them—all those things. Not only that, but to understand that, at certain times, how you did your kinetic operations were extremely important. Going in at the dead of night, rounding up women and children, making the Afghan patriarch feel, powerless, neutered—you know, all you do is build resentment. You could have done the same thing during the day [laughs]. You could have started it with an Afghan police chief [raps on table] knocking on the doors, saying, "Now, me and my buddies are going to come in here. We're looking for these things, and we'd like you to put your women and children in one area." It's just a different way of doing it, and at the end of the day, everyone moved the ball a hell of a lot farther than a lot of disparate activity in a same area.

DR. KOONTZ: **To just kind of change tacks a little bit, a while ago, you'd mentioned the regional command system. Was that an innovation while you were there?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: It was. There were some areas of operations that people had, but to have a brigade headquarters that essentially was responsible for regions was different. I think it was consensus, although I think, what came first, the chicken or egg? You know, did we tell CFC-Alpha they ought to tell us to do that, or did they tell us that that was the structure we're coming into? I think we were told that that's what they were going to do, and so we embraced it with open arms.

DR. KOONTZ: **I was going to ask you what the genesis of that idea was.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, it's this ink-spot thing, you know. You're trying to separate the insurgent, the guerrilla, from the population. So, do you do that in a big garrison and go out and do these kinetic operations and come back in; or, now that you've built an indigenous capability with the Afghan National Army, do you operate in a way that facilitates the legitimacy of that national institution, which was very powerful over there? Do you operate in spite of them, or do you help them grow? And then, once you realize this is a pretty big country—you know, things in Herat are going to be totally different than things in Kandahar; things in Khowst and on the Pakistan border are going to be different than things in Bagram. So, there are regional nuances, and why have a two-star headquarters in Bagram try to direct everything that's going to happen, especially if you're going to take the long view on this thing? Our view was to get out of these large garrisons, to push out into the areas to help establish the legitimate Afghan authority, and in doing so,

creating some space between the insurgency, the guerrillas, and the population. So, the idea is, you have these ink spots, lily pads, that you're operating from, and that they would expand; and eventually, over time, these ink spots would all connect, and we'd have good governance, and "It wasn't just the Americans doing that." In fact, it worked so effectively, I think, that when we had issues out in Herat, we established an ad hoc brigade out there and sourced it, and we had another regional area. Initially, we went in on two regional areas, RC South and the East, and it had two brigade commanders, and then the brigade commanders further kind of subdivided. It was a different approach.

DR. KOONTZ: **Once you'd assigned a brigade to that regional command, was it then up to the brigade commander to assign his units to those ink spots or lily pads as needed?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Yeah, and it's all based on where you thought the threat was, where you needed to put effort. Who else was out in the battle space? I mean, there was a whole thing. They briefed the division commander back. He gave them task and purpose, and they briefed him back, and that point, in terms of the military decision-making process, it was very conventional. I mean, we used established, existing processes to do that, and the same with controlling current operations. That was all very conventional. It had reports and that kind of stuff, with nightly updates and morning staff updates. A lot of times, the issue became how did you get the senior leadership out of the tactical and into the operational? We had to keep the connective tissue between operational goals and objectives and the strategic goals and objectives. And in the operational, we shared that with CFC-Alpha, and we were hooked. We were connected. That was kind of our role. So now, if you're regional, then it has a little different. Rather than operating out of these big garrisons and doing kinetic operations and coming back, now that you're out in these regional areas … the regional commanders had all the PRTs, which in the past were assigned directly to CJTF-76, and even before that, to CFC-Alpha. So, they chopped them to CJTF-76. We created more of them, and they became under the purview of the regional commander, the brigade commander.

DR. KOONTZ: **The Army piece of CJTF-76 is pretty broad when you've got a big chunk of a light infantry division there. You've got SOF elements. You've got higher echelons that—you know, CFC-Alpha, for example. Did you notice any difference between the Army slice of things and then 22d MEU?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, don't forget that 22d MEU went in for a duration, for a stated purpose, and we also brought in some augmentation during the time of the election. At that time, the 82d came in to help us out. And, again, everybody that operated there

at that point, every thinking leader at that point, understood that you couldn't operate just one way and be successful and that it wasn't all about just doing kinetic operations. And it wasn't all just, everything wasn't moving to contact, even though you wanted it to be that way. You just couldn't get there. First of all, Chris, they're not going to mass just so you can go whip their ass, you know? They're not that stupid. They're not going to, at all. They understood that we had on-call airpower. We had a lot of things—a lot—to extend our reach. So, you know, to the point, the MEU, we put them in an area where there are a lot of bad guys, and they got in there and they, through their presence, allowed a governor to stand up on his own two feet. They pushed away, or they killed and captured, the bad influences, and they created an ink spot. Up in a very bad area, they went in, and they did very well. Now, they also worked with the PRT. They also did reconstruction. Even though they were there to really establish a strong presence in the Oruzgan border area, they understood for there to be a lasting effect, they had to do things that would allow whoever was left there when they left to be effective. So, they couldn't deny reconstruction projects, you know? They built wells; they built schools; they listened to mullahs and leaders when they said, "Here are my issues." And a lot of times, they weren't Taliban. They listened: "We've been in a drought. We have no means. We have no water. The reason we sent our kids to madrassas in Pakistan is because we have no schools"—you know, things like "How am I supposed to stand up to this guy if I don't have a security force, if I don't have any police? How am I supposed to do all these things?" And so, they couldn't deny that.

Col. Frank Mackenzie was very effective. And what we did—as soon as he left, guess what we did? We changed our task organization. We pulled a battalion out of another brigade, and we stuck it—well, actually, it was the battalion that was initially chopped to the other brigade from the original, but we sent it back there, and it operated there. And so, the bad guys, the Taliban or al Qaeda, were going to hold their breath until they left, which would happen in the past. You'd go in there, very intense operations for eleven, twenty-one days, thirty days, and then leave. Guess what? When they left, another element came in—and not only that, but they continued to push out. Then, guess what? They brought in the Afghan army. You know, they did all these things that showed progress. They built a road between that area and Kandahar. It was one of those things: "Hey, listen. We can't get our …"—someone said their drugs—but, I mean, they couldn't get their stuff to market. There was no road. We built a road to Tarin Kowt and Kandahar.

DR. KOONTZ: **While we were down in RC South and the Oruzgan area and getting pretty close to the Pakistani border**

down there, I'd like to get your comments on the border situation and how that affected operations.

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Now, see, a little bit different south. Off of Kandahar, we had the French SOF, which was initially chopped to RC South, and then we moved them up underneath CJSOTF. There was movement that we probably didn't appreciate. You know, it's like if a tree falls in a forest and there's no one there to hear it because we weren't a strong presence except in one or two areas down in the south. Who knows how much cross-border activity there was? We knew there were large Pashtun refugee camps in Pakistan. We knew south of Kandahar—I mean, this is desert, down in Helmand Province. We knew that certain times of the day, there's a lot of drug traffic, but that was way down south, and it wasn't until we really had the SOF that was down there kind of reoriented and operated along the border that I think we got an idea what ratlines are coming across. We could talk for hours just about the Afghan-Pakistan border—you know, the Durand Line—and don't forget they straddled the old trade routes, I mean, smuggling. There are these routes that get passed down generation to generation, how to get through certain areas. It's a little flatter down there, but in short order you're back up in the Hindu Kush and it's … but anyway, to answer your question, we decided that that the folks that were probably the best prepared to build an indigenous capability, an indigenous security capability, were probably the SOF guys, CJSOTF, and so we gave them the mission to start working the border to build an indigenous capability, and to also—I'm kind of between the conventional force, although they're operating in the conventional forces region, and the black forces to create a capability, a kind of handoff intelligence when things are happening in a way that made sense; and at the same time, trying to figure out, get a handle, on who's transiting the border; and to build an Afghan border security capability. And, again, it gets back to kind of the strategic level. If they're going to be a sovereign country, they need to have border control, and they need to levy taxes and create revenue. A big thing to do is to build things in Pakistan, but then to export them through Afghanistan, so they kind of lose the trail and they don't have to pay all the export duties—you know, the black market and stuff.

So, we tried in earnest. We kind of turned it over to CJSOTF to start working at force. We started—originally, we came up with a plan where, you know, some of the—if the presence was just your routine kind of cross-border smuggling and stuff, but not nefarious, all the way to areas where we knew there was a lot of cross-border movement, and it was al Qaeda or it was Taliban, we had different forces focused on that. We still wanted to build an indigenous capability that was eventually going to take that over all the way to the north—well, "north" in our area, all the way down RC

South. We also started to move our OH–58s that we had moved out to RC West back over there so they could help do some recon and surveillance and try to figure out really what we had. But, yeah, we appreciated that the border was an issue.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have any contact with the Pakistani border forces or ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence] or anybody on the southern side?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: We had a thing called the tripartite, which you probably heard about, that General Jacoby did, and that was really the Pakistani military, the Afghan military, and the U.S. military. We'd have monthly meetings and quarterly meetings, depending on what level—it was either General Barno, or it was General Olson, or it was General Jacoby, and they're very rank conscious. So, we had these things where they would eventually interact. We had an effort there. Restate your question again.

DR. KOONTZ: **I just wanted to know what Pakistani authorities CJTF-76 was working with or tried to work with.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: We gave them radios. We wanted the means to be able to talk to them when there was a national incident, so that if we were receiving mortar fire—now, again, one man's understanding of where the border was, you know, that whole FATA [Federally Administrated Tribal Areas] area in the … you know, there was a British engineer, a guy by the name of Durand, that came up with that border. But, I mean, there's a two-mile difference between maps oftentimes. You got two maps. If it's a Pakistan map, the border's here; if it's the one we had, it was here. So, wherever there were friction spots, we had a huge capability. The conventional forces did it for a while, and the SOF kind of picked up on it. We would meet with their border police and their army that was operating there, and we would try to operate in a way that—and we had a one-mile exclusionary zone that we imposed on ourselves that you had to get permission to operate inside or fire anything inside that. But, yeah, there was a huge, huge effort there. The long-term thing was what we talked about. If you could have two sovereign bordering countries, then you'd respect each other's border and control their own people inside that and prevent people that would want to take advantage of that border. That was the long-term strategic goal. So, the operational capability was to build it in. The operational goal was to build this indigenous capability.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of progress was made on that indigenous capability during your tour?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: It always got back to money. So, the border police were part of the Ministry of Interior. Training the police was the Germans' responsibility. There was an American contract with DynCorp that did some of that, and we hooked up with that. The Germans would turn out beat cops in a vest, and what they were dealing with was paramilitary stuff. They were outgunned, you know? You can't put a beat cop out in some village where they're up against people with AKs and that kind of stuff. So, in between what the Germans were teaching them at a very slow rate and what we signed up to—it depended, again, on the regional commander and where he needed the help. We had certain prohibitions on how we could equip them. There were certain things that we could do to help them and it was always turned over to this legitimizing the Afghan authority there. So, the first thing we had to straddle was the difference between the minister of defense and what he needed and the minister of interior, who was really responsible. And then there were also indigenous security forces that were under the OGA that were up in these checkpoints that they put up after they figured out the Taliban were in certain areas around Waziristan where there was a lot of cross-border movement. They trained and equipped their own indigenous force that they stuck up there and around Khowst and all. So, you had that, and they were getting paid by the OGA, and then you had conventional U.S. forces and then Special Operations Forces all operating up in there. So, the first thing we had to do is we had to come up with a framework on how could it work.

There are certain border checkpoints, border-crossing points and border checkpoints, and I think we built two border—the existing border-crossing points—we tried to start there with building a capability of just monitoring what was coming across and, eventually, to attack them. And then in between that, it ran the gamut, but the plan was to have all this kind of indigenous capability that was kind of monitoring things and then stopping it that was a more lethal capability to deal with things. And that was probably still going to be combined, not just Afghan. So, we made a little progress. I remember the first plan that came in. CJTF came in, you know, they needed a thousand gabazillion dollars—you know, millions and millions of dollars to build this capability, and it was just before its time, and it wasn't the priority. So, we made do with what we had, and we kind of time phased it, and in certain areas it was more of an issue, depending on what the challenge of that border was. That's the capability we had.

DR. KOONTZ: **From your perspective as a DCG of CJTF-76 …**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: That's a lot of letters!

DR. KOONTZ: **How would you describe the way that CJTF-76's headquarters interacted with CJSOTF?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: They were subordinate headquarters. The CJSOTF answered to the commanding general of CJTF-76.

DR. KOONTZ: **That wasn't always the case, was it?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Under CJTF-180, I think it was. I think at one time they were separate, and then I think they—the three-star headquarters was not in Kabul. General [Dan K.] McNeill left, and then they established General Barno. They had a two-star headquarters, and then the three-star billet went to Kabul. That was always at Bagram. So, during that window between, when they had a CJTF-76, it might have been the CJSOTF for a short amount of time that answered to CFC-Alpha. But I don't think so. In the early days, they operated directly under CENTCOM. There was a move afoot when we were there to have them as kind of a theater reserve, to have them working for SOCCENT [Special Operations Component, U.S. Central Command] and then kind of tasked us based on what we needed, and we had to come up with kind of a quick reaction capability that could be kind of theaterwide. But they wanted, in earnest, to change the command relationship, and our view was to say, "It's not broken. What are you trying to fix?" There's always the petty, parochial things, you know? "You're not given enough helicopters. You don't know how to use this to best advantage." Quite candidly, the environment matured the conventional force to the point where it can operate in a way that was very complementary. There were a lot of blurred lines. There were a lot of the conventional forces doing FID, so that really left kind of the UW, the unconventional warfare stuff, for the CJSOTF, and a lot of times, they were more interested in doing direct-action stuff than doing UW or FID. I think you had to appreciate all that stuff. You had to get beyond "mine, mine, mine, mine, mine," like we're raised to be. You know, I was a BCT commander. I had a BCT. It was "Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine. Where's my slice? You can't take my slice from me." So, I think that really effective leaders got well beyond that, and I'm talking conventional and unconventional leaders that got beyond it—the very best.

DR. KOONTZ: **Comparing the Iraqi theater of operations to the Afghan theater of operations, did you ever get the impression that OEF was of secondary importance or secondary urgency?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: No. You know, we didn't compare ourselves to that. We had resources. We had what we needed to accomplish the mission. When we didn't, CENTCOM was very, very good. General [John P.] Abizaid came in frequently, at least once a month. We had VTCs with General [USMC

Lt. Gen. John F.] Sattler, the J-3. We had weekly VTCs with the Army Staff. About the time, on the verge of the presidential election, I thought there was a missed opportunity in terms of information operations in that, if you remember, that was the year of our presidential election, and obviously, al Qaeda was paying attention to that. AMZ [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi] was raising hell in Iraq, and here we were, the first election in the 5,000-year history of Afghanistan, I thought it could have played more. It was a huge success. No, I never—I mean, we got what we needed. Could we have got more? I guess so, but our shortcomings were never the result of not getting the resources we asked for and needed or attention from the senior leadership.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You go over; you do your year's tour; and you then get replaced by SETAF to take over CJTF-76. Tell me about the transition period between the headquarters elements.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I think it was very thoughtful. You know, they had—EUCOM [U.S. European Command] decided they want to do an exercise before. This is SETAF. They had never done anything like this, and so there was some concern. They had to build a headquarters—a pretty huge task. It wasn't a division headquarters, you know, to start, so they had to build their headquarters to have the capability, and then they had to get the JMD on top of that. So, there were two phases. There's a joint manning document for CJTF-76, but the base elements was a division headquarters at that time. It was us, the 82d, 10th Mountain, 101st. Those are the base units. So, you know, you had a certain team put together. They had to put a team together to get up there. So, EUCOM did an exercise and then—they actually did two. They did kind of a pre-MRX, and then they did an MRX. My view of it is they came in; they were thoughtfully organized; the commander had thought pretty hard about it; they had published a monograph on insurgencies. You know, I thought the transition was pretty good. I think there was an appreciation for what we were trying to do. I think there were different challenges. They came in right before the spring offensive, so here you go again, you know? But they had the parliamentary elections, and they had set the conditions for successful parliamentary elections. General Barno straddled that transition, which I think was important, so there couldn't be any lapses in how a new unit came in. Now, you know, they took a different approach to it on some things than we did. It's unfair of me to look back on what they did and be pejorative about it, but they operated a little bit differently. I think they learned some things. I think they made some progress. But the actual transition, I thought, went well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you pass on any kind of advice or guidance or anything like that on to their commanders as you guys transitioned through?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Yeah, absolutely—what worked for us, what didn't work. A lot of it was so new to us. We learned these lessons, and we thought they were just really important, and we passed them on. There was a forum for that, all the way from how we operated; what we did in terms of our battle rhythm; and the way the battle space was organized; all the way down to different tactics, techniques, and procedures, both at the tactical and at the operational level—you know, how you interacted with CFC-Alpha and those kinds of things. And we had an advantage. We had forty-some-odd—I think it started at forty-one; it might have been more—25th ID soldiers up in CFC-Alpha. I mean, General Barno was trying to stand that organization up. He came early on. We didn't fully deploy our division, so we pulled forty-two people and offered them to be part of their initial JMD. I think that helped in terms of communication. But, you know, in terms of going over everything, you know, we gave them—I don't know if we have time for that; I have to go back to all my notes to give you the specifics. There's also the personal connection, too. We knew a lot of the guys coming in, and we had served with them on previous assignments.

DR. KOONTZ: **Looking back on your tour, sir, what would you point to as the greatest challenge that you faced; and then, alternately, what was the greatest success of the task force?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: I think the greatest challenge we faced was understanding and appreciating the environment. And I think our greatest success was understanding and appreciating the environment and operating in a way that allowed for the election and the inauguration of a president. Because of my age, a lot of things have dulled over time, although it looks like I'm probably going back in May, I still, I remember telling people, "In my twenty-eight years of military service, rarely do you get the opportunity to see kind of the fruits of your labor as a soldier and as an organization," and, you know, we were able to see progress. We were able to see our efforts turn into things that were good for the Afghan people, that helped them to stabilize the region—geopolitical, all the way down. I mean, we saw our efforts to improve relationships between Afghanistan and Pakistan, as fragile as those are. You could see measurable improvements in all those areas, and rarely do you get the opportunity to say that. I mean, even now, with all the baying about, right around the spring offensive and the concern over there—and it's probably legitimate—we're still well beyond, I think, where a lot of people would have ever suspected we would have been. So, that's probably the

biggest thing. And I think there're a lot of really powerful things that are going to help the Army in the long term. That's a very unstructured, unconventional, demanding environment in every way you look at it, whether it's the terrain, the people, the resources. The challenges that—you know, we have thinking leaders that are unafraid to go into that thing to try to figure it out, and they're not willing to just be satisfied with movement to contacts. They really have an appreciation for the battle space and how all these things—you know, the DIME—and how it all works.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I think I have something like two minutes left on my appointment. How do you want to end this, sir?**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about it. Chris, I really think this is a great program, and I'm glad you take the time to do it.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir. On behalf of the Center, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this.**

BRIG. GEN. CHAMPOUX: Okay.



Col. Phillip Bookert (USAR, Ret.) *served as the director of the civil-military affairs section (CJ-9) of Combined Joint Task Force-76 before assuming command of Combined Task Force* LONGHORN *in Regional Command West. Colonel Bookert describes his notification for call-up to active duty and preparations for deployment at Fort Sill and Fort Benning. He explains how he became the chief of the CJ-9 section at Combined Joint Task Force-76 headquarters in Bagram, how he integrated civil-military operations into combat planning, and how he overcame the tension of being a Reserve officer in an active Army unit. Colonel Bookert discusses civil-military affairs and projects, morale, the employment of provincial reconstruction teams, and the conflict between Ismail Khan and Amanullah Khan around Shindand in western Afghanistan. He describes the creation of Combined Task Force* LONGHORN*, working with the Afghan National Army, and preparations for the transfer of Regional Command West to NATO control as well as the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, the effects of narcotics in western Afghanistan, the press, and humanitarian assistance.*

DR. KOONTZ: **This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the ninth of May 2007. Dr. Lisa Mundey is also present, and we are interviewing Col. Phillip Bookert about his tour of duty as the commanding officer of Combined Task Force** LONGHORN **in Regional Command West in Afghanistan. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

COL. BOOKERT: Yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have any reservations with Army or public researchers using this material, as long as you're cited correctly?**

COL. BOOKERT: No.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, thank you, sir. What I'd like to do to start off is to have you briefly discuss your civilian life. What were you doing before you got called up to Afghanistan?**

COL. BOOKERT: I worked at that time for the University of Texas, the Center for Agile Technology, which is an applied research center. I was an assistant director there. Let's see … I received notification in February 2004 that I was being activated for OEF [Operation ENDURING FREEDOM], with no indication of final assignment.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. How did you get into the Army Reserve? I should have asked that one first.**

COL. BOOKERT: I was active duty for eleven years and left active duty and went to grad school. I joined the Army Reserve after I completed my degree.

DR. KOONTZ: **And your eleven years in the active force—what was your branch, and what did you do?**

COL. BOOKERT: Field artillery. I was a fire direction officer; battery executive officer; nuclear weapons officer—and all of this was in an 8-inch battalion, a 203-mm. battalion—and I was a battery commander, as well. Those four assignments all were in Augsburg, Germany. The first three were in 1st Battalion, 30th Field Artillery. The last one was in A Battery, 1st Battalion, 36th Field Artillery. They were part of the 17th Field Artillery Brigade, and that was 1978 to 1981.

DR. KOONTZ: **You got called up in February of 2004.**

COL. BOOKERT: Actually, I received orders in February. I received notification and actually went on active duty in April of 2004.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Active duty in April and, as you said, you basically had orders pending. You didn't have a direct assignment at that time?**

COL. BOOKERT: Right. I actually got a mailgram. It looks like junk mail, and you open it, and it really is just a synopsis of the orders that you get in the mail a couple of days later, but it said: "Report to Fort Sill no later than …"—I don't remember the date, but it was some time in May—"for further assignment to OEF."

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. All right, take us to Fort Sill. What happens to you when you get there?**

COL. BOOKERT: First, they didn't know an O-6 [colonel] was coming on post. So I arrived, and the plan at that time was to give me a refresher of the field artillery advanced course, which I quickly informed them that they were not going to do that. And I took their curriculum, gave them some suggestions of what I wanted to know, which was "What are the latest advancements in field artillery over the last ten years?" I also requested some joint staff information, which they could not provide. So, we spent—because I was there, and a lieutenant colonel in field artillery, as well as a major—all three of us were out there at the same time, so we basically reviewed advancements in weapons and ammunition for the last ten years in field artillery.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, you're expecting at this point in time that you're going to be activated and do field artillery duties?**

COL. BOOKERT: I didn't think I would be doing field artillery duties because, at the O-6 level, field artillerymen are division artillery commanders, so I knew it would be some type of staff job. I didn't know what kind of staff job, and I figured it would be a Joint Staff.

DR. KOONTZ: **Other than your refresher courses, what kind of training or what kind of preparations did you do at Fort Sill?**

COL. BOOKERT: Additional basic training types of things—weapons training, nuclear/biological/chemical training. That's pretty much it. I mean, it was just really the basic kinds of training that soldiers need. No formal PT [physical training], but I did a lot of that, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you take any kind of preparation to acclimate yourself with Afghanistan or current operations there?**

COL. BOOKERT: Actually, I did. I was really lucky, because I was talking to a neighbor who is a member of our church. He and his wife spent three years in Pakistan, and when I told him where I was going, when I told him I was going to Afghanistan, he gave me homework. He gave me five books to read on the culture and religion, and I would say that's probably the best preparation I could have done, knowing, in hindsight, the job I ended up doing.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. When do you find out—or, let me ask this question: What happens to you after Fort Sill? Where did you go after you finished your basic and refresher training?**

COL. BOOKERT: Well, I actually found out where I was going before I left Fort Sill. I don't often use my rank to find things out, but I had to. I ended up calling DA [Department of the Army], an assignments officer, and pretty much raised Cain and let her know that "You know, we've got people being deployed,

and we need to know what's going on so we can let family know where we're going," because there were other folks there, quite a few military intelligence folks, and their orders said "OEF or OIF [Operation IRAQI FREEDOM]," and there's a great deal of apprehension among the families about where you go and what you're doing. So, I called and was able to get my assignment to—all they could tell me was Afghanistan and Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Do you remember approximately when that was?**

COL. BOOKERT: That would have been approximately June first to June fifth, somewhere in that time frame because I left Fort Sill and went to Fort Benning. At Fort Benning, you get to do the same thing again, and take whatever shots you missed. Again, you go through, you know, your nuclear/chemical/biological training; and again, through your weapons training, not because we needed it but, as I understand it, the commander at Fort Benning thought that if he was going to certify soldiers that are ready to go, ready to be deployed to wherever, he wanted to be sure that they were, and he wanted them trained on his post. So, it wasn't just me. It was everybody who went there that received the same training again. Nothing new happened. I had already done it all at Fort Sill.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you know that you're going to Afghanistan, and you know you're going to Kabul. Had they given you any kind of notification as to what organization you were going to be serving in there?**

COL. BOOKERT: Well, before I left I did because you actually get orders at that point, which had a line number which I couldn't interpret. I still knew I was going to somewhere in Afghanistan and Kabul. Actually, all three of us had orders to the same location. Actually, I did figure it out. I was supposed to be the operations officer in Kabul, and I don't know why I can't remember the command, but it was the higher command than CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76].

DR. KOONTZ: **And evidently, that changes somewhere along the way?**

COL. BOOKERT: [Laughs.] Oh, it changed all right! You probably know how you get there, but you fly from Atlanta to Frankfurt, and then a direct flight into Bagram. At Bagram, there is a CW-4 [chief warrant officer 4] who worked in the personnel shop, who actually met all incoming folks, and he would see you to your different units. At that time, CJTF-76 was short one O-6 and I was an O-6, and he said, "You two are going to Kabul. Sir, come with me." And that's how it happened. So, I was stolen by the S-1 [staff officer for personnel] from the 25th [Infantry] Division.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Take us to Kabul. What happens there?**

COL. BOOKERT: I never get to Kabul. That's the point [laughs]. I get to go about, you know, quarter of a mile down the road to Headquarters, CJTF-76, and the position for which they wanted me had been reorganized out of existence while I was in the air. The position he wanted me to fill was in the operations shop. Of course, the CJ-3 [staff officer for operations] was a lieutenant colonel, and there was absolutely no way he would want a colonel in his shop, and there was a position in the CJ-9, which was a civil-military officer's slot. The incumbent was a major, and he was PCSing [making a permanent change of station transfer], and I was put in that slot. And I'll tell you, I had absolutely no background in civil-military operations [CMO] at all.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of activities were you doing as the CJ-9?**

COL. BOOKERT: A CJ-9? Primary responsibility was advising the commander, Maj. Gen. [Eric T.] Olson, and his brigade commanders and all of his O-6 commanders on how to use civil-military operations to attain tactical and strategic objectives. That might sound a little funny coming from someone who didn't know what that was, but a lot of it's just common



Colonel Bookert at his command post in Herat

sense. You don't have to kill people all the time to get them to do what you want to do. That's really what it's about, and that required, other than, you know, those five books I read to get a lot of background on that, just a lot of common sense and a lot of reading about civil-military operations. There was already a section there. They had a great deal of documentation about civil-military operations, and I read them all that week. So, I spent a lot of time to try to figure out what it was I should be doing, and then talking to, at least, my direct report, which was at that time Brig. Gen. (Promotable) [Charles H.] Jacoby, and he sort of gave me, really, the objectives of what the commander wanted. So, from that point, I was able to at least develop programs that would help the division achieve his objectives.

DR. KOONTZ: **Can you give us some specific examples of the kinds of things that General Jacoby was telling you, insofar as the commander's intent for CJTF-76?**

COL. BOOKERT: Sure. They used a term which I don't like—and you can say that, and I still don't like it, but—"win the hearts and minds of the Afghans," and my opinion, and I stated this, was "I don't care about their hearts and minds. I want them to trust me, and I want them to understand that if we say we're going to do something, we do it." I think that was more important than winning their hearts and minds, but that was number one. Number two was how do we win over the population locally? And then, how do we build that up to provincial level, and then from provincial level to national? Another one was how do we involve the education system, meaning the colleges, in helping us achieve those objectives? And then, to prepare for contingencies, humanitarian assistance contingencies.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You step into this job. As you say, it's a great deal of it's common sense, and you've done all your homework. How was it that you tried to craft policies or procedures that would enable the commander's intent?**

COL. BOOKERT: Okay. Thank goodness I had a good staff. I had folks who had been doing this, and I had some NCOs who had been doing this for five to ten years. I had really one good captain who had been doing it for about five years. So, I had some good talent to draw on. So, let's skip up to trust. There are several resources we had, and one is I was never short of funds. One thing we would always do—one of the things I implemented was whenever we went through an area with a combat operation, you follow it up with either a medical team or—we created what we called these humanitarian (that's not the word I want to use, but I'll use it for now, and I'll describe what that means, but) package of humanitarian aid or assistance, and that could be, depending on where you were and the time of year, clothing. It could be pioneer tools, shovels—you know, that kind of stuff, to build things.

As well as some clothing, pioneer tools, sometimes small stoves that you could burn wood, wood-burning stoves. So, as you can imagine, we're very good at destroying things and we are very bad at rebuilding things, but they are very good at that, and they really appreciate being given things that they can use. They really don't—yes, you can give them food. That lasts as long as the food lasts. But, when you give them these other kinds of things, that has more of a lasting effect and reminds them that you were there. So, we would follow the combat operation or the civil-military operation with a medical operation, and sometimes we would go into areas and just do that before combat operations occurred.

We got the University of Kabul involved. Actually, I just visited—we contacted the dean of students, and I proposed to him a collaboration between our JAG [judge advocate general] and some of their prelaw students, and the intent was to get them to learn the law and learn how to practice law operating with our JAGs. And, really, it was sort of dual: to educate our JAG on Afghan law, and educate them somewhat on how our judicial system works, because the judicial system is—was, probably still is—in shambles, so it was really try to educate them on what one should look like.

As simple as this sounds, a lot of this was just participating in staff meetings. Now, you can imagine when there's a two-star general, two one-star generals, and four or five O-6s, two of which are combat brigade commanders, majors just don't speak. Colonels don't listen to majors, but they'll listen to colonels. A lot of that was just getting these commanders to think about using civil-military ops to achieve an objective because, like I said, what we do well is we do combat operations very well. We don't do civil-military operations very well. So, just by participating in these meetings and speaking up and telling them the resources that we had available, the resources that the provincial reconstruction teams [PRTs] had available, it changed the thought process of commanders from just sending in an infantry platoon to maybe sending in a PRT that's available to them, or "Let's do a medical action."

Oh, I forgot one other key point. Another one is assessments. Any time any unit goes through a new area, they would do what is called an area assessment, for several reasons. One is to determine whether or not that area or village supported enemy operations. So, you go through a village, and if you see a lack of fighting-age men—there's a problem there if they're not in the fields. If they disappear, then that's an indicator. You look for, you know, the normal things you would expect in any neighborhood. You look for the kids out, look for the women out working, and if that's missing, then there are some problems there. So, they do a village assessment, as well. Part of that is also assessing the needs

of that community. Do they have fresh drinking water? What's the medical situation there? That can drive, or did drive, what civil-military operations we would do in an area. So, one of the major problems was unclean drinking water. Wells are cheap, and we probably—I think in my tenure, in just the two and a half or three months I was the CMO or CJ-9, we probably dug over five hundred wells because they're cheap and it's easy to do that. That would also key us—if it was a friendly village and they looked like they were going to support us—that would key us to send other resources there, like a MEDCAP [medical civil action program], or have a PRT visit, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **You said you were only there for about three months. How effective was CJTF-76, during your three months as the CJ-9, in winning over the hearts and minds or winning the trust of the Afghan people?**

COL. BOOKERT: Wow! That's a tough question [laughs]. We got better at it, and the way I can assess that is the first month I was there, when I spoke up in the staff call, you could hear a pin drop. It was like "Who is he, and why is he talking about something that's not combat operations?" There's some other thing I need to talk about, too. At the end of the three months, when brigade commanders would brief their operations, part of that briefing was civil-military operations. That was never the fact before, and the fact that it was directly integrated into the operations led me to think that we were on the road to success at the CJ-9 in integrating civil-military operations more effectively in the combat operations. And that actually became a requirement later on, that whenever a commander briefed at the monthly commanders' conference, you had to brief that. And it was an integral part of their operations, so it wasn't—you know—Month 2 was "Here's what my combat guys are doing. Here's what we're doing in civil-military operations," and then it was "Here's how we integrated that, and here's the way we do that." So, the commanders actually started thinking about it and using those PRTs more effectively.

One of the things that—another thing we did that I think was very critical to CJTF-76's success, and not just -76's but, you know, the entire command in Afghanistan—was when the 25th arrived, and when I arrived, we had many different organizations trying to do reconstruction and development activities all over Afghanistan, and there was a lot of overlap among these organizations. We had … you know, of course, the UN was there; and then we had Germany; you know, just tons of folks that were there trying to do different things. We established a group. We actually brought them all together, and once a week they would come to Bagram, and we would meet. We put, really, some structure and discipline in who was doing what, when, and where, to the point where we would assign—you know, the group

collectively would assign priorities to areas of the country and projects within those areas, and then the organizations, these civil organizations, could select what they wanted to do based on their national priorities. That was huge, and it saved a great deal of money among the organizations. I say "saved money." It saved money by eliminating a lot of the duplication.

The first thing—and one of the reasons we came up with that is, we found out that Japan and the U.S. were slated to do the same road in RC [Regional Command] East, and that's very expensive. They were already about to contract that, and we figured that out: "No, get back with the UN, and then you guys can build another road." So, a lot of that coordination would happen at -76 as a result of our initiative. That was very successful, because it went from about, initially, about ten people attending that meeting to … well, we exceeded the capacity of the conference room, which was forty, and that's just within three months. So, that was very successful. Was that because I was there? Partially, because an O-6 can get people to come to meetings. Mostly, this was something the staff wanted to do, and we just were never able to get the appropriate people to attend or get the deputy commanding general, General Jacoby, to agree to doing that. You know, some things you can do just because you're an O-6, unfortunately. But that worked very well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. How would you describe the command climate within the CJTF-76 headquarters at Bagram?**

COL. BOOKERT: First, it was a joint and combined headquarters. We had, you know, folks from other countries. Also, it had people from all of the U.S. services, so you had Air Force, Marines, Army, Navy folks there, as well. There were a lot of people who worked very hard. There were some people who barely worked at all. We ran what's called a joint operations center. The command ran a joint operations center, and soldiers were assigned to that for six months, and for six months they worked twelve-hour shifts every day, and the only time you're not there is if you're ill. Their morale was probably medium to low. I mean, it's such a strain because their roles were to represent their commands out in the field doing combat operations, but they were there all the time. I mean, they were always there. They knew at all times what was going on, and then at the end of each twelve-hour shift, they would have to brief the commander on what was going on and any significant activities. The operations section, the CJ-3, I'd say morale was pretty high because there aren't a whole lot of times that staff officers actually get to affect what's going on in the battle, and they got to plan all of that and implement it. So, I would say, overall, it was probably medium to high. You could—I mean, there's always 10 percent who will just say, "It was absolutely awful," and for some people, it isn't. When you think about MPs

[military police], the guys guarding the prisoners there—very professional folks but, you know, they had to deal with some awful conditions because they dealt with prisoners all the time and there was no rotation. They came in, they were assigned prison duty, and they stayed there the entire time, and there's a heavy psychological toll that it takes on those folks. Then you have units who had to pull patrols around the air base. Not the most exciting thing to do, but they did it, and I'd say their morale, for the most part, was high. They at least got to leave the compound. The vast majority of people on that compound on Bagram Air Base never left, so if you can imagine being in an area—well, it's probably not much bigger than—well, it's probably maybe three times larger than Fort McNair, being inside something like that, and you never get to leave for a year, other than when you go home for vacation or, if you're lucky enough, to get a full day of R&R. So, for a lot of folks that was difficult. I would say, personally, it was medium to high.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you mentioned the combined and joint nature of the headquarters. Did you have any foreign or joint elements in your section?**

COL. BOOKERT: In my section, I did not. All of mine were U.S. Army, and a mixture of active duty and reservists. Most were active duty.

DR. KOONTZ: **And this is probably as good a time as any to ask the loaded question. Did you have any problems as a reservist coming in?**

COL. BOOKERT: Of course! It was actually very interesting because the great point came about three, four weeks after I was there. One of my NCOs—when you schedule a mission, it goes into an operations center, and then it gets on the list of things that's supposed to happen. Well, he canceled it, and it didn't go through the right process, the formal process, of canceling so they could remove that. So, it got briefed. It didn't happen. Now they've got to figure out why it didn't happen, and the lieutenant colonel came in my section—my office was one room off to the side—and started screaming at my NCO, and I threw him out. From that point on, I think they forgot I was a reservist; or they realized it and started treating the section with more respect.

In that division, the CM section, civil-military section, was sort of a detail section. So, if the staff needed something planned, "Give it to the -9." A good example was graves registration and dealing with dead Afghans. A huge problem. Within seventy-two hours, they have to be returned to their family and buried. So, if we killed an Afghan by accident, they had given that responsibility to the CJ-9, and that's not where it lay. It actually lay with Headquarters Company. They actually have a graves registration section, and they

were supposed to handle that. There was a major—the operations officer was an O-5 [lieutenant colonel]—and he said, "You guys are going to do this." Over time, as I was going through the things we were doing, I saw that and I said, "We're not going to do that anymore," and went to the operations officer and said, "Here's who should be doing it. We're not doing it anymore." I was doing those kinds of things that I should do, and they realized that I knew we shouldn't be doing that. I think they sort of realized that, regardless of me being a reservist, it was not our issue.

So, well, yeah, I mean, I had to overcome that as well. I never felt that way from the command—from the two deputy commanders, the chief of staff, or from the commander, General Olson. I think one way to explain that … Lieutenant General [James R.] Helmly visited three times while I was on the staff, and he would always want to meet and talk to reservists. I was never, ever put on the list. The third time, I finally went to the chief of staff, and I said, "Why do I never get to talk to this guy?" He goes, "Oh, yeah. You are a reservist, aren't you?" I was also ordered to put on a 25th Division patch, which was not a problem. Reservists don't have to do that, but I did, anyway, and that, I think, went a long way to being assimilated into the division and people not realizing I was a reservist.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. A while ago, you had mentioned the integration of—you know, after a combat operation, you followed it up with a MEDCAP [medical civil action program], or you followed that up with humanitarian assistance, something like that. Did you learn anything about PRT work as your role in CJ-9 that you would use later?**

COL. BOOKERT: There was actually a civil-military brigade assigned to CJTF-76, and their role was to organize and field these PRTs whenever you needed a new one, as well as rotate replacements in for those. So, PRTs would be replaced, really, in two parts. We would replace the civil-military operations section of the PRT, and then we would replace the security force. The security force was normally an infantry platoon, and that infantry platoon was only used for protection of the PRT in the conduct of its civil-military operations. As the CJ-9, I had command oversight into PRT operations, so I had to learn very quickly what they should be doing, what they were doing, and then develop recommendations to the command on how we might want to use them or get them different missions.

So, yes, because we had oversight, I had staff responsibility for making sure that they actually had all of the resources they needed. A good example is, when you put a new PRT, typically they would go into an area, living in tents, while we were constructing a PRT compound, which is a fortified site. I had the staff oversight in tracking the involvement

of the different sections. We had a role in making sure that happened. Of course, the logistics section, the operations section, getting the—and personnel—so, general oversight of making sure everything was happening.

DR. KOONTZ: **From your position of command oversight, how would you evaluate the way PRTs were operating in Afghanistan at that time?**

COL. BOOKERT: I think very well, and I think we broke the code. It wasn't my idea, and I don't recall whose idea PRTs were, but the fact that you would put a very small unit—a large PRT would be about ninety, eighty soldiers with three civilians—three? Yeah, three civilians—Department of State, Department of Agriculture, and USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development]. The fact that you would put that sized unit typically in the capital of a province had a huge effect on, one, the population, definitely on the civilians; and, then, definitely on the government structure there. One, it was a confidence builder in the government in that we were supporting what they were trying to do there; two, the areas around PRTs were considered very safe, and if you look at PRTs, we typically would build them away from the main population, but growth would start moving out toward the PRTs. So, we built new home structures. Compounds were being built, and they would start migrating to it, in the direction of the PRT because there was this feeling of security. And not only that.

One of the PRT's main missions was to do an assessment of the province, and they started with the governor, trying to assess his ability to govern, and all of the things that affect his ability to govern. Then they would get recommendations from him of which parts of the province to travel to by priority. And then, these PRT commanders would do assessment missions, and their responsibility was to travel the entire province, and they did that. There were some places I recall in RC West … the Herat PRT went on a mission within—they had to go about eleven kilometers from the Iranian border, and they rolled into town, and one of the questions that they were asked was "You mean the Soviets are gone?" They didn't know that the U.S. was there. I mean, they had no radios. They had no television satellite dish. I mean, some of these places are very remote, and the fact that PRTs would do that and then follow that up with assistance of all kinds—you know, some of the things I mentioned before: medical, water, emergency support, support to their governor—that went a long way of gaining the trust of the population.

Now, I'll go back to something as simple as a well. One of the major complaints was dirty drinking water, and there

were a lot of illnesses that resulted from that. We got with the PRT commander or one of the soldiers. They had promised a well. The next thing you know, two weeks later or less, up comes some drilling rig with an Afghan crew, and they drilled a well, put a pump on it, and they have clean water. As minor as those things sound, that went a long way to gaining their trust because we would do what we told them we were going to do.

Another reason we were successful there was there really was no sense of infrastructure. I mean, if you think about—I'm going to get myself in trouble—Iraq, I mean, they really had an infrastructure already. They had roads, they had power, and these kinds of things. If you weren't in a major city in Afghanistan, like Kabul, Herat, parts of Mazar-e Sharif, or Konduz, you didn't have that. So, the small things that we could do with such a small budget as PRT has, and the things that USAID would do—roads, those kinds of things—went a long way to garnering support of the population. Like I said, I think the PRTs in Afghanistan broke the code because we had the military side, and then you had the three civilian advisers to that commander, and we were able to do quite a few things that helped them tremendously because they didn't have the money; they didn't have the knowledge; they didn't even have an infrastructure; and anything that we could give meant a great deal.

DR. KOONTZ: **The reason I asked that is because PRTs are going to be an important part of [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN. So, you had experience, and you knew what they were supposed to do, in other words?**

COL. BOOKERT: I already knew what they were supposed to do, and part of my responsibility, at some times, was to go out and evaluate PRT commanders. There were times when there were some things not going well, and General Jacoby said, "Go find out what's going on." I would visit, do an assessment, come back, and report to him.

DR. MUNDEY: **At this time, are PRT commanders still civil affairs Army folks?**

COL. BOOKERT: Yes, they are civil affairs, not—no, not always Army. During that time, we had Navy commanders and … let's see …Navy, Marines, and Army. There were no Air Force PRT commanders, but those were the three. There was always a marine in command. There was always at least one Navy O-5 [commander] in command, and then the rest were Army.

DR. KOONTZ: **Before we get you over to RC West and [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN, is there anything else you want to tell us?**

COL. BOOKERT: I should probably give you some additional background about how I ended up being sent out there. I mean, I've been a staff officer before. I've been a secretary of General Staff—the worst job in the Army while you have it; the best job in the Army afterwards because you learn how general officers think. They don't think like O-5s or O-4s [majors]. I mean, they really do have a different mental process they go through, and they expect different kinds of information. I had that job as a reservist at San Antonio. So, when I got to Bagram and ended up being on the staff, I knew how to write for a general officer, and one of the things that the previous CJ-9 never did was write summaries of what they were doing. That was really interesting about that command. They—at least, the staff officers—preferred to brief the command, brief the CG [commanding general] or the deputy commanders, instead of, you know, writing a one-page information paper and shooting it into them. And I don't like briefings, anyway, and it's much more efficient to do that. So, anything we did, and even recommendations—you know, I initiated it, at least for our section—we would document it. If we needed a decision: "Fine. I'll put that recommendation in that and forward it to the chief of staff or to my boss, General Jacoby." That was what I started doing.

Well, one day I get a call-up from the general: "Come see me." He had asked about this initiative to start collaborating with the universities. The next thing I know, every time I said something—the things we started doing started to get a visibility at his level, and so then, of course, when we started doing—and I'll say this. After you start doing well, you get more work and more work, and every three months, they had a commanders' conference. The commanders' conference was all of the brigade commanders and the PRT commanders. They would assemble at Bagram and give an update on what they were doing. Yeah, I think it was every three months because it was very difficult to get everybody there. So, you've got fifteen commanders—General Staff, primary staff of CJTF-76, higher command, headquarters, operations officer, sometimes the commander, sometimes the representative from the ambassador—no, every time the representative from the ambassador's office—anyway, I think his direction was "Phil, we're having a commanders' conference. I want a good speaker. Here's what I want to make sure we cover. Go do it and come back and tell me when we can do that and get it organized." We did it, and it went very well, and I say that because right after that, he called me in and said, "You know, I like you. I like the way you think." That was all he told me, and I went away and, you know, started doing the CJ-9 job again. What's important about that is, I think, that he, also with General [Brig. Gen. Bernard S.] Champoux, who was the DCG [deputy commanding general] for operations, realized that I understood the kinds of information they expected and

gave it to them, so they didn't have to come back. They never had to ask me what was going on in civil-military operations because I fed that to them, and I think they appreciated that.

So, the preceding activities that actually caused RC West to stand up was, in the west, there were two warlords. One was the governor of Herat, which was Ismail Khan. He was the governor of Herat Province. There's a town thirty miles south of Herat called Shindand, and there was a warlord there whose name was Amanullah Khan—no relation. We didn't know at the time—sixty miles? Yeah, sixty miles southwest of Herat was a border crossing, and I'm not quite sure which one, but one of them was collecting tolls there, and the other one wanted it. It was quite a bit of money they were extorting out of people bringing goods across the border of Herat into Afghanistan. There was a battle that erupted between the two militias, and don't think like militias in the Philippines. These guys had tanks and they had field artillery, and they were using them.

General Olson sent 3/4 Cav, Task Force SABER, out to separate them. I should be able to tell you the month. I think that was August of 2004. So, they went out and they did a very good job of separating the forces, and the other thing they started doing was trying to basically remove a lot of that equipment from the battlefield. There were some issues with Task Force SABER. One, in that that was a very large area for a battalion-sized unit to just be able to cover. I mean, it was just a lot going on, and the battalion staff was not really organized, nor are lieutenant colonels trained, to deal with a lot of the things that they had to deal with. One, a very sophisticated governor—Ismail Khan was a very smart guy, very savvy—and then there were three other governments there that they had to deal with. There are civilian aid organizations you have to deal with, and it was very difficult for them to do all of that. General Champoux went on a visit—I think it was in late August—assessed the situation, came back, and said, "You know"—I'm assuming he said this, because when he told the CG that "This job's too big for Task Force SABER," then General Olson went out and visited and spent a couple of days out there, and came back, and I'll relay the story to you as I was told it, because that's what I was told by General Champoux and then later by General Jacoby—he said, "I need a brigade headquarters out there. Tell me why I shouldn't send Phil out there to do this." They all discussed it and talked about, you know, "What kind of combat forces can he have? What kind of support? Can we do this? Where will we get the staff?"—and this was on the plane coming back with General Champoux. He gets back and has the same discussion with General Jacoby, and I think General Jacoby's words were "It's a good idea." Now, I don't know this at that time.

Also, a new civil-military brigade was rotating in and the old one was rotating out. Normally, the commander of the brigade is the CJ-9. All kinds of things are happening. They were thinking about all the kinds of other jobs they could move me into, and then I think September seventeenth—General Jacoby told me, recounted this story to me. I'm pretty certain it was September seventeenth. I can go back to my diary because I was pretty jolted, but every day, every evening, at 1800 there was a battle update. I think it was 1800. Yeah, 1900 was the JOC [joint operations center] update. It's a battle update, and I began attending that as the CJ-9. That hadn't happened before, but those were the kinds of things that … you know, I had to get people thinking about civil-military operations, and that's one way you do it. The battle update was the SECRET/NOFORN [classified secret, not releasable to foreign nationals] update, so it was just U.S. commanders teleconferencing in and then briefing them on combat operations, or on their operations, for the day. So, I would always attend them.

On the seventeenth, I was, of course, attending that—I always did—and right at the end, if the CG has any comments, he makes final comments and he said, "Phil, wait," and he kept the command sergeant major, the two DCGs, the chief of staff, and I think that's all he kept. He explained to me, he said, "You know, we've got a command problem out in Herat in RC West. I want to stand up a brigade headquarters there before the elections, and I want you to do it. Come back and tell me when you can get a staff together and get out and be operational before the elections"—of course, this was September seventeenth, and the election's on October ninth—"and here are your missions." One was ensure peaceful presidential elections, successful presidential elections, within the west; confirm or—I've got these written down, so I'll slow down if you need me to—confirm whether, or deny, the existence of Taliban in RC West; conduct security operations; conduct economic development—no, conduct development and reconstruction activities; establish a regional governor's initiative; and the last thing was set conditions for assumption of RC West by NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. Up until this clash between the two militias, NATO had made overtures that they would assume responsibility for RC West. Of course, they started at the north, and their plan was to move counterclockwise and assume all of the command. After that clash, they pretty much said, "It's a dead mission. We're not doing that."

DR. KOONTZ: **And up until that time, RC West had been fairly quiet?**

COL. BOOKERT: Oh, yeah. The opinion among the intelligence section and, to some extent, OGA [other governmental agency] was that RC West was very quiet and nothing was happening—until that happened, of course. But then that's militia activity, so

you really think, "Ah, it's just two guys with a disagreement." Not the case. We'll get to that later, I'm sure. There was a lot happening out there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Was RC West … was it an actual regional command that had been stood up at that point in time and was just vacant, or was it created when Task Force SABER showed up, or was it created when your command comes in?**

COL. BOOKERT: There was an area that was referred to as "RC West" in all of the other regional commands where they had a maneuver brigade or the PRTs reported to the maneuver brigade commander. In RC West, there were no combat forces, so it existed as an entity, or as an area. PRTs there reported to the civil-military brigade, but it did not exist as a command in RC West. It was an area. The other thing that General Olson sat down and said to me, he said, "You know, I soon expect 30 percent of your time, you'll be doing combat operations," so 30/70 percent combat to noncombat operations. That was his theory, and he said that he would leave Task Force SABER there. That would be my combat force, and, "We'll get you support that you need, and the PRTs will report to your command," and that was the end of that discussion. It wasn't an "if you." And it was sort of interesting. It wasn't, "Phil, would you like to?" It was, "Phil, I'm sending you out there to be the commander of RC West." That's how it first started, and then all of those other things, and then he gave me the missions. So, that was on the seventeenth.

I probably had one fairly decent friend I talked to, who was Lt. Col. [Jennifer A.] Caruso, and her job was—I'll think of that in a minute. Anyway, I'm going to digress a little bit, but probably July—yeah, about July 2005—the CG tasked Colonel Caruso to establish a task force of female soldiers, and it just happened to be all female officers in this case, to sort of assess how the command could improve the state of women in Afghanistan, and, of course, if you just listen to that, the whole thing sounds like a civil-military operation. She came and talked to me, so I supported that mission. In doing that and, you know, getting support to get the locations, she and I came to know each other fairly well, and that was the first person I told that I was going to be the commander of RC West. And, you know, I started thinking about "I'm going to be doing about 70 percent noncombat operations. I don't need an infantry officer or an armor officer as my deputy, because"—and I'll go back to what I said before, is, we destroy stuff very well. It's very easy to do that. So, I asked her, and she ended up being the deputy commander. So, probably in the first time of the history of the Army, an adjutant general [AG] officer has been a deputy commander of [inaudible] brigade, but that's what happened.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. All right, it's the middle of September. You've been given your orders from General Olson to go out and stand up an actual command in Regional Command West; and you've been charged to support the elections, which are coming in less than four weeks; and you mentioned you had to build your staff completely from scratch. Okay, how did you do that?**

COL. BOOKERT: That's where Caruso comes in. She was an AG officer, been in the company for a couple years, and she knew everything. Let me back up. So, having said that, of course, he gave the mission to the operations officer—"Support this"—and they had to develop the operations order and activation orders establishing this brigade. So, the implied mission is, one, figure out what your MTOE [modified table of organization and equipment] is. So, figure out what your MTOE is going to be, and then give that to the operations officer, and they'll start tasking people to fill that. After I convinced the chief of staff that Colonel Caruso was the right person, she and I started working on building that into a, first, internal staff. So, we identified all of the staff positions I thought we needed. What I told her is "This is an expeditionary brigade. We are being activated for a specific purpose, and we will be deactivated once we achieve that purpose." It probably took us maybe four or five days to sort of develop what we thought we needed, and we gave it to the operations section, and they started tasking different units to fill it out. And it wasn't just units in Bagram. I had soldiers that came from the infantry brigade headquarters and from units, you know, out in the field; they came from logistics command on post; some came from the primary staff of CJTF-76. My operations officer was then–Lt. Col. Thomas [D.] Webb. They tasked for communications. I actually ended up with a section of civilians. It was a field communications package. They ended up being my first communications package, and then they somehow found a communications unit that was sitting idle in Kuwait. They requested it from the CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] commander and got it. I mean, there was like a unit looking for a mission. And there was actually a team USAREUR [U.S. Army, Europe] that was sent that wasn't needed. It came there, and they ended up being tasked to provide support. So, it was pulled out of, really, all parts of CJTF-76, except from Task Force THUNDER, which was the artillery brigade, which was where I was supposed to get my fire support officer. I think, when we deployed, we probably deployed with a staff of about 80. I think it was 81. I think the largest number we had was around 100, 102.

DR. KOONTZ: **How long did it take you to get that staff kind of gelled together and operating—or "Did you?" might be a better question.**

COL. BOOKERT: Actually, yes, and I'll get to that. That's an interesting story, because Herat is about 350 miles from Bagram, and so you can imagine the difficulty of trying to deploy something like that. At that time, you didn't drive the roads and units didn't drive that route. I mean, that was a one-week—it's actually a ten-day trip about the time we got there, and it took that long because we had to worry about attacks. We deployed using Air Force assets, C–130s, and I actually hit the ground—we were activated October fifth. I hit the ground October fourth, and we were located on the same compound as the Herat PRT. We ended up leasing new buildings and expanding that compound, and we were actually operating by October seventh.

Now, mission number one is get there before, and be operational before, the elections. So, let's talk about the staff. It took about a month to get everybody out there. I'd been on, of course, a battalion staff; corps artillery staff; of course, one-star command staff in the Reserves; so I've got a lot of experience being a staff officer and really charged the staff officers. I said, "You know, we are pretty much unsupported here. If it's going to get done, we have to do it ourselves." The story I used was "If somebody attacked this compound, it would take air support thirty minutes to get here, and that's if they use the fastest thing they have and they come straight here." I said, "We have to do it ourselves. We don't have time to figure out how we're going to work together, and if you've got personal problems with somebody, work it out because we're here." We didn't have a lot of space. I had, you know, four to six captains living to a room sometimes, and it was just crowded. Really, what I told them during this initial meeting when I gave them our mission was "I don't have time for you to learn to get along with each other. If I have a problem, I will send you back to your unit, period, and that could be back to the battalion you came from, that brigade headquarters you came from in Kandahar, or back at Bagram, but I'm not going to deal with that because we don't have time for that." I found out later from Colonel Caruso, like several months later, that one statement, that "I'm going to send you back" did more to get that staff to gel than anything else.

The other thing was, my S-1 … I can't recall his name. It's probably two weeks into this. We were having some issues with personnel in one of the PRTs, and something was about to happen to a soldier that was just not right, and it shouldn't have happened. There had been a release from DA about that particular topic, and I had asked S-1 to look into that, and he gave some off-the-hip answer, and I said, "That's not right. I just read something a month or so ago about this. You need to go look it up again, and here's where you need to look." And, you know, they realized that I had broader breadth of knowledge than they expected; and, again, good people make it easier. A lot of the commands,

when they were tasked with giving up people, sort of gave up their, you know, mid-/lower-tiered people, or so they thought. Those guys were great. I mean, I can only give direction, and the staff has to do it. Colonel Caruso did a very good job of—she was, I swear, a human resources and economic something, EEO [equal employment opportunity] officer. I can't remember the acronym, but that was her title. She was very good at getting people to do what they needed to do, and she was very good at resolving conflicts and resolving issues. And Tom Webb was a fantastic planner and a great organizer. He was also a grad of—he got his master's degree from CGSC [U.S. Army Command and General Staff College]. He was one of those planners that came out of there, a fantastic guy. He understood operations, understood planning, understood how to organize very well. It took probably about the end of November. So, probably about six to eight weeks, they were operating as if they had been together, you know, for months, or even up to a year. I mean, they actually did very well in a short amount of time.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir, we've got your staff built together, and we've got 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry, there. What were the other elements in CTF [Combined Task Force] LONGHORN?**

COL. BOOKERT: I had two *kandaks*—a *kandak* is an Afghan infantry battalion—2/1 *Kandak* and 1/1 *Kandak*—and then the two PRTs, the Herat PRT and the Farah PRT.

DR. MUNDEY: **Do you know who the PRT commanders were at that time? Do you remember?**

COL. BOOKERT: The Herat PRT was Lt. Col. Andy Senta-Pinter. The Farah PRT commander was a Navy commander. I'll have to look up her name.

DR. MUNDEY: **Kimberly Evans?**

COL. BOOKERT: Yeah! Kim Evans.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then later, there were some Italian troops that were added to the task force; correct?**

COL. BOOKERT: Right. The Italians assumed the Herat PRT in … I think it was March thirtieth, 2005.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, the core of your task force is basically your cav regiment, or your squadron, rather, and your two *kandaks?***

COL. BOOKERT: Right. The two *kandaks* were supported by—they had advisers, U.S. advisers, and the commander of the group in the west was Colonel Randy Smith, and he was from the National Guard. They were organized with—he had a staff

of about twenty that worked with the highest—the Afghan command was 207th Corps. Their corps were equivalent to a division, but they called them corps. His staff worked directly with the Afghan corps commander, who was Maj. Gen. [Abdul Wahahab] Walizadah, and their goal was to train his staff how to be a staff. And then he would have a lieutenant colonel with five, who worked with the brigade, the 1st Brigade of 207th Corps. So, those five folks would work with him, and then there were three people in each battalion. I add that because they probably had the most difficult job out there. They lived with the Afghans; they advised the Afghans; they—you know, once I got there, I started treating them like they were mine, so I started taking care of them and giving them missions. They would assist the Afghans with planning those missions, and then they would accompany those Afghans on the missions. I think a huge reason for the security situation improving was their ability to train and mentor those Afghan infantry battalions and those—you know, that was just a very difficult job that they did very well.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was your assessment of the ANA *kandaks* that were operating under your command in terms of combat effectiveness?**

COL. BOOKERT: The 1/1 had sent a company out to provide security for the presidential elections, and they—so, they literally started doing patrols with some of the platoons from Task Force SABER, 3/4 Cav, and they were actually learning how to be pretty good infantry soldiers. I think initially it was they would do it if you told them and then told them how to do it. There was certainly never an initiative problem. Once you gave them a mission, they were certainly more than willing to do it. I would not give them a mission initially without them being task organized with a platoon of either SABER or, later on, Task Force PEACEKEEPER, who replaced SABER in January. Task Force PEACEKEEPER was the MP battalion that replaced SABER because they were redeploying to the east.

DR. KOONTZ: **Had you had any experience with the Afghan National Army before this, or was this your first?**

COL. BOOKERT: No. First.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, it was a learning process to be undertaken, or—**

COL. BOOKERT: Well, again, having Randy Smith there was crucial. I learned a great deal about how to use those guys from him, and they would recommend the kinds of missions those guys were good at. They were very good at going into places that I've never seen in any military, other than the U.S. I mean, really, when the Afghan soldiers would show up in a compound, one, typically—not a compound, in an area

or a village—typically, villagers were afraid of anybody in uniform, especially Afghans, because typically when a militia showed up, they'd be in some kind of uniform and they were there to steal or take, not to help you. When these guys were coming through, and one of the smart things we did—and I can't take credit for this, either—we started using these guys for civil-military operations, too. And not just that, but just using them in concert with U.S. soldiers. Later on, I would say after about February, I would just send—we would just send them a mission, and they'd go do it with their advisers. They became very good at it. So, initially, I would only send them on missions if they were task organized with a U.S. unit to accompany. After six, seven months, we just tasked them directly, and they would plan it. The Afghans would back-brief Colonel Smith. They would then brief me on it, and then they'd go do it. And I would say by the time they left, they were quite good, and they'd been right into combat. They'd had to do combat operations, as well, and they were doing rather well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You mentioned earlier that pretty much the reason for the creation of RC West was the dustup between Ismail Khan and Amanullah Khan. Were there any fallout effects from that by the time that you had gotten there?**

COL. BOOKERT: Yes. Before I got there, President [Hamid] Karzai replaced the governor, replaced Ismail Khan, and not long after that replacement, and before I arrived, someone attacked and burned the UN compound to the ground. Surprisingly, before the building was burned, all the files that had anything to do with Ismail Khan were removed. Of course, it wasn't difficult to figure out what happened, but, basically, he had hired thugs, had created a protest, burned the building down. Kudos to the PRT because they actually rescued the people out of that compound. They ran combat operations from the PRT compound to the UN compound, went in, and rescued the entire staff that was in that compound. We learned a hard lesson from that, but everyone got out of there uninjured, and then we evacuated them by air from the PRT compound to the airfield, and then flew them out on a C–130 the next day.

So, the environment that I got in was pretty—when we got there—was pretty tense, to the point where on the way in from the airport, and the headquarters was seventeen miles from the airport, which is on the south side of town, I passed two checkpoints. There's a river that runs through Herat called the Hari Rud. *Rud* is "river." It's the Hari River. So, the bridge across that river is probably, oh, 250 yards long. Went in, there was militia standing there dressed in black, AK47s. They never stopped us. On the other end was another militia dressed in green, and as we rode through town, I would see people just wandering around

with AK47s for weapons. My first order was "You've got to stop that," and in an initial meeting, I told them that he needed to issue an order that made it illegal for anyone to be in public with arms other than military or police, and then state that anyone caught in public with weapons, they will have their weapons confiscated and the person will be arrested. Three weeks later, that was not the case any longer. But, yeah, so, there were some tensions, and a lot of it was Ismail Khan trying to discredit the new governor and his ability to secure, or provide a safe and secure, environment for Herat. And, of course, President Karzai appointed Ismail Khan after he was relieved as the minister for power and water for Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Your first big task was going to be the election. Would that be correct?**

COL. BOOKERT: First big task was the election.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about the election in RC West. What did [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN do to support that?**

COL. BOOKERT: One thing that SABER did well was work with the Afghan army, Afghan police, and the governor's staff with coming up with the security plan for that I can't really take a whole lot of credit for that because the planning had already been done, and my role was to support that and let the governor know that we—the governors, now, but specifically the governor in heart—know that we were not going to reduce any support as a result of us getting there. That plan included securing all of the polling stations. The polling stations, of course, were separate for men. Males and females went to separate polling stations. The one change I made was—so, we had three rings of security. You would have the police guarding the polling station; you would have the Afghan National Army patrolling; and then, third, and what I changed—because, initially, they only had U.S. Army patrolling—is I had the U.S. Army on standby at the airfield, where if there was a problem, we would react to that. I didn't want us … you know, I remember telling someone when I was sent out west, I said, "If you see me on the evening news, you know there's a problem." I had wanted to make sure that we didn't give anyone the opportunity to create a problem involving U.S. soldiers. So, that was the only thing I changed. And, of course, reporters were there. We were quite successful, because by noon the day of elections, three reporters—the *New York Times*, AP, and BBC—flew back to Kabul because there was nothing going on. But our role was just to support security, and we did that. We, of course, had Task Force SABER, and they had transport and combat helicopters. We had all of that at our disposal.

In my mind, that really wasn't the most critical part of the elections. The most critical part of the elections was given

that you voted … now, it wasn't just Herat we were worried about, and we had Afghan soldiers in Chaghcharan and in Farah and in Qal'eh-ye Now, as well and the other provinces. Part of this was getting the ballots to those locations. That was all done without incident. My concern was "Now that we've voted, how do we get these ballots back safely to the counting center in Herat?" That was the regional counting center. Personally, if I wanted to disrupt an election, I would have done nothing. You do nothing on election day. All you had to do was ensure one ballot box goes missing and then make sure the press knows that you had it. That would have done more to discredit the election than preventing people from voting. That was my opinion. So, I think LONGHORN's real contribution was the after plan, was "How do we make sure we secure these things and get them all back to Herat?" You know, some of these things were delivered by donkeys and some on foot because they had to go to some very remote villages. What we did was we used central collection points in the provinces, and we used air to move them back to the compound—I mean, back to the regional ballot counting center, which was on the airfield in Herat, and we organized 24-hour security around that airfield. That's another good mission that we gave to the Afghan army. The police had the inner circle around the airport, and the Afghans ran patrols. We used a ten-kilometer area because nobody was going to do a direct attack on that, but they would fire rockets. We actually had one rocket attack that fired way over the compound, so it didn't hit anything. But they would go out and provide that security and, of course, that was successful, as well. That was the greatest benefit that LONGHORN did as a command, even though we did participate in the security the day of the election.

DR. KOONTZ: **By the time that you left—and we'll still have other things to talk about, but—there were four PRTs active in RC West. Is that correct?**

COL. BOOKERT: Correct. That's correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the process by which you doubled your PRTs?**

COL. BOOKERT: Actually, it's very interesting, because it was very political. In December, I got two clandestine visits, and then an overt visit in January, while I was on leave back to the States. In January, I had a visit from the Spanish ambassador to Afghanistan, and it was one of those visits I was told that it didn't happen, and they were interested in two things: one, assuming the Herat PRT—I presume because it was already established—and two, being the first NATO country to command RC West. The second visit was by the deputy minister of defense from Italy, who flew down to visit the Italian consulate in Herat—at least the Spanish showed up in the day. They showed up at night, and it was dark, eight at night, because they didn't want anyone to know they were

there or see them. They came in, and I probably spent four hours with them, to the point of "If we came. …" Well, they wanted the same thing. The first visit was "We want to take over the PRT, and if we came, where would you put us?" We were already expanding, and it just so happened there was one building we had not yet occupied, and I took them on a tour, and they said, "Great! We'll take it." All of this was rather interesting, because we'd received no guidance from higher headquarters, and then it was announced at the end of January that the Italians were coming to take over the Herat PRT. So, that's how that transition occurred. The Spanish, once they lost that, came back in. They had heard already through the grapevine, but they came back for a visit in January and expressed interest in establishing a PRT in Ghowr. So, that third PRT that's there now is the Spanish PRT in Ghowr, and they actually started establishing that before I left. In February or March, we had a visit from the Lithuanians. They actually went through headquarters in Kabul, but they coordinated with us, and they visited Chaghcharan and they began establishing a PRT there. That was a little different in that, of course, Lithuania has a very small army, and they asked for U.S. assistance. I know we had planned to provide assistance. I don't know how much of that unit is U.S. because it was established after I left.

DR. KOONTZ: **A while ago, you had mentioned, you know, your deploying over to RC West, and you cross that bridge, and you have the two different militias, and you go to the governor and you say, "We've got to do something about this." Tell me about cooperating with the Afghan governors in RC West.**

COL. BOOKERT: Yeah. It was very different dealing with the governor of Herat. A very educated man, had lived in Iran during the Soviet occupation, very savvy. Dealing with him was a little different, and one of the things I learned very quickly, and I'd realized when I was the CJ-9, is Afghans will let you do as much as you want, or you will do, and they would get out of your way and let you do it. In my initial meeting with him, was he was asking for a lot of things, and what I explained to him was his primary interface with the U.S. is with the Herat PRT commander, not me. My role is to, you know, sort of do … I used the term "economic development and reconstruction in western Afghanistan." But it took a while for him to understand that I was not at his call, and that actually caused some conflicts later during a couple of riots when he asked for U.S. help, and I said, "That's a police problem, and it's not a PRT problem." Dealing with him … like I said was, he was more sophisticated, had a very good understanding of what we could do. He was not accustomed to being told "I won't do it," and he learned that, and his staff learned that. He had one very good—his chief of staff was very good, understood that very well,

spoke English, and he and I worked well together behind the scenes. But what I made him understand, what I made sure he understood, was that, you know, "Herat is the most populous province in the west. The west sort of goes like Herat goes, and your role in getting more national funds and resources in the west will revolve around you trying to assist me with this plan for the region." That he liked because that was publicity, and they like publicity.

I mentioned one of the missions that the CG gave me was to establish a regional governor's initiative. When I was the CJ-9, that was something that we came to—that was an idea we developed. We sent some officers, soldiers, down to Kandahar, and they were able to do that. And then, what that did is, in a region, you get all the governors together. They identify the major issues that they have, prioritize them, and then they go to the national government with them—in this case, Karzai—and we, of course, had resources to assist that.

The governors in the west always felt slighted and felt that they were not getting their fair share of national resources, so after my initial visit with the governor of Herat, I planned visits to the other governors. I went to Chaghcharan and met with that governor; then, Farah; and then, to Badghis. The governors were very resource poor. Quite often, their staffs were illiterate. They didn't understand the concept of government being for the people, so you really had to train them how—other than in Herat because they understood that. That was not a problem there. But the other thing they really didn't understand was that the government's role is to provide services to the population, so a lot of what—especially in Farah, I had to sort of give a mission to the PRT commander: "Part of your role now is to help train the governor's staff," and they were more than happy to accept that. At that time, of course, dealing with these initial meetings, I—and when I say "I," it's [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN. That's how I'm sort of representing the entire command because my S-5 [staff officer for plans], my CMO staff, was very critical of doing this because I gave them the mission of coming up with the plan for doing this. I mean, I'd give direction, consider it, and they come up with a plan, but the voice of this was me. So, I mean, it was a big deal that the senior U.S. commander in the west was coming to see them. Now, they're used to seeing PRT commanders. They're not used to seeing brigade commanders. So, they would listen, which I find just fascinating—that just because I was wearing a uniform with a U.S. flag on it—and I think that U.S. flag carried a lot of weight—governors, mayors, and militia would listen because they understood the force behind the flag. I guess that is the way to put that.

So, as I would visit these governors, I would describe the problem as I saw it: "If you governors could get together

and come up with some regional priorities and a direction that you'd like to take the west, I think you could get more resources for that." They all thought that was a good idea. Roads are very—I mean, their infrastructure of getting from point A to point B is very difficult, and I offered to fly them in from wherever they wanted, and that helped tremendously. I timed our travel, you know? Herat was 110 miles south. To drive it took twelve hours: one, because the road was bad; two, was because of the militias, and we solved that problem. In the time I was there … I think early on, they said it took ten days. By the time I left, it took four days to go from Kabul to Herat by road. But convincing the governors that a regional initiative was beneficial to them, to the region, and to their provinces specifically worked.

The other thing is the only communications they had back to Kabul was the governor's—with the exception of Herat—was the governor's personal satellite phone. "Oh, we can fix that." So, we, the command, purchased what we would call a communications package, and that communications package was three satellite phones and a year's worth of cards to use—minutes, basically—and then I went and specifically told them that "We'll pay for this for a year, and then you have to come up with that." And, then, what I called a computer package: three computers, a generator, a satellite dish, and Internet service so they could e-mail each other back and forth and e-mail back to Kabul, and we gave them training on that, as well. So, all of a sudden, they had communications, so we could now e-mail these guys and e-mail their staffs and the governors could actually start talking to each other. We were successful. That happened in January of 2005. They all came down to Herat—which, again, getting the Herat governor involved. He was very happy to host that. It was a big deal. I think the conference lasted like three hours, and I had asked them to prepare a press release afterwards that I would not participate in, and that they would sit down and have a press conference and tell, really, the world and Afghanistan, whoever was going to watch this, what priorities that they had established for the western region and the resources they thought they needed from the national government. It got Karzai's attention, to the point where he visited there later in January and met with all four of them, so it worked.

And at least once a month afterwards, some U.S. force visited in the capital and—it's just, you know, when you don't have a lot of forces—you can't do a whole lot with one infantry battalion and the three Afghan battalions, which really had transportation problems with their trucks and, you know, as I said, roads are bad. I would also make sure that we had some presence at some time. We'd go out from the central pinpoints and make sure we're visible, and we would repeat that. So, there was always some visibility, which maintained the governors' support, that we were supporting them. But

that's how I dealt with the governors, is try to get their concerns known to national government and provide what assistance I could. In some cases, a couple of times we had to go—we had to run—I think the governor of Ghowr asked us to do some security missions there, and we did that in conjunction with DDR—disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Have you guys heard of that? I'll talk about that more later on, but did that answer your question about how I dealt with governors?

DR. KOONTZ: **Yes, sir. Yeah, there are two of the big—we wanted to talk about DDR, and then also you mentioned when you were talking with the governor, is that your job was basically in big-scale development, rather than small-scale tactical support. What did [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN do in terms of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in RC West?**

COL. BOOKERT: Again, my experience as CJ-9 helped tremendously because, when I got off to the west, they had all of these organizations—USAID, UN—doing different things and not knowing what the other one was doing. I mean, I got out there and found out that India had planned to build this huge hydroelectric power plant dam up this river, and they had no plan to distribute the water. What sense does that make? I mean, they just left it—you know, this is about tons of folks not knowing who's doing what. So, we were able to get these different organizations together and organize who's doing what, when, where. Now, that was a problem when the PRT was there, and before the brigade was there, because these civilian organizations accused the military of making it more dangerous for them because we all drove these white Toyota SUVs around, and they always thought that the Taliban and militias would mistake them as soldiers. You know, they're a lot smarter than that. They have an intel network just like we do.

The turning point was … I think I told you earlier about the rioting and burning down the UN compound. After that and the PRT went in and rescued those folks, they were very cooperative to the point where they started calling us and asking if they could get involved in assisting the planning. So, we were able to have weekly meetings with these people to organize who was doing what. So, that's one thing, and the way we divided that is they went in the areas that were safe, and the military, we would go to places that, one, either we didn't know whether or not it was safe, or we knew it was dangerous. So, that's how we split that up. I would never—you know, they would tell us where they were planning to go next, and if we had not been to that area, we would recommend that they not go until we get an assessment of that area. The PRT commanders would do assessments of the area. Andy Senta-Pinter was great at that. I mean, he got all over that place, and in some cases he took

the governor with him, which was great, because people got to meet somebody from the Afghan government and not just the U.S. One of the things we did when we would do something—you know, repair a bridge or something like that—is we would tell them that the Afghan government sent these folks here to do that work, even though we're paying for it and we might have been the one to assess it, but it was the—you know, I think the term said "put an Afghan face on it," and that had quite an effect, as well, because they began to believe that the government's actually doing something for the people. It also got the government to think, because they were getting good reports from the people, that "Oh, we should do that."

So, this one is just sort of organizing the efforts in RC West—going to the places where they couldn't go. One, we would do projects there, and we put schools in places where it would be thought the population was maybe on the edge, teetering on supporting us or supporting the Taliban, and we reaped benefits from that. But we did the typical things that you do similar to operations—you know, wells, schools, drinking water. We renovated and built a couple of clinics, and I need to explain that, in that when I arrived, we were building clinics left and right, and they sat empty, which deeply upset the minister of health in Afghanistan. To change the way we do that, any time we would build one of those, we would coordinate with the Ministry of Health, and if they couldn't staff it, we wouldn't build it. So, the ones we built either already had doctors there, or there was a plan to send somebody there very soon. Of course, they needed it drastically. But schools? Easy. You go some place. Teachers are there, and they're teaching out in the open under the trees or in tents. So, we had standardized plans for 8-, 16-, and 24-room schools, and you figured the PRTs would put down what they need, and they would recommend those projects to them. Anything over—I think $5,000 was the amount that I gave them—and they had to go through that brigade headquarters. That was another responsibility—that is, of these major projects that are being recommended, which one is giving us the biggest bang for the buck in the area we were building it; and does it support the strategic plan for that area? That was another one of the missions I had to give to a commander, so we would provide these resources to the different provinces.

DR. KOONTZ: **There are these places that civilian and the humanitarian assistance organizations can't go, or won't go, where there is no humanitarian space, or they don't know if there is or not. Other than militias, what kind of anti-Coalition or lawlessness was there in RC West?**

COL. BOOKERT: I think I told you one of the missions was confirm or deny the existence of Taliban in RC West. What that really says—what that mission really was—was what's the threat in RC

West? And you know, this is public. You've read it in the newspapers. You may not realize what it actually means, but the threat in the west was the narcotics industry and bad governance associated with it, and what I mean by that—I think you know that narcotics is a huge industry in the west. A lot of farmers are doing that, because … let's see. A poppy farmer at that time was averaging $800 or $1,000 a year; a non–poppy farmer, $400 to $500 a year. Poppy takes very little. It can grow anywhere. It is a very hardy plant. You need two rainfalls, one within the first month you plant it, and one a little bit later in the growing season, so it's very easy to plant and cultivate. Narcotics corrupted a lot of government officials, police chiefs, and some mayors. What I can say is that we were able to show a direct correlation between militias, militia locations, and the narcotics industry, and that was the primary threat in RC West. Once I found that out, that changed the way we did operations, and that's when DDR became very, very important to us.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, the narco-trade and the corruption, that's the major threats?**

COL. BOOKERT: Yeah. We found no indication of active Taliban activities. There were some operations that occurred that I can't talk about, but compared to what you saw in RC East and, obviously, in RC South, we didn't have to deal with that. I think one of the major reasons—we had, I think it was, one IED [improvised explosive device] in the west in the entire time, and it wasn't even directed at us. It was directed at the governor, and it was actually, I think, designed to just scare him, not kill anybody, because all the thing did was put a hole in one of the streets. I mean, it was just a place where it made no sense. It really wasn't designed to kill anybody. Herat is on the silk trade route, and it's always been like that, all throughout history. The border crossing there, right here [referring to map], was responsible for—it's like you're right on that road there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Just for the sake of the recording, this is just next to the city of Teibad in Iran, about sort of middle of the way through Herat.**

COL. BOOKERT: It's actually right on the border of Herat and Iran, and that was thirty miles from the city maybe, fairly close. But that was a major customs stop, and you may need to check this number, but two-thirds to three-fourths of the operating income for Afghanistan is customs collected at that point. Herat is a very commercial city, and I think a lot of the reasons we didn't have the kinds of activities you saw in Kandahar or in Kabul was everybody understood that, and I think if anyone had done anything to upset that, the militias would have been turned on them, because the militias are involved with illegal activities, as well—stealing fuel, having

illegal bazaars, stealing goods, or, you know, after someone crosses and pays customs, then taxing those folks again. So there was a huge interest in ensuring Herat stayed peaceful because it kept the commerce moving into other parts of Afghanistan and Iran, and that's just a byproduct of the locals. That wasn't because we were there, and it had been operating long before we were there. I think that was one of the major reasons that we just didn't see those kinds of attacks, IEDs on the roads, out there because trucks had to move, and you blow up one commercial truck by an IED, it stops dead. Fortunately, we came to an early realization on that, and we stopped worrying about that. It's these other things, back again to narcotics being the major problem.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell us about the DDR efforts of [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN.**

COL. BOOKERT: Task Force SABER was included in on this, as well as the PRTs because the PRTs would give us indications of where things are suspicious. I talked earlier that when we do these assessments and all of a sudden you see a lack of kids playing or a lack of fighting-age men, then that's an indicator. We knew where most of the militias were, and when SABER got to Herat and after getting with the governor, two things happened. One was a lot of these—at least in Herat, Ismail Khan's militia had cantonment sites. I mean, there were actually places where they kept their equipment and ammunition. There were incentives in the DDR program, and the incentives were if a commander—and it had to be a brigade commander or higher—if he DDRed 60 percent of his soldiers, he would get a package; and if he DDRed 80 percent, it would be a higher package. I think 60 percent, he received a $5,000 stipend and training, some kind of business training, and if 80 percent of his soldiers turned in their weapons and equipment, then he would also get his salary for two years. So, there was a lot of incentive for him to do that. The incentives to the soldiers were, if you turn in your equipment, you get an ID card, and that ID card made you eligible to receive $100 worth of foodstuffs—and when you realize somebody makes $500 a year, that's a lot—and training in a trade, and those trades were … you know, I think it was inclusive. I think it was welding, agriculture, carpentry, masonry, and tailoring. They would receive free training for that, and they would get a stipend during that training. That training lasted anywhere from six weeks to … I think welding took six months. So, there was some incentive in that. The other thing we did was, if you didn't have fuel or batteries, we would get that for you and do those things.

We established our cantonment area at the airport. When SABER showed up—and you know what gunships can do to tanks—and they realized that we were there to stay, the regimental commander in Herat decided to DDR his regiment. So, right after I arrived, we got all the resources

together and organized it, sort of organized the acceptance of this stuff, and started dragging it. They would drive it to the airfield, and then we would have a DDR station. We'd get the photographs done, and then they'd get processed, and they would get their foodstuffs, and then they would report for whatever kind of training they had elected. I should also add that they were really positive. The soldiers were very positive about this because I met soldiers my age—at that time, I was forty-nine and fifty—who had done nothing all their lives but fight, but be a soldier, meaning they're somewhat like National Guard in that when your militia commander calls you, you ran off and did that. But a lot of them were just tired of doing that, and I think that was part of the reason for the success of that—that, plus they were actually getting something back, and they were learning a trade as well. So, we made sure that they understood the benefits.

Number two was, through the commanders on the ground, I gave them the authority to tell that "If you don't turn it in voluntarily, we'll come get it, and when we do, you're going to jail, and we're going to take your equipment, anyway." The previous effect of SABER separating the two militias had a great deal of effect on that because they knew what a cav squadron could do, and so they started turning them in in Herat first. My staff worked with the DDR staff. I think the French had primary responsibility for that. But actually, when we would plan operations for that, we would actually get them involved because they would actually handle the in-processing part of that. That was not our responsibility to do that, so whenever that would occur, they would be there, as well with one of the troops from the cav squadron, doing security and making sure nothing unusual would happen. Of course, there's always someone who doesn't believe you, and, sure enough, in Chaghcharan, during security operations, there was a platoon just, you know, patrolling one area, just driving through, and we later learned this militia just fired at them in mistake. They thought it was a rival militia—too late. When they figured out what they did, they stopped firing, but we arrested them and took their weapons anyway and turned them over to the local police. We had a cantonment area there. Later—and that would have been April—we DDRed the regiment that was in Ghowr Province.

DR. KOONTZ: **Your tour of duty with [Combined] Task Force LONGHORN ends sometime in June?**

COL. BOOKERT: No, it ends May thirtieth, when we deactivated. We activated on October fifth and deactivated on the thirtieth, when we turned it over to NATO.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me about the transition with NATO.**

COL. BOOKERT: In some ways, I think the generals made a smart choice in choosing me, not because I was a good tactical officer or any number of reasons, but I think one of the reasons is, I understand politics somewhat. I think it was important to realize that this transition to NATO was not necessarily based on NATO's tactical ability. That was purely political. One of the things that I was tasked to report back was whether or not NATO was ready to assume the command, operationally ready to assume command, and I realized very early that that had nothing to do with it. It was they said they were coming; they had made statements to the world that they were coming; so they were coming. When I talked about battalions visiting in December, how they broached that subject then, and as soon as—the Spanish visit was all right. It was just somebody coming out to feel out the west, but when the Italians came, that's when I realized it was serious, that someone from NATO was going to assume RC West.

I mentioned that to the boss during a staff call to General Olson, and he said, "You start planning for it when I give you an order to plan for it," and in my opinion, if I didn't start planning for it then, it was never going to happen. I directed my staff in December: "We have to start planning for transition to someone in NATO." That must be February, I think. So, we started doing a little bit of planning on this. I had the staff start documenting what they did in their jobs, and how they did that; whom they were coordinating with in the Afghan army, Afghan police; these other organizations, national aid organizations who were in the area. So, I just started having people document what we do and how we did it. And then in February was when it really became official, but not public, that NATO was coming, and I began to have visits from everybody everywhere, mainly NATO: NATO chief of staff, NATO deputy commander, NATO commander.

Oh, I have one other thing I wanted to add about DDR. So, you go and you do these operational reports, and you tell people that you're picking up. One time, we had the largest cache of enemy ammunition in southwest Asia in Herat, and so we sent in the reports. My boss didn't even believe me because I kept asking for engineers in order to help destroy this stuff. I had the largest compound in Herat at the Shindand Airfield, which was thirty miles south, which was an old Soviet airfield. They just abandoned their ammunition area, and so we had that to deal with. I had a Reserve engineer group, engineer section, of guys who were destroying that area. So, then in Herat there was a civilian French organization that was part of—it was a demining organization that does destruction. But anyway, they were destroying. We would capture, bring it in, and they would destroy this stuff. We had the largest collection of DDR equipment—T54, T62 tanks; 122-, 152-mm.

howitzers, rocket launchers, BTRs, BMPs [both Soviet-built armored vehicles]. You name it, we had it—all this Soviet equipment.

The CENTCOM commander was in Kabul. We get a call one evening saying, "The CENTCOM commander's coming out tomorrow. He wants to see this stuff and he wants to visit with the governor. Organize it." So, so he lands in the airfield, and we go around the berm, and just I'm in the Humvee, and I'm explaining what we do in RC West, and his comment—and I quote—after he got out of the Humvee was "Bullshit!" [Laughs.] CNN was with him, as well as, you know, the normal press corps that follows him, and of course, they took pictures and all that stuff.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. What happens to Colonel Bookert after you transfer authority with the Italians?**

COL. BOOKERT: You mean for RC West?

DR. KOONTZ: **Well, you personally, or—**

COL. BOOKERT: Oh, okay. So, there are a couple of things. One, first thing is the transfer of PRTs—of Herat, of the U.S.—to an Italian PRT, a huge event, you can imagine: U.S. ambassadors, ambassadors from all of NATO. The next thing is a Spanish hospital is put in; and then, transition RC West to NATO. I should probably—let me back up a little bit. In March—not that we didn't have enough going on—in March, my staff transitions from the 25th Division, which was rotating out after their year to SETAF [Southern European Task Force] coming in. SETAF had a different view of RC West than the 25th did. To them, it was not important. We weren't killing people, and "We don't want to support that." They had done a lot of study, in theory, had run many exercises back at home station, and it really wasn't until after they got on the ground that they realized how important, or at least that the CG, Maj. Gen. [Jason K.] Kamiya, finally realized, "Oh, we've got to support this." So, not only were we assisting transitioning to the Italians in Herat for NATO and the Herat PRT, we now have a new beginning staff coming in, as well. So, that made it a little bit more difficult for me, especially for command and control, but they learned. So, that's the other thing that happened.

So, what happens to me after transitioning to NATO? My year was up June fifth. So, change of command, May thirtieth. June first, flew back to Kabul and out-briefed the commander, and one of the best things that he told me was they issued an arrest order for Amanullah Khan, which was the other militia commander in Shindand. There were some things that he was doing and we had been monitoring, but, one, we had to build a case; and, two, there were certain individuals in Afghanistan who could not be apprehended

without direct and personal approval from President Karzai.

DR. MUNDEY: **That's very interesting, because one of the secondary sources I've read about that suggests that Amanullah Khan was arrested right after the violence with Ismail Khan back in August.**

COL. BOOKERT: He was. Here's how they turned that. He was called to Kabul. He wanted to be a national politician. President Karzai called him to Kabul, and he was under pseudo–house arrest. He was not allowed to return to Shindand. But was he arrested? No. He was called to Kabul. That was the official story in the Afghan news. I think he returned twice while I was there, only for a couple of days, but he thought he was going to get a cabinet position. He did not, but he was still not allowed to return to Shindand. Now, he had a brother who was still doing things based on direction from him, but he did not return. He was not arrested. But, so, I out-briefed the CG, and I get on a plane and fly home.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'll leave with one last question. What have we missed in talking to you? What were the important things that CTF LONGHORN did that we haven't talked about? Or, is there one accomplishment or one story or an anecdote that kind of sticks out in your mind?**

COL. BOOKERT: Actually, there are two things. One is that CG realized we had to put a brigade there. Because of who the commander was, I think that was important in sort of achieving the exit strategy, and that was for NATO to take over the next regional command because, as I mentioned earlier, they weren't going to. I think had he not done that … then, what I think is a major achievement of LONGHORN is setting conditions for NATO to assume RC West, which would never have happened. I mean, a lot of good things, but, really, that was the major mission, and all these other things were just part of getting to that. Getting NATO to come in was probably the overriding—probably the major mission, major accomplishment of LONGHORN.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, CTF LONGHORN—is that because of your affiliation at the University of Texas?**

COL. BOOKERT: [Laughs.] I knew that was coming! No, and I purposely didn't choose LONGHORN. After the CJTF-76 CJ-3 got the order to write the op order for putting this brigade, as they were actually writing the ops on it, I'm holding it up for twenty-four hours because we hadn't settled on a name. So, at that time, I knew who my deputy commander was, so I had her. I took four members from my CJ-9 staff out with me, and they formed my S-9 staff. And so, I had all those guys in, and I wanted one of the gods of thunder and lightning—Odin, Thor, I can't remember them all—a really

bizarre one, but I liked Odin. I think he's the Swedish god of thunder and lightning—and the deputy commander said, "Sir, you think like a professor. You can't make people think like that. They'll never get it. You need something simpler." And so, they basically didn't like anything I came up with, and I said, "Okay, fine. I want three recommendations on my desk in the morning. I'm out of here," and I left. This was probably about ten to eleven at night, and they had three recommendations, all right. There was LONGHORN and two others that were so awful, and we didn't have time to think about anything else, so I just said, "Tell them it's LONGHORN." You know, I have been accused of that, but that's not why it's named LONGHORN. That's humorous to me because the action officer who had to write, did most of the writing of the operations order, was an Oklahoma Sooner. I remember him saying, "Sir, the first crappy mission I get, I'm sending it to you guys" [laughs]. But, no, that had nothing to do with my affiliation, but that's what they came up with. That was the staff's recommendation.

DR. MUNDEY: **No, I think that we covered a lot. I guess I'll just ask one last question. If there's one thing that the American people ought to know about what happened in RC West, what would it be?**

COL. BOOKERT: I will go back to your question, and I'll answer your question as well—the positive things that we did. You know, what the press reported … you know, we ran combat operations, and we had collateral damage, you better believe it. It showed up on BBC, or it showed up in the *New York Times*. Fortunately, the *New York Times* and BBC also reported some of the great civil-military operations and humanitarian assistance, and I'll just mention a couple. The winter of 2004–2005 was the most severe winter they've had in twenty years. I mean, they had—there were areas in RC West that had six to eight meters of snow, and the roads were covered. In seventy-two hours, we were running either airdrop or airlift missions with emergency assistance with food, wood, whatever we needed to assist those folks. And, I would say a lot of the good work that we did, you know, working with the politicians and humanitarian assistance that we did. That was the other thing that I should have mentioned earlier that we left out is during that winter, there was a lot of humanitarian assistance missions, and what's going to happen? All this snow is going to melt in a hot area, and then in the spring, we ran a lot of rescue missions to rescue the locals out of flood-prone areas. Because they had not had major amounts of rain or snow in two decades and started building villages in low-lying areas next to rivers, there were huge floods, and we also had to do a lot of rescue missions. So, it's the positive things we did. I mean combat operations? Yeah, I mean that's easy. But, you know, we poured on some of the good stuff.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, sir, I think that's a good place to go ahead and wrap this up. On behalf of the Center of Military History, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this. We appreciate it, and you've told us some very important things.**



Col. Clarence Neason Jr. *served as Commander, 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, Division Artillery, 25th Infantry Division (Light), as a lieutenant colonel. His battalion was part of Combined Task Force* BRONCO, *Combined Joint Task Force-76, from April 2004 to April 2005. He was interviewed on 22 February 2007 at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Colonel Neason discusses his battalion's preparation for deployment to Afghanistan and its transition period with the 3d Battalion, 6th Field Artillery, of the 10th Mountain Division (Light). The battalion, augmented with Romanian troops, elements of the Afghan National Army, and Afghan National Police units, was designated Task Force* STEEL *and operated in Regional Command South under the command of the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. The battalion headquarters was located in Kandahar, and its eighteen 105-mm. howitzers were scattered around the city in two-gun emplacements. The battalion provided supporting fires for Special Operations Forces operating within Regional Command South, and its personnel served as gun crews for 155-mm. artillery pieces situated in Regional Command East. Colonel Neason comments on the difficulties in command and control of his widely dispersed batteries, as well as the performance of his artillerymen in patrol and convoy protection operations. During the parliamentary election of 2004, the battalion provided local security and supervised the collection, transportation, and counting of ballots. After discussing the threats posed by improvised explosive devices in the Kandahar area, Colonel Neason concludes with comments on the weakness of the Afghan local government and his battalion's transition with a field artillery battalion from the 82d Airborne Division.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is February twenty-second, 2007, and I'm interviewing Colonel Clarence Neason regarding his tour of duty as the commanding officer of 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 25th Infantry Division [25th ID], CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76], in Afghanistan. We're at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where Colonel Neason is currently a student. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

COL. NEASON: Yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have any reservations with Army or other researchers using this material, as long as you're cited correctly?**

COL. NEASON: No, I do not.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Thank you, sir. When did you take command of 3/7 Field Artillery?**

COL. NEASON: 2 July 2002.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, and what was the battalion doing at the time that you took command?**

COL. NEASON: At that particular time, it was right before the holiday, and it was still doing conventional operations in preparation for a JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center] rotation.

DR. KOONTZ: **When did that JRTC rotation take place?**

COL. NEASON: It was the winter of 2003.

DR. KOONTZ: **When the battalion did that rotation in JRTC, did the battalion perform anything, or did it learn anything that it would use later in Afghanistan?**

COL. NEASON: No. At that juncture, we weren't aware of a pending Afghan rotation. When I went to JRTC, it was still in sort of the light division mode, just going through normal rotation to sustain our basic skills, to get an assessment of where the battalion was, and use that as a baseline for planning our future training events.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, you were not preparing for unconventional-type war at this point?**

COL. NEASON: No, we were not.

DR. KOONTZ: **When did you become aware that 25th ID, or parts of 25th ID, was going to go to Afghanistan?**

COL. NEASON: As I recollect, I think it was somewhere around six or nine months prior to the rotation, and we went in April of 2004.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, you found out probably sometime early fall?**

COL. NEASON: Yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of steps did you take to prepare your battalion?**

COL. NEASON: Well, for me a little bit different than our infantry brothers, as they were planning for that rotation because first I had to ascertain as to whether or not we were going to do sort of a traditional field artillery role, and that was going to be sort of like the bulk of what I was going to do; or, it was going to be a combination of doing the field artillery stuff, but more on the side, and doing some of the nontraditional

roles of patrolling in urban areas and that. As we began to sort of get more information on that rotation in conversations with our brigade commander at the time, Col. Dick Pedersen, I was informed that we would, in fact, bring all eighteen guns in the battalion, as well as be given a geographical battle space and be responsible for that area to take and conduct patrolling and stuff like that—augmented, which would mean within that area, since I was an artillery unit and our battalions are not as large—we're just over four hundred, whereas an infantry battalion is typically over seven hundred—I was augmented with a Romanian battalion that was in place in the area there, that worked with us in the area doing that. In addition, as my battalion deployed for the 25th, we augmented with some other things like that. An MP platoon was given to me to take an assist with that effort of doing some urban patrolling. Within the Romanian battalion that was with us, there were two line companies. The third line company within that battalion was responsible for base security for our base camp where my headquarters was, our brigade headquarters was located.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, but you don't link up with them until you get into theater, correct?**

COL. NEASON: In theater. That's correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, I want to get you back to before you deployed. You get the word you're going over. What kind of guidance did you get at that point in time?**

COL. NEASON: We did a whole METL [mission essential task list] crosswalk, looked at, what was our training status now? We started doing sort of professional discussions both at the brigade and battalion level, looking at what our anticipated mission was and what adjustments we need to make, given the conventional METL set that we had. And given that, the division also had—there's a list of cleaning-type tasks that we had to be proficient at, that the division had to check off on to say that yes, we in fact were prepared to take the missions that were known that we're going to have in Afghanistan—so, that sort of unit assessment with the brigade, and for me I had two. I had the infantry brigade commander whom I was going to be working for looking down at the kinds of training that we were doing and augmenting me as necessary with the necessary infantry expertise. But I was still under my DIVARTY [division artillery] headquarters, so the DIVARTY commander was also looking at the artillery specifically, as well as some of the other tasks that we were going to have to perform in theater. All of that was sort of like amalgamated together, and we devised a training plan to take and get after the tasks that our soldiers were going to be doing in theater.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Did you get any guidance above that level? Did you get anything from General [Maj. Gen. Eric T.] Olson or General [Brig. Gen. Bernard S.] Champoux at the time?**

COL. NEASON: Yes. The division had a task list that we had to do. As a matter of fact, my battalion was responsible for finding some of the stations that the entire division went through to conduct some of the training leading up to the deployment in Afghanistan, things like, you know, convoy ops; you know, what do you do upon contact with an ambush, blocked and unblocked; looking at hitting IEDs [improvised explosive devices] on the road; what are the specific techniques that were known that were being utilized in theater and some of the emerging techniques that were being utilized; training our soldiers on proper ways to taking response; use some of the electronic devices that we had to take and detect



Colonel Neason (*foreground*) secures a convoy with soldiers of Combined Task Force STEEL in Kandahar Province.

IEDs and different things like that. So, we went through an assortment of training to take and prepare for the deployment.

DR. KOONTZ: **At this time before your deployment, were you getting any kind of information or advice from any units in theater?**

COL. NEASON: I had contact with 3/6 [3d Battalion, 6th Field Artillery] in the 10th Mountain [Division]. We were in close coordination with them, trying to gain as much of an understanding as we could of what it was they were doing in theater because we were going to take and assume that mission from them at the TOA [transfer of authority]. So, we talked with them extensively and I had my whole staff—I was talking to the commander there via SIPRNET [Secure Internet Protocol Router Network]. My -3 [S-3 operations officer] and my

XO [executive officer] were talking to their counterparts in theater with regard to, we understand the mission set, the kinds of things that are happening there, specifically, "What are you doing, and what adjustments did you have to make vis-à-vis the training plan that you had in training up to get there?" so that we could make those adjustments prior to departure and to inform our soldiers as much as possible about realistically what it is that we were going to be doing vice some of the generic tasks that were going to be important to our survival and successful accomplishment of the mission in theater—but, more specifically, looking at the things and the terrain that they were occupying and what nuances we could learn that we could take and sort of adapt ourselves to.

DR. KOONTZ: **Could you give me an example of some of the kind of specific information that they were giving you that you found useful?**

COL. NEASON: One of the tasks that they were doing that was very interesting and intriguing to us was that they did some interagency work. What they were doing, they had some agencies come over in theater that worked in conjunction with them, specifically within—we were—my headquarters was in Kandahar, and I was responsible for Kandahar city proper in terms of—we had the upcoming election, so everything was going to be driven towards preparations for the election, securing a site, working with the international organizations that were to come here and conduct the elections themselves, providing security for them, as well as facilitating that. And we also did some other interagency stuff where they came over. We did what we called a sensitive site exploitation, where we were looking at things within their zone, but we were really interested in that interaction, that lash-up, with those agencies, since they were—it was a nonmilitary agency—how to take and appropriately take and deal with them as effectively as we could, getting smart on that.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. On the eve on the deployment before you and your battalion go over to Afghanistan, how would you personally assess the amount of training and preparation that had taken place?**

COL. NEASON: I thought it was very strong. I thought we were given an opportunity from the division to take and assign tasks to us that were theater mandated, that all units had to take and do. Our brigade commander looked at some specific tasks within the AOR [area of responsibility] working with this counterpart that he thought that might be important for us to take and work into our training plans, as well as my interactions with the battalion commander in the unit that I was going to take and work with there. So, we took all of those approaches, and we tried to make an estimate

to a cohesive training plan so that they can get after the specific tasks that our soldiers were going to be doing. So, I'd characterize our training as very good, very specific. It was targeted at the kinds of duties that we were going to take and experience.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me about the deployment over. How did you get from Hawaii to Afghanistan?**

COL. NEASON: We flew right out of Hawaii into Ireland; and from Ireland to Incirlik, Turkey; and from Turkey into, I believe it's Uzbekistan; and from Uzbekistan we flew into Kandahar.

DR. KOONTZ: **About how long did that take? Do you remember?**

COL. NEASON: Two days. I think about two days.

DR. KOONTZ: **Probably two very long days, it must have seemed.**

COL. NEASON: Yes, the flights were long, but they were comfortable in terms of the spacing for us, so—and provided us an opportunity, I guess, to gain some separation from between when our soldiers left Hawaii proper to the separation from their families, sort of like all of the time to take and reflect to get in an appropriate mindset, to reflect upon a task and the mission that we're going to have ahead and as we went there in going to our transition with the unit there. So, I think that those two days, while it was long, it was a good time to have a period time to take and transition mentally from the conventional set in Hawaii to preparations for combat operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **You're an FA [field artillery] unit, so you're bringing a lot of large equipment with you. How long did it take to get all of your equipment in theater?**

COL. NEASON: I can't remember the exact time spent that it took. I know that a lot of our stuff was sent ahead of time, and some of the stuff was at sort of a reciprocal unit exchange. 10th Mountain left gear on the ground there. We assumed responsibility for their howitzers and a lot of that kind of stuff. And in turn, my howitzers went from Hawaii to New York. So, a lot of the really large, bulky equipment went to them, individual weapons and that kind of stuff, crew-served weapons, we carried that stuff with us. But the howitzers and all the basic initial equipment that went along with that was shipped to 10th Mountain, and we assumed responsibility for their stuff. They sent us lists. We exchanged lists to get a sense of which shortages of equipment they had and what things we needed to take to augment that. We didn't just lock and stock send everything to 10th Mountain. We said, "Okay, what is it you have?" Now we balanced that against the list and said, "Okay, here's what we're sending there, and here's what we're bringing with us," because there were some of

our basic initial items for our howitzers and stuff that we had to take up some of the pioneering equipment and those kinds of things, we had to bring with us because they kept theirs at Fort Drum, and we needed to bring that with us.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you actually fall in on the artillery pieces you're going to use. And you said there're eighteen tubes?**

COL. NEASON: Eighteen tubes, yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **You said you transferred authority with 3/6. Tell me about the transition period between your unit and theirs.**

COL. NEASON: I had been speaking with their commander sometime before we had got there, so we had planned the typical ten-day transition of authority where we get in and where my battalion proper was on the ground as an effective fighting force prepared to take and assume the mission. That's when those ten days started. Prior to that, on the advanced party I sent some key individuals, specifically in my operations shop, to go over. That went as far as—I think it was two to three weeks ahead of time they went over and became a part of 10th Mountain's battalion that was there and worked, so that when I got there, I had guys that had been working with them for like two to three weeks and doing the missions that they were doing. So, that eased the strain of unfamiliarity as we took and assumed their mission. So, when I got there, my -3 and XO had already—the assistant S-3 had already been on the ground there working with them and had transitioned from being sort of a second-seater to being the primary and doing the missions over there before we got there, so when I got there, while we were all familiar with the mission set from a theoretical perspective, practically when we got there, that transition was eased a lot as we got into the mechanics of doing the stuff because my own people—guys whom I'd worked with and knew their habits of work and trusted—were there ready to assume, which made the ten days for the TOA that we had go by a lot quicker. In fact, we were prepared to assume prior to that, but it was only constrained by my personnel coming in and his ability to get their personnel out based upon set timetables that had already been established between him and me ahead of time.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You've had a lot of cross-talk with 3/6, and then you've got an ADVON [advanced echelon] from your own unit there, so you've got a fair amount of information coming in to you before you set up, I guess, your CP [command post] in theater, so you've got a lot of information coming in. Was there anything that you knew about that you either didn't understand or didn't appreciate until you actually started dealing with these sorts of issues?**

COL. NEASON: The biggest thing was, geographically, the size of area I was responsible for. We found that as a battalion, even augmented with, like I said, a Romanian battalion-minus and an MP platoon that we got, the nature of the terrain—it's just—its vastness was very, very daunting, and immediately we recognized that we cannot be everywhere all the time. So, I gained a greater appreciation for that once I got there. Looking at the map didn't really—well, yes, it looks large, but when you couple that with the ruggedness and mountainous terrain, it's very, very compartmentalized. That gave new meaning to what it was we were going to be responsible for.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And you told me earlier that your area was Kandahar. About how much of the area around Kandahar?**

COL. NEASON: Responsible for Kandahar city proper, and some of the—what do they call them? Just the surrounding areas. Kandahar proper was my largest responsibility. It spanned out to the north a little bit and to the south a little bit, where we lashed up with some of the SOF [Special Operations Forces] forces that were there doing other operations that were adjacent to us, and those lash-ups came just so that we understood what our boundaries were as we began to prepare for the October elections that were going to take place. But Kandahar, as you know, being sort of the birthplace of the Taliban, was the biggest area. That was immediately impressed upon me, that we needed to demonstrate presence, consistent presence and control, for that particular area. That was going to be vital to the success of an open and free election that was going to take place there. So, just being in sort of an urban area, our ability to demonstrate that the government could extend its reach down into Kandahar and demonstrate some positive control was important to the overall operation, as I appraised the situation. Kandahar was the second-largest city in Afghanistan, so it was, we thought, critical to the elections that were going to be upcoming.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. If you Google "Clarence Neason" and "Afghanistan," you get Task Force STEEL as one of your—that's the name of your task force, correct?**

COL. NEASON: That's correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, and that includes your battalion, the Romanians, and your MP company?**

COL. NEASON: And we also had some Afghan forces.

DR. KOONTZ: **Afghan National Army [ANA] or—**

COL. NEASON: Afghan National Army.

DR. KOONTZ: **Go ahead, sir.**

COL. NEASON: A combination of Afghan police, also, because in Kandahar proper, I had relations with the mayor and the provincial governor for trying to maintain some good order and discipline within the city and to assist them with sort of facilitating law enforcement there. So, we worked with the Kandahar police down there in maintaining security for Kandahar proper, as well as enabling their operation through the use of sort of certain monies that our government had in terms of giving sort of the necessary equipment for them to take and do things.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You told me a little bit earlier about the Romanians and kind of laid out that you had the two companies doing kind of patrolling work, and one working at your command post. Tell me about working with the Romanians. What was that like?**

COL. NEASON: They're very good. However, there was a stigma associated with the Romanians as a result of the Russians being there and the vehicles that the Romanians had. So, initially, my tour there, we did not—we deemphasized the employment of the Romanians in Kandahar city proper. Their vehicles were there sort of Marine LAV [Light Armored Vehicle]-type vehicles, armored vehicles, wheeled vehicles, so it was a mobile force, a mobile infantry force. They did perimeter regions for us, as we did a lot of stuff there, because a lot of the ill feelings that were still resonant within the locals with regard to the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. But working with them? A very professional force. They were wholeheartedly into the operation. The commander and I frequently met at my headquarters. We had a liaison that was one of his guys that was resident with us that was on call 24/7, and when we did planning and operations, they were in my conference room and we briefed them on the operation. The commander accepted the role as a subordinate of mine within the organization, and it was a tremendous lash-up, very, very positive. They were an effective tool for us, that they can get out to mobile areas. Since they had been there before us, their rotation cycle was not necessarily synchronized with us. When I got there, I was there with a unit, with a commander that had been there for some time now and was going to be there a couple more months before he rotated out. So, I had the benefit of all of his experience in the region already prior to another one coming in. During my year tour in Afghanistan, we went through—there were three separate, three different Romanian battalion commanders' forces that came in.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, moving on. Next, tell me about the MPs that you had assigned to your task force.**

COL. NEASON: It was one of the MP battalions from the 25th. We got there the—I was fortunate enough that we initiated the linkup with the MP platoon that was going to be working with us in Hawaii, so that we incorporated him into the train-up that we had prior to deployment to gain some familiarity with them. So, he was familiar with us as we go there and continued to take and develop that relationship. He was an MP lieutenant. He was just like another lieutenant within my battalion. He became an organic part of us for the duration of our tour.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then earlier, you had mentioned that you had some Afghans on your task force, and you mentioned that you did some work getting them equipped. What kind of state were they in, I guess, when you fell in?**

COL. NEASON: They were in varying states of readiness. Some of this was a result of they just didn't have the equipment. They could not always—they didn't always have the transporting equipment to get themselves from point A to point B to take and do things. And sometimes the staying power … the government was working very hard to take and get them the tools that they need, but we had to take and bridge that gap some of the times and do that. We did not have to take and arm them. Although a lot of them, some of them, didn't have arms, we weren't in the business of arming them. We assisted with the sustainment sometimes, of taking—when we were out in operations, doing things in terms of feeding those soldiers that participated in remote operations with us because they didn't have the logistics skill necessary to take and sustain those soldiers when they went out to do that. And if we wanted to make that relationship work, we had to take and reach across the divide and bridge that gap.

But they were—there were some units that I got that were what I would call somewhat lethargic as a result of the system wasn't able to consistently pay them. So, you'd find that soldiers were somewhat concerned or worried about it because that money that they had was going back to their families. However, at the other end of that spectrum, when they did get paid, a lot of soldiers would leave and go back to their villages to deposit that money with their families to provide for some of their sustainment and then subsequently come back. So, that created some problems for consistency with regard to knowing the numbers that you're going to have in terms of available forces to take and work. I worked with one unit that was extraordinarily professional, and I thought it was because they had just superb leadership. It was just an Afghan leader that was there. He was eager. He was enthusiastic. He was an original member of the Afghan army before the reorganization in the election, with the election of President [Hamid] Karzai. He had been like—I believe he was a lieutenant

colonel, and then during the reorganization stuff, when he came back in his new rank was as a major, but he was very, very professional, and he had a very, very disciplined force. They assisted us greatly with regard to the Afghan elections.

The only significant problem that we faced with the Afghans is just the language barrier. You know, I did, in fact, have an interpreter for my battalion that went with all of my forces when we went out when we had Afghans with us, as well as when we went out and we didn't have Afghan forces, just to bridge that gap of the interaction that we may have with the local populace. But the language barrier was significant. Now, our soldiers did, in fact, receive—we got some cards. We got some language training, some minimal training, some key phrases to learn how to use and say, and the team developed that as we went along. Some of our soldiers learned some more phrases and could have very limited conversation with some of the Afghans. But again, the big problem was just the language barrier.

DR. KOONTZ: **These Afghan forces, were they within your chain of command? Did you have command over them?**

COL. NEASON: Operationally, yes; administratively, no. When we went out and we did an operation, the Afghan forces that were there, either myself or my designated subordinate that was one of my commanders responsible for that operation, he was in fact in charge of employing of all of the forces that were there. Usually, what we did was sort of like—with the Afghan leadership, I would, inasmuch as I could, try to establish a relationship just that—I would share with them what it is I could. Some things unfortunately, because of OPSEC [operational security], we just weren't able to share with them. So, when they came out and did the operation, it was, once we got them there and were prepared to take and depart or execute that operation, was when we unveiled what we believed they needed to know in order to take and move forward on any operation. Unlike when I worked with the Romanians some of the times, Afghan commanders weren't in my headquarters and brought in on operations briefings: "Here's the nature of what we're going to do; here's our mission; here's our objectives." I was not able to take and do that with them, but it didn't inhibit my ability to take and employ the force in a manner consistent with the accomplishment of the missions and my lash-up of the organic forces that I had with them to ensure that the right things were being done.

DR. KOONTZ: **I was wondering what kind of missions you would use the Afghan forces on.**

COL. NEASON: We went out in some rugged terrain. We had to do some patrolling in some remote villages. We would augment

them with our soldiers because they could assist us interacting with the local populace, and they were usually much more familiar with the area than we were, although a lot of times we got Afghan forces that were in the Kandahar region—because of some of the preexisting problems, the ANA soldiers that we might have may not necessarily have been from the Kandahar area. They may have been from up north and unfamiliar with the area, initially. But, more often than not, they'd been there longer than we have, so when we got there, they understood terrain, moving around compartmentalized terrain and interacting with the local populace. That was an aid to us.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. What is your chain of command? Whom does Task Force STEEL report to?**

COL. NEASON: I reported to Task Force BRONCO, 3d Brigade.

DR. KOONTZ: **And that's Colonel Pedersen?**

COL. NEASON: Colonel Pedersen.

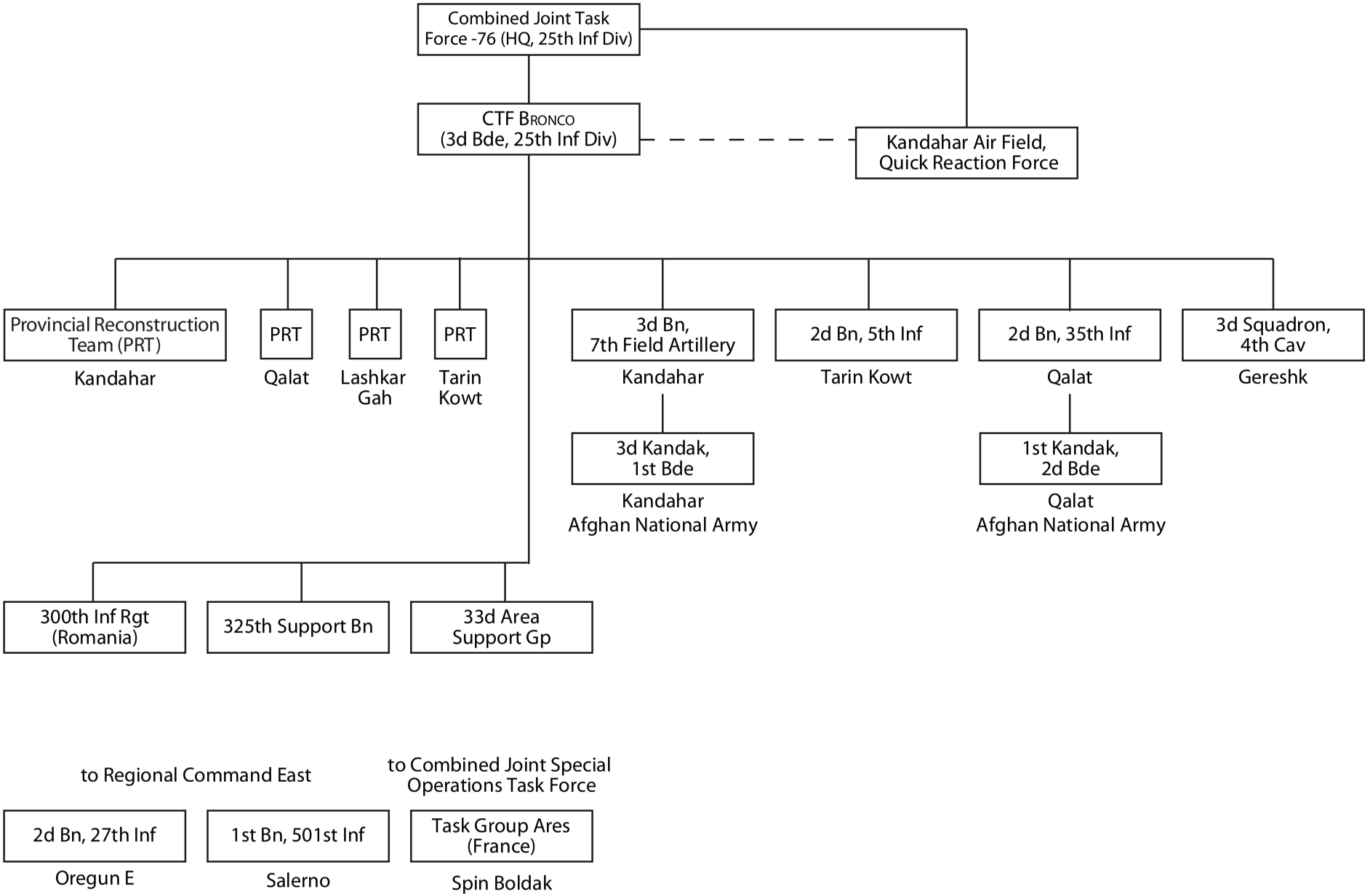
DR. KOONTZ: **And then from him up to CJTF-76?**

COL. NEASON: That's correct. [*Chart 2*]

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You're in Kandahar. That's where your CP is. What I want you to do is kind of take me on sort of a little mental tour of your command post. What does it look like in terms of facilities, infrastructure, all that kind of stuff?**

COL. NEASON: It was a panel building. And 3/6 was in one location when I went there for our predeployment site survey and looked at their headquarters, looked at their operations to see what equipment we might need, just internal to the headquarters to augment our operations. They were in one location, but prior to us coming they moved to another location. I got to see the blueprint for that location. It was a panel building, roughly, I would say, pretty close to the size of my original battalion headquarters back in Hawaii, that had—I had an ops center that was better than the ops center in Hawaii, for obvious reasons, as we look at it there, with a lot of projection devices to show simultaneous sort of things, and a briefing area where I took a morning brief from all of my soldiers, as well as, I was to take in any key leaders or dignitaries that might be coming in through the area and want a brief of what it is we're doing, what our geographic boundaries and the like were. And my soldiers manned a 24-hour operation where I had a watch officer that was on call physically in the building there, with the soldiers taking on that. So, the building was more than adequate as a facility to take and accomplish the mission that we were going to have. I had personal—myself and my sergeants

Chart 2—Combined Task Force (CTF) Bronco Task Organization, 6 April 2005



major, my S-3, and my XO both had personal office space within that building, as well as communal areas for the S-3 to take and conduct operations. And each of my staff shops, my S-1 [personnel staff section], my S-2 [intelligence staff section], all those guys, there was more than adequate space for them to take and conduct the business that they needed to sustain this. And, to boot, we had a conference room that was there, also.

DR. KOONTZ: **Some of the people I've spoken to have had pretty austere operating environments, but that wasn't your case?**

COL. NEASON: Not at my main CP back at Kandahar proper, no. That was—now, whenever we went out to take and do operations, again, now we're talking about bringing tents and setting up on the field and doing that. But back at Kandahar proper, which was adjacent to the airfield there, the airport that they had there, it was fairly robust.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You mentioned a while ago you had morning meetings. Did you have sort of a battle rhythm within your headquarters?**

COL. NEASON: Absolutely.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me how that worked out.**

COL. NEASON: Couldn't really do specific times because everything was in Zulu [Greenwich Mean Time], but every morning what we had was I'd have a battle update. My staff would come in and give us the last twenty-four hours, the current projected missions we have on the table now, as well as any significant events that may have occurred that night, and that was a running meeting that I ran every day, six days a week. We ran it every day except Sunday, and we ran unless we had an ongoing mission. If there's an ongoing mission where either myself or I had subordinate commanders deployed out, then we would conduct that every day. It had all the necessary secure content interface. And in addition to that morning update that I had, we started off initially with the BRONCO Brigade having daily updates, which then transitioned to—I believe it was just every other day where we had updates. There was a standard format that said, okay, we talk about ongoing missions, future missions. We talk about the planning where we'd provide, we'd schedule and provide those necessary updates to Colonel Pedersen about ongoing as well as future operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. About how often would you get out of your CP and into the field, I guess, to see what's going on?**

COL. NEASON: Probably for me, if there's an ongoing mission that we had, something that was going on, obviously I'd go out there to field with that. But what I tried to take and do, in addition to

geographic responsibilities that I had in Kandahar proper, I had my eighteen guns, were split out in two-gun sections, and it was nine, then it went to eight remote locations that were throughout the theater. We were in a southern AOR [area of responsibility], but my guns went throughout the CJTF. So, when Colonel [Gary H.] Cheek took geographic responsibility of these, sort of, what I would call east and we had south, my guns were in both areas. So, I sort of acted as the theater artillery commander, and I would get out—I tried to get out to one of those sites—about every two and a half weeks I'd try to get to a different site, depending upon what was going back on at Kandahar or what ongoing operation that they had out of those remote sites, to take and both check on the soldiers and make sure that they were being adequately provided for because we did not—those soldiers still remained my responsibility in terms of providing logistics for them to take and sustain their operations. Now, resident at these remote sites they had, whether they were lashed up—a lot of them were lashed up with SOF forces, and the SOF forces provided a lot of this, you know, the feeding and care and those kinds of things for them. That was done by them, and we would take and augment any shortfalls that might occur. And I was responsible for the moving around of all of the large items, for instance the 105 rounds for the howitzers as they shot in missions, those kinds of things. The care and sustainment of the equipment was my responsibility. So, about every two to three weeks I would get out to a site there and do that, and that was in addition to any meetings that we might have in Bagram with CJTF, which occurred—that was an infrequent thing.

I also had some meetings in the eastern AOR with Colonel Cheek, who remained, from a home station relationship, my boss. I worked for Colonel Pedersen on a day-to-day operation and responded to him as my senior commander on the ground, but my rating chain still stayed with Colonel Cheek, my DIVARTY commander. So, I linked with him not because of that, but rather because of the howitzers that I might have in that area. And while in theater what we did was, also, in addition to my 105s that I had in theater, we brought the 155s from Hawaii in theater to take and assist with the border region because the 105s didn't have the range in the eastern area, as a lot of stuff was occurring along the Afghan-Pakistan border in that no-man's-land. So, we brought those 155s from Hawaii to Kandahar. I was responsible for conducting the train-up of those forces and doing all of the functions checks and conducting the live fire with those howitzers prior to employing them in their combat roles.

DR. KOONTZ: **How many 155s did you bring over?**

COL. NEASON: I believe it was eight.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were they employed as a battery, or were the split up into different places like your 105s?**

COL. NEASON: They were employed as two platoons, but they remained in the eastern AOR. They come to me in the south. I conducted the train-up. I had the commander and all those soldiers there. I did all their certifications. Once they completed those certifications, they boarded aircraft and went into the eastern AOR and were on the compound proper with Colonel Cheek.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, they weren't your responsibility after that point?**

COL. NEASON: No, because the 155s, they are an organic asset to the division, whereas my battalion was a direct support battalion. That was an organic division asset. Now, initially all of the soldiers within that battalion, they deployed with me. They deployed with me to augment my 105s and to assist with the patrolling mission that we're going to have because, initially, we did not foresee bringing the 155s in theater, and when they brought them, I had to break those soldiers, detach those soldiers, from the operations I had



Soldiers of the 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, position an M119 howitzer near Forward Operating Base Cobra in Oruzgan Province to support Combined Task Force BOBCAT, 23 October 2004.

ongoing, get them certified with their howitzer training, and then they were employed in another AOR.

DR. KOONTZ: **How do you adjust mentally to this kind of fragmentation of units and splits in chain of command?**

COL. NEASON: For me, personally, it wasn't that difficult. I had a great relationship with Colonel Pedersen as the DS [direct support] battalion that supported that artillery brigade in theater. So, we already had built the relationship because deploying with my third unit command two years prior to that, to include going to a JRTC rotation, I'd worked with Colonel Pedersen. So, I was very familiar with him, and very comfortable with him as he was with me. There were no real disconnects with regard to the chain of command because while Colonel Cheek remained my rater, other than providing some periodic updates to him as to what we had going on when I could—and, I think, I made two trips to his location which were specifically mission related—there was no real interference. It was as if Colonel Pedersen was my rater.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I need to go back and ask you something. You were mentioning those site visits out to those eight or nine bases where your guns were operating. What were those like?**

COL. NEASON: They were very austere. They were in very rugged terrain, very remote. Most of them were in support of SOF forces, to enhance their reach because we had a lot of no-man's land. The SOF guys would go out on these long missions, but they didn't have any organic and direct support to take and assist them with either enabling them as they had contact and/or breaking or disengaging contact. Those fires were able to provide some destruction to these sites where people were launching mortars into their compounds. It created standoff, and once we got the guns out there, it was immediately known and had an immediate impact upon the operations in terms of assisting and safeguarding their base of operations, as well as supporting them when they went out on operations external to their remote locations.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the process for coordinating with the Special Operations Forces to provide that kind of support to them?**

COL. NEASON: Largely, that was done through CJTF-76. A need was articulated. I went through the necessary channels at CJTF, and we had an artilleryman working on staff there. As a matter of fact, my replacement worked on the staff there, so I had contact with him, and we're talking. So, as these needs were arising to take and put these guns to these remote locations, then that was then transmitted down the chain saying that the division commander has approved

the mission for guns to support SOF forces at this location and the elements which I would need to put together the package to take and facilitate that. And I say that because the unique challenge that we had is, typically in an artillery battalion with eighteen guns, you have three firing batteries. Those three firing batteries each have one fire direction center, so I had to split my fire direction centers multiple times in order to facilitate the ability to provide the indirect fire computations for those guns to take and shoot at those remote locations. So, that was a unique challenge, but largely, the determination was made by higher headquarters, and I received orders to take and prepare to have guns to go to X location to be in position to fire no later than X.

DR. KOONTZ: **How are those—I guess "two-gun team" is probably not the right word—but how are they manned? Was there a permanent crew assigned to each one of those guns, or did that responsibility rotate?**

COL. NEASON: No. What I ended up doing was, I ended up getting—the crews for those guns went there. I ended up finding my key NCOs that could take—and normally, we have a gunnery sergeant and a chief of fire, one per battery. Well, I had to find multiple senior guys that were capable of operating sort of in a noncontiguous, remote location so they can do these independent operations. I assigned a lieutenant and an NCO as the leadership package in addition to the section chiefs for each of those howitzers to take and go up there, and then we tried to augment them as we could with whatever personnel to enable their ability to do 24-hour operations, which often would mean that the biggest strain on that came within the fire direction center, just having the organic capacity to have the people that were trained to take and do that mission. So, we augmented them as much as we could. My battalion FDC [fire direction center] section was, in fact, decimated in order to facilitate that, to getting the additional 13-E's [cannon fire direction specialist military occupation specialty] out to these remote locations to assist.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'm getting the impression there was a lot of kind of improvisation and learning on the job in the employment of your troops. Is that a fair assessment?**

COL. NEASON: Not necessarily improvisation, I guess. Normally, we're employed centrally, and then it's always been about volume of fires in the conventional sense. Well, now what we had to take and do is we broke my three entities up into eight to nine entities, and they were essentially doing the same thing, just on a smaller scale. So, in terms of the tasks that they're performing, it was a typical task that they would do as a cannoneer. They'd just be doing it more. So, in that sense there was no improvisation, but it was unique in that they would just remote it out from

the parent headquarters, and they didn't have—I didn't have a battalion FDC articulating fire missions down to the battery FDCs, and then the battery FDCs then fired in support of a brigade operation, like we would normally do or in support of a battalion operation. They were doing support in terms of individual support to SOF operations, and they had to do both the tactical employment of that system as well as the operational computation of fires to take and employ those guns in support of the SOF forces.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, so once this subdivision of the normal tactical unit gets worked out, everything worked out efficiently?**

COL. NEASON: Yes, yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Way back in the beginning of the interview, when we started, you mentioned that before you deployed some of your soldiers trained for nonartillery tasks like convoy escorting and things like that. Tell me about the transition of your soldiers from cannoneers into these other functions.**

COL. NEASON: We spent a lot of time on that. As I said, my battalion was responsible for the conduct of the combined operations sequence of training for the entire division. So, pushed out some smart guys to be the lead trainers to get their expertise up, and we went through a credentialing process with them to take and make sure that they were there. And then, we internally sort of trained ourselves on these particular tasks, and I liken them to a lot of just sort of advanced basic soldiering. What we did was we took—a lot of our soldiers learned a lot of the basic techniques of fire and maneuver that you get introduced to in basic training. Well, we harkened back to that with an emphasis upon "Okay, how do we effectively take and disembark from a truck? Should we have it at a halt or upon contact?" or something like that. So, reemphasized that. I think the soldiers adapted to it pretty quickly, I think, for a number of reasons, probably the most significant of which is that it was very real to them that they were going into a hostile environment and that these were going to be essential not only to the successful accomplishment of the mission, but their personal survival also, as well as the survival of their buddies. So, the soldiers were focused. I mean, they were honed in upon the importance of these tasks, and we had a number of enablers. We had, I think, a team from the [Joint] IED Task Force and that kind of stuff came to Hawaii and assisted us with training events and that kind of thing to give us the perspective on what's the latest and the greatest things being employed out there, and what are some effective defeat mechanisms that they've identified, and how the threat is, in fact, adapting to some of the things that were going on so the need for soldiers to be vigilant, to

be alert all the time. So, I would say that our soldiers readily and rather quickly adapted to the necessary training.

DR. KOONTZ: **I was going to ask, in the Army or any other kind of large bureaucratic organization, whenever you have changes and you get people out of their lanes or out of their training, there's a certain amount of resistance and grumbling. Did you notice any kind of—**

COL. NEASON: No, none to speak of. I think once the announcement was made that we were, in fact, going to take and deploy and we went through the necessary tasks—the division list for the tasks that the theater commander says that units must be proficient on prior to deployment, once we go through that—I think sometimes there's a little hesitancy because people believe that "I know how to do that! Why am I going through that again?" Maybe just on the fringes, just a little bit of that. But then, actually, as soldiers got into it and went through that training, they recognized that it was necessary for them to take and refresh themselves on some of these tasks that some of them hadn't reviewed since basic training. So, I think we had marginal, if any, resistance with regard to that training.

DR. KOONTZ: **And from what I hear you're saying, once they actually started doing these things in the field in Afghanistan, things went largely as training—or, the training paid off, I guess, for lack of a better word?**

COL. NEASON: Yes. Yes, I think it did. There's still learning. There's still some adapting. Terrain provided some really unique challenges for us as you went out there, doing patrolling in some remote sites in Humvees, and our guys were not necessarily used to some of, just the tight spaces that they'd have to go with some of these vehicles and really zooming out and looking at all of the hazards associated with that. I think there was some continual learning. Field patrols went out, you know? Patrols were giving intel updates or giving briefings on—we talked about any known impediments out there with regard to training or known obstacles so that we could take and warn our soldiers about that and talk about techniques for successfully overcoming them. And when soldiers went out and they encountered what they believed to be unique obstacles and things that were not necessarily covered as we talked about in the training that we were doing in theater … because our training didn't stop there. We were constantly refreshing ourselves and updating ourselves to how to successfully go out there and accomplish a mission and come back. I think that enabled us to be, I think, more successful.

DR. KOONTZ: **What did your battalion do to support the 2004 elections?**

COL. NEASON: In conjunction with the—I just lost the name of the organization.

DR. KOONTZ: **Is it UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan]?**

COL. NEASON: UNAMA was there. We talked with a lot of them, but there was a specific sort of election team that came down, and one of the gentlemen that I worked closely with was an Australian. We, in Kandahar, we had a lot of remote election sites that were out there, and I was responsible for providing security for the sites in and around Kandahar proper for the election, as well as running the election control site. The soccer stadium in downtown Kandahar was going to be the central collection location for all of the balloting coming in within that region. We were responsible for security of that while they brought the ballots in and did the counting and that kind of stuff.

So, I remoted my battalion headquarters out into Kandahar city proper. We found the location relatively close to the soccer stadium where we set up and did 24-hour ops, and I was personally there the entire time, as well as had patrols that were still ongoing throughout the city and other elements that were responsible for the securing of the election sites—that is, facilitating them. There were civilians that were out there that were actually not engaged in the election proper, just for the security and the facilitating and transporting of the ballots. The balloting is done here, assisting with the escorting of the balloting back to the central location at the soccer stadium. So, we did that from the beginning of the setting up the sites, the designation of the sites, through the election, through the computation process, and the transport of all of the ballots out of Kandahar was when our operation ended.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I'm curious about that central polling site. About how big was that soccer stadium, and how big was that security force there?**

COL. NEASON: It wasn't necessarily as large as some of the soccer stadiums that we have here in the U.S., but it was a soccer stadium that was oval in shape.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'm thinking kind of like a small college football field, a big college football stadium?**

COL. NEASON: Probably a small college football field, with the surrounding stadium structure. There were stands and that kind of stuff. I probably had my battalion-minus there in terms of—because we were still doing patrolling in Kandahar proper, as well as external to Kandahar, as well as facilitating security and doing that, so we had a number of simultaneous operations ongoing there. So, my emphasis at that particular time was,

in fact, the elections. So, I probably had my battalion-minus there. I still had some people back at Kandahar proper manning the link there with that headquarters. But from that remote site is how I communicated directly with the brigade headquarters, from that site.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And did you have any interaction or observation with the people that were doing the ballot collecting there?**

COL. NEASON: Yes, I visited the site several times while I was there. I got to—initially, during the setup process, went there to see what it was going to look like, as well as when the ballots were coming in, I got to take and be with the civilians that were actually responsible for the care of the whole balloting process, got to walk through a remote site to see them as they were doing that. And we acted as a filter for a lot of the local Afghans who worked at the election site. We established a series of barriers around the stadium and had central access points so that we can take and control that, and all of the workers that came in that were responsible for assisting with the counting of the ballots came in from a centralized location. So, from that perspective, I saw it in operation both sort of throughout the process.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you get any kind of resistance to the election, either at the central balloting stadium or the outlying polling places?**

COL. NEASON: At the central balloting location, no. At the remote locations, just sporadically. You know, there was always the concern that there was going to be—people were going to be inhibited from participating in the election process, and that's why we had the patrolling going on. We were trying to make sure that access was available, that people felt secure in terms of going to the polling sites. But we did not receive any overt sort of resistance, and there was really no resistance by external elements to inhibit any people to go to the polling sites that we could detect at that time. There was a tremendous buildup to that. Prior to the election itself, we had intensified our patrolling in the area, trying to take and demonstrate to the people that our presence was in fact going to enable the security, that they could feel comfortable going to the polling sites. So, we did that some weeks prior to the election, and we sustained that through the election.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You're in Kandahar, which as you said is part of the Taliban heartland. Tell me about the kinds of opposing forces that your battalion had to deal with in Kandahar and the outlying regions. Whom were you fighting?**

COL. NEASON: It was very much transient elements. There were no firefights, so to speak, in Kandahar proper. The encounter

was from—the contact was being encountered from IEDs, and to take and to illuminate the impact of IEDs, we—and that was one of the purposes of the patrolling that we did, demonstrating to the people that there was, in fact, security in Kandahar, as well as manning the roads and being on the lookout for IED devices, lessening that so that not only would we not be harmed but neither would the local populace. So, we didn't have any—there was never a deliberate opposing threat to us there. It was always, everything was done on the fringes. Something would pop up here, and you'd attempt to take and respond to that. In Kandahar city proper, fortunately, I guess—we like to think it was because of the intensity of our security and stuff—there was never a significant threat. In and around the elections … as I recall, this was after the election. There were some populace, local populace, that were disgruntled with the local leadership in terms of some of the things that were going on, so we did encounter one time where crowds became unruly and a potentially dangerous situation could occur, because that's when you'd have some rogue insurgent, that might be just a single individual, that could take and stir something up and make it seem as if it was a concerted effort when it possibly wasn't.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have any sense of who was planting these IEDs? I mean did you know if it was Taliban or al Qaeda or HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin] or just generic kind of rogue elements?**

COL. NEASON: The belief was and the reports were that Taliban because we had—forgive me, but I don't—down in the southern portion, there was a road that ran from Kandahar running south down to the Pakistan border, and they believed that a lot of things were occurring in and around there. SOF forces had some responsibility down there, and we augmented that with some patrolling in and along that road to enable some security there. But because that was believed that that was how a lot of the insurgent elements, these onesies and twosies, never a compelling force, that were gaining access and coming into the area and causing disruptions. More often than not, the kinds of problems that we would encounter is that we'd go into a remote village to demonstrate presence and make contact with the local leaders. And I used to do that by going to the weekly *shuras* and making contact with them. And when we encountered any resistance, it was usually because either there was someone that favored the Taliban ideology who had recently been there or was there, and the people were very, very standoffish and just—and so we'd try to intensify and/or increase our presence there to weed that out and let them know "Hey, look. We're here for the long haul. If we can get you to tell us who these bad people are, we can either have the local police arrest them or do something of that nature," because they can dissipate this threat that they

were having, so that they could hopefully come into the fold, because some of the remote locations, while we had provincial governor, the reach wasn't always out to these remote locations. It usually was in Kandahar proper and just the adjacent areas, and the further you went out a lot of times. It wasn't as—not that there were a lot of bad things happening there, but it was, I guess, what we would call almost a semi-ungoverned space.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have any kind of interaction or coordination with the local government in Kandahar to extend the reach?**

COL. NEASON: I met weekly with the police chief in Kandahar. I met very frequently with the brigade commander, with the provincial governor. I met frequently on an as-needed basis with the local mayor of Kandahar to address any concerns or needs he had or, you know, if he's concerned about some operation that we're having or any negative impact that you think it might have on a population or what was going on around there. I met with the local government frequently.

DR. KOONTZ: **How effective would you evaluate that local government as being? You mentioned that it needs its reach extended and there are ungoverned areas.**

COL. NEASON: My personal opinion is they just didn't have the apparatus to reach out. There were no subordinates, sort of as we think of county and town people to take and that he could reach out and hold accountable, responsible, that understand what he was trying to do such that that could be articulated down to the people. So, I think there's some uniformity with regard to understanding the government. The local elders at the local *shuras* were, in fact, the governing piece as you went out to a lot of the remote sites—for that matter, even within some of the towns within Kandahar. As you went and met with them, they spoke for the people, and deference was given to them as we reached out and touched them to find out what their needs were and find out what their position was with regard to the national government. Usually, that was readily apparent, because they'd have pictures of President Karzai. That was the means of bridging that gap, letting us know that they were loyalists and supported the government. I think because President Karzai had—even though his family was from Kandahar, they had no effective, consistent reach down there. His appointment of some of the local provincial governors was extraordinarily important. However, I will tell you that a lot of those guys were—everything was done along tribal lines. I mean, the tribe was everything in Kandahar. As I dealt with the people there, I had to remain very, very conscious of "Am I dealing with the Barakzai or the Popalzai?"—you know, making sure that I am not inadvertently empowering one tribe over the

other, because then that would cause friction between them and then you would have problems. So, I think the local leaders gained power based on tribal dominance, and whatever lead tribe there that was in power, then that was good for the people; and the minority tribe, you kind of like didn't hear anything from them. I guess from a political perspective, it's a smothering, majority rules, okay, and you don't hear a lot from the minority voice from a particular region. But they, in effect, locally governed and controlled everything, and that's why the elders were, in fact, very, very important.

For instance, the provincial governors, a lot of the guys gained prominence and/or popularity as a result of the resistance fighting with the Russians, and not necessarily the most educated people amongst the population, but had reputations for heroism fighting them and hence had enhanced stature, and that gave them power. Sometimes it was because, you know, this guy was in fact a ruthless fighter and was known for his heroism in the fight against the Soviets. Hence, he ascended to power. So, power was, a lot of times, direct ties. It wasn't necessarily based upon political savvy and that kind of stuff.

DR. KOONTZ: **By the time that you left Afghanistan, did you notice any kind of changes in the acceptance of the Afghan National Government in Kandahar?**

COL. NEASON: There were a lot of changes that occurred while we were there. The provincial governor changed a couple of times. The police chief changed, I think—the government was seeking to demonstrate its ability, or its reach, by, in effect, trying to get effective governors in the region that were responsive to the national government. So, in that sense, I think that there was a positive turn, I think, because when the people began to see things occur, some of it through us, Coalition forces—that is, us and the Afghan army—working with the local government to do things as rebuild mosques and rebuild schools so they can assist with some of the infrastructure rebuilding in Kandahar and the surrounding area. That was, in effect, a way of demonstrating the government's reach because what was important to us as we did things was, emphasized from CJTF on down to us, "We must ensure that an Afghan face is put on all the operations that we're doing. We don't want this to be perceived as a U.S. or the Coalition doing this for them, but in fact try to demonstrate that the government was in fact behind this, and we were just assisting with that effort as they do that," to take and to be empowering to governmental structures.

DR. KOONTZ: **What do you think was your battalion's greatest accomplishment or greatest achievement during your tour of duty in Afghanistan?**

COL. NEASON: I would think I was very proud of the manner in which the elections took place. I mean from start to finish because there was a lot of concern about that, that that was going to be a place where the Taliban was going to take a stand. They were going to come across the borders from Pakistan and come in there and be a disrupting agent and, in fact, take and nullify the election by contaminating the results in Kandahar. So, that was a significant accomplishment for us there—the successful running of the election that went off, you know, really without a glitch.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. When did you leave Afghanistan? That would have been probably about—**

COL. NEASON: I was scheduled to leave in April. We transitioned with the battalion from the 82d. However, they had—the commander there had a family emergency that took him away, so I remained in Afghanistan after the bulk of my battalion had left an additional two and a half, three weeks, and ran the operation with that battalion from the 82d until that commander was able to return. It was, I guess, maybe about two weeks; two, two and a half weeks.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you were just doing the same thing that you had been doing before?**

COL. NEASON: Yes, I acted as the battalion commander.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me about the transition when the commander from the 82d came in. What kind of guidance or advice did you give him?**

COL. NEASON: Same thing. We established prior coordination. They came over on a PDSS, a predeployment site survey, at which point I provided him a briefing of "Here's what it is we're doing. Here's the geographical area." We had provided all the products that we were able to take and provide with him so that his unit can begin to take and study the operation that we had going on and anticipate any future missions that we might have. And then, we conducted a TOA much like I did with 3/6 from the 10th Mountain. We established a ten-day period, which was a mandated thing, that we would take and actually get his battalion fully on the ground, and he and I would left-seat/right-seat, and then as we proceed through that ten-day period, my staff and I would back off, and he would assume the helm with us there for several days where he was totally in charge of the operation and we were just observers.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. What happens to Colonel Neason after he leaves theater? Where did you go after deploying out?**

COL. NEASON: Back to Hawaii.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And how long did you stay with the battalion?**

COL. NEASON: I got back in, I believe it was May, sometime in May, late May. I changed command in June, toward the end of June, I believe. Yes, third week of June, I changed command.

DR. KOONTZ: **And where did you go after the change of command?**

COL. NEASON: I remained in Hawaii a fourth year and was the division inspector general.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were there any major lessons learned or kind of experiences you had during your deployment in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM that changed the way that you think about, I guess, either yourself, your leadership, the way that you approach decision-making processes, anything like that?**

COL. NEASON: The big thing for me was I liked being involved in everything that my battalion has going on—intimately involved, familiar with what's going on—and allow my subordinates some freedom of doing things. Probably, centrally, the battalion established a plan for everything, and then we briefed down to our subordinates and then directed their actions as we went out doing things. In Afghanistan, as I said, with the eight to nine separate locations I had, the howitzer batteries, and even with the fixed responsibility I had in Kandahar, I had to remote out one of my battery commanders. I had to really zoom out from what was going on, understand what was going on, resource what was happening, but, in effect, recognize that he had the situational awareness of what was going on the ground and allow him to take and conduct that operation and remain apprised of the situation such that if he gets in any difficult spots, I could effectively take and resolve it without the mission suffering. So, a big lesson for me was just moving out, backing away from things that are going on. And, as we trained prior to the deployment, of empowering our subordinate leaders so that they can conduct operations and doing things. Well, we got to take and really actualize that, which doesn't necessarily always occur in an artillery battalion when you're doing centralized operations and providing volumes of fire. Now I got these guys going out to these separate locations, and we were separated by hundreds of kilometers and just getting periodic reports on what's going on, and trying to resource the fight from a remote location while trying to get out to see them, as I said before, about every three-week period of time, which meant that if I went to Unit 1 here, it was some time before I got back to Unit 8 because just moving a lot. And then, that could be disrupted based upon operations that we had ongoing back at Kandahar. During the period of time for the October elections, I was not out visiting for probably a six-week to two-month period.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir. I'm out of questions, and you're the one who was there. You have all the knowledge, and we're just trying to pull stuff out of you. What's the important thing that I should have asked you that I missed?**

COL. NEASON: I think you pretty much covered the gamut. I guess we talked about it, I guess, but more indirectly is, the whole notion … I thought it was the unique mission for the operation, just the conduct of activities from my battalion there, because we truly operated more as a maneuver battalion than we did as an artillery battalion. We still retained the ability to take and do all the artillery things, but back at Kandahar proper, I just had two guns. I had two guns at Kandahar proper, and the sixteen of my other guns were throughout the Afghan theater. So, a big thing for me was just this notion of—well, we typically support the maneuver operation. Well, now I found myself both supporting maneuver operations, as well as conducting maneuver operations, which was a unique thing for an artillery unit. But it wasn't a huge stretch, though, because, like I said, a lot of it is basic soldiering tasks and understanding the things there. And I did have the entire brigade staff and the brigade commander available that I've briefed on all of the missions that we're going to do in a sequential process leading up to all the operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Is there anything else you'd like to add, sir?**

COL. NEASON: Not that I can think of.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. It was a pleasure meeting you, and I want to thank you on behalf of the Center of Military History for doing this.**

COL. NEASON: Sure. Thank you.



Col. Terry L. Sellers *served as Commander, 2d Battalion, 5th Infantry, 3d Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (Light), as a lieutenant colonel. His battalion was part of Combined Task Force Bronco, Combined Joint Task Force-76, from April 2004 to June 2005. He was interviewed by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 21 February 2007 at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Colonel Sellers discusses his battalion's training efforts and preparation for its deployment to Afghanistan in April 2004. Originally stationed in Ghazni, the battalion replaced the 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light), and conducted joint operations with the 6th Marines. Colonel Sellers comments on working with the local government, Afghan security forces, and the Ghazni provincial reconstruction team, as well as the battalion's first casualty, before deploying to Oruzgan in June 2004. He describes the battalion's forward operating base and area of operations and joint command and control and command structure issues there. The battalion experienced success in registering vot-*

ers for the 2004 parliamentary election but had to work with an ineffective and corrupt local government. Colonel Sellers comments on types of operations, intelligence gathering, and opposition from Taliban forces in Oruzgan. The battalion was disestablished during the modular reorganization of the 25th Infantry Division after its deployment, and Colonel Sellers concludes the interview by listing the battalion's accomplishments, the postdeployment transition of its soldiers, and his memories of the four soldiers killed in action while serving under his command in Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, this is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the twenty-first of February 2007 and I'm interviewing Col. Terry Sellers, who is currently a student at the Naval War College here in Newport, Rhode Island. I'm interviewing him about his experience as the commanding officer of the 2d Battalion, 5th Infantry, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Combined Joint Task Force-76, in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM [OEF]. First of all, sir, you're sitting for the interview voluntarily?**

COL. SELLERS: That's correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have any objection with Army or public researchers using this information, as long as you're cited correctly?**

COL. SELLERS: No, I do not.

DR. KOONTZ: **Thank you, sir. When did you take command of 2/5 Infantry?**

COL. SELLERS: Took command of 2/5 Infantry on the first of July 2002.

DR. KOONTZ: **And what was the battalion or the division doing at that point in time?**

COL. SELLERS: It basically just normal training and theater engagement exercises with partner nations in the PACOM AOR [U.S. Pacific Command area of responsibility], so just really training and normal security duties and those kinds of things.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And you were in command for about a year and a half before the deployment to Afghanistan?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, yeah. I guess we actually got word—we'd done a deployment, which we thought was going to be our major contribution to the Global War on Terror[ism], by taking my battalion from Hawaii to West Point to do cadet summer training for the fourth-class and third-class plebes and yearlings as they were coming into West Point. So, when we got the alert notification, we were about two-thirds of

the way through that particular three-, three-and-a-half-month deployment. That would've been in the fall of 2003.

DR. KOONTZ: **How did you get the word that your deployment status was going to change?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, initially, the division commander, Maj. Gen. [Eric T.] Olson, came on a visit, and he had some indications that at least one of the brigades was going to be alerted to deploy for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM—not sure whether it was going to be 2d Brigade or 3d Brigade at that point, but you know, that kind of put us on the radar screen: "We should probably be taking a look at how we're preparing." And I guess it was upon our return, then, that they confirmed that, yes, both brigades of the 25th were going to deploy. 2d Brigade was going to go to Iraq, and 3d Brigade was going to go to Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. After your brigade got the notification that you were going to Afghanistan, what kind of preparatory processes or exercises took place?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, you know, I was fortunate enough to do a JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center] rotation in the first six months of my command, and one of the things in preparation for JRTC is I told every one of the leaders that their ticket to ride at JRTC was to know the enemy, know the terrain, and know the weaponry that the JRTC OPFOR [opposition force] would use. So, using that same kind of construct, turned right around, and said, "Okay, if we're preparing to go to Afghanistan, same rules apply. You've got to know the terrain; you've got to know the people; you've got to know the culture; you've got to know the weapons systems; you've got to know the history, particularly looking at history as it revolves around the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan." So, immediately tried to start putting our hands on some books that we could read on the Afghan people, read on the Taliban, read on the positive and negative aspects, and [Lester W.] Grau's books were instrumental in our preparation both from the Soviet perspective and from the Afghan *mujaheddin* perspective, and getting to know the terrain and tactics and weaponry that people would be using because, frankly, I wanted us to concentrate on operations and not "Oh, excuse me, can you tell me about how many of them, and what kinds of weapons?" That should just already be known, all the way down to privates in rifle squads. And I did four letters to combat. I did one at West Point that said, "Hey, 365 days from now, our battalion will be engaged in combat operations," and then I updated that almost on a quarterly basis, the last one published probably in March, as a "Hey, final last-minute things you can do in the last forty-five days before deployment." There're a number of repetitive themes and topics that guys should be using to prepare themselves physically, tactically, mentally,

family aspects—you know, to make sure their family is prepared for them to deploy.

DR. KOONTZ: **Going back to that JRTC rotation, one of the things that kind of comes out, and you sort of implied this—I don't want to put words in your mouth—is that when you do a JRTC rotation or a NTC [National Training Center] rotation, there's a certain amount of kind of gaming involved in that you can kind of guess what the OPFOR is going to do, given the fact that the terrain and everything is fixed. Were there any things that you learned from that JRTC rotation that you would apply later in Afghanistan?**

COL. SELLERS: Oh, yeah, definitely. You're right, there is a gamesmanship aspect to JRTC. We tried to minimize that because we wanted it to be an honest appraisal of our combat readiness. So, tactical operations center systems, communications systems, how we communicated orders—we were able to refine all of that, which really paid off in Afghanistan because when you look at the map and see where my companies were actually, physically located in the province, provinces that we were responsible for, communications was a huge challenge. No longer could you talk by FM [frequency modulation radio], sometimes not even by TACSAT [tactical satellite radio], so how were we going to communicate orders and intent and everything else? JRTC stretched us to the point where we were already struggling—limited experience across the battalion in TACSAT, and, you know, some people could make FM communications work to their advantage and others couldn't, so it really identified where we were weak in those kinds of areas. And then tactically, as far as kinetic operations, I'd say our squads were probably as good as anybody else's.



Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Frank M. Leota (*left*) and Colonel Sellers in Oruzgan Province

The nuanced piece, though … you know, for example, when you get into some of the villages where depending on how your unit acts and engages with the local populace and the insurgents that are there, you can either grow the insurgency or you can turn those insurgents to your side and make that beneficial, we experienced a mixed bag. Some things we did pretty well, kind of by accident, I think, at that point; and other things, we increased the enemy's capability by the ways we acted, the things that

we did, and the tactics that we employed. But I think it was our first true indicator that, for company commanders and platoon leaders in a decentralized fashion, you know, "That's where you're going to beat that kind of enemy. That's where you're going to have the best opportunity to defeat that kind of enemy."

DR. KOONTZ: **At this point in time before the deployment, what kind of guidance did you get concerning what the battalion was going to do in Afghanistan?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, that was kind of a mixed bag for us because the brigade was going to be employed in Regional Command South at that point, and my battalion was going to be employed in Regional Command North or East. So, we knew almost from the outset that my battalion was going to be detached and work for the 6th Marine Regiment, where 2d Battalion, 87th Infantry, from the 10th Mountain Division was. I was going to replace [Lt. Col.] Dave Paschal there. So, we kind of knew that our deployment sequence in time and in location was going to be different than what the rest of the brigades was. One of the first things we did was I asked my S-2 [intelligence staff officer] and my XO [executive officer] to set up a SCIF [sensitive compartmented information facility] in our battalion headquarters, and so we emptied out a room adjacent to the S-2's shop that he turned into a SCIF where we could actually put in SIPRNET [Secure Internet Protocol Router Network], we could actually put up maps, and we began a dialogue with 2d of the 87th—Dave Paschal is a friend of mine—and started getting their situational reports. And we actually updated and maintained situation maps as much as we could inside this SCIF, where we could leave it 24/7. Company commanders and platoon leaders, and their platoon sergeants and first sergeants, could come in and look and see what was on the map. They could read the INTSUMs [intelligence summaries] that we were able to get our hands on, and then we could have planning sessions where we could plan in a secret environment and then secure all that—you know, that body of knowledge, I guess—to bring back out and continue our preparations, whereas normally a battalion doesn't have that. You don't have that kind of connectivity, or at least to this point we didn't have that kind of access.

DR. KOONTZ: **Speaking in sort of broad themes, what kind of things were you learning from your SITREPs [situation reports] that you were getting from the 82d?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, from the 10th Mountain Division, really what it was is almost tactics and techniques that worked and didn't work. How does the enemy, if he's going to fight you, how does he fight? You know, there were small engagements, normally at a little bit greater distance. The engagement would happen, and the enemy would disappear. So consequently, when we

deployed to the Pohakuloa Training Area on the Big Island, we crafted platoon-level live-fire exercises that mirrored that kind of enemy, an enemy that would hit and then melt away maybe to appear someplace else, so, certainly, TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures] that the enemy was employing against us and first introduction to improvised explosive devices [IEDs]. 2/87, at that point, I think had been hit with two or three, had a number of individuals killed, and how are we going to deal with that? How do we recognize them? How do we disable them? How much engineer support are we going to have? How much EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] support are we going to have? So, how are we going to train to that? I think another thing would be dealing with the local populace on issues, not strictly kinetic combat operations—where the enemy looks like the next-door neighbor, how do you separate those two out? And then, now that you've separated the populace from the enemy, how do you effectively deal with the populace? You know, I guess one of the company commanders says, "Well, we don't negotiate." Well, we found out very quickly you do negotiate and start trying to figure out and think about the things that we could give to the populace or get from the populace to make that a better relationship.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned a few minutes ago that you crafted those letters to combat and got your troops sort of reading up and learning things, and then you also mentioned having to deal with the local populace. Did you have any kind of cultural training regarding the Afghan population?**

COL. SELLERS: Not specifically Afghan, but I was fortunate to have a number of Spanish speakers, and because we are out in the middle of the Pacific, we had some Pacific Islanders, and I think probably the key thing that we did there was really work on "Okay, you said you don't negotiate but we're going to have to. What things can we do that won't sacrifice the overall mission, but might be small concessions?" We started getting used to talking through interpreters, where I would select the leader of a village based on a particular language capability he had, and then I would select a competent interpreter and say, "Okay, for this scenario, you're not a member of your particular squad or platoon. You're the leader of this village, and here are your grievances that you want something done about." And then we'd brief the interpreter similarly so that he was read into the situation, and then we'd select maybe another platoon to play the combination aggressors and local populace, so that the company commander would come in with one of his platoons or his platoon leader—maybe even a squad leader, because we thought we might have to go down to that level—and they would have to, through an interpreter, talk to the village elder, the leader, whatever we termed it at that point, and try and find out what's really the situation? What are the grievances? Has there been any activity in

this particular area? And that, while it didn't specifically replicate Afghanistan, was close enough that when we did engage in that environment. Afghanistan, as we were a little bit familiar with—I won't say that they were good at it right off the bat, but it was certainly a method to start changing their mindset.

DR. KOONTZ: **From your perspective as the battalion commander, how would you assess, sort of overall, the training that your battalion received before you deployed?**

COL. SELLERS: I really think it was pretty good. We did an after action review that was published by companycommander.com following in kind of the same vein. The 82d had done that with the 10th, and the 10th had done that for us. We had both of their previous products, and we were looking at not specific TTPs that they used because we knew that the environment would change over time, but really, we used major topic areas to kind of focus our training. And we didn't stop training once we deployed. I mean, I think that's a common theme that you find most places. You know, we ran cycles where guys were on mission and guys were doing support tasking for their particular fire base or forward operating base [FOB], and we would cull out opportunities for them to continue to train, to continue to refine the TTPs that were working in country. So, I guess to get back to your question, I think we were pretty well prepared in a number of areas. Was it an exact match? No, it certainly wasn't. I mean, guys had to continue to think outside their normal comfort zone how to do operations. A good example is, at the company level, company commanders kind of had to change how they used their fire support officer [FSO]. They had to use their fire support officer. In our case, we used them as intelligence officers, so what I asked company commanders to do at their outlying FOBs was really kind of make a microcosm of a battalion staff. An officer was their S-2. An officer or a senior NCO would become their civil affairs officer, and we'd take the engineer squad leader, for example, and make him the civil projects officer and so on and so forth, so that each company was kind of creating their own mini-staff to handle planning and tracking it and tracking civilian population.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you deployed sometime around March or April 2004, right?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, it was April. I think we actually—I think I got into country, Afghanistan, on the twenty-first of April, and different from what we had done in the past. Like when we went to JRTC, I didn't deploy right up front. I sent an advance party to open accounts and set up this and set up that. I looked at the deployment to Afghanistan a little differently. I took all my company commanders, I took my S-4 [logistics staff officer], I took my S-3 [operations staff

officer], my S-2, and a couple senior noncommissioned officers, first sergeant and a sergeant first class, and I did it like a leader's recon, where I left people in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, to push our soldiers forward as they came into the country. I left a small element in Bagram to receive those people and immediately link into, or as the marines would call it, snap into 6th Marines. And then everybody else, all the leadership, I brought forward, and we embedded our leadership where Dave Paschal's leadership was actually operating in Ghazni Province, for kind of the left-seat/right-seat ride concept. We would watch and see how 2/87 did their morning and evening updates. We would watch how company commanders crafted their operations and executed their operations. It was really kind of a leader's recon to really get to know the physical terrain, get to know the key personalities, and figure out what kind of operations 2/87 ran. Now, as soldiers arrived, as companies arrived, I sent the company commanders back for a shorter than they anticipated period of time to Bagram, to brief their soldiers and do in-country training there, and I never returned to Bagram. I stayed forward the entire time and shadowed Dave Paschal the entire time, met the key personalities, and we started that shift of him backing away and me interjecting myself as the next Coalition force that was going to be engaged with all these same personalities and same forums. And then, as a company commander was comfortable that his subordinate commanders, platoon leaders, platoon sergeants were getting the troops ready and they were passing all their RSOI [reception, staging, and onward integration] tasks, I allowed the company commander to bring all of his platoon leaders and as many of the platoon sergeants as he could forward to do the same thing, kind of the company level. Then that led into the full-up left-seat/right-seat ride where, really, thinning of the lines from 2/87 as we built capability in each of the different company areas.

DR. KOONTZ: **I should've asked you this before. You mentioned you had this previous contact with the 2d of the 87th, and you're getting their SITREPs and stuff, and then you also mentioned that when you get to Afghanistan you're going to be working under the 6th Marines. Did you have any kind of contact with them?**

COL. SELLERS: I did. We rolled in, it was probably around seven o'clock at night, into Afghanistan with everybody bleary eyed from the C–130 flight down from Kyrgyzstan, and I notified immediately Col. Dave Garza, the 6th Marine Regiment commander, that we were on the ground, and he said, "Meet me at my headquarters at this time." I spent two hours—my S-3, S-2, and I—being briefed and debriefed by his staff. I got his commander's intent, what he wanted our force to do as we replaced 2/87, and then at, I think about three or four the next morning, we're loading plates

into our IBA [Interceptor body armor], uploading ammo, and we were on CH–47s out to Ghazni, out to link up with Dave Paschal and his commanders and staff. So, I probably at that one opportunity, I had about a two, two-and-a-half hour time block with Dave Garza, where it was crystal clear what his intent was, what he expected me to do, the successes that Dave Paschal had experienced to that point, and then what he saw as the future for our battalions we took over from Dave.

DR. KOONTZ: **And this all takes place in theater?**

COL. SELLERS: In theater. No, I really did not have any connectivity with 6th Marine Regiment's staff or the commander until we were in country.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And what was that commander's intent that Colonel Garza gave you?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, I mean, he had, as he called them, "lines of operation," and it's, you know, really kind of our concept of the operation tasked to subordinate units, if you will, "Here are the things I want you to concentrate on." Voter registration was going to be important, but more important than that was finding and capture/killing the Taliban, al Qaeda, HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin] members that were anti–Afghan government, anti-Coalition. And then, partnering with the PRT [provincial reconstruction team]. We were collocated in Ghazni with the Ghazni PRT, shared the same compound, and Lt. Col. Steve Ford, Reserve civil affairs officer, prior Special Forces officer, he and I had a great relationship. But partnering with the governor; partnering with the provincial police chief, the NDS [Afghan National Directorate of Security] chief, their secret police kind of intelligence apparatus, really making the linkages there and the continuing development of good governance; development of schools and education, medical treatment facilities; and really not replacing their capabilities, but putting the Afghan face on those capabilities as they stood up; coaching, teaching, mentoring them to be responsible for those things, manage their own money, and manage forward progress. And then I guess the last one that finally got introduced was we were to receive one of the first battalions of the *kandaks*, Afghan National Army, to come in, and had to coordinate that with the governor and the Afghan Militia Forces [AMF], to coordinate the interjection of the new Afghan National Army at an old Soviet air base, and those Afghan soldiers were going to help with expanding voter registration and then security of voter registration sites as we got them.

I guess one of the other things that Dave Garza told me was they referred to Colonel Paschal as "Commander Dave," and Commander Dave had gone on the radio and

television on a spontaneous show, Afghan local radio, with the governor, the deputy governor, the provincial police chief, and others to try to talk about Coalition initiatives, talk about Afghan initiatives, and then just answer the general public's questions. They would write in questions, and they would spontaneously feed those questions out and amongst that group of people they would determine who was going to answer the question, and a lot of time it was designed to put the Coalition commander on the spot. The PRT commander was involved in that, too. And you know, Dave Garza's message to me was "Hey, I want you to sustain that because that's a way to get the word out to more people and demonstrate that we're here for everybody's betterment, getting rid of the bad guys, adding structure, and then doing projects."

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you became "Commander Terry," then?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, I don't think anybody ever referred to me as that. Really, we were there for about a month and a half before we received orders to move someplace else. I was there from April until June.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, you get to Ghazni in late April, and you said you were there until June. So you're there for about a month and a half, and you get your commander's intent from Colonel Garza. Now, how much were you able to accomplish in Ghazni before you moved?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, I think—and, I mean, I think quite a bit. You know, the second day that we were fully in charge of AO [area of operations] Ghazni—and I forget what the actual name of the AO was; I've got it written down someplace—but we had our first—we thought it was an IED, but actually ran over a large antitank mine. One soldier, [Sgt.] Jorge DeLeon, lost his right leg in that and one of our interpreters had a broken leg and we experienced our first catastrophic kill on an up-armored vehicle. Probably one of the first successes was being able to, in cooperation with the Afghan security element, their secret police, intelligence apparatus, the deputy governor, and the provincial police, we were able to apprehend the individuals responsible for that less than two days later, and they were actually HIG-affiliated operatives—a father and his five sons, and we actually had to release one of his sons because by our estimate he was only twelve to fifteen years old, so that didn't meet the detention criteria. But all those individuals were eventually apprehended, along with items secured from their compound that implicated them in this one particular attack.

So, I mean, that's one success. The broader success, though, I think was us working side by side with the PRT. The PRT commander and I, on a weekly basis, sometimes multiple

times in a week, would meet with the governor and his deputy with the provincial police chief, the mayor of the bazaar, if you will, and find out what's important in the province of Ghazni; what's important to the district chiefs; what's important to the district police chiefs—you know, "Here, we need your priorities on what we can accomplish." And so, Steve Ford would handle the things that were civic projects, primarily big-dollar kind of items. We would do smaller civic projects, wells, you know, maybe school improvements and school supplies, those kinds of things—limited CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program] dollars doing that. But then in a little smaller forum, the NDS chief, the Afghan National Police chief, and the deputy governor and I would handle the items that were security issues. A big success was drawing in the Afghan Militia Forces commander, an ethnic Hazaran who didn't get along well, at least initially, with the Pashtun governor, and cooperatively working our resources to find out who and where the bad guys were, who and where the caches of munitions were at.

One of the governor's own security forces, kind of a private militia at that point, the commander there ran an old Soviet armor base where there were literally thousands of 120-mm. rockets, at that point one of the weapons of choice for IEDs, and then thousands of antitank and antipersonnel mines—again, great assets to build IEDs out of. We brought in UN teams to destroy all that ordnance. We took out all the things we couldn't destroy, but some of the things stacked on top of each other, don't know whether they're armed or not. But through district chiefs, through this one particular AMF commander that worked for the governor, we were able to pull close to a dozen SA–7s from him, a couple hyperbaric rounds that the Soviets had left behind, and then one of the district chiefs was very cooperative and provided British Blowpipes and other antiaircraft missiles. So, they knew they were going to be monetarily rewarded, probably, for these things, but also at least in the case of the commander, very concerned that those weapons would get into the wrong hands. You know, here's a guy that's not being paid on time by the governor. His loyalty to the governor is kind of questionable. He's an ethnic Tajik, and I sat and listened to him and I talked to him, and we talked about world politics and we talked about local politics, and we talked about Pakistan; we talked about Afghanistan; we talked about the United States; and over a couple hours and eating lunch, at his invitation, he came up with a scheme to make it look like I forced him to give me these weapons and it all worked out. Probably one of the strangest experiences I had was, as we walked around inspecting his compound, Afghans are very comfortable holding hands, man to man, and something in our culture … we don't do that, and he reached out and grabbed a hold of my hand and held my hand the way I hold hands with my wife, as we walked

around inspecting his compound. Fortunately, only a small number of soldiers and the sergeant major saw that, because otherwise I'm sure I would've been the butt of a number of jokes on that one. But the way I told them is that "Hey, if it gets us these weapons that we're looking for, I'm all for it!"

DR. KOONTZ: **Now, where did the money to buy those off come from? Is that CERP funds?**

COL. SELLERS: Some of that, for the information and some of the—it came from small rewards funds, different than CERP funds and managed differently—a lot of restrictions on how we controlled those funds, and that was probably one of the things that we, initially, were not prepared for, but once in country, there were a number of certification programs to get the right number of officers in the right locations qualified to authorize low-level CERP funds. My S-2 was the only one authorized for small rewards. Now, he did use the FSO that we employed in companies as the company's S-2's recommendations: "Hey, this guy provided us with this kind of information, or he brought us this particular weapons system. We think it's appropriate to reward him," and kind of used 2/87's sliding scale for their small rewards on how we were going to employ the same thing, because we didn't want to overcompensate somebody or pay too much for something that we thought was a dangerous weapon system. I don't remember the exact price, but I think somewhere, somebody was setting the price for, if you've got a Stinger missile it's worth about this much money, and we tried to keep that as classified as we could so that the Afghans didn't find it out, send us on wild-goose chases looking for stuff that wasn't there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Just to backtrack a little bit to something you'd mentioned earlier, you mentioned the second day there, you had that IED go off, and Sergeant DeLeon loses his leg and you get the Humvee destroyed. You'd done a lot of training for this. Was that kind of a wake-up call, in any kind of sense, that it's serious now?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, I think that, certainly, as unfortunate as it was, I think it had that effect. I think across the battalion—it happened in Bravo Company; Jorge was driver for 1st Platoon in Bravo Company—but it was a wake-up call across the battalion that "Hey, we're not just playing here. We're not playing or training. There is a real, tangible consequence to things not going well." You know, we were very concerned because we'd driven over the same route a few times over the past couple days: "Well, we need to change how we're doing things. We don't want to set up discernible patterns. We don't want to telegraph what we're going to do." Certainly for the families back home, it was a definite shock to the family support group system on how are we going to deal with this and I think probably one of the smartest decisions

I made was leaving one of my best junior captains back as our rear detachment commander to deal with not only the soldiers that were nondeployable, but to watch over our families. You know, I kind of referred to 2/5 Infantry, the Bobcats, as the Bobcat Ohana [Hawaiian for "family"], and taking care of families is pretty important. That night, called my wife and told her, "Hey, this is not officially released because DeLeon's family's not notified yet, but you need to know this, and you need to contact the rear detachment commander, and the two of you talk about, after official notification's done, how the family support group is going to support DeLeon's family"—two small children, a spouse, residing on island—"How are we going to take care of them the same way we're trying to take care of him?" And at that point, you know, it was touch-and-go on whether he was going to live or not. So, big wake-up call, I think, on how things are going to go and what the true consequence to what we've trained for really is.

DR. KOONTZ: **You told me before the interview started you're a veteran of DESERT STORM. What was the level of veteran experience within your battalion?**

COL. SELLERS: I would say it's probably less than 15 percent, and I base that mainly on not a lot of guys were DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM veterans. Certainly our senior noncommissioned officers had maybe stretching back to as far back as Grenada, so some Grenada, some Panama; but again, one or two here or there, probably the largest percent DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM vets, but most of those would've been in the officer ranks, would've been platoon leaders or squad leaders, maybe, in the enlisted ranks. And then we had a smattering of guys that had already seen service in OEF—the original phases, OEF I, OEF II—and in a rare case, a guy that saw a little bit of service in OIF [Operation IRAQI FREEDOM] at that point, because you know, we're talking 2004, so some guys—and then some guys came to us with less than six months underneath their belt from a deployment to either Afghanistan or Iraq, so those guys, we consciously left on island a little bit longer to get settled with their family, but gave them a definite time period: "Hey, we're bringing you forward because we want to use your experience." And, oh, by the way, we needed the people because we were close to built full, if not right-out full, unitwise, but obviously anticipated that we were going to have casualty problems or injuries or something like that, so we wanted to keep the replacements flowing in. So, yeah, not a lot of folks had seen actual combat operations, kinetic combat operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **When did you move out from Ghazni to Oruzgan?**

COL. SELLERS: It would've been early—it was about the thirteenth or fourteenth of June. Again, I was able to fly a small leader's

recon element. I took my S-3, my S-2, my S-4, and I think one or two other—my FSO went with me. My battalion fire support officer captain went, and it was really—they flew from Ghazni. We flew back, met with Colonel Garza for about two and a half hours; flew from Bagram then down directly to Kandahar and met with my parent brigade commander, Col. Dick Pedersen, and his staff, and then remained overnight in Kandahar. The very next morning, flew up and linked in, snapped in for the first time with 22d MEU [22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)] on the ground in Oruzgan, in Tarin Kowt—very rudimentary FOB, FOB Ripley. You know, the MEU doesn't normally venture too far from the ship, and now find themselves well inland and had been there for about, I think, forty-five days at that point, and normally they're on the ground for about sixty days and then pulled back, so no real hard structures constructed there at all. But, immediately, they welcomed us, set up an addition to their COC, their command operations center, gave us a workspace, tried to get some air conditioning inside, computer connectivity, SIPR and NIPRNET [Nonsecure Internet Protocol Router Network], phones, and we worked there for a day. We remained overnight, one night with them, and then went back to Kandahar, back to Bagram, back to Ghazni, and then got the word that the very next morning, I was to take a reinforced company back and start operations immediately with the MEU. And in that process, there were only about at least three different ideas—probably four, if you count mine—on how we were going to be employed, who was going to backfill us in Ghazni, how all of that was going to sort itself out. Was I attached? Was I OPCON [placed under operational control]? Was I TACON [placed under tactical control]? Was I none of those things? Whose AO was I really going to work in? It was very confusing for the staff to try and sort all that out, but we sorted it out. I became OPCON to the 22d MEU. Col. Frank Mackenzie was the MEU commander and immediately carved out part of the FOB for us, immediately started planning three simultaneous combat operations to take place three and a half days after units were closing at Oruzgan, and units were only going to close at about two-thirds strength because company executive officers remained behind in Ghazni under the control of my battalion XO as we transitioned for 3/6 Marines Battalion from the 6th Regiment, transitioned Ghazni to them. So, company executive officers are under the command and control of my battalion XO. We were actually collapsing our FOBs in and around the Ghazni area and transitioning those operations to their counterparts from 3/6 Marines. In the meantime, company commanders with two to two and a half platoons of their combat power—no equipment at this point, really, and equipment, I'm talking about vehicular equipment and so forth—prepping for combat operations, and so really closely micromanaging the flow

of equipment. It would flow, some of it by ground convoy back to Bagram and then driven on lift, Heavy Equipment Transporters, down to Kandahar, and then either convoyed forward to us; some of it was driven to Bagram, picked up by the Marine C–130s and flown directly to Tarin Kowt; some of it convoyed down to Kandahar to convoy to us. I mean, we were really patching things together to get these three company-level combat operations going at the same time, commencing on the nineteenth of June. So, very limited planning and resourcing time, but you know, the MEU was doing everything they could to help us out, both in moving our stuff, giving us supplies that we were short on. And the complementary thing that I did in return was, they hadn't had hot chow in forever. I had cooks available. The cooks were like, "Sir, we're sitting around looking at these REFRs [refrigerated trucks]. There's frozen food in the REFRs. We've got some of our equipment here, and we've got some of the Marines' equipment. We can start providing hot chow for the entire FOB." So, about two days later, maybe the seventeenth of June, we started cooking hot meals at least once a day for the entire MEU and then whatever force we were added to.

DR. KOONTZ: **Why was it that your battalion was moved to Tarin Kowt?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, at the time, CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76] believed we were conducting decisive combat operations, decisive kinetic operations, to eliminate Taliban and al Qaeda presence in the Oruzgan Bowl, and I would say that the Oruzgan Bowl stretches from, really, Helmand all the way through Oruzgan into Zabol, Zabol, Paktika, into Pakistan itself. So, if you view that as a limited-mobility corridor for the enemy to move back and forth in, they were moving key personnel, supplies, back and forth in that area and almost using Oruzgan as a lower portion of the Hindu Kush support area. And the places we were looking for the insurgents, the Taliban, the al Qaeda operatives—in any place where there was an intersection of a village, at least a trail, some sort of food source, and some sort of water. So, in a general area, there's a place where the enemy might be conducting their refit and planning operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **And your battalion is OPCON to 22d MEU, so you're now out of the command structure for Task Force BRONCO?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, I left Task Force STONEWALL, which was 6th Marine Regiment, kind of just passed through my parent brigade headquarters, BRONCO Brigade from the 25th, and then moved up and was really OPCON to the MEU until the eleventh of July, tenth, eleventh of July, when I assumed responsibility for all of Oruzgan Province, and then on that day reverted back to parent BRONCO Brigade control.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And Task Force BOBCAT, that is just simply your battalion, correct?**

COL. SELLERS: At that point, Task Force BOBCAT was an artillery battery, my engineer platoon, my ADA [air defense artillery] platoon, all my organic companies. The only difference was, from the time I arrived in Ghazni, they required me to have a platoon's worth of soldiers in Kabul conducting quick reaction force and security missions for CFC-A [Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan], and try as we might to get that platoon back, I had to maintain a platoon in Kabul our entire thirteen-month deployment. When I arrived in Oruzgan, I had to split out another platoon-sized element to work with Special Forces out in the Deh Rawod Raoud area, and that was a commitment that one of my sister battalions had from 3d Brigade, but when Oruzgan became my AO, the JSOA [Joint Special Operations Area] that was part of that. I became responsible for it, so I provided the security platoon along with that Special Forces detachment that was there, actually two ODAs [Special Forces Operational Detachment-A]. So, really—and once we got to Tarin Kowt in Oruzgan, again, we were partnered side by side with the PRT, so the task force grew in size then to about thirteen hundred soldiers, give or take, as they added engineers to help construct the PRT's compound adjacent to FOB Ripley and then just—since we were that far out, I ran the C–130 airstrip, so I had to have refueling capabilities, rearming capabilities for helicopters, so I got a piece of the support battalion to come out, augmented with additional maintenance personnel, so that just kind of add on. And then, as we eventually built the Tarin Kowt-to-Kandahar road, I got vertical and horizontal construction engineers to not only build my FOB but construct the road.

DR. KOONTZ: **Now, before we get you started on your operations there, you mentioned that when you get to FOB Ripley, it's pretty austere, no air conditioning, not much infrastructure.**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, it was the surface of the moon when we got there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Take me on a little tour of FOB Ripley as it was when you arrived.**

COL. SELLERS: When we arrived, the first thing that you noticed—we did not land in C–130s. We landed in CH–53s, Marine Corps aircraft—two of which were non–mission capable and didn't move for the next two days after we landed—and you literally walked out, no joke, at least shin deep in a fine brown talcum powder dust. The MEU has an airfield control element with their air traffic controllers, and they run all their own—they looked at those soldiers, and the soldiers were the same color as their uniforms. So, you just felt like you were on the surface of the moon. Hesco barriers and guard towers were up. A lot of barbed wire, a

lot of concertina wire. If you can imagine a perimeter that is about five and a half miles in circumference, to include the dirt C–130 strip, and then to secure the key pieces of terrain to make sure that the Marine COC stayed secure, that's about all there was. There's the Marine COC; the support element; their maintenance; all tents; and then each one of the marines lived in their own individual pup tent contraption that the Marine Corps issues to them, and those were replaced by our own version of single-man tents, adjacent to that. Wooden latrines, burn-out latrines, stationed strategically so that it would support each of the different command and control nodes and the sleep areas for the soldiers, and then some out by the guard towers. And then two sets of gravity-fed showers—gravity-fed nonheated showers, but showers nonetheless—so the time that you wanted to take a shower was after the sun went down and the wind hadn't kicked up yet so that you didn't immediately get wet and get talcum powder dust back on you. Laundry service nonexistent, obviously. All those capabilities we eventually built into the location. Not long after we arrived, the Marines had a very small contingent of Afghan National Army, and then over time I had anywhere between a company and company-plus of ANA presence. So, the ANA would then—we built a compound within a compound for the Afghan National Army.

And, then, the PRT at the time was really like Fort Apache. I mean, here was the Alamo built inside the perimeter of the MEU FOB Ripley. At that point in time, the PRT commander and the PRT XO were much, much more concerned about their own physical security than they were doing anything external to the FOB. Very fortunate for us, the PRT chain of command changed out about two weeks after we arrived. So, had a very good relationship with Col. Bill Lafontaine and his executive officer, his civil affairs team chief, as we did away with the Alamo mentality and started getting his guys outside the gate paired with my guys to do very similar to what Steve Ford and I had done and go out in Ghazni. I did the security piece, and he did the civil affairs piece. Priority number one for us was getting gravel brought up from the riverbed, and it was huge boulder-sized gravel, but getting some of that down so that I could put my TOC [tactical operations center] tentage, which I borrowed from the brigade, and it was actually the brigade's ALOC [aerial line of communication] facility alternate operations center. That was on permanent loan to us now that we put over this rock so that we could minimize the amount of dust that would interfere with our computers and electronics and everything.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And then you mentioned that you go into operations pretty shortly after getting there. What kind of operations are you conducting?**

COL. SELLERS: We did an operation, ASBURY PARK II, which the Marines had done ASBURY PARK and had just finished it when we arrived. So, 1/6 BLT [Battalion Landing Team], Lt. Col. Asad Khan was the commander for that unit. He had just returned from a sweep down into the northern part of Zabol, extreme southern part of Oruzgan, northern part of Zabol, kind of a circular mission, and then returned back to FOB Ripley. ASBURY PARK II had the same objectives, but it was really driven by the kind of enemy contact that we had on how many of those objectives we'd actually get to, and that was a decision to be made between myself and Colonel Mackenzie, so on that particular—that was the main effort operation. ASBURY PARK II was main effort. I reinforced Bravo Company on that particular mission. Second mission, my Alpha Company was to go back out to Khas Oruzgan and reestablish what had formerly been an outlying Marine FOB, and we called that FOB Anaconda, and it was in the district center of Khas Oruzgan in the far northeast corner of Oruzgan. Eventually, in the latter stages of [Capt.] Andy Brosnan's mission to establish FOB Anaconda and our mission ASBURY PARK, I was moving north in Zabol Province as he was moving south, trying to squeeze the Taliban in between us. And then the third one, the third mission, was done by our Charlie Company. CADILLAC RANCH was, I think, the name of that one, and that was really more of an establish presence, determine whether or not there is Taliban, al Qaeda presence in the area that they've established, and then transition to a medical MEDCAP [medical civil action program] operation, treating the people, delivering some foodstuffs, delivering some needed supplies, and things like that. It's more of a just, kind of, area familiarization, kind of drawing attention away from ASBURY PARK and ANACONDA, and really all of those were setting up the MEU's last operation, which would go off into the west, western portions of Oruzgan.

All during this time frame, because of their limited mobility and the limited numbers of marines that they had available—I mean, that's why we were added to the MEU, to significantly beef up the numbers out in Oruzgan—voter registration had not taken place in the majority of the districts in Oruzgan; so one of my first missions as I took over was, as we're getting to the end date for voter registration in preparation for the national elections, get out and get more people registered to vote, make that available, and we really facilitated UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan] in moving around and allowing voter registration centers to open up.

DR. KOONTZ: **That's a pretty wide variety of mission requirements there.**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, we developed kind of a buzzword that we called "flipping the switch," and flipping the switch was kind of

our code word for transitioning immediately to kinetic combat operations if we had to because, you know, getting people to register to vote, I don't think you would've seen that in our training plan as we got ready to prepare to go to what we thought was kinetic combat operations. So, initially we would conduct cordon and search operations or clearing operations or blocking operations in an area and link up with the village elder. Between company commander platoon leader, sometimes even squad leaders, "Hey, what's the enemy activity been like in this area? What have you seen? What have you had?"—you know, what are the problems, and then transition to an operation where we would transition to voter registration, transition to treating animals, transition to treating people, providing maybe food to some of the folks that needed it the most, and clothing. I mean, any civic operations that we could, preparing to lay a contract with a local Afghan contractor to dig a well, increase help with irrigation, provide tools for better farming, and then nest that with operations to bring the PRT in, where they brought obviously more CERP dollars, USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] dollars, when we could start talking about education; and we could talk about medical clinics; we could talk about good governance, how to be a good district chief and how the district chief should interface with the provincial government.

But one of the challenges we had was Jan Muhammad Khan, who was the provincial governor of Oruzgan, was—we termed him kind of our "good bad guy," an unsavory character that you kind of felt like you needed a shower after you worked with him, but he was the guy that was in charge and he was the guy that was in power—a family friend of President [Hamid] Karzai, from the same tribe as President Karzai, the Popalzai tribe, not recognized necessarily as the leader of the Popalzai tribe, but definitely a guy that had his own private militia and was powerful in the province of Oruzgan. And you know, one of the missions that we immediately took on kind of happened by accident, but we figured it out that he's surrounded by a lot of armed guys—and I say kind of by accident, but on purpose, we stumbled across a cache that supplied his private militia, and I seized it and I destroyed it, and over the next three or four days—this is when I owned the province now, after 11 July—I hit successive caches, all of which belonged to his private militia. I took all the weapons, destroyed them all, and really demonstrated to him—I think he was confused as to how I was finding these things and getting to him, but I was decreasing his power, and that's when we could start the dialogue of "Well, you don't need a private army. That's what you've got Afghan National Police for. That's what you've got the Afghan National Army for. What you need to concentrate on…." And this was a long-term process, and we never got there with him, was "Stop being a good Taliban killer"—which, he's a pretty good *muj* [*mujaheddin*], I think,

and least his stories from the Soviet days and his stories of the exploits with President Karzai as they rid the country of the Taliban. Now, he needs to concentrate on being a good governor, and between Bill Lafontaine and I, our job was to coach, teach, mentor him into being a better governor, and we—Bill did that primarily. I did that for security issues, and we used the Department of State rep to try and further that along, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **How was it that you were finding those successive caches?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, part of it is I had what I called the governor's liaison team, something that the Marines had established, and I wrung my hands for a long time on how I was going to resource this, because the Marines resourced it with a major, two captains, a couple senior NCOs, and a couple marines, and I just didn't have the bodies to do that. So, we handpicked our civil affairs officer. One of them—I had two majors and a captain. I took one of them, took one of my staff officers, an NCO from my staff, and two soldiers, and they went and lived inside the governor's compound, and their job was to monitor what was going on throughout the day in the governor's compound, meet and greet, keep track of who came in and out, and just contact from the people. People would say "Hey, do you know about this?" or "I know where a bunch of weapons are," and befriending those individuals—and again, small rewards for those kinds of individuals that provided us useful information. A lot of times one piece of useful information would lead to bigger pieces of useful information. But, as I say, there is an aspect of luck to discovering the first one, and then intelligence, probably coupled with a little more luck, led to about four in a row, when it took out some pretty significant caches of weapons, heavy weapons and munitions, and took them away from his private militia.

DR. KOONTZ: **Were you there when he was finally removed, or was that after you ...**

COL. SELLERS: No, that was after I left. But one of the last things that General Olson asked as the outgoing CJTF-76 commander was—he was obviously going to have an opportunity to speak with President Karzai—"Who in the provincial officials and district organizations do you think needs to go?" Bill Lafontaine and I, in coordination with the Department of State rep, put our heads together and wrote a two-page information paper on when we thought the time would be right for replacement of Governor Jan Mohammed and, frankly, we had an op plan we called Op Plan ZULU. If we had to remove Governor Mohammed immediately from office, we thought there might be some sort of armed response to that, so we had taken the time to figure out how we were going to lock down the city of Tarin

Kowt, which is the provincial capital, in order to facilitate that forcible transition, I guess it would be. It was certainly an op plan that we did not want to have to execute. But, you know, over time he did change. He became a better governor, but by no means would I term him, certainly by our standards, a good governor, but you know, getting out and meeting with the people in the province. And there were, a couple were natural disasters that were—one group was snowed in in the Bahguchar Valley in the extreme northeast. They had been snowed in since October, and we flew the governor in my command and control helicopter out, and we brought in two Chinooks of mixed U.S. and Afghan National Army soldiers to bring water and food and warm clothing to these people. We brought the governor so the governor could talk to the village elders. I mean, it was a huge success because they'd never seen the governor before. We had the same experience in the spring with floods along the Helmand River valley. Took him out, and rescued a number of people off islands in the middle of the river, and then he spent probably three or four days out there talking with village elders and trying to coordinate or to find out what people needed, and him working through his reconstruction minister and us working through NGOs and our own system to provide what people needed. So, he got better, but still our "good bad guy."

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You mentioned a while ago the voter registration efforts. What was your task force's contribution to the 2004 election?**

COL. SELLERS: I think pretty significant, in that we probably increased the voter registration in the province several hundred percent over where it was when we arrived in June. So, a large majority of the eligible voters in Oruzgan were actually registered to vote, and then when you look at the turnout from the elections, darn close to 85 to 90 percent of the people registered actually came and voted, and that was despite the fact that a number of people with voter registration cards had been killed. Some of the UNAMA workers were attacked, ambushed, assassinated in their voter registration efforts. I provided two of my battle captains, two of my planners, to UNAMA down in Kandahar to assist in planning and resourcing how we would conduct the elections and collect ballots back from the province of Oruzgan, and they spent a week down in Kandahar, working side by side with the UNAMA planners on where would maybe be the best locations: "How should we get the ballots back and forth? Who and how should those ballots be secured once they're completed?" And again, our direct contribution on election and postelection days was almost a roving presence, where you could respond to calls for assistance to any number of specific voter polling locations, but working with the governor and his district chiefs and the district police chiefs, again through the

company commanders. Immediate security for the polling site was Oruzgan Afghan National Police. External to that was kind of a combination between some of the governor's still-private militia, Afghan National Police, UNAMA security workers, who were almost an outer ring to that polling site, and then beyond them, connected by Thuraya phones, were really the U.S., Coalition, and Afghan National Army forces.

So, in a couple instances, a polling site was attacked to try and discourage voters from coming in. The immediate Afghan National Police called the UNAMA workers on a Thuraya phone, Thuraya phone to my company commander: "Hey, we're being attacked." This location responded to the attack, looked for, eliminated the attack, and the poll reopened forty-five minutes later. A couple different instances where IEDs were planted on the roads, discovered by locals—again, through the Thuraya phones, reported—Bravo Company moved to a different location, secured the IED, and polling continued. So, I would say elections were a major success.

DR. KOONTZ: **Who is it that's doing this voting? What were your impressions of the people of Oruzgan?**

COL. SELLERS: Oh, I mean, the ballot was picture ballots, so most of the folks—a high percentage of the Afghan population is illiterate to begin with, so the majority of the people out in Oruzgan, one of the remote areas, a lot of them illiterate. A lot of them probably voted by rumor, reputation. A lot of them voted, probably, by, you know, what the mullah in the mosque was reporting—a lot of dialogue inside the mosque from the mullahs. We made a concerted effort over time to befriend and co-opt good mullahs so that our message was getting out in addition to the Taliban message to the Afghan people. It wasn't us standing up preaching in front of somebody, telling them what they should believe and what they should think. It was somebody they're familiar with and somebody they know extolling the virtues of a centralized government in Afghanistan.

So, I think a lot of them, you know, it's by hearsay, by reputation, "I recognize President Karzai," but you know, postelection, those that voted wanted to show that they'd voted. They would point to a picture of President Karzai: "Karzai good, Bush good." But again, you had to prove to a lot of people why government mattered to them at all, because you know, they're remote people. The central government, at least to this point, in a lot of locations, had not been a provider to them, and they didn't really understand or see a benefit to having a centralized government: "I've raised my sheep and goats and vegetables on this piece of land for hundreds of years and not had a central government. Why do I need one now?" But the education aspects, the medical improvements where functioning clinics,

functioning schools were in place, they start to see a change in the amount of commerce in their bazaar—products and services available, just the physical appearance of the bazaar. They made those connections. We helped make those connections for them, that "Hey, this is because you have a stable government because they're providing money to staff the clinic. They're providing money to construct the road, money to provide school supplies for the education of the children."

DR. KOONTZ: **What major operations did you conduct after the elections?**

COL. SELLERS: There's, I think—I don't know the exact number, but those are color coded by company—no, time periods, I think. Yeah, they're color coded by time periods, so if you look at the green ones, the green ones are MEU operations, of three simultaneous MEU operations, and then the ones—area development, we're kind of—how do we figure out what's going on in this area? BOBCAT FREEDOM and BOBCAT FREEDOM II, those are post … BOBCAT FREEDOM II, II and III are all postelections, so there's probably, I don't know, thirty-five, forty different major operations that lasted anywhere from three to ten days long.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. So, these probably also sort of vary in purpose as well, like those earlier ...**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, they all start—one of the things we did is we produced these interesting little cards that are for the commanders. They've got bigger size of these, but it lists tasks and purposes that the graphics—and one of the things that we had to be careful of is wording that indicated strictly kinetic combat operations was not approved by CJTF-76. So, I guess, maybe in sort of a deceptive way to get around that, the first time we had an operation kicked back because it was too kinetic in its communication, I said, "Okay. Strip the kinetic verbiage off in the task and purpose and leave the graphics on the card so that a clear graphic symbol on the map still tells the company commander what I want him to do. I want him to clear the area of Taliban or al Qaeda forces." But the overall purpose of the mission has a civil affairs focus to it, and again, that's where the flipping the switch comes into play. If we went into a location with no specific intelligence on an individual or individuals, then immediately it was a prepared posture for kinetic operations; but as soon as nothing happened, like if we weren't attacked or shot at on infil, then we immediately transitioned to engaging the village elder, assessing the schools, assessing agriculture, assessing the police presence in that particular area, and going to projects, providing food, providing tools, whatever it might be. So, every operation we did had a kinetic and a nonkinetic component.

Now, operations where we had specific intelligence on individuals, obviously much more focused on initial aggressive posture, but focused on specific targets: "I'm looking for Mullah Abdullah," and we gained as much information on Mullah Abdullah as we could. And I'm just pulling that name out of a hat, but if I had a picture of him, everybody would have his picture. If I had a description, everybody would have the description. If I knew generally what compound he was in, in addition to the map marked with a red dot—not listed as an objective, but as just a red area of interest—there might be a piece of imagery, a picture that would show what the surrounding area might look like. I know I've got one. But that would be distributed, you know, circled as the major objective, where he could be in one of these, what looks like seven or eight compounds but on the ground it turns into, like, fifteen compounds because they all latch together. So, here's the guy Mullah Abdullah we're looking for. He could be anywhere in this area, and we can go in.

We eventually developed the TTP of an aerial reaction force where I kept a scout squad under the command and control of either my S-3 or one of my experienced assistant S-3s so that as we flew in to cordon and search one of these specific intel-driven objectives, anybody that squirted out to the sides, the aerial reaction force would fly in behind, sit down, sort out the individuals on the ground, and then either detain or release those particular individuals. Or, a number of times, we'd keep a team on the ground to just collect the squirters, as we called them, in one location until we could sort out what was actually taking place on the ground. And that's why the number of operations is limited, because we had limited EOD, limited sensitive site exploitation, limited in tactical questioning interrogation teams. So, I'd surge those individuals to different companies, and they might finish one operation in one location, be immediately picked up, have a day in between to do the next operation with another company.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, we're looking here at this map, and there're thirty-three different operations. Do any of these stick out in your mind as being particularly effective or particularly difficult, or just for some reason you have a strong memory of?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, one that I'll talk to is Operation LANDGRAB. It was an interesting operation. I did not really have clearance to go out and really establish FOB Cobra. LANDGRAB was really focused initially on voter registration in the extreme northwestern portions of Oruzgan. The hidden intent for us was to establish FOB Cobra, find an empty compound in an area where I knew the enemy to be operating, and I had many discussions with Colonel Mackenzie about this, on

where I needed to be to effectively manage AO Bobcat, i.e. Oruzgan Province. So, we did the voter registration—very successful, although the UNAMA voter registration force was ambushed and a couple of their workers were killed. On exfil, when we came to a town, several compounds in the middle of a dry riverbed, the company might have stayed, did not return. They were there less than twenty-four hours when they received their first attack by the Taliban, and that remained a contentious, hot area for quite some time. The first two soldiers we had killed were killed by an IED strike at the end of a convoy resupplying an FOB Cobra, and then there was a series of operations after that which were specifically designed to tame and rid this particular area of Taliban presence.

And I'm looking for the right—oh, Operation OUTLAW, 23–27 October '04—two soldiers were killed, one soldier blinded permanently, and a platoon sergeant injured severely enough that he returned to the States—took place just a couple days prior to that. So, went back out specifically—and again, a company-plus size operation, so I borrowed soldiers from Bravo Company to go out and reinforce Charlie Company. I did a split TAC operation where my S-3 controlled one end of the valley, I controlled the other end of the valley, and it was a pretty dedicated series of operations from then on. You can see 9–13 November, and then there should be another one in the November time frame where one operation after another, and each time they became less kinetic at the outset and more civil affairs focused. But each time, all three of those operations, very, very informed by detailed intelligence on what facilitators and what Taliban forces might actually be there.

DR. KOONTZ: **All throughout the interview, you've mentioned the Taliban. Who are the bad guys in AO Bobcat?**

COL. SELLERS: The bad guys in AO Bobcat, out in Oruzgan? Really, strictly the Taliban.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you're not getting very much al Qaeda or HIG?**

COL. SELLERS: Almost no HIG. Al Qaeda, some linkages, potentially, between the extreme northern portions of Zabol and southeastern portion of northeast Oruzgan, the area that we saw, these valleys in here, that there might be movement between key figures. I know in the Zabol Province, where 2/35 Cacti, [Lt. Col.] Scott McBride, was operating, a number of foreign fighters there. In my engagements in ASBURY PARK down in this area, I think we encountered, although did not capture them, foreign fighters in that area, as well. So, a little bit of al Qaeda, but primarily Taliban guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about fighting the Taliban. What kind of tactics did they use, and what kind of tactics did you use to counter them?**

COL. SELLERS: Well, one of the things that was spot on from Grau's analysis is it's almost this inherited ambush points. You know, I was personally ambushed on Operation ASBURY PARK in a location that was really kind of a good exfil route for the ambushing force to leave the ambush site, but it was really a poor ambush site. There were several locations along the route that we had to travel in and out of this particular valley that would've been better ambush spots and probably would've resulted in casualties to our side. But in this particular instance, we suffered no casualties—you know, dings and dents, bullet holes in vehicles—but really did damage to the ambushing force until such point as they used their exfil route, and the exfil route was a defile that they were able to move on to the backside of a hill mass, a small mountain, that led to another village. So, if we were going to employ any sort of ordnance that had a high circle probability of error, you run the risk of maybe killing the ambush force, but also maybe killing some of the civilian population in that particular village. So, that's why I say in the exfil route, pretty smart, but the ambush site? The only good thing that protected them, it was uphill. So, in order to pursue the ambush force, we had to move uphill with our ANA squads and with our infantry squads to get to them, so that offered them some element of protection, but fields of fire and chokepoint was not there. So, not very tactical savvy in that respect.

Another key aspect was you can always count on, once you started hearing weapons fire, that they'd pretty much shoot what amounted to a magazine, maybe two, of ammunition and then they would melt away and disappear. RPGs [rocket propelled grenades], many times, were fired inaccurately and then if they—sometimes, if they were accurate, in their haste to fire multiple rounds out of one or two weapons, they would not remove the arming pins, so the round would impact where they shot but would just splinter apart because the round was not armed. Now, if it was a thin-skinned vehicle or obviously an individual, it's going to go through them. I had no casualties to RPG rounds, direct-fire RPG rounds, but I did have, at least on one of our communications vehicles, where multiple RPG rounds had gone through the wood and just splintered apart on the inside because they were not armed, so they didn't detonate.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, these are typically just kind of pray-and-spray attacks?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah, they were just—and I think the exception to the IEDs, because the IEDs became more sophisticated

over time. And even those, a lot of times, malfunctioned because it's not necessarily the hardcore Taliban organizer that is conducting the attack. They've paid somebody how much ever money it takes to get some money to perpetrate the attack. Why? Because they need the money. So, that complicates the process. You're not necessarily always looking at the attacker. Although we would detain the attackers or, best case, kill the attackers, I guess, maybe, what we're really looking for is the organizer and the facilitators. But they did appear many times to be poorly selected tactical sites to conduct their attacks—poorly executed, and hastily executed, primarily so that they could move away to come back and attack again.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have a standard ROE [rules of engagement]?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah. I mean, there was a standard listing of rules of engagement that was very well understood, I think, by the soldiers. And that was one thing that … routinely, as variations in the ROE came down, or even if there weren't new additions or changes to the ROE, we conducted periodic training to make sure that we were engaging the right people and, if necessary, killing the right people and not causing civilian casualties. But we did have some incidents that required investigation.

DR. KOONTZ: **How well do you think that your battalion balanced kinetic and nonkinetic operations?**

COL. SELLERS: I think pretty well. It's difficult to judge, though. I mean, you sit around and second-guess yourself all the time. But given the difficulty of collecting—and I hate this word, I guess—actionable intelligence, there's a lot of dots to connect before you could go after a specific individual or group of individuals, make all the right connections to say, "Yup, that's the guy that we want, and here's the reason we want that guy," but I think it was a pretty good balance.

You could see the difference. I pressured the governor hard before we left to put good district chiefs in charge, and we measured that by satisfaction of the populace in that district with the policies and how the district chief was conducting his operations. Same thing with the police. We provided a number of training opportunities where we conducted operations with them to try and bring them along. Again, were the police taking bribes? Were they detaining people or putting up illegal checkpoints just to get money for themselves? Or, were they actually going out investigating a complaint by somebody? Medical clinics and schools? I think those went a long ways. Or, medical doctors in conjunction with the PRTs. They did a lot of good work getting the money to not go into somebody's pocket, but go into the actual clinic and doctors and medicine themselves.

But you know, then after we left and turned over our AO to somebody else, you kept hearing about increased resurgence of Taliban: "They're preparing for and executing more aggressive and more frequent operations. They're taking over district centers." So you know, you kind of wonder, "Well, did I do such a good job, or did I not do such a good job?" I know that of the guys we put away, 90 percent of them were detained for extended periods of time, so that kind of gives me the feeling that we focused on the right guys, collected the right evidence, and then either killed or captured the right guys. Very few were turned loose as just "Hey, you got the wrong guy." So, we kind of used that as a measure. More time—you wish you would've had more time to do these kinds of things. Twelve, thirteen months is not a long period of time. Just when you know the personalities and know the area and can anticipate the way somebody's going to react, then it becomes time to transition to somebody else. So, I guess in hindsight we've second-guessed a lot of the things we've done.

Certainly, one of the aspects of Oruzgan—and I think Helmand Province is similar—is, as the Afghan government's policies on drugs become formalized, the resurgence in Taliban certainly is connected with the resurgence in drug lord activity. Everyone would like to believe that the Taliban outlawed opium and opium was not produced in the years that the Taliban was in control of Afghanistan. That's horseshit. A lot of the Taliban's money comes from opium production. So, as we have an impact on the opium growers, the opium transporters, the producers, we're affecting the Taliban's livelihood; we're affecting the drug lords' livelihood; and, you know, the first time you get shot at by anybody, that now becomes your enemy. So, a drug lord starts feeling his means of support and his livelihood slipping away, he's going to strike out at whoever's doing that. So, I think it's kind of a combination of the two of those things.

DR. KOONTZ: **You kind of touched on this before when you were talking about the detention rates of the people that you're bringing in. What kind of metrics do you use to determine success or—failure's probably too strong a word—but nonsuccess in an unconventional war like this?**

COL. SELLERS: There were two products that … kind of a combination. We leveraged a few things that we thought were indicators of enduring success, and eventually the brigade came up with two—it's kind of like a PowerPoint picture that you put bullets on, but nested with that was an Excel spreadsheet that measured good governance or reconstruction activity, I think it is, and the other one—yeah, one was a developmental assessment, and the other was a security assessment. It

started out that initially I was filling out both of those, and I filled those out by pulsing the company commanders. There's a series of metrics in the Excel spreadsheet that—you know, how many *shura* meetings have there been, how many—and most of them are quantifiable. They're not subjective, kind of touchy-feely things. So, company commanders would fill those out, and company commanders filled out both of those spreadsheets for development and for security.

Eventually, Bill Lafontaine, the PRT commander, and I cooperated on these, where I would do a developmental assessment, he would do a developmental assessment; we would put the two together, and then send that forward to the brigade headquarters. We'd do the same thing on the security. He would give me his impressions overall on security, and I would take the detailed input from company commanders. We'd compare the two, discuss it, come to an agreement, and send that forward. And, you know, under the developmental assessment, what we would list is we would list current initiatives that were going to move one of these areas from a stoplight chart of red, amber, green from, say, amber to green or from red to amber or something like that. So, I think we tried to use as quantifiable, objective criteria to make those evaluations as we could. I hope I answered the question.

DR. KOONTZ: **When you left Oruzgan in April 2005, you get a year there, which isn't a whole lot of time. Were there any differences that you noticed?**

COL. SELLERS: Yeah. You know, when you looked at the Tarin Kowt area itself, the bazaar area had changed drastically, not only in its physical appearance, but just kind of the shadiness of the vendors that made up the bazaar. A lot of that had to do with low-level CERP projects that I initiated, and then larger CERP projects tied to USAID projects that the PRT was bringing. You know, we were eventually going to pave the bazaar. I graveled it initially as a low-level CERP project so that in the wintertime it wasn't sloppy muddy. The police traffic circle in the center of town had always been a place where criminals and Taliban, at least according to the governor, were killed and hung out for display. Now it was a two-story, like a police precinct headquarters in the middle of the traffic circle, brightly painted so the Afghans thought it looked nice. Checkpoints had gone up at key locations where the Afghan National Police could monitor traffic flow in places where people had historically been held up or robbed or something. I mean, again, those were almost like district police or precinct houses where the police were, and they stationed out of to do their patrolling.

The clinics were vastly different. Schools were vastly different. And when I say a clinic's vastly different, staffing, at least on a volunteer basis, of a trained doctor or a trained

nurse being there at predictable hours during the week with medications or other items to help the people. In the past, yeah, it's a clinic, but there was a lock on the door and nobody was ever there. Schools—difficult in the Pashtun areas to convince everyone that the girls should attend school, but I would say a majority of the males, young males, were in school. So, those are the kinds of tangible things. The road from Tarin Kowt to Kandahar being worked from Kandahar north and from Tarin Kowt south, not long after we left was finished, completed, and paved, and I've got to think that has improved commerce significantly in the Tarin Kowt area. Farmers now have an easier way to get crops to market and things like that.

The president's brother, Hamid Karzai's brother Qayum Karzai, runs an IGO [international governmental organization], Afghans for a Civil Society, and we had, through Colonel Pedersen, inspired him to come out and work on establishing a provincial *shura* where the districts, the district chiefs, district *shuras* would provide representatives to the provincial *shura*—very similar to the way we bring grievances to the county seat where the county takes them to the state, trying to inspire them to do the same thing so that the provincial *shura* is almost an extension of the governor's administration. They take input from the governor. So, the Department of State rep, Qayum Karzai, Afghans for a Civil Society, the PRT commander, myself, I think, felt that that was moving in the right direction. They were beginning to understand the initial stages of their form of democracy—certainly didn't look like ours, didn't function like ours, but that's kind of what it was, and even as kind of shady as we still felt the governor was, when we first arrived you couldn't do anything without greasing his palm or providing contracts to some of his cronies. But you dealt with him only, and that was it. As we departed, me first and, I think, Bill Lafontaine about a month, month and a half after I did, the governor's cabinet of ministers, two deputy governors, and assorted judiciary, regional, rural development, education ministers, were not only being paid on a fairly reasonably frequent basis, but you didn't have to go to the governor to always get approval. You could go directly to one of those ministers with an idea, or he would come to us with an idea on "Hey, we would like to do this in the province." In one of the districts, and obviously there had already been some sort of meeting between the governor and his ministers, if you will, on what needed to be done. So, I think those are tangible, observable improvements, but certainly not to our standards. If you wanted to compare U.S. rights and democracy freedoms to Afghan style, they're still totally different. A lot of that's cultural.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, you've got almost a year in Oruzgan. When the SETAF [Southern European Task Force] guys come in**

to replace you, what kind of guidance or what kind of experience or advice can you pass on to them?

COL. SELLERS: Very similar to what we had viewed in the 10th Mountain and, before them, the 82d [Airborne Division]—AARs, formal AARs, written out and published. We provided the same thing to 173d [Airborne Brigade], SETAF. It was obvious that the SETAF commander had done a lot of research and development of his folks on insurgency. There's a published document that he had. I had all my guys read it so that, hey, when we're talking, we're speaking the same language.

But, again, our disappointment was the battalion that was designated to come in directly behind and replace me at FOB Ripley never came. We started into transition. We're two and a half, three days into our left-seat/right-seat ride, exchange of equipment, and everything else when the decision was made by SETAF, then the new CJTF-76 commander, that "Hey, we're not going to backfill the battalion out in Oruzgan. Instead, we're going to put a SOF ODB [Special Forces Operational Detachment-B] out there and beef up the number of ODAs with an ANA battalion"—an ANA battalion which really amounts to an ANA battalion-minus by the time personnel fill trickles down. Had an ODA at every one of our FOBs with about company-minus of ANA personnel. So, all of the preparatory work, e-mail exchanges, visits that 173d—504th [Infantry Regiment], in specific—had done to backfill us came to nothing because they were used in another area, I think, primarily RC East, at that point, for SETAF's version of kinetic combat operations. So, I think, even despite their best efforts, the already struggling concept we had of manning and staying in touch with the entire province of Oruzgan, now we're replaced by a unit that's roughly a third of the size that we were. I think the ODB SOF forces were challenged to keep pace with everything, and I think that some things may have backslid because of it. I know they had good successes with the ANA, and I think that they probably still are. I think all of our FOBs, my last check, are still operational in some form or another.

That was difficult, but I think we tried to provide as much detailed information on "Hey, here's the enemy as we see it; here's the historic engagements; here are the IED contacts over time; here are the direct fire contacts over time; here's the electronic monitoring spectrum that we've seen over time; here are the projects that we've instituted, the ones that are completed, the ones that are still in the works, the ones that are planned for the future; here are the good guys as we see them; here are the good bad guys as we see them; and here's just the flat-out bad guys." All that information that we had started to transition with the 504th, certainly we turned it all over to the ODB, but, again, by the time

that decision was made, there's maybe a week's worth of transition between us and the ODB, and they certainly weren't staffed to secure the large FOB, and, I mean, we were robbing Peter to pay Paul, to keep that security going anyway. So, the security issues that they had, and then trying to conduct operations, they were greatly challenged by that, I think.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, what happens to Colonel Sellers and his battalion when you leave Afghanistan?**

COL. SELLERS: You know, we came back, and four guys KIA, which is when compared to some other units not significant; four individuals without legs; one guy that's blind; another soldier recently had both of his feet amputated from a mission that ended just a week before we were to redeploy. You know, we came back by company, a reinforced company. The battalion headquarters element was the last to return. Great welcome from the division, great welcome from families, but, again, we were the last unit to return from our division. The 2d Brigade had been back for awhile from Iraq. We were the last unit to come back from 3d Brigade. So, in some sense, it was a little bit anticlimactic, but soldiers were able to take a full thirty days of leave, spend time with their families, either on island or off island. And then, you know, they went through a small reintegration process immediately when they got back, before we went on leave; went on leave, and then came back and continued the reintegration process, which was needed. I mean, I personally felt that there was about a three-month period where you were coming back out of the environment and readjusting to normal life as you knew it before the deployment, and I think that's probably consistent with other units and other deployments.

But then, you know, it became "Let's transition and prepare for the change of command," which was going to take place towards the end of June in '05. And then a month and a half later, sadly, on a lot of accounts, as part of transformation, 2/5 Infantry ceased to exist. It was deactivated, colors folded, and it was transformed into 3/4 Cav as what was then known as a RSTA [reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition] battalion in 3d Brigade. I guess immediately after the leave period, soldiers began to feel the effects of that. I pretty much made—unless there was a compelling reason for a soldier to PCS [make a permanent change of station transfer] outside of that ninety-day stabilization window—pretty much everybody stayed, but as soon as that ninety-day window was over, major portions of the battalion were transferred to 2d Brigade or to other units as we were making room for the new MOS [military occupational specialty] and the transition to the 3/4 Cav. The 3/4 Cav, I think, is about a third the size of the standard infantry battalions in numbers of personnel—300-some versus 750-some—and that caused, I think, soldiers a

lot of problems, because here was the unit that they had trained with, gone to major operational deployment with, lost friends with, and now it's not there. It's like it didn't exist, in some sense. So, I think that added to some of the adjustment problems that some of the soldiers had, some of the leaders. I think some of the leaders actually stayed behind. Like, my S-3 became the XO for the unit. The guy that was my XO became the deputy IG [inspector general] for the division and things like that.

DR. KOONTZ: **When did you leave that position?**

COL. SELLERS: Change of command was, what, 26 June? So, I left the command thirty-six months later, and I did a week's worth of leave on island. But the day our vehicle drove off of Schofield Barracks, I didn't go back, and unless somebody initiated contact with me from the battalion, I never went back to say, "Hey, how's it going? How are things now?" It just didn't feel right doing that. But it was certainly a huge change, both for me and my family, to no longer be responsible for anywhere between 750 to 1,350 folks and their families. So, while the huge gorilla came off your back, you missed that sense of importance and responsibility, the great opportunity command gives you. So, while it was great that the phone wasn't ringing at three in the morning, you kind of wish sometimes that the phone was ringing at three in the morning: "Hey, one of your guys is in trouble downtown."

DR. KOONTZ: **If I could ask a personal question, and this may be related to what we're talking about or may not, what's the deal with your bracelet on your right wrist?**

COL. SELLERS: Those are the names of the soldiers that were killed. And I wear that all the time, and it's still tough to think about. These are guys that were doing their job, and they were doing a job that I told them to do. And I can't put all the guys that were injured on there but, you know, you feel a sense of responsibility, then and now, for what happened there. I still talk to the families. One of the families … Jacob Fleischer's father is a colonel in the reserves. I invited him and his wife to the change of command. They flew all the way to Hawaii to go to the change of command. So, it never leaves, and I guess maybe I induce that, but I think it's important. There's a cost, and that's one of the things I try to spread to people here at the War College. I mean, I was an instructor at the War College in joint military operations for eighteen months before I became a student. All the great think pieces we do and theory and everything else that we banter around in the classroom, there's a cost to getting that wrong, and there's a cost even if you get it right. We're in a dangerous business. These certainly aren't the first four soldiers that I've seen killed in twenty-two years of active service, but I feel personally responsible for

these guys, and I don't think that I or anybody else should forget the sacrifice that those guys put forward willingly to do what I asked them to do. So, that's why I still wear it. I certainly didn't lose as many soldiers as some commanders have, or units have, but one's too many. But that's the nature of what we do.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir, I've taken up two hours of your time. What else would you like to add?**

COL. SELLERS: I think it's a great privilege to command in the first place. I think it's an even greater privilege to serve the soldiers and their families in an operational deployment like what we did in OEF. Done it twice now in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, OEF, and, if I stick around long enough, I'll probably get asked to do something again. It's important, and I think—we don't always get to choose how or when we're going to get engaged to do these things, but we've got to be ready to do them and do them to the best of our ability, and that's what I've enjoyed about my time in the battalion. So, I guess that's the only thing that I would add to this.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, sir. With that, we'll go ahead and end the interview. I want to thank you for taking the time to do this.**



Lt. Col. Timothy P. McGuire *served as Commander, 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade, Southern European Task Force (Airborne), Combined Joint Task Force-76, which operated in Regional Command East from April 2005 to March 2006. He was interviewed at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 22 February 2007. Colonel McGuire took command of his battalion while it was deployed in Tuz, Iraq, after its original commanding officer was wounded and evacuated out of theater. The battalion conducted counterinsurgency operations in concert with Iraqi security forces before returning to Italy for a year of refit and training prior to its deployment to Afghanistan. Colonel McGuire describes the local conditions and government in Paktika Province, where the battalion was stationed within Regional Command East, and discusses the battalion's successful cooperation with the provincial government to rebuild the Bermel District through construction projects and training of local officials and police. He comments on the command structure in Regional Command East, the battalion's coordination with Special Operations Forces, the instability of Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, and the integration of small-scale air assault operations with reconstruction and humanitarian missions. Throughout the interview, Colonel McGuire stresses the importance of coordination and cooperation with the Afghan government and military in his unit's successful counterinsurgency efforts.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, this is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the twenty-second**

of February 2007, and I'm interviewing Colonel Tim McGuire about his experiences as the battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76], in Afghanistan. We're at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where Colonel McGuire is currently a student, right?

LT. COL. McGUIRE: That is correct.

DR. KOONTZ: **First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yes, I am.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have objections with Army or public researchers using this information, as long as it's cited correctly?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I do not.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Thank you, sir. When did you take command of your battalion?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I took command of the battalion on the third of November 2003 in Tuz, Iraq.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was the situation behind that? Were you already stationed with the battalion, or did you have to go there?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: No, I had been pre-positioned in Italy, and I had just finished twelve months in Afghanistan. I arrived in Italy and served for the ninety days as part of the Joint Task Force LIBERIA. As soon as the joint task force stood down, my predecessor in command, Lt. Col. Harry [D.] Tunnell, was wounded in an ambush, so I was brought forward to take command of the battalion.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. How long was the battalion in Iraq after that?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We remained in Iraq for another four months. We redeployed to Italy at the end of February.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did anything happen during that three-month period in Iraq that was notable?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I was very proud of our battalion and the brigade's full-spectrum approach to fighting and winning a counterinsurgency. And I think we did a very effective job of building Iraqi capacity and helping enable the Iraqi leadership to govern. As a result, the insurgency did not gain traction in our portion of Iraq. We also incorporated what I had learned in Afghanistan in terms of the standing up of the

Afghan National Army [ANA]. The model worked well in Iraq with the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and helped us to develop a new institution which had the trust and confidence of the Iraqi populace. We took that model, then, with us to Afghanistan, when we deployed there a year later, with similar positive results.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, your battalion was working with the Iraqi National Army?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yeah. We owned the battle space. Each of the companies owned battle space, and they realized to be successful, they had to take a full-spectrum approach. So, they daily interacted with their police counterparts. We stood up the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps battalions, which included working with civic leaders to recruit volunteers, equipping those volunteers, and then training them. We quickly realized the most effective ops were joint and combined operations with our Iraqi counterparts. So, the soldiers got to see the importance of working with a partnership of equals in Iraq, and we applied that lesson to our actions in Afghanistan the following year.

DR. KOONTZ: **What was it like to take command of a battalion in theater like that, after a previous commander had been wounded? Was there any kind of acclimation or transition process?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: It was a little daunting, being on the aircraft going down there to take command eight months earlier than I expected. But I actually think it was much easier to take command in combat, because on Day 1, that was my battalion. I knew I needed to get out and focus in on the mission and take care of my subordinates. It made it much easier for me to come back and prepare the battalion for Afghanistan because I had been able to live and fight with them in Iraq, that I had established my credibility with them, and vice versa. So, while we were coming back for only a one-year reset and train-up, we knew we would be ready. We knew, as a team, where we needed to go.

DR. KOONTZ: **Once you got out of Iraq okay, then you go back to Italy, and you said there's a reset period. What transpired during that reset period?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We went back and had a week of half-days where we executed reintegration classes, and then we sent the battalion out on thirty days of block leave, which was fantastic. It really gave everybody an opportunity to reconnect with themselves, with their families. In hindsight, when we got back from Afghanistan, we actually were able to wait a couple more weeks before we took the block leave, which I thought was an improvement, just in that we were able to let soldiers decompress at home station under the supervision of their chain of command, and if they had any issues, you could get

them with counselors those first couple weeks back. Getting everybody back on block leave was very important. We had about ninety days then, no training, where we focused in on maintenance and working back on reestablishing systems. Then we started individual skills train-up for about ninety days. And then, we went into an intensive collective training period. At the welcome-home ceremony before going on block leave, we found out we were going to Afghanistan, twelve months to the day, 365 days from when we got back. I thought that was very helpful to know, and we were then able to focus our train-up plan on where we were going in Afghanistan and tailor it. I applaud the Army for letting us know right off the bat because we made decisions on that. We were able to craft our train-up to deal with going to Afghanistan vice Iraq, and it gave a predictability, and so we were then able to balance the training requirements with the need to get soldiers time off, and I think that balanced approach paid its dividends.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. When you got the word that you were going to Afghanistan, what kind of information did you have other than, you know, you're being deployed again? Did you have any kind of specifics?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: No. The specifics just were we were on orders to go to Afghanistan. As it neared and the deployment got closer, they identified the unit we were going to backfill. We were attached to Regional Command East, so my battalion was not part of the 173d. We started off as part of the division artillery for the 25th Infantry Division, and then they were replaced by 1st Brigade of the 82d [Airborne Division]. So, we spent our twelve months in Afghanistan as part of Regional Command East, while the bulk of 173d was in Regional Command South. Once we found out where we were going, I was able to send a small PDSS [predeployment site survey] recon team out to get with the unit that we were replacing. That was 2/27 Infantry from the 25th Infantry Division. Lt. Col. Walt [E.] Piatt did a great job of providing us the information we needed at the battalion level, company, and down to platoon level, of where his forces were, what missions they were conducting, the personalities among our Afghan counterparts, so we could start, as we did our train-up, actually training to where we were going to go. We started doing VTCs [video teleconferences] probably two months out, where we were able to talk with our counterparts and ask them the questions that were relevant to us, and they'd provide us great insights. And then we tried to do the same with the unit that replaced us, so they could really hit the ground running. What was important to us was that there was no degradation of effects, and with the 2/87 Infantry that backfilled us, we considered our measure of success as, how well they did the first ninety days, that they could come in and operate at the same level and hopefully surpass us.

DR. KOONTZ: **Can you give me some specifics of the kind of information that you were getting back from that unit in theater—the kinds of things that they were telling you about?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yeah—everything from missions that they had done in the past, their after action reviews, their databases in terms of their targeting process. Information operations is such a key component of the successful counterinsurgency fight, so their personality profiles for both kinetic and nonkinetic targeting were important data to have. We got DVDs with just their staff continuity books, with "Here's what the S-1 [personnel staff section] or the S-2 [intelligence staff section] had put together during their twelve months," and we did the same. We actually had a Web page link to this encyclopedia of all the products we had created in our twelve months there so, once again, when the unit replaced us, they weren't starting over reinventing the wheel. We received from 2/27 a recommended campaign plan for the next two months if they were sticking around, and we gave the same to the unit that replaced. Once again, I think is very important because the commander that's on the ground really has a feel for how to



Colonel McGuire after taking command in Kirkuk, Iraq

set the unit up for success that's replacing us. So, the right-seat/left-seat ride process to me—you know, the ten-day overlap, I think, is one of the great innovations out of OEF and OIF [Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, respectively]. And I know we got that from the Balkans, but I think we're, as an organization, doing a very good job of sharing the lessons learned of all organizations with the units that are replacing them.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You're getting this feedback from 2/27. You're getting this information on them, what they're doing, what they're up to. What kind of guidance were you getting up your command chain?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: You know, SETAF [Southern European Task Force] and the 173d did a good job of the LTPs [Leader Training Programs]. We did training programs up in Grafenwoehr with BCTP [Battle Command Training Program] coming out to help augment it, where I think General [Maj. Gen. Jason K.] Kamiya did a good job of identifying the nature of the fight, which by that time had shifted focus. It was clearly identified to our team that it was a counterinsurgency focus, with the center of gravity being the legitimacy of the people, the human terrain as the critical terrain, and that the priority of efforts would be those to build the Afghan capacity and ensure good governance. So, I think both General Kamiya and Colonel [Kevin C.] Owens, the brigade commander, were united in that and did a good job of pushing that message down, and that's why we spent a lot of time, just as a battalion, as part of our train-up really talking about the essence of counterinsurgency theory and doctrine and how to fight and win a counterinsurgency and getting down with platoons, down to the team-member level, talking through our campaign plan and why we were going to do specific tasks, and why, when you go out to train an Afghan policeman or an Afghan National Army soldier, how that links back into winning the overall fight and, more importantly, winning the peace that follows.

DR. KOONTZ: **I probably already know the answer to this question, but I'll ask it, anyway. Your battalion already had a tour in Iraq, and you get almost a year of time to prepare for this next mission, which you know about well in advance. How well-prepared was your battalion for a year of counterinsurgency work?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I thought we were very well prepared. I think we realized that it was a squad-, a platoon-level fight, so we did not—our training was very focused in on the lower levels and really worked on building strong, cohesive, and lethal squads of platoons. We spent a lot of time on leader development for the company commanders on how to think. The training exercises were set up to mirror Afghanistan. Hohenfels, Germany, did a great job

of replicating Afghanistan, with Germans role-playing Afghans. We were able to train using interpreters. We forced our company commanders, our platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, down to the squad leader level, to do negotiations training, to go through and deal with interacting with their Afghan counterparts. So, I was real pleased that the unit was ready to go.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Let's get the battalion to Afghanistan. What was the deployment process like?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: The deployment process? We were the first to go from the brigade. Actually, from SETAF, we were the first to roll. The area support group pushed us out, and they did a good job. We had sent a couple members of our staff out as an ADVON [advanced echelon], who did some great work on fighting through some of the friction of being the first unit to be there. The 25th did a good job of receiving us up in Bagram. So, we went into Bagram, and then from there we pushed out to Paktika Province.

DR. KOONTZ: **That probably wasn't a direct flight, was it?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We went from Aviano straight into Bagram.

DR. KOONTZ: **About how long did that take?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I don't recall the specific hours. I think it was six, seven hours.

DR. KOONTZ: **On that aspect, you were lucky.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yes [laughs].

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You get into Bagram. How long were you in Bagram before you went to Paktika?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: For myself, I was probably there two days. I'd say most soldiers were two to four days. We went there in the—this was February time period, so we did have some challenges with weather being able to fly down there, but I think on average, we spent no more than a few days. Everybody got out in about three to four days.

DR. KOONTZ: **And how did you get to Paktika?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We flew rotary-wing, for the most part CH–47s, but also some Black Hawks, down into Bagram—or, excuse me, into Orgun[-e], which was the battalion FOB [forward operating base]. And then, from there, we pushed out into the company-level FOBs.

DR. KOONTZ: **We'll get to your FOBs in a minute. Okay, then, you get to Paktika, and then you transition. You do your right-**

seat/left-seat with 2/27, that's correct? You talked a little about it before, but tell me a little bit more about the transition. How did that go?

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Transition went very well. They got us out to see their area of operation. They had a good plan. They gave area orientations to everyone first, and then as much as the weather would permit, got the units out to their specific versions of the battle space. While we were up in Bagram, the division ran some training—the latest on IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and some cultural nuances to Afghanistan. I think for the most part, the cultural ROE [rules of engagement], we were familiar with. I think some of the latest IED countermeasures were new from when we'd gotten it, but they did have some classes there. When we got down with 2/27, one of the most effective things was having a formal process, where they would introduce us to the Afghan leadership in each one of the districts. The relationships matter so much in Afghan society, that the ability of Colonel Piatt to introduce me to someone he spent the last twelve months with as a personal friend, and then I'm able to meet him, it really made the transition much easier. The hardest thing on the right-seat/left-seat ride for us was inventorying of the stay-behind equipment because trying to do that—for the company commanders to try to do that, with everything else that's going on, it was very time consuming. So, one of the lessons learned for the unit that replaced us was, we asked them to send their company commanders, supply sergeants, a couple days early so they could take care of that before the bulk of the soldiers arrived, so once they started that orientation, they had a singular focus.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned when you arrived, you got kind of a cultural ROE. What was included in that ROE?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Oh, just aspects of *Pashtunwali* [Pashtun moral and ethical code]. I think one of the keys to success is leveraging the culture to your advantage. You know, if you understand it, if you embrace it, it can provide you with great benefits and so understand the points at play on hospitality; respect for women; on the soldiers understanding how the concept of revenge within *Pashtunwali*; some basic phrases in Dari and Pashto. But, once again, that was stuff we were doing as part of our predeployment training also.

DR. KOONTZ: **That's something I wanted to ask you earlier—before you employed, if you had gotten any kind of training about that.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yeah, yeah. We went down to the individual soldier on the basics of Afghan culture, Afghan history. It was more specialized. While we were there, the National Assembly provincial council elections took place. That was going to

be one of the big events of our twelve-month period, so we had classes on the Afghan constitution. I think most of our soldiers were as informed on the current Afghan constitution as any Afghan they encountered—that ability to be able to talk intelligently about the area, about the country, got us great legitimacy in the eyes of the locals.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right, sir. What was the situation on the ground like when you arrived at Paktika?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: When we arrived, it was definitely heart of winter. There was a foot of snow on the ground, and it was a lull in the battle because the insurgents had gone to ground. 2/27 had really utilized, though—I think the light bulb really came on for them that it was a counterinsurgency, and they spent a lot of time trying to help the Afghan government exert itself. So, we wanted to build upon their success. They had taken their governor, prior to the presidential elections, out on a speaking tour. We did the same in the spring. So, I think one of our keys to success was, as soon as the snows melted, we were out of the blocks, seeking to seize the key terrain, which was the human terrain.

So, at some of the locations, due to the mud as the snow was melting, you couldn't get out for several weeks. When we arrived, there wasn't a meter of pavement anywhere in Paktika—all dirt roads. Paktika is one of the poorest provinces in Afghanistan. President [Hamid] Karzai, when we were there, said it was the province in greatest need of reconstruction. You could argue it was construction; it just didn't have a lot of infrastructure there. To get from Orgun, which was my location of my battalion FOB, to Sharan, which was the capital—Orgun's the business capital for Paktika, Sharan was the political capital—took over fourteen hours when I arrived. During my first trip up there, due to the weather—you know, you drive up a river bed, get stuck in a Humvee probably half a dozen times, and then all commerce, all Afghan trucking, stopped moving four kilometers outside of the provincial capital because of mud flats. So, on the major quote-unquote "highway" there was no movement, which we realized gave us a lot of opportunities to bring about some visible signs of progress. One of the things we did in our twelve months was get heavy engineers attached to us to improve, to actually build, the road from Orgun to Sharan. What took us about thirteen, fourteen hours to do the first time, you could do in ninety minutes when we left. That visible sign of progress brought us huge dividends and, more importantly, brought the legitimacy of the Afghan government. Thus, we beat the insurgents to the human terrain in that spring, and I think they were unable during our twelve months to ever reassert themselves.

We went out to seize the human terrain by the visible signs of progress in the reconstruction, by aggressively training the Afghan National Army, by training the police. You know, we found on the police force that no one had uniforms, and by the time we left, by working with the Afghan government, everybody had uniforms. We were able to get the governor out to connect with each one of his districts. And once again, we kind of looked at that as fundamental to extending the reach of the central government, and so we took him into those areas, in which the past the government had never gone, and let him meet with his people.

One of the operations I'm most proud of was what we and our Afghan counterparts achieved in Bermel District. Bermel District is an area where they'd had—Bermel's a border district with Pakistan, you know, part of Waziristan. For fifteen months, there had been no legitimate Afghan government presence there because the Taliban had come in, or al Qaeda, and executed the chief of police, killed his police force, and the district subgovernor did the rational thing and left and returned to Kabul. In my first, critical meeting with the governor on my second day there, he said "I'd like to reestablish government presence in Bermel." And he also said, "And here's what I can provide: fifteen policemen, a couple vehicles, and a quality man to be the mayor." But then he asked, "What can the Americans provide?" And, specifically, he'd been coached by the UN to ask for "Will you help build the government compound?" We went and took a look at it and thought, "That's exactly what we need to be doing," because that was the major infil route from Pakistan into Paktika. And we said, "You know, if you want to build Afghan capacity, you want to extend the reach of the government, retaking Bermel, would represent both a tactical operation and strategic victory."

So, we went and took a look at it and was able to get funding from higher headquarters. We came back with the governor and said, "Hey, we'll go in and not only build you a government compound, but a school, a mosque, a clinic, and a post for the Afghan National Army." The governor had wanted to build it right in the corner of Bermel, about a kilometer into the district, as far from the Pakistan border as possible, in a very progovernment town—we said, "Mr. Governor, if you want to go in, we need to go in right to the heart of the staging area for the insurgents," the Bermel bazaar, which was the crossroad of all the infil routes. "You've got to go in and retake it and regain the key hub of that district." He was very surprised and unsettled "What part don't you get, Colonel? The last time we did that, the chief of police got killed." And I said, "Hey if you go in, you're not going in alone. We'll go with you." When he realized he wouldn't be alone, he was willing to commit to going to the heart of the insurgency. And so, I sent one of my companies to go in and establish that, an ODA [Special

Forces Operational Detachment-A] team also, and more importantly, was able to get the battalion—at the time, it was a company, but it extended into a battalion's worth of Afghan National Army, and immediately, we were able to see the populace gain more confidence in their government. That's just symbolic of a full-spectrum approach to fighting this thing. Prior to going in, we brokered a land deal, and once again, it was the Afghan government brokering their agreement with the support of the UN and my battalion, to give the government land to build this compound on. It was the first time all five tribes had agreed, and at the end of the day, we were able to shut down the key infil route and build a physical sign of the government presence out there. And that turned the tide, and that bazaar went away from its insurgent leanings because it was very quickly realized by all the locals that the government now was the strongest player in town. We'd built everything we said we'd build. We followed through on our promises, and at the end of the day, you had now, on the major infil route, an Afghan National Army battalion there. And we did similar things along other infil routes in the south with—because we didn't have, at that time, any more Afghan National Army units to use, we had to use border police. It was the same type of thing, empowering and emboldening the Afghan to get out and solve their problem, but to do that, it takes the logistical weight of the United States military, the comms platforms that we bring, and just the moral support of knowing that you've got an American soldier out there to watch your back and reinforce you, if required.

The other thing I was proud of, on the day that this company went in to set up this base, you had a company commander, Captain Joe [C.] Geraci, and Afghan government officials, meeting with the tribal elders, engaging them on what the future was going to bring. You had a flag-raising ceremony where all the tribal elders raised the Afghan flag within visual sight of the Pak border. You had construction starting on the base itself; you had soldiers training the police; you had soldiers training the Afghan National Army; and you had local doctors out working with American doctors to treat the local populace. So, the hearts and minds are going on, but it also sent quite a message to the insurgents. We thought we were going to get in a big, kinetic fight because we once again stuck a stick right in what used to be the staging area for the insurgents when they crossed the border. We never really had a big fight there. I think that, by going in strong, it sent the perfect message because it left no doubt that the government and the Coalition forces were much stronger than anything the insurgents could put together and that the government was the future and the people got on board. And I think the beauty of that is, at the end of the day, we were able to pull out, the U.S., to cut down our presence there, but you still had the Afghans, now, because we helped them build the base infrastructure.

They were going to take that over. And, once again, tying back into the cultural aspect, with the *Pashtunwali* and the revenge and the pride, the people were able to see that the insurgents talked a big game, but they were unable to regain that, and so that just furthered the strength of the government. I know I got sidetracked on that, I'm sorry.

DR. KOONTZ: **No, no, that's quite all right. How long did it take from the time that the governor says, "I want this changed," to the point that you guys are going there and raising the flags with the tribal leaders?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We took about forty-five days for that because we wanted to make sure, when we went in, it was not piecemeal, but very strong. When the governor first discussed it, we started; then got the funding; then started pushing the resources out. So, we actually went and occupied the ground, brokered a land deal and said, "We'll be back in one week to establish it," and one week to the day, this force of a hundred Afghans, in what we called the jingle trucks, full of supplies, along with my company of soldiers, some heavy equipment we had rented, the Afghan National Army, and the police force that the governor had sent down, at sunrise, just came over the horizon and started construction—to me, that's the true shock and awe for the counterinsurgency. It was the shock and awe of positive progress. And so, we said we'd be back within a week, and we kept our word. When I made it down a couple days later, I went in and just did a patrol into the bazaar and went to my guys: "Hey, where is the roughest place? Where do you get the weirdest looks from?" And we went to that part of the town, and they invited me in, and in a statement to me that was telling, I said, "What do people think about the government being here?" and they said, "Hey, we're on board." And I said, "Why?" And they said, "This is the first time in the history of Bermel that our government and Coalition forces have kept their word." And so, by going in and resourcing it, not piecemeal, and having what was required to do that, really paid us huge dividends.

DR. KOONTZ: **And so this is all part of the spring offensive there?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: That was part of the spring offensive, and that's where, you know—too often, we define "offensive" as kinetic, taking the fight to the insurgents. I think a better way to look at offensive is to view it as any action that unhinges the enemy and gains the support of the population. If your objective is to seize and retain the human terrain, if that's your critical terrain, focus in on that because if you're going out and extending the reach of the government, our philosophy was, as we're doing that, then the insurgents will come to us, and we'll fight them; and if they don't fight us, then we're still increasing the capacity and the legitimacy of the government. And so, we really went and focused on, instead

of getting in an attrition battle with the insurgents, we're going to go in and extend the reach of the government and build that capacity; and in that process, when the insurgents show themselves, we're going to fight them.

Another part of our spring offensive was getting the governor out on a campaign stop to reconnect with his people; going out and training the police, training the Army; and, bringing about visible signs of progress. I talked about the lack of pavement. We started building cobblestone roads, which—you know, this is an infantry battalion, but we quickly realized that we can get great bang for the buck on the hearts and minds by building roads, by the simple act of getting some pavement in. So, we built some roads with heavy engineers being sent down from Bagram, which cut the travel time from fourteen hours to ninety minutes. With CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program funds], we were able to build these cobblestone roads, which, to me, was the equivalent of dropping a bomb on an insurgent training camp because word quickly spread of these cobblestone roads, and out in the hinterlands, where the insurgency still had some support, you get the locals asking, "Hey, when are we going to get a paved road?" And it was very easy, in terms of the information operation, to say, "You can't get the road because it's not safe enough to get the engineers out here. We need intel on who these insurgents are." Well, they wanted the road. They'd provide that intel. They'd turn over the caches. And it gave the governor great credibility. Every project we did was through the Afghan government, so once again, the governor and his subgovernor's authority to actually produce some signs of progress gave them much more—it gave them greater standing with their constituents and increased their ability to govern their areas and their influence.

For me, though, the biggest change from, you know, a Cold War Army, fighting the Soviets, to what we're doing now, as a full-spectrum counterinsurgency force, is the kinetic operations, information operations, or CMO [civil-military operations], are no longer distinct, sequential actions. In the past, you break something; then you try to go and reconstruct; and then you talk about it. It's all seamless right now, and so I don't want you to get the impression that all we did was build roads. When we had any intel where bad guys were, we would act on it immediately. We did, as part of the spring offensive, also, some very effective air assault raids, once again targeting the leadership, the insurgent leadership. We had great partnerships with Special Forces and with OGA [other governmental agencies]. And they were combined, in that we did everything with our Afghan counterparts. But we'd get intel, and we'd pounce on it. But as we were doing that cordon and search to get the insurgent leader, you know, at the same time, you've got a MEDCAP [medical civil

action program] going on, treating the local populace; and you've got a leader engagement going on, where you're explaining why you went out—the purpose behind this operation and how now is the time to commit to the government—so it's that simultaneous kinetics/nonkinetics—you know, the CMO and the information operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Is your battalion part of a larger task force within RC East?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yeah.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me your command structure.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Okay. Command structure? I was part of Regional Command East. RC East was based out of Salerno, FOB Salerno, up in Khowst. My battalion's sector was Paktika itself, and later on, I picked up four districts of Ghazni. But it was just my battalion in Paktika and Ghazni, so I worked within the framework of the brigade, first DIVARTY [division artillery], and then Task Force DEVIL. I started off with, like, four companies. I used my headquarters company as a maneuver company. They used their mortar, scouts, and engineer platoons as small-sized standard infantry platoons. Each of the companies were then out at a different FOB location. A couple months into the rotation, based on the success, Bravo Company went to Kandahar and became part of Regional Command South. So, we had three companies in AO Fury: my headquarters company was up in Sharan, the provincial capital; my Alpha Company was in Orgun, where my battalion was located, and they had a company in Bermel; and then my Charlie Company was down in Waza Khwa. And then, these company commanders owned their battle space, and they each had ranging from six to eight districts, in which they were responsible for everything that took place in there. They then broke them down into platoon areas of operations, in which they were responsible for mentoring districts and partnering with Afghan security forces, both the police and army.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you spend most of your time with your headquarters company?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: No, I rotated among all the companies. I would spend the bulk of my time conducting battlefield circulation. I was blessed with a great battalion XO [executive officer] and S-3 [operations staff officer], so I was able to spend a lot of my time out in field circulation just moving between the three companies, but my staff was located with Alpha Company in Orgun.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Tell me about your FOB there in Orgun. Take me on a little tour of it. What are your facilities or your infrastructures like there?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Infrastructure there—it had been established in 2002, so we had a hardstand TOC [tactical operations center]—you know, everything was hardstand. We used the local contractors to build barracks. 2/27 had started building barracks. We then continued that construction. It was Afghan local contractors doing the construction—tin-roof barracks, Hesco barriers. While we were there, built a gym and a mess hall. We did not have any KBR [Kellogg, Brown & Root] type of facilities. Our cooks did the cooking, along with local, national Afghans that we hired—probably had about two hundred local nationals working there between laundry and cooks and running some of the logistics—"logistics" isn't the right word—the maintenance type. Early on, it was burn-barrel latrines and the Afghan workforce had upkeep of that, and it was similar then at the company FOBs, also, just a smaller scale. But soldiers had, you know, heaters, and living conditions were not bad.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have sort of a daily battle or a weekly battle rhythm that you tried to keep up?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: For myself?

DR. KOONTZ: **For yourself, and then also for your staff.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: You know, we did have a battle rhythm. We did work seven days a week. For the staff, about ninety days into the rotation, we decided to give the soldiers a little break, so on Sundays, they could come into the TOC in PT [physical training] gear, but we did work seven days a week. We had our morning update every morning. We did that over the SIPRNET [Secure Internet Protocol Router Network] so the company commanders could log in to that, also, if they were at their FOBs. We did a TACSAT [tactical satellite communications] update in the evening every night with the company commanders in which I would get assessments from each commander. These fostered crosstalk and sharing of good ideas among the company commanders. We would do weekly information operations and kinetic targeting meetings, and those targeting meetings, once again, we followed a full-spectrum approach where we looked at both where we needed to do kinetic operations to kill or capture an insurgent, or where we need to push projects, or where we need to send someone down to meet with the leader. Those were on a weekly basis. One of the good battle rhythm events was getting all the company commanders back to a centralized location for commander conferences. Because company commanders were out on their own—I got to see them often, but they didn't get to see their fellow company commanders, so about every six weeks, we tried

to get the company commanders at a centralized location so they could share good ideas. They participated in the weekly targeting meetings via VTC, but face-to-face interaction was valuable. The other key player we had in Paktika, though, was the PRT [provincial reconstruction team], and one of the things we were proud of, we did call ourselves Team Paktika because we wanted to break down the perceived differences between the maneuver battalion and the PRT. We felt that the key was to be working together, so all these battle rhythm tasks—you know, the PRT was included, so we could make sure we had a unified front out there. And I'm sorry I don't remember more of the specific battle rhythm tasks, but those were probably the most significant ones.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of, I guess, regular contact did you have with your higher headquarters?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I did a commander's daily conference call with the brigade commander daily via TACSAT, and that was seven days a week.

DR. KOONTZ: **Another thing I wanted to ask about your task organization was did you have any nonorganic units assigned to your battalion or attached to your battalion?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I did get MPs [military police] pushed down, which were invaluable. We were able to utilize them very effectively. We established a five-day training program for the Afghan police force. My soldiers were doing that, but it was really great having actual policemen so that we were able to make it a little bit more extensive, where they would cycle throughout the province and train the police. We had engineers come and go—the heavy engineers that built the road. We also had route-clearance packages, which, that, to me, is one of the huge successes—the route-clearance packages going out and being able to clear and look for the IEDs.

And, occasionally, I would get more assets for named operations. We did some large-scale battalion operations along the border with Pakistan, and when we did those, DEVIL-6, Colonel [Patrick J.] Donahue, sent additional units. He said he would push another company down from the 82d down to give me some more maneuver forces because I didn't want to move an entire company out of its AO. I felt it was important to keep some presence with at least a platoon from each company. So, I'd pull away two-thirds of the company to surge in specific locations, but always keep a presence throughout the entire AO.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have any kind of interaction or any kind of coordination with any SOF [Special Operations Forces] efforts?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Yeah, we had SOF located in Orgun with us. Initially, it was ODB [Special Forces Operational Detachment-B], and we did a lot of operations together. I think it was a very positive relationship. When they moved out—that was 7th [Special Forces] Group—when they moved out, there were only backfilled with an ODA team, and that ODA team was not as proactive, and we didn't do as much. But eventually, in my tenure there, SOF ended up working only on the border. But as I mentioned, Bermel was a joint SOF/Task Force FURY operation, and I was able to get the funding to do a lot of construction through SOF. My staff was able to synchronize the planning, and my company commander took charge of the construction, but we did have an ODA team there. When Bravo Company was sent to RC East, we turned over the base that we built to the ODA team, and they did a great job keeping that up and running.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. You've spoken several times about the human terrain. What was the human terrain like in Paktika when you got there? What was your sense of the populace there?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: The populace? A lot of distrust of the government. I think 2/27 had done a good job of starting to establish trust, and we had a very positive, strong governor in Gulab Mangal, and he had really broken down some barriers in the fall with 2/27. But I think during the winter, the doubts rose: "Is he going to be there in the spring?" And so, we decided it was critical to get the governor back out among the hinterlands in a series of visits we called 1774 to correspond with our first Continental Congress because it was to go build support for the upcoming parliamentary National Assembly and provincial council elections. When they saw that, it was reassuring to them, but a lot of promises had been made by the governor in the fall that hadn't been followed through on. So, that's why we took it so important, that whenever Coalition forces or the government makes a promise, you've got to produce on that. So, we made our goal, if we agreed to anything, we would follow through on it. We were very systematic on what we agreed to. But if we said we were going to build a school; we said we were going to build a road; we said we were going to produce a well, we did. And so that's where—when our patrols were going out, we could be going out looking for bad guys somewhere, but it was with our Afghan counterparts, so we were training them in the process. But along the way or along the way back, we'd stop off at the school or the mosque or the road that was being built to do QA/QC [quality assurance/quality control check] because we realized if we didn't do it, it wouldn't get done, and that a school not built or a school built poorly is a win for the insurgents. It's a blow, a devastating blow, to the legitimacy of the government. So, we didn't look at that as somebody else's job. We realized it's all about producing

visible signs of progress, so—but because we did that, then, the locals got on board.

I mentioned Bermel changing. Another example was the positive change by Charlie Company, down in Waza Khwa. Governor Mangal saw the success we'd had in Bermel and came back a month after we started the construction there. The governor came back to formally install the subgovernor. When he was there, there were over a couple thousand men that came forward to meet the governor, Afghan flags flying everywhere. That, to me, you know, just represented a huge sea change on what had been a safe haven is now shifting towards the government. That didn't mean all the problems had been fixed. If we had pulled out, the government would have failed. You've got to stay afterwards, you've got to have that constant presence there. But the governor saw that, and he said, "Hey, I want to do the same thing down in the south." At that time, we didn't have more Afghan National Army to send down there, but we sent border police. Make a long story short, we did a similar operation with border police, on two major infil routes in the south, and built compounds for the border police. My soldiers lived with them. My soldiers trained them, and that's why I did take great pride in the leaders and soldiers of this task force. I thought the best ODA teams in Afghanistan were my rifle platoons and squads. They embraced the Green Beret mission in terms of full-spectrum operations; they embraced the FID [foreign internal defense]; they embraced the unconventional warfare; they embraced the civil affairs aspects. Here is a great example of what this can achieve. The head of the *shura*, the tribal council down there, when we arrived, was the uncle of the number one insurgent leader we were looking for. This insurgent leader had to stay the entire time in Pakistan. We went after him on one air assault raid and ever since, he stayed in Pakistan the entire time we were there. But his uncle, who was not a supporter of the government, was eventually voted out by the tribes, and he was replaced with the most positive, progovernment mullah, religious leader, in the south. And that's where that full-spectrum approach, where you're building the local, national capacity, is so effective. It emboldens the common Afghan man to do the right thing, and for me, seeing them vote out the uncle of the insurgent leader and replace him with a very progovernment official spoke volumes.

DR. KOONTZ: **You've mentioned the border several times. You're right there, and you're trying to close off these major infil routes. What kind of cross-border infiltrations were you getting?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We were getting some—not as much as it appears they're getting now. Because of that, we pushed out the Afghan presence along the borders, and our CJTF-76 and Task Force DEVIL worked to establish better coordination with

the Pak army. While I was there, I did do meetings with my Pak army counterpart, and if I was staying longer, I would have liked to have built upon there. There were pockets and infiltration that did take place.

DR. KOONTZ: **These are pretty small groups?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Small groups coming in, and that's why we felt that, rather than try to find these small groups, we focused in on building the Afghan capacity to stop them at the key choke points in the bazaars and the crossroads, and in the process, make a target that they may want to come fight you over, and if they do, you destroy them there; and if they never show themselves to fight, you've won anyway, because the people see that, and they're going to side with the government because, the inaction on the part of the insurgent shows they've ceded that area. So, down in the south, we had some firefights right after we started building those compounds, and a very effective return on our part, and they never came back. So, word spreads quickly.

DR. KOONTZ: **A while ago, you mentioned you had your spring offensive where you went out and closed off Bermel and these other things. Did you get a Taliban spring offensive? As you said, they'd gone to ground?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: No. I would say, we never saw what I would call a Taliban spring offensive. They were never able to mass. You'd get



Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry, patrol the town of Naka in Paktika Province, April 2005.

some occasional night letters, but I felt by beating them out of the blocks in the spring, it completely unhinged them. We also did a successful operation with OGA and SOF, where we killed one of the key insurgent leaders, and I think they were unable to coordinate amongst themselves. We desynchronized their attack in the spring, and then when the government was able to get out and then start following through on the promises, then the locals wouldn't let them—they denied them the safe haven. You know, we had insurgents lay down their arms following the visit of the governor to the province. Both the governor and I were proponents for the reconciliation program, where, you know, if you want to live in peace, as long as you follow by the rules and truly lay down your arms and not fight again, you can make peace with the governor, and we had a large number of insurgents take advantage of that. So, we really did not have a lot of activity. We did have some IEDs, but the vast majority of IEDs were terminated by locals, and when we left, all the key leaders that we were going after, all HVTs [high-value targets] were across the border, so they knew we were looking for them. The communities had turned against them. I think they knew if they came too far into the province, somebody would turn them over, and so they stayed out of reach. But if they're out of reach, then they're not causing problems. The government's continuing to get stronger.

DR. KOONTZ: **And also, you've mentioned that you did have kinetic operations that went on and largely resulted in the bad guys' getting hammered. Is there sort of a typical kinetic operation you can describe to me, in terms of size, scope, purpose?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Well, very small scale, for the most part. Now, we would do some battalion-level operations, but the operations were more to show our ability to go anywhere in the province we needed to. We did operations with adjacent units to show that we could cross boundaries. If we perceived there was a seam or the insurgents thought we were only sticking to provincial boundaries, we would do an operation to make sure the Afghan National Army would move from Paktika out through Ghazni to Ring Road, which links Kabul to Kandahar, because we wanted them to know that we would go anywhere to look at them. But these operations were not the norm. The majority of our time was spent on what you would call, for the most part, routine policing. We did not go in and shut down entire towns to go search every house. We did very surgical strikes for which we had already gathered the intel, so we knew where we were going for. Part of the policy on our watch was we didn't search homes at night without the three-star General [Lt. Gen. Karl W.] Eikenberry's approval, which I think was smart. But we quickly realized—we thought we did better than that. We didn't search homes at night because the Afghan police or

army were the ones searching the homes. We did not do an operation in which we did not have Afghan counterparts because we realized, one, they know what looks out of place; but more importantly, it comes back down to we wanted to work ourselves out of a job. So, it's both a training aspect, but it's, more importantly, a legitimacy aspect. The people have got to have confidence that their government's getting stronger, that their government's going to defend them. So, every operation we did was a combined offensive operation, and every time we left the wire every day was an offensive operation. The vast majority of the time, they were nonkinetic, but they were still offensive. We went to seize and retain the initiative. We went to keep the enemy on the run, even if it's just going in to meet with locals. A company commander, a platoon leader, attending a city council meeting—that's an offensive operation. By going in an hour before or the day before to help the mayor prepare for a city council meeting or a tribal *shura* meeting, so he could go in and run an effective meeting, that's an offensive operation. We were taking the fight to the enemy by building those schools, by the successful elections. The enemy can only destroy. He cannot build, so our asymmetrical advantage was, we were able to bring about signs of progress. So, we really prided ourselves on those things we did to build the capacity of the Afghans.

In the center of the province, once again, on the main highway, in the west of the province, we took an old British Afghan fort that was in disarray. The locals had believed it was haunted because the Taliban had executed a lot of people in there. We went and got funding to refurbish that fort and turn it into a battalion headquarters for the Afghan National Army. It became a source of great civic pride because it was a symbol of the twenty-five years of war and destruction and became a sign of progress. It was in ruins, and Afghan constructors went in, built a backup, and at the end of the day, you've got a battalion's worth of Afghan National Army soldiers there that could work the seam between Ghazni and get its way out to the borders. Another safe haven had been eliminated.

And getting back to the MPs, with the police training, you know, we would go in and do the five-day curriculum, and we'd always, on Day 5, do a hands-on exercise, and it was, where do we have any intelligence on where a possible bad guy could be? We would then have the Afghans go in and search that compound. More times than not, they were dry holes, but occasionally, that would be the correct intel. So, every time we went out on patrol, you know, if you found that intel, you would go and act upon it. Because of that, the most effective ones were the small-scale. But we did do some large-scale, and those were mostly to show that we could blanket multiple districts at once, to show the range of the Afghan National Army. But then, the most effective kinetic

operations would be the air assaults we would do, and those air assaults were raids—normally, a platoon, possibly two, with company C2 [command and control elements] and then some battalion C2, with Afghan counterparts, and then those were always targeted on insurgent leadership. So, if we get any intelligence from national-level assets, any word on an insurgent leader had entered back into our province, we'd go after him as soon as we could get aircraft, and then we would really publicize the success. We put together what we called "the list," and they were prevetted targets. It was really the governor of Paktika's ten-most-wanted list, and there were ones that we had discussed, if they stepped foot anywhere in the province, we were going after them. And once again, by being able to get a couple of those guys, word quickly spread, and they never came back into the province.

DR. KOONTZ: **Where did you get most of your intelligence—mostly, human intelligence [HUMINT]?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Mostly HUMINT, then we'd also work in with OGA using some national-level assets. But HUMINT was the most effective, and that would range from children coming to tell you of an IED up ahead or a suspicious individual to tribal leaders turning in caches or letting us know about a potential cell. HUMINT was the most effective.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about Team Paktika and working with the PRT.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We were talking about maintaining the initiative, offensive vice kinetic, you know, knocking the enemy off the fields. With Team Paktika, we sought to achieve unity of effort without the unity of command. We quickly realized we needed an effective division of labor for the PRT. We realized for us to be successful in a counterinsurgency fight, we couldn't just be the door kickers, and the PRT is the one that does the reconstruction. The PRT's not going to kick any doors in, but my soldiers have to be seen as a force for more than just going after bad guys. So, we came up with a division of labor. It would take the PRT, which is a small element, you know, a day or more to get from one area to the next, so rather than having them think they've got to try to be everywhere, we wanted the PRT to utilize my soldiers. I told the PRT commander: "My guys are out in the hinterlands. Let me be your eyes and ears out in the hinterlands. If you've got an issue, pick up the TACSAT, talk to the company commander or the platoon leader down there because we can cut down your response time on getting an answer filled from days to minutes." So, we really came up with an effective division of labor where we tried to get the PRT to focus in on the big provincialwide systems, those things that would take a more long-term solution, and then my guys focused in on the grassroots implementation of it. And when we really got that going,

I thought we were able to get some great return on our investments.

DR. KOONTZ: **Way back a long time ago, you'd mentioned the Afghan constitutional election. Tell me about what your battalion did to support that.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I had one of my captains go in and embed with the UN reps that were responsible for it. He served as the LNO [liaison officer], and if we hadn't forged that partnership, the election might have failed. He was able to prevent a lot of balls from dropping. He had a very good partnership with all parties. We came up with a comprehensive security plan—we were responsible for the security of it, but we used this as an opportunity to build the capacity of the Afghan government. So, we went through and came up with what we felt the security system should look like, but then we brought our Afghan counterparts in and did combined planning for it. When we issued our operations order, we had the United Nations present, and the Afghan National Army commanders, and each one of the chiefs of police, and we looked at that as a historic event and a vehicle for them to establish their credibility. As a result, then, by helping them out, they got to see how we plan operations, how we command and control it, and based on some of the success, we had no incidents during the election. All of the ballots safely made it back up to the hub, and then in Kabul. We were able to steamroller that thing into more combined planning. From then on, we started doing routine—I talked of the weekly targeting meetings we did. Those became—we'd have an internal one, but then we'd also have one with our Afghan counterparts, where we'd go through the same methodology with the hope being when we left—and by "we," I mean, we Coalition forces in general—they would continue the process.

One of the things during the elections we established was a provincial coordination center that was just a really coordination node to work issues with the UN, the Afghan government, the Afghan security forces, and ourselves. We had this up running 24/7, with Afghan maps and reps from each of the Afghan security forces. This enabled us to better synchronize activities. At that time, the Afghans did not have adequate C2 infrastructure. It was cell phones or no provincewide communication, so their ability to synchronize operations was very limited. With this coordination center, if an incident came on, they could help get the word out through our radios. This helped the Afghans gain confidence and fostered greater initiative on their part since they could talk to adjacent units. That was very beneficial for us. And those provincial communication centers have been sustained throughout, and now they have their own radios so the Afghans can do it themselves. But we had incidents come in where Afghans would find out about an

incident in one of the districts, and they'd be able to get five other district police forces to go in and assist. That is what this is all about, working ourselves out of a job. The provincial communication centers are an example of the good that came out of supporting the elections.

DR. KOONTZ: **A while ago, you mentioned that you did take part in some named operations from time to time. Do you recall any of those?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: Well, okay. 1774, just once again, because I think it's important—you know, the first ones we did were just the campaign stops with the governor, but I maintained this defeated more insurgents than any other named operations we did, and a shot wasn't fired. It was getting the governor out into the hinterlands to meet with the people, and you could see there [referring to briefing slides] that this is just the roads lining up to welcome him into a village. But by going out with security, and the security was provided by the Afghans—my guys were out of the limelight. We tried to empower the government, and that's why I was very proud of 1774. And then a brother battalion commander of mine, [Lt. Col.] Tom Donovan at 2/504, further north of us in RC East, ended up doing Operation 1776, which, same thing—just prior to the elections, getting the governor out to talk through why they should support the elections, and I think he'd tell you the same, in terms of effectiveness. Operation CORREGIDOR was the named operation going into the Bermel bazaar. We did these operations—these were the air assaults we did, which Operation VERONA was the first one we did, combined with OGA and SOF and Afghan National Army. By using two Black Hawks and two Apaches, we were able to go in and take out insurgent leaders. This set the conditions for getting that border compound built. INTERCEPTOR was what we named the operation when we went and built the border police compounds in Tarah Wat and Wor Mamay districts and—let's see, some other names. VERONA was the first air assault we did, and we did several of them over that time period; CORREGIDOR was going into Bermel; 1774 was getting the governor out on his campaign trips; INTERCEPTOR was what we did down in the south; OMAHA BEACH, UNIFIED STRIKE were ones where we would mass several companies of both Americans and Afghans to eliminate seams. VICENZA was similar to VERONA in that it was a series of air assaults. NEPTUNE was prior to the elections once again, getting a large-scale, just flooding the zone to stir up any intelligence we could and eliminate seams, and then the elections themselves. And then we did some more air assaults in the fall—again, targeting some lower-level insurgent leaders, and then WINTER DRIVE was letting them know that because we were able to fix the roads, we were not constrained as we had been upon our arrival by being limited to our FOBs, so we had full-year coverage now. They would not be able to return during the winter. For the most part—there were a couple districts

that we couldn't get to by ground, but WINTER DRIVE was to make sure the insurgents knew that we would be outhunting them at all times. Those are the named operations, but every day, we're doing the daily offensive operations that I talked about, you know? We're heading out of the wire every day; working the good governance, the Afghan capacity; leading from behind; embracing the FID; training them; constant interaction, talking to the people, gathering that intel, building the infrastructure, so when you get that intel, you go out and go after the insurgents.

I'll go back to answer your question, but that's [referring to photograph] some of the cobblestone roads that we built, which we'd hire hundreds of Afghans to build. You know, if an Afghan's out spending his time during the day in honest labor, he wasn't willing to put that at risk to go dig an IED in. And so, in terms of return on taxpayer dollars, we're paying them $4 to $5 a day to build those roads, but we had, in addition to the roads we built, they would put in solar lights, which was the first lighting in the evening that they had in Paktika. These solar lights—ten years, maintenance free—$1,200 to put in, but the IO [information operations] message it sends is invaluable. It's a physical sign of progress in their lives. I had a little old lady come up with tears in her eyes to tell one of my captains through his translator—he says, "Anything wrong?" She said, "No, these are tears of joy. Orgun's becoming just like the United States." Now Orgun, rest assured, has a far way to go, but the fact that she's perceiving a positive change spoke volumes—and that's why people were able to give us the intelligence we needed, and that's why they didn't come back on it.

DR. KOONTZ: **When did you get notice that your tour was up, that, you know, it's time to start transitioning with the guys that are going to replace you?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: We knew, pending any changes, it's going to be twelve months going in. I'd say probably six months out, we knew the unit that was backfilling us and we quickly—they came out on a site survey, like we had done. I was able to meet with the battalion commander. He was actually able to come this time. So, I was able to meet with him, and that's where we started taking the great products that 2/27 had built for us, and we tried to improve upon them. Not only did we recommend projects, but we got the funding preapproved for them. We were able to tell them "Here's what we do for the next sixty to ninety days in terms of operations," and we actually went in and obtained over $2 million worth of funding for projects and got the projects contracted out and ready to go, so not only in the spring when the snows melted, would they be taking the governor out to meet with the people, they'd be, the minute the snows melt, meeting with the people and have a groundbreaking ceremony on the start of a project. So, we just wanted to make sure

we could even more effectively stop the insurgents from gaining any traction with the populace. And we maintained the weekly—we did weekly VTCs with them. Each one of the company commanders knew his counterpart before he came over, and by that, we were able to, I think, prepare 2/87 pretty effectively.

DR. KOONTZ: **What would you point to as the greatest success that your battalion had during your tour in Afghanistan?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I think the greatest success was embracing the full-spectrum approach because it really got after what everybody had in their mission statement as the key task, which was building Afghan capacity and assuring good governance. That is hard work. It's not glamorous, but I think the soldiers, for the vast majority, realized the importance of that and took great pride in that. And that was one thing we learned. If you're fighting a counterinsurgency effectively, you most likely will not get a lot of large firefights because the human terrain's with you, and, like I said, when we went after bad guys, it was normally just a handful because the vast majority of folks were with us. As a result, it was imperative that soldiers understood measures of effectiveness. The key to success in a counterinsurgency is not the number of insurgents killed; it's the degree of stability, the degree of security, within the area, because if you're doing kinetic operations in which you're killing fifty but you're motivating another hundred to join the cause, you're at a net loss. If you can defeat the insurgents through campaign stops from the governor, going in and by getting the people to buy into, believe in the legitimacy of, the government, that's how you win. And so, I think I am most proud of the fact that my soldiers did a very effective job of treating their Afghan counterparts as partners, building their capacity, and increasing the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of its people.

DR. KOONTZ: **What happens to the battalion when you leave the area of operations and get back to Italy?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: After we did our right-seat/left-seat ride, we redeployed through Bagram, did some additional out-processing tasks, some health questionnaires, some reintegration-type classes, and then the battalion flew from Bagram to Manas, and from Manas—we spent a day or two there, and then we'd fly from Manas into Aviano, and then bus back down to Vicenza. We went through the seven half-day classes for reintegration, and we had done reintegration classes ahead of time to try to identify anybody who might have a family problem awaiting on the far side, but that half-day schedule is a very good idea in getting that training. We had counselors there for soldiers. Because we were the first battalion back, we were able to wait a couple weeks longer than we did coming back from Iraq before we sent soldiers on block leave, and I thought that was

good because we were able to spend a couple more weeks working some maintenance issues. We were able to inspect all our equipment, get it tagged, turned in, and get the parts all in order, so when we were gone for thirty days, the logistics system was able to send the parts through. But, more importantly, I think having the extra couple weeks there gave soldiers more time to decompress under the supervision of their team leader and their squad leader, platoon sergeant, than sending them right off on block leave. So, I was pleased with that. We then had ninety days of maintenance and very little formalized training—a total of ninety from when we got back—and then right after that, I changed command. The battalion spent most of the summer doing individual skills training and now they're prepping to go back next summer to Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. All right, we've covered a lot of ground here in an hour and forty-two minutes. I'll let you have the last say. Is there anything you want to add to this, sir?**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: No. I'm just very proud of what our soldiers are doing over there. One thing I didn't discuss was disciplined professionalism. The importance of professionalism and discipline of the individual soldier over in Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be overstated. I'm just very proud of these soldiers, who realized the importance of displaying restraint and doing the right thing. I also realized that we asked soldiers to do tasks that they were not trained for, in terms of when they joined the Army, but by applying just some of the values of middle America, from the Golden Rule to what they learned in civics class, you had squad leaders, platoon leaders, on a daily basis teaching economics, ethics, democracy, law enforcement, Business 101, and by embracing that and realizing that, it's not about just winning the war. It's winning the peace and working ourselves out of a job. They were able to push the ball down the field. But in a counterinsurgency, you're not going to be able to throw the hundred-yard touchdown pass; it's a lot of three- to five-yard gains. But I was just extremely proud of the job the soldiers did to every day take the fight to the enemy and just do it through a wide variety of methods.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, sir, I think that's a good place to stop. On behalf of the Center of Military History, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this. We really appreciate it.**

LT. COL. McGUIRE: I hope it helped.



5

Security and Assistance

Lt. Col. Eugene M. Augustine, USMC, *served as Commander, Lashkar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team, which operated in the Helmand Province in Combined Joint Task Force-76's Regional Command South, from 2004 to 2005. He was interviewed by Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, on 22 February 2007. Colonel Augustine discusses his transition into command of the provincial reconstruction team, as well as the team's mission to provide security and to build the physical and political infrastructure in Lashkar Gah and outlying districts in Helmand Province. He describes his area of operations, including the terrain and its inhabitants, as well as the development of the forward operating base where his team was stationed. The team was composed largely of Iowa National Guard. Colonel Augustine comments on working with local police and political officials, as well as the challenges in building Afghan institutions in an impoverished and underdeveloped region where the major source of income is opium production. He attributes the successes of the team to its guardsmen, civilian augmentees, and the will of the local Afghans to build a more stable society.*

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is February twenty-second, 2007. I am interviewing Lt. Col. Gene Augustine, U.S. Marine Corps, about his tour of duty as the commanding officer of the Lashkar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT] in Afghanistan. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I am.

DR. KOONTZ: **And do you have any objection with Army or other researchers using this material as long as you're cited correctly?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I don't.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. To get started off, give me a little bit about your background.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Background? I am an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps. I've been in for approximately eighteen

and a half years. Previous assignments were as a platoon commander during Operation DESERT STORM; later on, I was a mechanized company commander with Battalion Landing Team-18. We basically went out on a Mediterranean cruise with the 26th MEU [marine expeditionary unit], were involved in Operation SILVER WAKE, which was in Tirana, Albania, I believe, in 1996, '97, that time frame. Prior to going over to Afghanistan, I was assigned out of III MEF [marine expeditionary force] headquarters in Okinawa, Japan, as a G-3 [staff section for operations] planner, and I went over to Afghanistan on an individual augment billet.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. You mentioned that operational experience that you had in Albania. Did that give you any kind of insights or any kind of experiences that you used later in Afghanistan regarding low-level conflicts or unconventional conflicts?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I'd say yes—and not just that, but being submerged into the whole MEU training cycle. You know, it's a six- to eight-month work-up prior to an actual deployment, so that whole process is a thorough process of training, evaluation, simulated exercises—very real world exercises, where you're constantly being tested on rules of engagement, you know, your ability to think quickly and act quickly. So, just



Colonel Augustine (U.S. Marine Corps) meets with local officials in Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province.

that background definitely gave me better insight when I got over to Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And other than that, did you have any other experiences or any other kind of professional duties that prepared you for your work for the PRT?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I'd say working out there at III MEF, doing a lot of joint, multilateral exercises—you know, working a lot with the Thai military, Singapore military, Japanese military, Korean militaries, working with those folks, and also civilians in those countries, as well. That type of coalition-type operation did help me prepare for Afghanistan.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And what was the process by which you got sent from Okinawa to Afghanistan. Why did you get tapped to do this?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. III MEF had been assigned a number of individual augment billets. A friend of mine that I worked with at MEF G-3, he had—he was the first PRT commander at Lashkar Gah. He was the guy who actually set up the PRT. His name was Lt. Col. Ty Yanvary. I had been in contact with him while he was the PRT commander. We didn't know … when the billet came out in a tasking message, it said, "Prov. Recon. Team Commander," so it sounded pretty operational. You know, it sounded like it might have had some recon in there. We thought "recon" meant "reconnaissance," not "reconstruction," but when he got over there, he figured out that it meant reconstruction. So, he was communicating with me on a routine basis. There're a lot of IA [individual augmentee] billets, you know? I kind of thought it would be good—and I knew it was a command billet. He had kind of formed the PRT while he was there, so I knew it was a command billet, and kind of independent operations, which appealed to me. So, the next time this billet was coming open, I got approved to go. I got approved by the CG [commanding general], III MEF, and I was a one-for-one replacement for Lieutenant Colonel Yanvary.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. What's the approximate time frame that all of this is happening?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: This is late October '04, was when I actually went in country and took over the job, and I was done in May of '05. So, I knew several months in advance that I was going to be going over and taking over that job.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. What kind of preparations did you take before?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: There was no formal training or anything else to go through in preparation. I just read up on some joint pubs, Marine Corps pubs, the Small Wars Manual, those type of things, just basically on my own. I did do some weapons training—

basically, went to the pistol range prior to going over there, that type stuff. So, it was just basically stuff on my own.

DR. KOONTZ: **I guess my question is, there's no magic book, How to Be a PRT Commander, is there?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: There's not now. However, I think since the time I've gone over there, there is a lot more training. I think the Army did a lot more training in preparation for guys going over there. They all kind of went over as a unit because most of the other PRT commanders came from the Army civil affairs section. So, they came over—I'm not sure which unit it was, but they came over basically as a unit and went into PRT commander billets that they were already tagged to. So, they did do a lot of work-up training prior to going over there. And I believe the Navy is starting to take over some of the PRTs now, and they are sending folks through training prior to going over there.

DR. KOONTZ: **What kind of communications did you have with Colonel Yanvary?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I had SIPRNET [Secure Internet Protocol Router Network] communications with him, as well as telephone conversations. I was able to talk to him every once in a while on the phone.

DR. KOONTZ: **And what kind of advice or guidance was he passing on to you?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Just basically about prep, gear prep, and things like that, and then once I got there, I had a good solid week or so ground time with him, which was an ample turnover.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And before you left Okinawa, did you get any kind of advice or guidance from any of your commanders? Did anybody tell you, "This is what we want you to do?"**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: No, no. No, just basically, "Hey, good luck! Stay healthy." But I don't—no one out there at III MEF really even knew what the PRTs were doing. It was still a relatively new concept. Like I mentioned, Lieutenant Colonel Yanvary got there in country—I guess he was there probably seven months before I went, and there was no PRT down in Lashkar Gah. He kind of went on initial site visits down there—you know, kind of recon, check out the place, talk to the provincial governor, see if there was possibility of getting a piece of land where they could set up a PRT and start building a PRT. He did that initially, started getting folks together. So, when he started out, he basically went down there with a handful of guys and some money, moved into like what they call the safe house, and kind of started out there. Eventually, once they built the security perimeter, basically the wall around the PRT compound, once they

got approval to build that, then the PRT slowly moved over there. When I got there, it was basically a wall with very few buildings built yet. We were still sleeping outside. We didn't have any head facilities or any of that. So, that was slowly coming online while I was there.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Tell me about the deployment from Okinawa to Afghanistan. How did you get there?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. I flew from Okinawa to Tampa and reported in to CENTCOM MARCENT [U.S. Central Command, U.S. Marine Corps Central Command] there and basically waited a week or so. And then, they have something called a rotary flight that I—they flew me from Tampa up to Baltimore, caught a rotary flight and went into, I think it was K2 [Karshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan]. It might have been K2. I'm not sure. It was somewhere up there to the north, either—I'm not sure if it was Uzbekistan; it's been kind of a while—but somewhere up there to the north. And then from there, we waited there a day or two and then caught a flight down into Bagram. Spent a few days at Bagram talking to Task Force VICTORY folks. There was a Marine detachment there in Afghanistan. Had to do some admin stuff—you know, kind of check in with those guys for pay and all that other kind of stuff, and then finally caught a flight from there down to Kandahar, and then from Kandahar, I caught a flight to Lashkar Gah.

It's pretty interesting flying in. The whole way I'd been flying either commercial airlines, some military aircraft, but I was landing in—you know, Bagram is a major airfield. Kandahar is even a pretty big airfield. It used to be an airport. So, I was flying into those two places. And, you know, you're flying regular flights, landing on a tarmac and then etc. Well, the last leg of the flight from Kandahar to Lashkar Gah, I was able to get on a Blackwater flight on some small aircraft, and I'm talking maybe a six-seater aircraft. And just basically me and another guy, a sergeant that I'd met up with at Kandahar that was actually part of the PRT. So, we start flying to Lashkar Gah. Not that far from Kandahar—I'm thinking maybe it's sixty miles or so; I'd have to do the map study—but we're flying in there, and the aircraft is circling and I'm looking down and I don't see anything except desert, so I'm thinking like, "What, am I not seeing the tarmac? I can't see it," and I didn't know what was going on. And then all of a sudden, the pilot is doing the final approach, and I just see green smoke coming up. And then we hit, and gravel and everything else, and dirt and dust and everything else, is flying up. Well, there was no tarmac there at Lashkar Gah. There was no airfield. It was basically just basically a level piece of desert that the Russians used to land aircraft on there. And we were capable of landing C–130s there because we did do that once or twice, but yes, there was no control tower or anything else. The control

tower was one of us on a handheld radio, and then we'd throw green smoke to let the aircraft know we had the little airfield secure and it was safe to land. So, that was actually my buddy, Ty Yanvary, who threw the green smoke and met me at the airfield and gave me a big hug and said, "Hey, this is home!" So, it was pretty funny.

DR. KOONTZ: **Right. All right. So, your colleague and buddy, like you said, slaps you on the back: "Welcome to home!" What's running through your mind as to what you're there to do and what your job is? What's your conception of what you are going to do as the commander of this PRT?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: My conception was I was going to help rebuild infrastructure in that province, and also help to provide security in that province. So, my goal was to do as much reconstruction as I could during the time I was there, try to make the place as safe as I could while I was there, basically kind of developing the critical institutions and infrastructure that they were lacking there. And I knew they were lacking. My friend had told me, "You won't believe it when you see it how little they have there." And Lashkar Gah is a little, small place. I mean, Bagram and Kabul are kind of built-up places, and even Kandahar is pretty built up. Lashkar Gah and Helmand Province really isn't. It's more farmland more than anything else. But there is a little town there in Lashkar Gah, which was largely built by the U.S. back in the forties and fifties, you know, Peace Corps–type folks. I would constantly run into elders that spoke a little English that said, "Yes, I learned English from Mrs. Smith. She was my teacher back in 1964 when she was over here with the Peace Corps." So, Lashkar Gah actually had a reputation of being—let's see if I have the term here in my notes here. It says [referring to notes], "Lashkar Gah was largely built by the U.S. in the fifties and sixties as a model of nation building." I think what was going on there was that the U.S. was kind of building down south while the Soviet Union was kind of more interested in moving in from the north. But they had a beautiful dam there, a hydroelectric dam there in northern Helmand Province, that was built by the U.S. It had fallen into ruin over the years and was only producing maybe three to five megawatts of electricity, but I think the capability and the goal that we were trying to get to was just to try to get up to fifty megawatts of electricity, which is pretty significant for over there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. I think you answered this before, but how long was your left-seat/right-seat?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: A week to ten days.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And what did you learn or experience in that period that you didn't know already?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Basically, the key players in the region. I learned more how best to operate, you know? You weren't just dealing with the provincial governor and government. You were also dealing with the district governments, as well. So, more the local governments, more of that stuff. The PRT had not really been in existence for all that long before I got there, so they hadn't established a lot of places. There were still places in the province they hadn't been to, districts they hadn't been to yet. I learned about what the ongoing projects they had going at that time. Our CMOC [civil-military operations center] wasn't up and running yet. It was one of my first goals was to get the CMOC up and running, as well as the basic infrastructure of the PRT. I wanted to get that running so the guys can be well rested, focused on the mission each night, and it's kind of tough when you're not sleeping real well and your facilities aren't that good. I mean, it's obviously better. You know they can get better rest if their facilities are a bit better.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And you'd also already talked a little bit about your site of operations. When you arrived, you basically said it was kind of a walled compound, and that's about it. Take me on kind of a quick, just kind of mental walking tour of your compound.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. We had—it was a walled compound. It was probably about 200 meters by 250 meters, the interior. In each corner of the compound, there were basically twenty-foot-high watchtowers. Outside the walled compound, there was space all around the PRT as well, so we were able to dig a trench basically all around and then place triple-strength concertina wire around that so there was some standoff from even getting into the PRT. We were in the process of building vehicle ramps so that if there was an attack, we could have the up-armored Humvees drive right up onto these vehicle ramps, and we'd be able to bring their weapon systems to bear right over the wall of the compound. So, basically you've got a wall there; you've got a ramp here; the vehicle drives up; the driver is able to bring his weapons to bear. We were trying to get a fuel storage point so that when we did get fuel for the compound, for the vehicles and for the generators, it would be far enough away so it wouldn't be in the blast zone. We had an underground ammo storage point that we were working on. Basically, we were able to bury several CONEX [container express] boxes, three or four CONEX boxes underground, under about six feet of dirt, and then put our ammo underground like that. Oh, what else? A helipad. We were working on a helipad. We were working on basically barracks for the troops, working on a recreation room. We did have a headquarters building. That was the first building that went in, so there was already a headquarters building when I got there, a place we could have meetings. We had our comms system set up there and everything else. We were working on a CMOC as a separate

part, kind of a separate compound almost, the civil-military operations center that had kind of a private entrance so that folks could come in and out of the CMOC for meetings—you know, local Afghans, etc., without being exposed to the rest of the compound for security.

Surrounding the outside of the PRT, there were some homes, some villages. All the houses over there, basically, they all have walls around them. People put a wall around their property almost all the time, whoever owns it. So, the PRT was pretty desolate around us. By the time I left, there was a lot more buildings going on all around us, and I think that was because of the relative security that the PRT brought with it.

DR. KOONTZ: **What were the walls of your compound made out of?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Everything that was there was built locally, so there were no U.S. contractors building any of the buildings or the walls or any of that stuff. We did use KBR [Kellogg, Brown & Root] to do electricity, plumbing, that type stuff, but everything else was built locally, basically built with, you know, mortar, dirt, some rebar, that type stuff. But it was well built. I mean, the construction on that was very good.

DR. KOONTZ: **Would it be fair to say this is a pretty austere operating base when you got there?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Very austere. No toilet facilities. We built little wooden outhouses, basically, so we were burning the waste with diesel and everything else. Having problems trying to keep everybody keep their hands clean and everything else, a lot of guys getting sick just from dirty conditions, from living in a field environment.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And by the time you left, you mentioned all these construction projects are going on at the operating base. What kind of progress was made on all those by the time you left?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: By the time I left it was, I'd say, 98 percent complete. We had—it was beautiful. We had a great PRT. I mean the construction on it, the guys that had worked on it, between the KBR guys and our guys internally, this staff sergeant—he was a national guardsman out of Louisville, Kentucky, a real sharp guy, an engineer by trade, but a national guardsman, a reservist, and he wasn't full-time Army, but he did a great job overseeing the construction. One of the great things about having guys like national guardsmen and reservists is a lot of these guys do construction or are mechanics or whatever in their civilian jobs, and are very good at it and have been doing it for a long time. So, whenever we needed something, as long as we can get the tools, if these guys had some downtime or whatever, weren't going out on patrol,

whatever, they'd grab a circular saw or a jigsaw, whatever, and start building stuff for us. So, they did a great job.

But, yes, we had a grand opening ceremony where we actually invited all the local government officials, Ambassador [Zalmay] Khalilzad, who was the ambassador at that time, he came to it. It was a great ceremony. Colonel [Richard] Pedersen, I believe, I think General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno was there. But, you know, just a fantastic grand opening ceremony, and the PRT looked great. We had very good billeting areas for all the soldiers. We had a very good dining facility, a very good recreation room, a full weight room and everything else, a TV room with a big-screen TV that they got for us. The big thing was electricity. We had gotten these high-speed generators. They were all up and running. We had three. You'd have two running different types of electricity, one 110-watt, 220-, and then the other one was off cycle. And that type of stuff is probably too much detail, but all those ramps were built. Those were up and good to go, the vehicle ramps. What else? We had built a little field. We were trying to grow grass. It wasn't working out too well, but we had leveled off a good soccer/football field, probably about sixty yards by forty yards, and it was a common occurrence for us to be out there playing flag football or soccer or whatever when we weren't out on mission or whatever.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And again, you just kind of mentioned this a little bit, but tell me about the geography and the terrain that you're going to be operating in.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. Pretty rugged, semiarid desert. The south was a lot, the south and southern districts were very flat, open desert. As you move north through the province, when you get up to the north in those northern districts, very mountainous, a lot of snow up there, very rugged terrain, tough go in a lot of areas up in Bagram Valley, up through there. The Helmand River runs basically through the entire province from Kajaki, and it exits all the way down to the southwest border there with Nimruz Province, and then the Helmand River continues through Nimruz Province into Iran, into Zabol, Iran. What I was going to say about the terrain there, very few roads, very few paved, asphalt roads; a few in Lashkar Gah. Ring Road, that ran from Kandahar out to Farah, that ran through the town of Gereshk, kind of cut the province in half, so when we did go into Kandahar we can get up to Ring Road there and take it into Kandahar. It kind of made the trip not too bad, but getting from Lashkar Gah up to Ring Road, it was all kind of cross-country–type movement across very tough terrain, very hard on the vehicles and equipment.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And tell me about the people of Lashkar Gah?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: The people of Lashkar Gah? Very interesting, friendly people. I mean the Afghan people, as a whole, they take their hospitality seriously. They were always inviting us into their houses. I don't think we ever went to a meeting or went to a district where they didn't host us for a meal, very, very friendly people. Within Lashkar Gah—Little America, or whatever they called it, that was, like I mentioned before, largely built by the U.S. So, that did have paved roads, and it was a nice, little town. It was a small town, but a nice, little town that was kind of—people had very little, you know. They had no plumbing systems. They had very little electricity. They didn't have a sanitation system. As you can imagine, no real irrigation system, so they had gotten rain there pretty heavily in January through February and March of that year, and they literally hadn't had any rain in seven years. So, there was a lot of damage and a lot of flooding and everything else because of that. But the people handled it pretty well. We did a lot of relief ops. I'm sure we'll get into that later, but we did a lot of relief ops for everybody throughout the province during that time. But counter to—you know, you kind of think people don't want the impression, "Hey, we're here to stay," that type thing. There, they were like, "We hope you stay," because they knew us being there would help to provide security and stability and generate income and jobs for a lot of people, so they welcomed us with open arms.

DR. KOONTZ: **You just anticipated my next question there, so I'll go ahead and drop that one …**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I'll caveat that by saying the average citizen welcomed us with open arms and was happy we were there. The other thing about Helmand Province is it's the number one poppy producer in Afghanistan as a province, so there was a huge amount of poppy being produced throughout the province, and everywhere we'd drive and go we'd see these fields of poppy. The other thing the U.S. did while we were there in the fifties and sixties was we built a pretty extensive canal system off of the Helmand River. So, this canal system allowed big farms to flourish in that area because it was a really good canal system using the water off of the Helmand River. The way the farmers would farm there is that they would basically flood their fields, and then they would allow them to drain. So, I learned a lot about farming when I was over there, both about how to grow poppy and produce heroin, as well as best practices with regard to things like drip irrigation and the way they do farming and how to desalinate the soil, all that kind of stuff. So, it was pretty interesting.

DR. KOONTZ: **We'll get to the nonaverage citizens later. Tell me about the local government in Lashkar Gah.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. Lashkar Gah was the provincial seat there for Helmand Province, so you had the whole provincial government right there in Lashkar Gah. I met with on a weekly, sometimes three four times a week depending what was going on, with the governor. The governor at the time was a guy named Sher Muhammad. He was later elected—I don't know exactly what position he was elected to, but he moved up to Kabul and was working the government up there. But he was the district governor the whole time I was there. Basically, the major players are the district governor, his deputy, the police chief, and the intel chief. Those three [four] guys are usually the main players at any given province. So we had Sher Muhammad, Daoud Muhammad Khan was the intel chief, and then a guy named Abdul Raman Jan was the district police chief. I don't believe any of them stayed in their jobs thereafter.

DR. KOONTZ: **How effective were they in, I guess—I'm trying to think of a way to articulate this—doing their job? I mean, how well were they governing?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: You know, I think they were all making pretty good efforts, but there was always a question of corruption, and with all of the drugs and poppy production going on in Helmand, that was always a—these guys always had that in there as a question mark behind them, not just from me but from higher headquarters, intel. Everybody else was always like, "Are these guys involved in drugs?" That was always the thing behind every conversation—this ongoing chess game of corruption, who's making money, how are they making money, you know? It's kind of an ongoing problem over there.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Earlier you had mentioned that one of the important things that you wanted to do was to do reconstruction and building institutions, but then you also mentioned that the average citizen wanted you to be there and wanted help. Is this a humanitarian space that you're going into for the most part?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: In what respect? What do you mean by that?

DR. KOONTZ: **In terms of security.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: For us, it was. I mean, since we had our own kind of traveling security, we felt we could go into wherever we wanted to go and start doing humanitarian efforts. Other NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and other agencies didn't feel the same way. They didn't have their own security, so they wouldn't go into Helmand at times because of fear of something happening to their workers or their supplies or what have you. So for us, since we had our own security, never really a problem. We kind of felt like we could go wherever we wanted, and the whole time I was there,

within Helmand Province and, really, with my predecessor as well, we didn't have any real direct attacks—probably some ancillary incidents, maybe mistaking who we might be when moving at nighttime or something like that, but never any direct attacks against the PRT.

DR. KOONTZ: **How about attacks against the NGOs and others?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: There were occasional things that would happen. Whether or not they were attacks because they were NGOs, or whether there were attacks as a criminal activity, is kind of hard to say. For example, one of USAID's [U.S. Agency for International Development's] subcontractors was a company called Chemonics, and they were basically doing an Alternative Livelihoods Program, where they were hiring locals to work on some of those drainage and canal systems that I'd mentioned. Basically, those things have to be cleaned out every so often or else the water doesn't drain properly from the fields and you get an oversalinization problem there. So, they were hiring these guys to come clear out these trenches and paying these guys in hard currency, in Afghans—a very effective program. They'd get up to a few hundred locals working at each different farm, and they would be working at different farms. One time they did have an incident where a couple of the workers … they got carjacked, basically. The car got taken from them. These guys were actually taken to a farm somewhere else and dropped off. So, they basically stopped work at that one particular location. I believe it was in Nad Ali District. So, that kind of shut them down for a while, but it kind of sent a message like, "Hey, we're doing this. We're bringing in money for you guys. If you guys can't provide security for these guys or be on the watchout, then we're not going to keep doing these programs." And enough of the people wanted to continue to do these programs that it became an issue.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay, sir. What I'd like to do is transition into the actual PRT itself. What was your chain of command?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: My chain of command as a PRT commander was—I reported to Colonel Pedersen. He was the RC South commander, and then he reported up to C[J]TF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76] up in Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **You're a Marine officer. You're now working for an Army unit. Was there anything you had to kind of learn from the joint aspect?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Not really, you know? I mean, it was very seamless integration. That's an infantry headquarters, C[J]TF—Colonel Pedersen and Task Force BRONCO, they're an infantry brigade. I mean, I had no problems plugging right

into those guys, speaking the same language. Really, it was very easy.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about the composition of your PRT.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. The composition would fluctuate occasionally, but for the most part we had somewhere around a hundred personnel, seventy-five to eighty of them being infantry from Iowa National Guard. We had some U.S. Army regulars. We had some U.S. Army Reserve. We had myself as a marine, and then we had a few civilians. We had a USAID rep, Mr. Pat Irish. We had a Department of State rep, who got there kind of near the end of my tour. His name escapes me right now. We also had a U.S. Department of Agriculture rep, a veterinarian who worked with us as well. The Army active duty were based out of Hawaii. They were normally the folks that provided comm support and also human support, human intelligence support. The reservists were—I believe those were the military policemen. And then, like I said, Iowa National Guard for the rest. So, I'd say 75 or 77 percent were Iowa National Guard, 10 percent U.S. Army Regular, 8 percent U.S. Army Reserve, 1 percent Marine, and then 3 or 4 percent civilian.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And you as the commander of this conglomeration of personnel, what did you see as your primary tasks or missions?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. Basically, two main missions were security and reconstruction. The mission statement that I had was "Provincial Reconstruction Team Lashkar Gah will conduct civil, military, and security operations in Helmand Province in order to facilitate reconstruction and reform and to deny enemy influence over Helmand Province."

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. How do you do that, I guess, is my question.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Okay. Security—basically, by our presence, was helping security. The other way we did it was working with Afghan National Army, and then even more so with the provincial and district police. We actually would run some, basically, training seminars at the PRT for these folks, and we were trying to set up, working with Colonel Pedersen, trying to set up a mini-police academy out there in Helmand Province.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And you'd mentioned that your PRT was doing some training with the district and provincial police. What kind of training were you giving them?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Well, not only training but equipping, as well. We were providing them with police vehicles so they could actually do their jobs, to include border police as well so they could actually patrol the borders, working with them so that they

had comm systems, radios so they could communicate with each other, training as far as riot control, things of that nature, proper search of vehicles; basically the basic police officer skills. And I did have some military policemen attached to my PRT, and those are the guys who were running these little training seminars.

DR. KOONTZ: **I guess my question was going to be is this kind of—cop training, or is this kind of more like paramilitary training?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: A bit of both. Their job there isn't like you would picture a typical city cop would be or a detective, you know? It's kind of more vehicle searches, more security, that type stuff.

DR. KOONTZ: **And what kind of efforts did you have to undertake to build that police academy?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Well, we just used the PRT compound. We never actually had the police academy built. There was a police academy in Kandahar, but it was always full to capacity. We would send guys there, but it just wasn't enough room in order to get this done, so the thought was "You know, maybe we should push out police training teams to the provincial level, instead of bringing them all in to either Kandahar or Bagram or wherever these academies were, and maybe we can kind of push it out and send out expert teams out there to do that." Whether or not they actually got there, I don't know. It was kind of an ongoing process when I left.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, this is more of providing capabilities rather than facilities?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Right, right. Here's some point I failed to mention before. One of the unique things about Helmand Province, compared to the other provinces in RC South, was that the other provinces … they would have a PRT there, and they would also have an infantry battalion. So, out there in Tarin Kowt, there was both—and Oruzgan both—there was a PRT out there in Tarin Kowt and the infantry battalion out there, as well, in Kandahar PRT and an infantry battalion. We didn't have that. We were out there, kind of as Dances with Wolves out there, without that infantry battalion support. So, what we can do and how much we could travel was kind of—we didn't have that additional security. In the other provinces, the PRT battalions worked closely together for both security and reconstruction efforts. Our PRT was a little bigger with Iowa National Guard infantry because we were providing our own security wherever we went. I just wanted to kind of point that out.

DR. KOONTZ: **There's two questions I have based on that. The first one is how big is your area of operations?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Let's see. I don't have the exact statistics, and you really couldn't relate it to U.S. terms. I think landwise it's the biggest province in the country. It's very big. I mean, it would take you two days to get all the way up to the northern part. From Lashkar Gah up to the northern part here, it would take you a good day and a half to get up there just because it's a tough go. So, you could say, "Hey, it's one hundred kilometers," but it might take you two days to get that one hundred kilometers.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, your PRT is responsible for the entire province of Helmand?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Right, and all the districts within.

DR. KOONTZ: **And the reason that you did not have the associated battalion, was that because of the relative security in the province?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: No. We just didn't have the manpower. We just didn't have an infantry battalion to put out there. Whenever they could, they would try to reinforce. At times, we would get some infantry support from other places. I think there was a unit that had been out in either Herat or Farah that was getting ready to redeploy, and they brought them in and we worked with these guys. It was an air cav unit.

DR. KOONTZ: **I had planned to get into this later, but this might be a good time to go ahead and transition into that. You had talked a little bit about that Helmand is the number one poppy producer or region in Afghanistan. Were you aware of that at the time that you arrived?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I was, yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **And other than being able to go out in the provinces and see these fields of poppy—I mean, you can't hide that kind of thing. Could you see other kind of physical evidence of opium growth, opium trade?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes. Actually in meetings with the provincial governor, that would come up as a topic because it was very—that was when President Karzai was really telling the whole country, "Hey, we can't be a narco-state. We're not going to get the long-term aid that we want. We need to start eradication. We need to stop it on our own," and kind of put out the word to the provincial governors: "Hey, this is your responsibility. I want you guys to make this happen." So, at our weekly meetings, the provincial governor would report to me and say, "Hey, we eradicated this much poppy, and we busted and seized this many kilos of heroin," or—it was raw opium. It was in a raw state whenever we saw it. And he would show me, "Hey, this is what we've confiscated." And then we also—and

I didn't mention this before. We also had a Ministry of Interior rep, Colonel Fakir, who was basically working at our PRT on a daily basis. So, he was kind of the guy who reported directly to Kabul, to the Ministry of Interior there at our PRT working with us, that if there was poppy, he would kind of report on poppy eradication as he saw it and what was going on, as well when there was a drug seizure or whatever, he would make sure that that actually did get destroyed and didn't wind up in some bazaar somewhere else.

DR. KOONTZ: **And counternarcotics efforts, as you said, were supposed to be the official kind of domain of the British. Did your PRT get involved in any kind of counternarcotics efforts?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: No, we didn't. It would have been counterproductive to our reconstruction and, probably, security mission. So, it was kind of a fine line there, a very gray area. I knew we weren't doing counternarcotics. We did see it there, but it wasn't our mission to go and eradicate fields. We mentioned, "Hey, long term, you guys cannot continue to produce poppy and make that your means of livelihood. We need to find something else." But there were also "What else, okay? If not poppy, this number one cash crop, what else? What are we going to do to feed our families?"—and this and that. We had folks there from USAID and places like that who would talk about Alternative Livelihoods and what other choices they might have had, but it's difficult because if you're growing a different crop, how do you get that crop to the market if you don't really have the roads? You know, it's not like you can grow melons and then be able to transport melons to Kandahar. By the time you got the melons going over those roads, they'd be destroyed. So, it was kind of everything kind of melded together. Well, you can't do this if you don't have the infrastructure. Well, you're not going to get the money for infrastructure if you're growing poppy. So, it was kind of—there were a lot of things that kind of needed to happen simultaneously. This whole reconstruction effort was like an elephant, and how do you eat an elephant? Well, you take one bite at a time. So, it was basically the same thing. We would try to do whatever we could for that day, at the same time keeping an eye on a long-term goal. We developed a five-year plan for reconstruction efforts in our province. All the PRTs and infantry battalions developed a five-year plan for what could we do, what were we going to do, spread amongst a number of different areas for reconstruction within our province. We submitted those to Task Force BRONCO, the RC South commander, who compiled those. We met with the—we'd have a governors' meeting where we met with everybody, and we would try to implement as much as we could.

DR. KOONTZ: **Do you remember what your five-year plan looked like, just kind of in its broad construction?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes. It was based on the Afghan National Development Plan. They had basically four pillars, which were human capital and social protection, physical infrastructure and natural resources, trade investment, and public administration security and rule of law. So, those four pillars, basically, and then there are subcategories under those, but they're just categories. There's no implementation plan. Like for example, under rule of law, you have effective judiciary. Okay, effective judiciary—what does that mean to Helmand Province? Well, it means in Year 1, we are going to establish a courthouse in Lashkar Gah; then we were going, in Year 2, to establish a courthouse down at the district levels in three districts; Year 3, courthouses at the district level in however many more districts, until you have, over a five-year plan, now each district has their own courthouse, as well as a courthouse in the provincial capital. So, it's basically a way of implementing this grand Afghan National Development Plan, a way of actually putting some realistic, or potentially realistic, goals to the problem, to this reconstruction plan. So, we kind of looked at that. You need schools in each of the districts, and how many towns? What are the population centers? USAID was doing a lot of that from Kabul, and at our level, with our USAID rep, we were going around ensuring those projects were being done properly. But what we did at our PRT was, we kind of task organized, and we went around to the thirteen districts that I had, and we sat down with the district leaders, the district *shura*, the district police, all these different folks. We sat down with them and we'd find out "Okay, what exactly do you need, and what is the priority?" and by doing that, by task organizing and doing that, we were able to accomplish a lot of things each time we made a visit to the districts. We had to prioritize. We knew "Hey, Musa Qala, that province or that district, what do they need? What is their number one priority?" and we would know and we would go from there. So, I kind of felt like that was our job to know which each of the districts, what their priorities were, what they needed, what was the state of security there, what problems were they having. So, we kind of really closely monitored that and then implemented plans to actually make these things happen. Basically, the weapons at our disposal were having USAID there and what they were doing. Plus, our province had a $6.4 million CERP budget, Commander's Emergency Response Program funds, that we could actually "Okay, you need this? All right. Everyone agree?" Or, my civil-military affairs guys: "Make sense? Okay, let's work up a proposal for a contract." They would give us a proposal of what they wanted. Say it was a hospital. Nobody else was building a hospital, and we could, within our realm of possibility, go ahead and do that. We'd put that project out for bid. Maybe it was—not a hospital, maybe more of a twenty-bed clinic, or

whatever it was. We'd put that project out for bid. We'd hold bidders' conferences at our PRT. Folks would put in bids on those projects, and then we would award the contract, and then, boom, then they would go and start that twenty-bed clinic or whatever it might be.

DR. KOONTZ: **Are these locals that you're opening the bids to?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes, they're all Afghans. There were occasionally folks from construction companies coming in from Pakistan or whatever, but to the maximum extent possible, we would award the contracts to locals from those districts. So you have the benefit of, A, they're getting a clinic, and then, B, we're putting money back into that district by paying the contractors who hire workers there, etc.

DR. KOONTZ: **Was CERP the major source for your infrastructure building funding?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: It was for the PRT commanders and battalion commanders. It was definitely CERP. The bigger money was coming in through USAID from Kabul. They—and that's why you always had to coordinate with USAID before you did any project like, "Hey, we're thinking about doing this." And the USAID rep was right there all the time, anyway, and he'd know automatically, "Hey, you guys are thinking about doing this, right? All right, let me check and see if there's any plan up in Kabul at USAID headquarters to do anything like this." "Okay." "No, there isn't." "All right, fine." And the other thing we would do is sometimes we would supplement what was going on. Say, USAID built a hospital, but the hospital didn't have the proper equipment so they could run the hospital. USAID didn't normally provide hospital equipment, but perhaps we could with CERP funds. Perhaps we would find a source that would bring in hospital equipment; hospital beds, X-ray machines, whatever it was. Same thing in schools. USAID might build schools and basic buildings and stuff like that, but we would potentially use the money to buy desks and chairs and books, whatever, or coordinate with other NGOs to get that kind of stuff in.

DR. KOONTZ: **This is something I should have asked a while back. What was it like to have these kind of civilian augmentees embedded into what's basically a military structure?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: You know, I call it interagency operations at a tactical level. I think it's brilliant. I think it's what we should be doing. More is better. To have a USAID guy working right there alongside the military, great. Not only do we know ground truth of what's going on at USAID, but we're also providing security. USAID just couldn't tool around, go around Afghanistan, potentially, without any security; but by us being there, we could accomplish both missions. Same

thing with USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture], you know? There's only so much, and there should be more of it. There's only so much knowledge, me, as a PRT commander or infantry officer, has about things like rule of law, education systems, grid systems, those type things, better farming practices. But, you get folks like USAID, USDA, State Department—there should be more of that. There should be an expert on education systems. There should be an expert on department of public works systems, road management, grid systems, all that kind of stuff. I firmly believe that that interagency-type activity is the way to go down there at the tactical level. Great if they're up at Kabul talking about these things, but they need to be down there at the implementation level, as well. I think we were able to create a lot of synergy by working together and going out instead of the USAID going over and visiting a district and the USDA guy going over and visiting a different district, State Department having a separate meeting over there. No, we'd all go together. We'd sit down with our counterparts at the district level, and at the end of it, we'd all kind of come to an agreement and we'd all kind of agree, "Hey, these are the projects we need to do, and why we need to do it," and we'd be able to share information, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Way back when we started, you mentioned that your previous experience had given you a lot of experience in working with civilian agencies and things like that. Did you get any sense from your USDA and your USAID and your State Department reps that there was some kind of learning process on their part to work in a military system?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: No, I don't think there really was. I mean, it just so happened the—I think everybody—those three reps had all had prior military experience. I know our State Department guy was a prior military intel guy. I think our USAID had some prior military experience. But, the USAID guy had been around for a long time with USAID, so he had done other operations with other military guys in other parts of the world. So, those guys have great experience. They've been around and done the stuff, and some of the guys from some of the subcontractors under USAID had had a lot of experience. These guys, some of them had experience in Colombia and places like that, so they knew about the narcotics and people being involved in that, but also being government officials, so they were pretty savvy to a lot of that stuff. There's a constant—a lot of these meetings with different people is a constant chess game, a mental chess game in your mind of "Why is this guy asking me for this? Why is this his part? That doesn't make sense, of a bazaar road being his number one priority over a hospital or a school or whatever," you know? "I wonder if this guy owns the bazaars over there." So, it was a constant mental chess game that we'd all kind of—when these meetings were over,

we'd sit back and recap and talk, and after a while, after a few months of doing this, you start to really understand what makes sense and what didn't make sense. I could think of several incidents where we'd get a report like "X is going on, this place is under attack by this guy," and be like, "That doesn't make any sense. I just talked to that guy yesterday and things were going fine there. That doesn't make any sense," and, sure enough, that report would be wrong. It would be either misinformation or a mistake, or who knows why that report came in. But you could almost, after a while, understand. You kind of knew who the players were and where they were coming from and why they were coming from there.

DR. KOONTZ: **Did you have kind of a weekly routine with the PRT? Did you have a battle rhythm that you tried to operate on?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes, we definitely did. For example, we had our infantry guys broken down into five squads. Okay, we had two mission squads, so one squad would be designated Mission 1; the other squad would be Mission 2. The third squad would be the quick reaction force, and then one squad would be on day watch on the towers during the day. The other squad would be on night watch towers at night. So, Mission Squad 1, whatever mission was going out that day whether it be taking a patrol to get the PRT commander and staff out to a meeting at the governor's place, that would be—a mission squad would do that. Maybe another mission squad, a different meeting was going on for whatever reason, or one of the civil affairs guys was going out to a site where we were doing a construction project and he was going to check on that construction project in one of the other districts, they would take him out. The quick reaction force would know both of those missions and would be ready to reinforce as required, and then the other two would be on guard duty. The civil affairs guys who worked for us—once we got that CMOC established, we had some real sharp civil affairs teams. We had two basically civil affairs teams working out there. They would be running operations in the CMOC for the day. We'd always have people coming in, either NGOs, locals, different people within the Afghan government coming in to talk to us, maybe contractors coming in to talk to us. They would keep that going during the day, and everyone else was kind of as required. But each night, we'd have a daily meeting and kind of go over what the schedule was for the next day and the week out and then whatever missions we were going on the next day. Later on that night, we'd brief up the missions, do a mission brief. Any time anybody went out of the PRT compound, we'd have a mission brief. We'd know who was going, numbers going, when they were going, where they were going and a way to put in a quick reaction force if needed to reinforce those guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **What's the thought and planning process behind the missions that your two mission squads are going to go out on? How do you identify what missions need to be done?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Basically, we knew what districts we wanted to get out to. So, if we were going to go out and do a district visit, we would basically bring in the PRT commander, the Department of State rep, USAID rep, one of the civil affairs teams, the Ministry of Interior rep, our police training guys, our medical guys, our USDA guys. We would try to space out going to the different districts, and some of those missions would be … you know, you could go get out early in the morning, visit with these guys for four or five hours during the day, have meetings, whatever, and then make it back that night. Other ones might require an intermediate stop, remain overnight, set up security, and then push on the next day. So, we kind of kept it going in a cycle. These are the thirteen districts: "When was the last time we were here? All right, we've got to get that one." That way, we had weekly scheduled meetings with the governor on projects. We had to go and check on the projects to see what the status was, see what the status of work was on the projects, maybe do a site visit to see, "All right, this is where these guys want this road. What are going to be the parameters of that?" So, there was always something to go out on. It just depended on what was going on at that particular time—humanitarian assistance when the weather was bad, providing aid, getting aid out to folks, stuff like that.

DR. KOONTZ: **As you mentioned before, you're going out on lots of these missions and site visits to meet governors and provincial officials and things like this. Can you kind of take me through kind of a typical meeting that you would have with an Afghan official? Is there sort of a ritual, I guess, or is there a pattern to this?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes. Basically, whenever I went out to the district teams, I would try not to just meet with the district chief or whoever it may be. In one of our districts, it was actually the governor's brother. He was the district chief in one of the districts. Now, if you just meet with him, you're going to get the world according to him, so I would very rarely just meet with him. I would meet with him and what's called the *shura*, which is basically the tribal elders from that district. So, I would usually sit down with these guys, local doctor, veterinarian, police chief. They might be having side meetings with some of my guys at the same time. But I'd sit down with the district chief and the *shura* and talk to those guys about security, what's going on with security, what are the problems we're having: "One of the schools got broken into. Who do you think did it? What do you think the problem is? Do you think it was a Taliban thing, or do you think it was just criminals?" You know, that type

of thing. We'd talk about security. Then we would talk about reconstruction: "Hey, what are your priorities? What are your goals? What do you want to happen?" And then we would just talk in general, just general stuff, establishing rapport—family life. We'd always sit down, have a meal with these guys, and do that type stuff, kind of a sharing of the culture, that type thing. We talked security and reconstruction. We'd also get into politics a little bit: "What do you think about the elections? What do you think about the government in Kabul? What do you think about the Ministry of Interior?" and anything like that.

DR. KOONTZ: **Probably drank a lot of tea, I would imagine.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes, absolutely. Tea all the time. They always put out these great raisins and pistachio nuts, ate a lot of that stuff—a lot of goat.

DR. KOONTZ: **Had you had any kind of cultural training?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: No, not Afghan-specific. Just in the Marine Corps, you kind of naturally travel around the world, so you are getting cultural training. But I didn't have any Afghan-specific cultural training. A critical piece that I didn't really mention when I talked about PRT personnel is in addition to what we had, U.S. folks working, we also had locals working. We had locals working in our little mess kitchen there. We had local guards, so we had guards working around the PRT compound. When one of our guys would be on watch that night, they'd have an Afghan alongside of them, and that was important because if you ever had a problem at one of the gates or whatever, you had someone that spoke the language able to be with you and help take action. Whenever we went out and did something where we thought there might be riot and control problems and stuff like that, where we thought that might be an issue, we'd bring these guys out with us because they could—it looks better for them to be pushing the crowd along than it does a U.S. soldier pushing the crowd along. And they know how to—it's a cultural thing. They know what's acceptable and what's not.

And the other people that were critical to us is our interpreters. You know, our interpreters were key. That's always—not only did we have local hires for 'terps; we also had a few of what they call Class A 'terps that are U.S. citizens that work as interpreters. Those guys are—you can't even put a value on those guys because those guys, they have the clearance and they're U.S. citizens, and they can actually kind of sit quietly in the corner of a room and let you know if the interpreter that's working for you is actually saying what's he supposed to be saying, or is he putting his own political spin on things, which would occasionally happen.

You'd have to check on these guys, and then if that was the case, you'd have to either talk to them or get rid of them.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned that hydroelectric dam that was there, that the Peace Corps built, had fallen in disarray, and then you mentioned you did some work on that. What did you do to rebuild that dam?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: That was a USAID project. That dam was built, I guess, back in the fifties or sixties, and I think it was by a U.S. company. I believe it was Westinghouse, if I'm not mistaken. I'd have to go back and check my notes. But there was a reconstruction project, refurbishment project funded. I believe it was by USAID through Siemens, and they were basically going in there and adding turbines in there. They were either refurbing the turbines or whatever they were doing, but they were basically up there kind of doing a complete overhaul of the facility up there at the Kajaki Dam. The infrastructure was there, the dam was there, and the location for the turbines to go into and all that other stuff was all there. It just needed to be upgraded and rehabbed. And, the grid system was out there. I mean, at least part of it was. So, if they can get—I'd be curious to know what they did now, how many megawatts of power it's producing now. But by the end of that project it was supposed to get up to like fifty megawatts, up from like three to five.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you mentioned that there really wasn't very much opposition in Helmand, at least that affected your PRT. Is there any way that you can describe the limited opposition that was there? What kind of tactics would be used against those NGOs that couldn't protect themselves?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Occasionally, a schoolhouse would get burned down by people who were reported to be Taliban because Taliban didn't want women or girls in school. Occasionally you'd hear that. There would be attacks occasionally, and some of the police would be threatened. You'd hear different people saying they were threatened by people reported to be Taliban saying, "Hey, don't work with the U.S."—kind of intimidation tactics, things of that nature. But, you know, it's pretty hard to discern how much of this is actual Taliban and how much of it is drug lords, organized-crime types, people who may have an interest other than what our interest is.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, it's kind of more just sort of generic criminality?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: That's what I always felt like it was like, yes. I didn't really feel like it was like, "Hey, this is a Taliban stronghold, and we don't want you guys there." Then again, they really didn't have a reason. The PRT is there to do reconstruction and to assist the police force. I don't know that they necessarily

had a reason to—it probably would have done them more harm than good to disrupt the PRT. You would hear occasionally some of the—occasionally, there would be shootings between the local police force and what was reported to be Taliban. Now, is that because the local police came upon drug smuggling and whoever was smuggling those drugs, whether they be Taliban or just some other organized criminals, and they got in a firefight over that? So, there were a lot of strange things. We had heard that one of the police chiefs had captured a Taliban guy that was probably a mid-level Taliban guy whose name we had heard and knew of and came to find out that the reason he had this guy was because the Taliban had shot up some of his policemen, so he had captured this guy and was going to ransom him back to the Taliban as kind of punishment for those guys shooting up some of his policemen and, obviously, to make some money. So, we kind of got wind of it through some intel sources, whatever, and we just happened to pay a visit to that district headquarters the day that that guy was being held. Some of our HUMINT [human intelligence] guys happened to—and Ministry of Interior rep Colonel Fakir happened to stumble, and I say that tongue in cheek—happened to stumble upon this guy being held in this guy's jail cell, and then they were able to [say], "Hey, Ministry of Interior wants this guy, and they want him now, so we're going to take him with us. Colonel Fakir is going to take him with us and get him transported up to Kabul." So, it was kind of a little cat-and-mouse game like that: "Hey, we stumbled upon this guy now. Hey, wait a minute! Oh, you got this guy? Great police work! We're going to take him from you," and that police chief was pretty pissed off. But you know, hey, he's operating illegally, and that's kind of part of the problem, is when you're in a place there is no real rule of law. So, your average farmer growing poppy or selling narcotics, there's nobody that's going to arrest you and put you in jail and put you through the criminal process because there is none, or there was none when I was there. There was no court system or true police system at that time.

DR. KOONTZ: **How far do you think efforts to build the rule of law and to extend the reach of the government and build some kind of responsive, responsible rule in Helmand—how far had that gone?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I'd say, just off the ground. I believe one of our projects was to build a courthouse. There were some—we had met with the different judges from the area. As I recall, I believe the judges were also kind of investigators in some cases, so it was different than what we were used to, and there were different types of judges—kind of judges that handled strictly law things, and then also kind of a religious judge who kind of handled other things. And in other countries, other cultures, you basically have a religious judge that

handles things like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and things like that. So, there was kind of that, but it was not fully up and running by the time I left there, but it was certainly an area that needed to be addressed and continued to be built on.

DR. KOONTZ: **What can you point to as the greatest success that your PRT had while you were commander?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I would say the establishment of the CMOC and making that a viable place for the average Afghan leaders, *shuras*, Afghan government folks, NGOs, PVOs [private volunteer organizations], folks like that, and government organizations, as well, for U.S. government organizations. For them to go to in Helmand Province and know "Hey, if I go to the PRT, I'll be heard, I'll get pointed in the right direction, and I have a place to go. There is a place to go to that people will hear what I'm saying." So, I think the establishment really of the CMOC, and our work with the districts, getting down to the district level and making sure the *shura* know that we were out there to support them, the various *shuras*, that they knew we were there to support them, I think that was kind of our—the best thing that occurred during my time there. The PRT really became established during my time there.

DR. KOONTZ: **And what could you point to as the most pressing challenge or most pressing concern?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I would say a true Alternative Livelihood for these folks, other than poppy. You know, Afghan folks are just like anyone else. They want security. They want job opportunity. They want education for their children. Really, providing an alternative to poppy; what can we do for these folks? What is it that—what market, or what crop can they grow? Maybe it's not farming. Maybe there's something else, some other industry or business, that these folks can get into to give them an opportunity to support their families, find a better way for their families and everything else.

DR. KOONTZ: **Based on your experiences, what's your assessment of the PRT as a means of, I guess for lack of a better word, prosecuting irregular or unconventional war?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Yes, I don't know if that, really, you want to get into that as a PRT's mission. I mean, they support winning the hearts and minds of people by their actions, but you wouldn't want your PRT to be doing direct action.

DR. KOONTZ: **I guess what I mean is this a strategic weapon?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: I believe it is, because it is interagency. We are bringing a lot of our capabilities to bear. A series of successful PRT events can have strategic effect, I would think.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, do you think overall the PRT model, or the concept behind it, is a successful one?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: If it's given the proper manning, given the proper funding, I think it is. I think if you can push these interagency operations down to this tactical level—get State Department guys in districts, in provinces, I think that's what you need; USAID folks down to that level, USDA folks. And I think we could go, as I probably mentioned before, go even deeper and get educators down to that level working with the PRT, get folks that understand how municipalities work, folks of that nature. I'm sure if we hired people, there would be people that are willing to go over in harm's way to do these things as a civilian working for the government. It doesn't have to be a foreign service officer, I don't think. I think it could be—ask for volunteers. Ask for people. They're volunteers, but you're still paying them well, you know? I'm sure there're educators that would be willing to do that.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. I've got two minutes left with you before I have to turn you in. What should I have asked you about, or what do you want to talk about?**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: The national guardsmen, Iowa National Guard. What I will say is these guys were just fantastic, very, very professional, really committed to their job, really committed to the Afghan people, knew that they were doing something special. My one big takeaway is I tip my cap to the National Guard for what these guys are doing. They were away from their families for probably like fifteen months total, leaving their jobs, leaving their families, and going to do this, and they just performed great. And for me, as a marine, it was my first time really submerged into an Army unit, and it worked out great. It was never any rivalry—I mean, kidding around all the time, but they treated me just like I was one of their own, and it worked out great. Colonel Pedersen and his staff at Task Force BRONCO, they were great, great guys to work for. Always got good support from them. So, it was great to see. Afghan people, they're great people, you know? I really respect them. I really came to love these people, as a whole. Like I've said, their hospitality is unparalleled. They want the same things that Americans want—just an opportunity, security and an opportunity. So, I think there's more we could do there. I think we should continue there to do more for them because I think it's a worthwhile investment.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. With that, we'll go ahead and close the interview. Sir, on behalf of the Center for Military History, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this.**

LT. COL. AUGUSTINE: Sure. My pleasure.



Lt. Col. Robin L. Fontes *served in the Political-Military Affairs staff section of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan from June 2004 to June 2005 before taking command of the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team in July 2005. She was interviewed on 27 February 2007 by Lisa Mundey and Christopher Koontz at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Washington, D.C. Colonel Fontes describes her duty positions in Afghanistan, including her responsibilities as director of the political-military office in Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. She explains differences between the commands of Lt. Gen. David W. Barno and Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, particularly in their strategic emphases. After volunteering for provincial reconstruction team duty, Colonel Fontes was assigned to the team in Tarin Kowt. She describes the terrain of Tarin Kowt, the town, and the people, including the tribal makeup of the population, as well as the joint, combined, and interagency composition of her team. The challenges in Tarin Kowt included a corrupt and unreliable government, an exploding narcotics trade, and resultant violence in the region, caused by either Taliban or drug traders. Colonel Fontes concludes the interview by recounting the transition with the next commander, her favorite stories, and lessons learned.*

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. This is Dr. Lisa Mundey, with Dr. Christopher Koontz, interviewing Lt. Col. Robin Fontes regarding her time in the political-military [POL-MIL] office in Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan [CFC-A], and as commander of the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT]. It is 27 February 2007. The interview is being conducted at the Center of Military History. Are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes, I am.

DR. MUNDEY: **Do you have any objections to the interview being used by historians or researchers with the understanding that you will be quoted or cited accurately?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Nope.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay, great. Now, you've actually had a couple of different jobs in Afghanistan, so if you could just kind of briefly outline what you did and when to start us off, that would be great.**

LT. COL. FONTES: Okay. I arrived in mid-June 2004 to assume duties as a chief for the political-military affairs section from Lt. Col. Tucker [B.] Mansager. I held that position until the end of February, when I was replaced by Col. Barry Shapiro. Then I became the chief for the Regional Engagement Division of the POL-MIL section, and I held that job until 1 July, when I went to assume command of the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team, and I relinquished command around the tenth of May of '06.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Describing it for someone who does not know what the duties of a political-military officer are, could you explain your duties and responsibilities when you were at Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Okay. I had a section of anywhere from three to five officers, and a couple of enlisted folks to do administration. One of those officers was the liaison with the United Nations [Assistance] Mission in Afghanistan. The rest were political-military officers. And, basically, we watched political events, provided the commander with talking points for his meetings with Afghan officials and other government officials. There were many visitors from the Coalition, as well. We took notes during the meetings, wrote up summaries of those meetings. We provided some political-military analysis of internal Afghan events, as well as regional events, political events impacting Afghanistan. That could range from political events associated with the presidential election, or issues concerning the drug trade and how it affects the political relationship between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. We also prepared agendas and briefings and did all coordination for the Tripartite Border Commission, which involved Afghanistan, Combined Forces Command,



Colonel Fontes at Camp Eggers, Kabul, 15 June 2005

and the Pakistani government. So, we prepared information papers, talking points, etc., referenced border incidents either between the United States or Coalition forces and the Pakistanis or different issues with Afghanistan, and in that, trying to develop methods to increase cooperation between the Pakistanis and the Afghan government.

DR. MUNDEY: **No, that's great. That's great. So, with whom did you deal regularly? What would be the key people that you were talking to on a daily basis, or very frequently?**

LT. COL. FONTES: As part of the POL-MIL office?

DR. MUNDEY: **Yes.**

LT. COL. FONTES: Okay. As part of the POL-MIL office, we liaised regularly with the United Nations mission; our office with the defense representative in Pakistan, to help coordinate meetings and such; members of the embassy political section, political and economic section; representatives from other embassies; occasionally with members of the Ministry of Defense, senior leaders of the Ministry of Defense; very regularly with the regional officers in the Afghan National Security Council and ministry representatives, as well.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. You were there during a change of command from General [Lt. Gen.] David [W.] Barno to [Lt. Gen.] Karl [W.] Eikenberry. Is that correct?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes, I was there for about a month and a half after General Eikenberry took command.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, what were his priorities for you, working in the POL-MIL office?**

LT. COL. FONTES: At that time, I worked strictly in the regional engagement section, and under General Barno we had a much wider focus for regional engagement. It was with all bordering countries—minus Iran, of course—in the areas of border security, counternarcotics, military-to-military exchanges, etc., counterterrorism, as well. Under General Eikenberry, the focus became much narrower—primarily, Pakistan—so, we really … other than watching the events in the other country and reporting on them, our real focus was on, and all of our time—I would say 90 percent of our time was spent on Pakistan, the Tripartite [Border] Commission, and trying to develop ways to get them more involved in the fight.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Chris, if you have any—**

DR. KOONTZ: **I was wondering, other than these changes of emphases in the regional engagement section, did you notice any**

other changes in the command after General Barno left and General Eikenberry came on board?

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, one of the long-term projects we had under General Barno was the development of this campaign plan, and the campaign plan encompassed—it was really kind of an interagency effort, many different lines of operation. There were nine or twelve different lines of operation. When General Eikenberry came in, it was much more focused on what—it seemed to me that it was much more focused on what the military itself could do, certainly in conjunction with our interagency brothers, but it wasn't—the plan became a little—it didn't—the plan really didn't involve them in as much detail, I should say. It was still the same plan, still the same basic plan. It just looked different on paper, and it was expressed differently in words, where General Barno's plan would have—well, I can't even remember. It was certainly economics infrastructure, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, development of police or security forces, etc. I mean, it was huge. We called it "the magic carpet" because there were so many things going on on the slide. It was a great piece of work, though, I must say. When General Eikenberry got there, he kind of focused it down into the main effort being security, whether that be counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, or developing the security forces; and then, the supporting efforts were judicial reform and improving governance on one line of operation, and the other line of operation was facilitating economic development and infrastructure development. And those were lines where the military was participating in specifically, but also supporting, the efforts of the interagency, and then in that was regional engagement and information operations. There wasn't a—although counternarcotics was addressed, it wasn't addressed as its own line of operation as it had been before. So, it's not to say there was less emphasis on counternarcotics because many of the same linkages that had been made between the interagency and the CFC were still there and still kept alive when General Eikenberry came in.

Other than that, the only other really visible change, I would say, was the combining of political-military office and the C-9, the Civil-Military Operations Directorate, and this entity that was called the … it's the EIPG, the Embassy Interagency Planning Group, EIPG, and basically, we restructured those. We combined them together in order to have more control in the headquarters of an entity that was providing advice to ministries in Kabul, advice, support, etc. General Eikenberry focused funds less on ministries in Kabul and tried to push those down to the provinces a little bit more. There was a pot of money. I have no idea how much it was that was left for this civil affairs entity. It's about—I don't know. I think it was about ten or fifteen

officers who were each responsible for a different ministry, and they had this pot of CERP money, this Commander's Emergency Response Program funds, to use within the ministries. General Eikenberry kind of pulled that back, got a little more focused on what that money was spent for and that it directly—in order for it to directly support the military campaign. We were giving money to, like, the Ministry of Women's Affairs. That's not really a military thing, so he kind of refocused that money more into—not necessarily the security elements, but other elements that affected what was going on on the ground, and just provided a little more direction to those guys that were going out and having contact with ministry. That was really the big—I mean, very structural, not necessarily impacting how the mission had been done before, except in minor ways. But it just in some ways, it was just a different way to express the same philosophy.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. I know that there were certain times, like around the elections, where they did a troop surge where they'd temporarily have more troops in the country. What was, during the time that you were there, what was about the standard size of the Coalition force?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, I guess between sixteen thousand and twenty-two thousand, I believe. It kind of fluctuated a little bit, you know? Obviously, we surged whenever we had a relief in place. We surged when we had the elections, and then, by the end, ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] was coming in with greater forces than we had, especially in the south with greater forces, and we had vacated the south. The same with the west. There were more then, so that kind of explains the discrepancies. But I would like to comment on the elections, just once.

DR. MUNDEY: **Sure.**

LT. COL. FONTES: I mean, we—I was there for both of them at different viewpoints, one in Kabul and the other one in Oruzgan and Daykondi. We saw the elections as a strategic event, and as a result of it being a strategic event for us, I think we projected on the enemy that it was also a strategic event for them when, in fact, it really wasn't. I mean, in my opinion, it wasn't. I think it's almost like a benefit to them to have an elected government in place that can't perform, and then that verifies what they have already told the people. So, I don't really think they tried to stop the election. There was a little bit of violence. I wouldn't say there was necessarily an increase of violence at that time, but there were a couple of events that may lead us to believe that there was an increase. There were some vehicle-borne IEDs at the time that were discovered, but I don't think the enemy placed as much emphasis on the elections as we did. It kind of—we Westerners projected that, maybe.

DR. MUNDEY: **Is there anything else that you want to tell us about your experiences either in the POL-MIL office or the regional office that you were in before we move on to your time as a PRT commander?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes. Boy, it sure would be nice to have a few more foreign area officers in the POL-MIL section, you know, folks who—you don't necessarily have to be an expert in the area, but have an understanding of what political-military affairs entails and an ability to write on that. It would have been extremely helpful. I mean, the people I had, they worked hard and they learned, but it's just not the same, and in a fast-paced environment like that, it's hard to train people up—not impossible, but we could have been more effective and more supportive of the commander if we would have had a few more foreign area officers. Put that on the record.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Well then, when was it that you learned that you were going to be going out to a PRT?**

LT. COL. FONTES: When Colonel Shapiro came in at the end of February, there was a little bit of "What do we do?" kind of thing, and, basically, I was talking to Colonel [David W.] Lamm, the chief of staff, and he had recommended splitting the section, that I would take one part and then Colonel Shapiro would take the other. And, basically, I told him because I went to Afghanistan with the intention of getting a PRT somehow, and I told him, I said, "Well, just let the colonel take the section. That's fine, and I want to be a PRT commander for my second year here," and he was very supportive of it. General Barno was, as well. So, they supported me in the interview process with [Combined Joint Task Force]-76 and selection process for commander of PRT. So, after that we had a board up at -76 with General [USARNG Brig. Gen. James G.] Champion, and a couple of days later they said who was selected and who was going where. I was originally supposed to go to Panjshir, mainly because I had worked with a lot of the Panjshiris in Tajikistan when I was the defense attaché out there in '98 to 2000.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, what does this selection process entail?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Put your name in. You get an endorsement from your commander or supervisor, and then you had an interview board with General Champion. I think it was the -76 J-3 [staff officer for operations] or assistant J-3, I'm not sure, and then the civil affairs brigade commander. It was just a series of questions. I think they asked everybody basically the same questions, some civil affairs oriented. Many were security oriented—What would you do in this type of a situation? How would you deal with the governor or a governor that didn't necessarily support the central

government?—questions like that. That was about it. It was about a 30- to 45-minute interview and then a question-and-answer kind of thing, and that was it.

DR. MUNDEY: **And then do you know why you ended up getting switched to Tarin Kowt instead of the one you originally were?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes. I wasn't terribly excited about going to Panjshir. It wasn't even open at the time, and there was no real—no one knew when it would happen, especially with the change between General Barno and General Eikenberry. And the Marine officer who was selected to Tarin Kowt was a guy from the CFC J-5 [staff section for plans]. He went back to his parent unit to like pack out or something, and they told him then that he wasn't going back. So, it was open, and so I just sent an e-mail to the chief of staff and said, "Hey, you know, I understand this is the situation. If he doesn't come back, I'd like to be considered for that job," and so they said, "Yes, okay."

DR. MUNDEY: **Did you get any sort of training on how to be a PRT commander?**

LT. COL. FONTES: There was a PRT precommand course thing that was run by the -76 CJ-9. If I knew nothing else about PRTs before I went there, I would still know very little. So, I mean, most of my training, most of what prepared me for it, was working that year in Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'd like to ask you a question now. A while ago, you mentioned that you went to Afghanistan with the purpose of eventually working your way to a PRT. What interested you into getting into that line of work? Or, why would you be interested, I guess, could be a better question.**

LT. COL. FONTES: When I was in Tajikistan, I worked with the government officials. I was the only military representative there. It was right after their civil war. They had—it was still very unstable. They still had a lot of regional leaders/warlords, opposition commanders. They were still trying to implement the peace agreement and work out the power-sharing issues, and I just really got a kick out of working with these guys. And so, you know, getting down at the grassroots level and working with people was kind of—not just the political angles, but also the reconstruction stuff as well. And it's just out in the wilds of Afghanistan, just kind of sounded exciting, so … I was at CENTCOM before I went out to Afghanistan as the Afghanistan POL-MIL desk officer, and when I heard about the PRTs, I decided right then that's what I wanted to do next, so I had to check the other box first.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then you also mentioned that you went to that precommand course and came out still kind of knowing**

very little. Did you have any kind of preconceptions in your mind or concepts of "This is what a PRT is, and this is what I want to do with mine"?

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes. Along with being in the development and having kind of worked with these guys long-distance from Kabul as we were working on the provincial leadership assessments, that helped me, as well as spending some time out at the Herat PRT back during the Ismail Khan thing in September of '04. And, understanding what the command priorities were, understanding the campaign plan, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do and the direction that I wanted to go and how I could get this to marry up with the overall campaign plan. So, really, what prepared me is this year in Kabul and some of the stuff I was able to do there.

DR. MUNDEY: **Now, to someone who's never been there and never seen this place, could you describe your arrival in Tarin Kowt, like, the geography, the people there? What, literally, does this place look like?**

LT. COL. FONTES: It's very brown [laughs]. Tarin Kowt sits in kind of one of these bowls. It's a little valley, surrounded by mountains on all sides. There's a couple of gaps in the mountains, where you go down to Kandahar and where you can get out to Deh Rawod, but it's—you know, I arrived in July, so it was over 100 degrees and there's very little irrigation except right at the river because the Tarin Kowt River goes right through. So, anything outside of the very immediate valley of this river is brown. There's no irrigation—brown, flat, dusty, you name it. And then it's very green in that little valley where they grow some crops other than poppy, although they grow plenty of poppy there as well. And this PRT sits inside a FOB, inside a forward operating base, which is—the base itself is surrounded by these Hescos filled with dirt and some concertina wire. The PRT, which sits up against one side, the side facing the—it faces the town, and it's like this old fort. It's cement walls, probably about ten, nine or ten feet high, and then there're these round towers on each one of them, on each one of the corners. So, your guards sit up on the towers, and they have pretty much 360 vision.

When you go outside, at the time that I got there, there were no paved roads. It was all dirt roads, very rough dirt roads, including the main street of the town. And when you go down there, it takes—you're probably, from the PRT to town, it might be a half a mile until you first hit the edge of the actual town, and it's all basically brown mud structures, the one-story structures. When you get to the very center of town, there's a couple of two-story buildings on the corners, and then you go around this traffic circle which has like this little stand where a policeman would sit, although they don't. And then you go around that, you drive down past the main street of the bazaar, I guess, and you go right into

the governor's compound, which is a walled compound in a two-story building in which there really is no electricity, no running water most of the time. There's probably, I would say, there're probably thirty thousand people in Tarin Kowt, maybe, and I only guess that because I know these people have children and I know they have wives, so I assume that they're out there somewhere. It has a hospital, which is a scary thing to go through, but they do have a hospital. Next to the governor's compound is a high school which has—inside the walls they have a dirt field where they play soccer. It's a one-story building, very overcrowded, and probably five teachers that really know what they're doing. There's no real equipment. There're no real books to speak of. Again, the only running water that any of these places have typically is the hand pump well that is in the courtyard, and that water may or may not be potable. Down Main Street, there are these drainage ditches, and God knows what's in them. It can be pretty disgusting. It's not a clean place.

The people are—you very seldom see anybody in Western clothes there. Most of them are in the *salwar kameez* with a turban. You know, the police were all with weapons. They typically did not—when I got there, didn't have uniforms, or if they had them, they didn't wear them. I remember the day I got there they said that the governor had dumped a couple of dead bodies in the circle. "Taliban," he called them. Probably, they get a little vigorous in their questioning at the police station, and he would just dump them in the square or the circle, the traffic circle, for their family to come pick them up. There aren't very many bridges. For the most part, if it's a ditch, there will be a little cement slab over it so you can drive over it, but the rivers for the most part don't have any bridges, so you have to drive through them, or the streams. A lot of the roads there are riverbeds, dry riverbeds. There wasn't a lot of food out at the bazaar—meat hanging, you know, in this heat of the day, just big lamb quarters and stuff just hanging there.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned that you were kind of guessing the population because you were assuming that there had to be wives and kids somewhere. Were the women and children cloistered up?**

LT. COL. FONTES: It was very, very rare to see a woman on the streets, and never without a burqa unless she was from the Coalition. Children, you know, you'd see them. If you were out on foot, they would just come out of the woodwork—I mean, they would be everywhere. But you don't always see them, is the thing. You might drive down the street and you won't see anybody, but you know people are there. And a lot of them, you know, on walking patrols we'd go down the street, and they would go back inside their yard and close the door. So, you just don't always see them. You know, if you went on walking patrol, you could see thousands of kids, and

you'd never be able to get rid of them, especially if you gave anything out to them. They would walk all the way back to the PRT with us just to get more.

DR. MUNDEY: **Ethnically speaking, what were the people in the area?**

LT. COL. FONTES: They were pretty much all Pashtun, I would say. That is, in the Tarin Kowt area because Oruzgan is split between Pashtun and Hazaran up in the two northernmost—in the northernmost areas there are Hazaran, as well, but these Pashtuns can be from just about any tribe. I think the dominant tribe, I think, is the Barakzai, but the tribe in power at the time were the Popalzai, very close to the Karzai family. The Karzai family used to spend some summers in Tarin Kowt because it's cooler than Kandahar, if you can believe that. And they had all—the Barakzai tribal leader, which was the police chief, and the governor, who was Popalzai, were both in pretty good with President [Hamid] Karzai. They had gotten fighters to join him when he came back in in 2001, and the governor had supposedly been with Karzai's father when he was killed, and he had also been a prisoner of the Taliban in 2001 when we went in. And there are also Achakzai, and I forget the other name of the other dominant—there are four basically dominant tribes in the area, and I will remember the other one. Alikozai, I think it was.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. What actual geographic area were you in charge of at the Tarin Kowt PRT?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, we were basically the PRT for all of Joint Special Operating Area Carolina, which encompassed Oruzgan and Daykondi, which is—on this map, there's the northern part of Oruzgan. We did get to Daykondi a couple of times, but it wasn't something that we spent a lot of time on for a couple of reasons: one, because it's very difficult to get to; two, we had our hands full in Oruzgan; and three, the Hazara actually have a lot of people looking after them. The UN was there with mostly UN agencies, and a lot of NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] were already there working with them. So, it wasn't—I mean, we could have done things, but it wouldn't have necessarily been directly supportive of our military mission, either, if we would have done something like that. We did like a MEDCAP [medical civil action program] up there, and it was a great learning experience to work with the Hazara and also to get their viewpoint on what was happening with the Taliban. But I had—my boss, the [C]JSOTF [(Combined) Joint Special Operations Task Force] commander, basically put the PRT in charge of all reconstruction humanitarian operations that were going on in the province, which meant that the two CA [civil affairs] teams that came out of the 96th [Civil Affairs] Battalion, I guess they were in direct support of the ODAs [Special Forces Operational Detachment-A]

out on the fire bases in Khas Oruzgan and Deh Rawod. They coordinated their projects with us so that we could say, "Yes, that makes sense." We could take it to the local government, and the local government could say, "Yes, I would like that done"—or, the provincial government, I should say—that they had visibility in what was going on. And then up in Cahar Cineh or otherwise known as Shahidi Hassass, which is up in the northwestern corner, I sent a couple of my CA guys up there to be the CA team in support of those ODAs.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Well, this leads us directly into the next question. Each PRT is organized uniquely. Could you describe the internal structure of your PRT, who was there, who was working for you?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes, I had a Civil Affairs [Team] A [CAT-A] and [Civil Affairs Team] B [CAT-B] detachment, which is four persons each, basically. It was headed by a lieutenant colonel, and his—I guess he was the CAT-B commander, and then the CAT-A commander was a major, and they did all the civil affairs and reconstruction stuff in conjunction with the USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] representative. My force protection company, basically, was out of the Texas National Guard. These guys were outstanding. There's just no other way to put it. They were very professional, very sharp, extremely competent people. That company provided basically the staff of the PRT as well. The platoon leader was the S-1 [staff officer for personnel]; the company commander doubled as the S-3 [staff officer for operations]. The supply sergeant was my supply sergeant. They provided the communications personnel for the tactical communications. The cooks, they provided them to run the mess hall; a motor pool. So, I got his headquarters platoon, and this basically a force protection platoon kind of on steroids. So, that was really the bulk of the PRT, those guys, and then we had individual augmentees. I had a three-man military police [MP] team. Initially they were an Army team from the—I can't remember what it was—the MP company out of Germany. And then I had some overlap with them and the security forces or security police out of the Air Force that came in. They were on, I think, four-month rotations, so they were also replaced by some other folks as well. My S-2 [staff officer for intelligence] was an individual augmentee Air Force, typically junior NCOs, until the second rotation. Then I got a junior NCO and a relatively senior NCO. For some reason I ended up with two, which is cool with me, very good. What else did we have? The medical unit was also—I had a small medical unit that came out of the infantry company. I had a State Department rep, Raphael [Carland]. I had a USAID rep, which was Kerry Greene, who was on his second year in Tarin Kowt when I got there. I had DynCorp police mentors, initially two, and in

the last three months I ended up with a couple more, was able to get a couple more. And in that last three months we also had their contract security guys. We also on the PRT had the UNOPS [UN Office of Project Services] engineer. The only way that the UN would allow him to come down was if he lived on the PRT for security purposes. And he was running—they were the implementing partner for the USAID projects in the province, so we were able to provide him security to get out and check things, and he helped us out as well. And he'll probably go to jail for doing that, but, oh well [laughs]. What else do we have? I know I'm missing something. Oh, Navy Seabees to provide engineering support to CA. Starting in October, I had two Australian officers, an information operations officer, which is another one—I had an American operations officer, as well, and an engineer. Because the Australians were going to come in and partner with the Dutch to take over the PRT in Oruzgan, they came in to find out what the deal was. They worked directly for me. It wasn't a liaison relationship. Americans, I also had the computer, the IMO [information management officer] guys that came in. I had two of those guys.

DR. KOONTZ: **I could ask you a question about your force protection company there. You said you got a headquarters platoon and then, as you call it, force protection platoon on steroids. Two questions; first of all, about how many men are those two platoons all together?**

LT. COL. FONTES: I think it was fifty-five.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. And then, secondly, you mentioned that they were Texas guardsmen. Did you notice these guardsmen bringing in any kind of civilian skills from their other lives that you noticed in the field?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Oh, yes. These guys—well, we had some construction workers that helped us out with QA/QC [quality assurance/quality control] on some projects. They also helped build a lot of the facilities around the PRT to make life a little bit better. We had a guy that was a computer systems guy who helped with the unclass system, as well as the MWR [morale, welfare, and recreation] systems. We had police officers who—a police sniper. Their skills were very helpful, not only for training for the other members of the PRT, but also for the police. Those are the ones that come readily to mind, but these guys were—I mean, they—I lost one of my guys in an IED [improvised explosive device] in Shahidi Hassass, and I had to replace him. And I didn't have a lot to pick from, because—what I ended up doing was cross-training one of my assistant squad leaders from the force protection platoon to go up there. I mean, it was a very hot area, first of all, so his infantry skills were very good, and it enabled him to quickly integrate with the ODAs up there who don't respect just anybody, and rightly so. But

he also had—you know, his construction skills and just his interpersonal skills were basically the reason why I selected him to cross-train and go up there, and he did a great job. He really did.

DR. MUNDEY: **Given the amount of rotations that you've been talking about, it sounds like you had a constant stream of personnel coming in and coming out. How did that affect the operations of the PRT?**

LT. COL. FONTES: It was difficult. Thank god the CA guys and the USAID guy didn't rotate and the force protection guys didn't rotate. If they would have, it would have been very difficult. As it was, the problem with rotations is not so much the quality of the person going in and out. The problem is that they don't have enough time to overlap to really do a good handoff a lot of times, and that's a function of sometimes the unit, and sometimes just regulations. While a person may think what they do is fairly easy and they can pass it down by the book, it's not as easy for a guy coming into theater for the first time who has no clue what he's getting into. You know, he's been told, "Okay, you're going to be training police," or something, but he doesn't really understand all the nuances of working with these particular people or what it means to go out and conduct an assessment. And sometimes, you can't always work those things into the schedule because there're so many things you're doing that the turnovers become very difficult. And there's a lot of just—a lot of doing things seemingly for the first time again. That made it difficult. The change—I worked with three different State Department officers in ten months, and that was frustrating and really unfortunate. They were all extremely sharp, all extremely capable individuals, but it just takes time to get to know what's going on. And not only is there integration into the PRT, but that person and the commander need to develop a relationship, as well as the person and individuals in the community. It's very difficult for these—I mean, the Afghans understand because they know that we're going to rotate, and they get really sick of it, too. But you always hear them say, "Well, you'll be gone. The guy two times ago promised me this, and he left and didn't do anything. You'll do the same thing," and that's something that we have to—it's impossible to overcome with the rotation schedules, but you know, the less turbulence you have, the better. I think it would make our mission—make us more effective working with them, as well as make the organization more effective. Turnover is a bad thing.

I ended up taking over the FOB [forward operating base] around November, right after the election, November, December time frame of '05, I guess. And so, within this organization, I had the Afghan National Army *kandak* that was on the FOB, worked with the Australians, worked on the transition of the space to NATO and turning things

over to other units. We had the CASH [combat surgical hospital]—originally, the FST, the field surgical team, I guess it is, and then it became a CASH-minus. We built a nice hospital and everything. We had a forward aerial refueling point with the helicopters. We had responsibility for C–17-capable airstrip. We had somebody else there, too. We had like a UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] unit, a contract UAV unit. We had the Special Operations Forces—well, some of which was on the PRT.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, with all of that there is there anything that even would approximate a typical day for you?**

LT. COL. FONTES: No. That was the great thing is you woke up, you never knew what was going to happen. You never even knew if you were going to make it to PT [physical training], which is only thirty minutes from the time I got out of bed to when I started. I mean, the typical things would be the battle update brief, and, always, the op order brief for the next day would be that evening. A couple times of week, you have staff call, and the staff call was because I hate to have too many meetings. It was the entire FOB that would sit in on this staff call. Most of the information, most of what was discussed, was PRT stuff, but the other guys would attend as well, and I personally think they kind of liked that, to find out what people going outside the wire were doing. And they all started calling themselves the PRT anyway, so I guess they kind of liked it. We would—I would see the governor three, four times a week, the police chief. Someone would always come up to the PRT. Every day, somebody would come up to the PRT that we would meet with. It could have been the provincial council, president, one of the governor's deputies or assistants; it could have been one of the police chiefs, one of the police commanders, one of the ministry representatives. That was a pretty typical meeting. Every week, we would have a meeting with those ministry representatives involved in some type of reconstruction activity. I mean, it's just—and in the midst of all this, we're working. You know, when I first got there, we were getting prepared for the provincial or the parliamentary elections, so there was a lot of planning and a lot of work that went into that with the Afghans, without the Afghans, etc., come rehearsals. And then after that, we focused pretty much on the reconstruction planning until about December time frame, and then after that it became—and then after that, we were working internally very hard on the transition of the FOB and the PRT, as well as the transition of governors and police chiefs, which really made my day. So, it was like you had a long event that you spent a lot of time planning for, but there were missions to go out on and different projects to go see to evaluate the potential to meet with village officials and stuff.

I would try to go on a mission outside of Tarin Kowt at least twice a week. Sometimes I only made it once a week, but I would always get out with my guys. We would do walking patrols about every three weeks, two or three weeks, kind of varied that up a little bit. There was a mission every day outside the wire with the exception of Friday. Typically, Friday was the down day. It was a maintenance day, and it was also steak day [laughs]. So, the other six days a week, we were outside the wire. People were gone, either checking on a project, looking at one, doing a meeting somewhere, or, at night, counter-IED patrols or something like that. So, it was—I mean, my guys were out much more than—nothing against the Special Forces guys. They have a very specific mission, but, I mean, they were shocked at how much we went outside.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, how did that work with your relationship with the locals? Did they appreciate your coming out? I mean, how would you characterize that relationship with them?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Oh, I think it was pretty good. When I initially got there, a lot of the locals would come to—you know, they heard there was a new PRT commander, so they were going to try to get what they can, say that these promises were made, yada, yada. So, they would all come to the gate and say, "I want to meet with the new PRT commander! I'm Bill or Jill from such-and-such place." And, you know, I met with a couple of them to kind of get the feel of what this was going to be like. But the agreement that I came to very quickly with the governor was that we were just there to support him, and we were not going to make any decisions on projects or anything without his blessing. So, what we ended up doing, we figured out which ones of the ministers were actually good or potentially good, and we would tell the people, "If you have a recommendation, you need to go to such-and-such a minister, whichever one is involved in that kind of a project; and if he endorses it to us, then we'll look at it and see what we can do to help out." So, pretty soon, we were just turning people around at the gate. They got the clue, and they started going to their government officials.

We interacted very regularly with these guys. They would—two, in particular—would often be at the PRT almost every day, the ministry representative for reconstruction and rural development, Engineer Hashem, and Engineer Kabir, who was the representative for the Ministry of Irrigation. They were by far the best guys we worked with, both very capable engineers and both seemingly interested in helping all the people and not just the people from their particular tribes or their particular areas. In fact, we told them right off the bat that we were going to keep track of where these places were and what tribe was dominant in the area, etc., and how much money we were spending, so that we were sharing the wealth. They had absolutely no problem with

that and really did a good job of getting things outside of Tarin Kowt, outside of the Tarin Kowt district into other districts, etc. So, that was kind of how we got to know the locals, and I know the government officials were very appreciative of us kind of empowering them because it was a problem when the PRTs first started. Until the PRT gets a chance to kind of mature and the relationship between the local government and the PRT leadership to mature, you always have a little bit of a struggle as to who's really—not necessarily in charge, but who has the most influence, struggle for influence. We didn't want to necessarily usurp the influence of the local government, in most cases. However, that said, if you have a bad government, as we had, you don't want to empower that individual. So, there were certain things that we would not do because it was—you know, we didn't want to give the governor too much credit for something. We're certainly not going to badmouth the governor or anything—he's Karzai's representative, but this guy was as corrupt as they come. But the people that were trying to work under him, we were able to give them a little more influence by supporting their efforts.

DR. MUNDEY: **Given the male-dominated Afghan culture, did you have any problems stepping in as a female commander?**

LT. COL. FONTES: No. I thought that I would, and I actually had this conversation with [Lt. Col.] Lynda Granfield, who commanded the Jalalabad PRT. She went to Jalalabad mainly because she didn't—you know, because of the concern about going into this very conservative, very male-dominated area. And I was concerned, but basically, if you wear the uniform, first of all, you're a representative of the United States government; you're also the representative with the cash, and they know that. So, it's like having this revolving lit dollar sign over the PRT all the time. It's kind of funny. But if you wear the uniform and you don't do anything to mark yourself as a female—you know, like, as long as you don't wear a scarf or something or makeup—then they don't have to respond to you that way. You know, it kind of gives them an out, if you will. I think it actually—you know, every once in a while, they would say something, but it was very, very seldom. You know, maybe the first couple times we met, the governor would say, "Well, why aren't you married? How come you don't have any kids?" and such, you know? But after probably the first month, it was like, "Okay, we'll just deal with you," and the only real indication I got, I think, from the police chief was in the last—it was probably about March of '06. He invited me to lunch at his place, and he introduced me to his wives. He took me back and locked the guys out and introduced me, and we chatted with his wives for a while. So, that was kind of a shock to me, and his only real indication that he may have looked at me any differently, I guess. So, it really turned out not to be an issue, which I found very

surprising. And once you get—you know, I can do the nice routine, and I can also do the not-so-nice routine, and after having done that with them a couple times, you kind of establish some ground rules. But the amazing thing was, around February, the mullah—the provincial council president was a mullah, and he came back after a couple weeks in Kabul, and he actually gave me a hug, and then he kind of realized what he was doing. So, it was kind of funny. He was just so happy to see me, so.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. How would you describe the security situation around Tarin Kowt in the sense of were the problems mainly with warlords, corruption, Taliban, al Qaeda, HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin]? What were those security issues that you had to deal with?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, the Taliban were really the issue. It wasn't necessarily al Qaeda and HIG that we could determine, anyway. That was the security threat that affected us in particular. When you talk about the security situation as it affects the locals, though, it's very much the tribal issues, competition and rivalries, corruption, narcotics, and all these things, to include the Taliban issue, are all very interwoven, because a lot of the Taliban that operate in Oruzgan are actually from Oruzgan, and some of the Taliban higher leadership is from Oruzgan as well. These people all know each other personally, and they may not believe in ideologically what the Taliban stands for, but if the Taliban can help them out in some way, they will enlist them on their side in a tribal fight. A lot of the Taliban from Oruzgan are from the Noorzai tribe and from the Ghilzai confederation vice the Durani confederation. So, because there was such a huge rift between the Ghilzai and the Durani, first of all, there were a lot of problems there as far as who the Taliban, so to speak, would attack; and then, when you mix in the Durani split between the Popalzai and the Barakzai and their two allies, it becomes—I mean, there's a lot of underlying issues and a lot of different security concerns from many different areas. And then, lay over that this competition for the poppy, which I firmly believe the government was very into. Then, you have people using the excuse of Taliban, because they know it gets our blood up, to get rid of people, so you have people with either a tribal grudge to bear, or an economic grudge to bear in the narcotics industry, so to speak, that they will use that to get us to help them out, and they continued to do that the whole time that I was there. But having said that, most of what happened in Oruzgan, with the exception of a few mid-level commanders that came in and would wreak havoc, there weren't a lot of security issues. You know, you would have some exchanges of gunfire that we had primarily at night, which could have been Taliban or could have been Taliban sympathizers, could have been anything. We had IEDs. Again, it's hard to say who actually put them there. Most of the trouble

up in Cahar Cineh, Shahidi Hassass, I think, was Taliban related.

But it was very calm until the January time frame that I was there, and "fairly calm" doesn't mean necessarily calm, but I mean, for Oruzgan, it was fairly calm. And then it just—it was like all hell broke loose. I mean, the first week of January, we had a suicide bomber that blew himself up at a dogfight the same day that we had the ambassador there on his visit. So, we had a MASCAL [mass casualty] event, and then it just steadily got worse after that. We had more IEDs. We had more incidents of shooting. We had some serious—it was like they were—and I'll explain kind of why I think this happened, but we had, basically, Taliban forces converging and moving in closer to Tarin Kowt, I mean, moving in quite close to Tarin Kowt. The Aussies were in a firefight, a twelve-hour firefight, right outside of Tarin Kowt. I mean, it was only a couple miles. You could see it from the FOB. And then from there on it was very—it was dangerous just to go outside the gate. We typically didn't worry too much about going into Tarin Kowt, but, I mean, even by then, you had to be concerned about going out in Tarin Kowt. We had a suicide bomber hit our convoy on the first of May when we were coming back from seeing the governor, so we had reports of a lot of SVBIEDs [suicide vehicle-borne IEDs] running around in Tarin Kowt at the time.

But what I think happened is that after the elections, after the parliamentary elections in—I guess they were like the first or second week in October—everyone knew there were going to be some personnel changes made, and there had already been discussion about replacing the governor who controlled most of the forces, most of the real security forces, and the police chief also knew that his days were probably numbered, and they both kind of just decided not to try to provide any kind of security. So, we would go out on a mission out past Tarin Kowt, maybe to Chora or something, and you wouldn't see any police or anything. Basically, they vacated the space that they had previously kept some semblance of security in and allowed this movement in towards Tarin Kowt of the Taliban or of the enemy, because by the end of their tenures there, they had pretty much just thrown up their hands and given up as far as security was concerned. Others had to tell us how bad security was. And the governor was using this as a way to say, "See, if I leave this place, they'll take over. I have to stay because I am the big provider of security here," and he had the locals convinced that that was the case, and if he left, they would be overrun by Taliban. And then when he was replaced, I had village elders by the dozens come in to tell me their story, how they needed Jan Muhammad to stay and could I please relay this message to Kabul because they couldn't get up there. It was incredible. And we'd seen the

same thing happen in Kandahar, when Gulagha Shirzai was replaced, as well. But, anyway, that's what I think happened is the security system seriously deteriorated.

DR. MUNDEY: **I guess this segues into my questions concerning combat operations in the area. Did the PRT support combat operations, or was there a role for the PRT in that or were they kind of separate things?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, we didn't go on combat operations, per se. However, we were ambushed a few times and whatnot. So, I mean, there was a little bit of action, but for the most part any combat operations were conducted by either the Australians or the Special Forces that were there. We supported a couple of their operations in that their ODAs, the ODA that was at Tarin Kowt, was a little bit undermanned, and they had requested that we provide them with a few of our force protection guys to be gunners and whatnot, so we did that. That was probably the one example where we really supported a combat operation. It really went the other way, I would say. It was kind of a give and take between what the ODA was doing and what the PRT was doing. They would accompany us on some of our missions, like to MEDCAPs or VETCAPs [veterinary civil action programs]. They'd send a couple people along, send their medical personnel along to help us out, to increase our capabilities, as well as to get them familiar with the different areas, and then if they had an operation, there were a couple of times they went into some towns or had conducted operations in towns that we went in afterwards and provided humanitarian assistance to those people who had lost something or provided medical assistance to those who needed it. So, we kind of supported each other based on our capabilities and needs. It worked out that way. But other than that, we weren't like the quick reaction force or anything. We were prepared to do that if need be, but that wasn't—I mean, we weren't the first-tier QRF [quick reaction force], if you will.

DR. MUNDEY: **Now, you mentioned that you were involved in supporting the parliamentary elections, and then you were focused on reconstruction, and then you were focused on transition. So could you outline some of perhaps the major accomplishments or some of the key projects that you worked on that you think are worthy of mentioning?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, the biggest thing was just the security support for the parliamentary elections. Together with the different forces that we had in the province and the Afghan security forces, we worked out the plan on how to provide security for the ballot box movements, as well as for the polling station security and QRF functions, etc. We did that not only in Oruzgan, but also in Daykondi, and supported the ANA [Afghan National Army] battalion that was up there in

Daykondi trying to make this thing work, and we had far more problems in Daykondi than we had in Oruzgan. But that was—the fact that it went off, basically—you know, we had a couple incidents, but it went off pretty well. It was certainly a success, I guess you could say. I think we could also say it was a success to actually empower government officials to take the lead on reconstruction and certainly take the lead on projects and begin to think in a long-term way. In conjunction with the key ministry representatives in the province, we developed a mid-term reconstruction program and determined priorities for projects. It truly was a joint effort to determine needs, identify projects, and determine priorities.

I would say that facilitating the removal of the governor was an accomplishment. That would be Jan Muhammad. We provided the command with a lot of information on what was happening that they were able to use at the highest echelons to convince the president to remove him. The transition of the base to—well, first, the transition of the base to the PRT, we saved the government quite a bit of money; and then, to transition to—at least, lay the groundwork for the next PRT to transition it to the Dutch was no easy feat. Projectwise, I would say that improving the road between Tarin Kowt and Deh Rawod was very important to not only transiting of goods, but also to improving our reaction time for security to different areas. The cash-for-work project that we worked on in conjunction with USAID, just getting USAID to allow us to identify projects and to distribute the money for that, was a huge interagency victory, and we put a lot of people to work. I think we put a couple thousand people to work doing that throughout the country because we had, with the USAID's permission and their subcontractor's permission, we were able to run that program in Cahar Cineh where there were no contractors, or there were only U.S. military. I think getting rid of the contract security that the PRT had when I first got there—we got rid of them like three days later. But getting rid of them and partnering with the ANA to do all of our missions and taking a government official along with us, getting them to voluntarily come and teaching the ANA how to do a MEDCAP/VETCAP, how to do kind of, I guess, information dissemination so that they were really the people interacting with the locals, their own people … they were able to provide—by the end of this time, by the end of about four months, they conducted their own MEDCAP/VETCAP without us, and I think that was a pretty big accomplishment. It's not terribly complex, but to give them all these medical supplies to use, to give them all this humanitarian assistance stuff to distribute and not be terribly concerned about them diverting it for their own purposes, I think, was a big accomplishment. I don't really think we would have been at that point if we would have done it right off because it took them really interacting with

the people and getting to know them and understanding what their needs were that really kind of pushed that along. The vocational training for, basically, construction skills, and I would say that's one of the PRT's achievements. As far as long-term impact, I guess I'm not a big believer in building of buildings as an accomplishment. I mean, you know, you can build a government—you can build—one of the things that we were building when I got there, it was a provincial government building; but if you don't put capable officials in there, it doesn't really matter if you have a building. So, I guess that was one of the things.

DR. MUNDEY: **Counternarcotics …**

LT. COL. FONTES: My favorite subject!

DR. MUNDEY: **Could you tell us about the situation in Tarin Kowt?**

LT. COL. FONTES: In '04, they had actually run a fairly—well, the governor was very active in promoting not cultivating poppy, as per the president's orders. What my State Department guy, who had been there when I arrived—his take on that was that Jan Muhammad had basically gotten his rivals, had gotten them not to grow poppy. And at that time, if you went out in the summertime, you would see—before harvest, you would go out, and you would see different crops, and then in the center of that crop was a little bit of poppy. So, you wouldn't—it wasn't terribly visible. I mean, it was there, but you wouldn't see a lot of it. The next year, as Governor Jan Muhammad was on his way out, he basically said, "Yes, grow poppy. Grow all the poppy you want," and they did. You couldn't go anywhere without seeing a field of poppy as big as whatever space was available. If you looked out of the windows of the governor's mansion, so to speak, into the river, into the river valley, it was just covered with poppy. It was amazing. Everywhere you went, it was everywhere. Many times on walking patrols, people in the bazaar would say, "Why do you not want us to grow poppy? It's our only way to make a living, and if you don't provide us with something else, we have no choice." So, it was pretty much all over the place. There was no way to get around it. It was even worse out in Deh Rawod, apparently, than it was around Tarin Kowt.

So, as far as Oruzgan goes, the places you were likely to see it were basically in the southern portion, and most of it was centered around the Tarin Kowt River and the Helmand River. But that's not to say you wouldn't see it in other areas, as well. When it was poppy harvesting time, just about every other project would come to a screeching halt because there was no labor. They would all go up to the poppy fields where they could get, I think it was, $15 a day or more to harvest poppy, where we were only paying them a couple bucks a day. Police would leave their posts.

I remember one village actually worked it out so that they would send their people, their sons or whatever, to harvest the poppy, and they would pay the police extra to stay on duty so that the police wouldn't also go up to harvest the poppy, and that was a local remedy to the situation. It was everywhere. There just weren't a lot of—most of what you saw there was just raw opium. It wasn't—I think there may have been some processing labs, but I don't know about them. A couple of times, the SF [Special Forces] ran across some opium during their operations. Whenever we ran into a poppy field, basically we got the coordinates for the poppies and gave its location to the police. Those were our instructions. The police chief was just as deeply into it as anybody, so, I mean, it made it very convenient for him, but nothing happened. It's not working.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, the British had the lead on that, but you couldn't see them actually doing anything in that particular area?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, representatives of the Counter Narcotics Working Group came down a couple times to talk to us about the eradication plan, but they were so overwhelmed with Helmand that they were never going to make it up to Oruzgan. One, they didn't have the support of the governor, so actual eradication was just not going to happen. The Alterative Livelihoods Program run by USAID was a joke. To even think that you're going to replace poppy with wheat is absurd. It doesn't make nearly as much money. To expect the Afghan government officials, especially the governor, to distribute wheat to anyone but his own supporters was not going to happen. He gave it only to the guys he needed to have influence with. He was not concerned about the farmers who needed it in exchange for growing poppy, and, in fact, he trucked half of it up to Daykondi to sell in the market.

The information campaign, this poppy elimination program group that's supposed to come down and do this elimination campaign and a couple other things, you know, they're not giving it—they don't have any assets to actually get out and do everything. They don't have any security. And other than telling people that it's wrong to grow poppy and it's against Islam, you got to give them something to live off of or it's just not going to matter. So, on the ground, the program is not coordinated and not really well thought out for how to attack it on the ground. I mean, I've seen the plan. It sounds great. It really does. The big strategy sounds great, but as far as implementing it at a tactical level, it is not happening. And I mean, let's get real: The Brits aren't putting nearly the resources against it that we are, and certainly none of the Europeans are, and if you don't have some kind of—I mean, right now the Dutch are in there, and the Dutch don't want to—they wouldn't touch counternarcotics, any aspect of it, with ten-foot pole. Wasn't that cheery [laughs]?

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. On to a more happy subject. The CERP program, heard a lot of people say that was a fairly useful tool. How did you use CERP funds at your PRT?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, the way we did it with both CERP and AID money was according to lines of operation. We figured out which systems we could affect most with our money based on what our operational priorities were, what the government's priorities were, etc. From that, we developed a plan on what systems it affects, such as irrigation. And it was very useful to kind of pair that money with the USAID cash-for-work money. Some things cash-for-work can't pay for that CERP can, and vice versa. We used it for roads and for the—you know, because roads as part of a system. We used it for the vocational training as part of the human capital development kind of things. It was very useful to attack the—it was very useful when you're talking about infrastructure and economy. It's a little more difficult to apply it for governance and for judicial reform because judicial reform is not a matter of something necessarily physical that you can give them. Those are the two areas that are most difficult for PRT to affect, in my view. Then the default becomes "Okay. Well, do I use that CERP money to build a building?" Well, no, it's not very effective use of your money. So, you end up using a lot of the money towards the infrastructure and the economy, and you figure out other ways to use at least U.S. assets, whether it be a USAID program like the Judicial—I think it's the Provincial Judicial Development Program, or something to affect that one, and then governance. We used it for—at least we planned to use it as part of a conference, to conduct a conference with representatives from the ministries in Kabul with ministry representatives at the provincial level and district level so they can jointly develop a plan on what needed to be done in Oruzgan. We weren't able to pull that off before I left, mainly because of the transition of governors, and then I don't know if it happened after I left or not. But, those are the ways to use it.

The problem with CERP is that you cannot use it for security or anything that smells of security, and because that is the main issue, really, in Afghanistan, you tie the PRT's hands when it comes to trying to make the security forces more effective or to help the governor with security, who is the representative of the central government. So, when it came time to try to provide security for Tarin Kowt, for example, or the governor, we couldn't provide him with things that he needed to improve security, whether it be facilities or uniforms, weapons ammunition, that kind of thing—and that is his number one concern, basically, staying alive so that he could do his job or keeping his people safe. So, that was a little bit difficult. The fielding plan for both the ANA [Afghan National Army] and ANP [Afghan National Police] is not conducive to just waiting on the equipment

and training to trickle down to the provinces, and it's not responsive enough to use that as a way to improve your local police force. I mean, you could train these guys forever, and they could be very well trained, but if you don't have the equipment to do the job, they can't do it. So, I found that to be a little bit difficult to work with. And not just—when I say the security forces, not just ANA and ANP, but also the NDS [Afghan National Directorate of Security], who, while we see them as a security/intelligence organization—and they are—oftentimes, they're the most effective, or potentially effective, security force in the province. They certainly were in Tarin Kowt because they didn't owe their allegiance to the governor or to the police chief. So, they were really the keepers of the policies of the central government, and if we could have helped them, we could have—I mean, it would have made certainly a difference—maybe slight—but a little more flexibility with the CERP money would have been good. And we originally had—I think it went away like the thirty-first of July 2005. It went away, and I understand why. I mean, we were putting all this money towards police and the ANA, but the problem was, if you needed—you had to go all the way to the SecDef to get an exception to policy, and it just kind of ties the commander's hand at every level. So, I'm a big supporter of CERP, but I think the authority should be broadened a little bit. I mean, not totally to the point where the PRT commander could just spend, spend, spend, but a little more flexibility would have been nice.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, when you were nearing the end of your time in command, how did you start transitioning for your replacement? Did you meet your replacement?**

LT. COL. FONTES: When he got there.

DR. MUNDEY: **Was there an overlap?**

LT. COL. FONTES: We had a couple days' overlap, yes. We had exchanged a couple of e-mails, but the connectivity was not very good. And then I think we had about, maybe, five days of overlap. I told him that when he was ready for me to leave, I would leave.

DR. MUNDEY: **What was the situation at that time? What did you tell him were the major issues that you were looking at?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Well, we all had continuity books of what had been going on; what was in the future; what promises had been made, what hadn't been made; what he was likely to see; who were the main contacts on what issues; how to deal with every situation I could think of that might arise, like how to deal with the separate chains of command with the State Department and the military; you know, how to be an escort for General Eikenberry; you know, stuff like that. So, we each had these books just in case we weren't able to

do a good handover, but we did, you know, the left-seat/right-seat ride and went over the different issues there. My XO and base ops officer were both going to be there for a little while longer, so they were able to fill in any gaps that I wasn't able to, as well as the Australian officers that had been there for quite some time. They were able to do that, as well. So, we had a couple of people that were holdovers that were able to help and could fill in most of the holes if the books didn't cover it or if our right-seat/left-seat didn't cover all the issues.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay.**

LT. COL. FONTES: It was a very—this unit, this force protection unit, they were the first ones to come in from the new PRT, and it was their first day without, you know, the old guys. The old guys had got on the plane the day before, and the very next day we had this suicide bomber get into the convoy and detonate. It really—I mean, it rattled us all, there's no doubt about it—but I mean, it rattled these guys to the point where I had a hard time getting them outside the gate, and rightly so. I mean, when you first get there, you're most vulnerable in your first three and your last three months. And we spent a lot of time during my personal turnover working with the force protection guys, both myself and my replacement, working with these guys to get them so that they were confident in what they were doing. They knew what they needed to do, but after that incident, they lost a lot of their self-confidence. So, we were doing some pretty intensive hand-holding, for lack of a better term, and maybe didn't have quite this—you know, we were both a little bit distracted. That probably took away from our turnover.

But with the XO there, it had the potential to make it a lot easier, because my XO knew everything I was doing, and he was totally right into everything. I had no qualms about going off with him in charge. He would often tell me that he wished I would call a little more often when I was gone. So, he was a great guy. He was into everything. So, the turnover was a little bit more difficult than we would have hoped and more difficult than anticipated.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Do you have a favorite story?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Yes, I guess. Do you want to hear it?

DR. MUNDEY: **Yes.**

LT. COL. FONTES: This provincial government building was—this contractor, Mr. Hamidi, he was really in tight with the governor, who I think was one of his silent or not-so-silent partners. So, he's the guy that's building the provincial government building. Right next to it, he's building this guest house,

and he was a little bit, you know, delayed in his completion of the building, of the provincial government building. So, called him in and said, "It doesn't look like you're going to make your deadline, and I just want to remind you that there's a clause in the contract that says we can penalize you for not meeting the contract." And he had all kinds of excuses—you know, security. Security is always the number one excuse for everything: "The security was bad." I said, "Well, you're from Tarin Kowt. You know exactly what the situation is here. You should have considered that before you committed yourself to go in this building in six months," and "Oh, by the way, security doesn't seem to be affecting the pace of building this here guest house."

So, we ended up—I think all told we penalized him 20 percent, and we told him this was going to happen. So, he didn't like it but finally he just went away, and then we made the final payment, and it was 20 percent short. He says, "Well, where's the rest of my money?" "Well, you're penalized, as it says in this piece of paper. You're penalized 20 percent." And so he says, "Well, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I'm late." "Okay, I'm glad you're sorry," you know, and then finally he goes away. So, then he comes in with the governor. The governor … I can't remember. He was sick or something, but he was over at the CASH because he constantly was in seeing the doctors about something. So, they told me he was in there, and he wanted to talk to me. So, I go over there, and the governor proceeds to browbeat me on this money, and I said, "No, he's not going to get it. We told him this was the deal." And he's like, "Well, he's poor." I said, "Well, he's not so poor, because his son speaks English and is working as an interpreter over here. He's building this guest house," and all the other things that he's done. "Oh, but he's poor. You took 20 percent, and he's poor. You can't do this." And, "No, no. Not going to pay him." "Well, can't you forgive him?" "No, I can't. You know, this is not my money. It's not like it's my money, and I can just pay him. This is government taxpayer money, and they want their money's worth." And he says, "Well, he's sorry." I said, "Well, I appreciate that he's sorry, but he's not getting his money." "Well, you know, this is like if you missed one of your five times of prayer during the day. You just tell Allah that you're sorry, and Allah forgives you." I said, "Well, I'm not Allah, and I forgive you, but I'm not going to give you any money." So, I mean, this went round and round, this same thing for about—oh, man! I must have been there for about an hour and a half, and finally the governor gave up, and he said, "Well, I guess he'll just be a poor man." Well, the reason he's a poor man is because you took all the money! I mean, you're not kidding me. So, anyway, it was one of those stories where you probably had to be there, but it was kind of comical.

The other very short one I like was being told that it's actually okay if you drink alcohol as long as you're under a cement roof, because Allah can't see through cement. So, I kind of like that. And there were many different things, many different very comical situations. There's one more. Can I tell you this?

DR. MUNDEY: **Sure.**

LT. COL. FONTES: Okay. We're up in Chora, and—I guess this is when we were taking the, going with the, police. They had asked us to go up there with them, and they took the new district chief up there. It had rained really bad that night, so we couldn't get across the river to get into town, and we're sitting there listening to the chatter of the Taliban, right? And these guys, they were so funny! You hear these guys saying, "Yes, we see them." "Yes, you see them?" "Yes, we see them." "Well, should we attack them?" "Yes, I think we should ambush them." "Okay. So we'll ambush them in thirty minutes." "Well, okay, yes, thirty minutes." And then twenty-five minutes goes by, and the guy goes, "Okay, are you in position?" "Yes, I'm in position." "Are you ready?" "Well, why don't we ambush after lunch?" So, then we all have lunch, too, as we're sitting here, and we had an overwatch crew and everything, so we weren't terribly—we were a little bit concerned, but not terribly.

So, after lunch, they get back on and chatter: "Well, you ready?" "Well, I think we should pray first." So, one thing after another that these guys had to do. This is all—my interpreter is listening to this busting a gut laughing, because it's incredible. It's like, "Who are the clowns on the other end of this thing?" you know. And then two weeks later, they actually did ambush us, but they waited until we had split again. We had an overwatch force and then us, and they waited until we were all together again and then ambushed us, which was not very smart. I remember coming up out of the river valley that time and hearing these guys say, "Okay, you ready. We're going to ambush them?" And I just said to Sergeant Clary, I said, "You know these clowns. It's going to be just like the last time. They're not going to do anything." And then a little rocket, and it was like, "Okay, so they are!" I mean, it's easy to look back and laugh on that now, but at the time it wasn't quite as funny. But the lunch and prayer breaks at the time were pretty hilarious.

DR. MUNDEY: **Do you have any final thoughts that you want to share about your experience in Afghanistan—things that you want to get on the record of your experience, or lessons, or just any final thoughts that you had?**

LT. COL. FONTES: PRTs are operating at about 40 to 50 percent effectiveness for a couple of reasons. One, they're just undermanned for the mission that they have based on the need and the amount

of space that they're expected to cover or be responsible for. They do not have the right skills. They don't have the skills that they need to really do the job at more than maybe 40 or 50 percent effectiveness. They don't have the skills to affect the governance piece or the judicial reform piece that they really need to have; or, for that matter, to some extent, the reconstruction piece, because you don't have a whole lot of trained engineers, and you need more than one. It's hard to do. I mean, you would run that person to death when all you have is one because they got to go out to everything to check the engineering of different projects and stuff. You know, I realize that that's not a skill that, say, State Department has, or that any of the other executive branch departments have, but it seems to me very simple to obligate the money, appropriate the money, and get contractors who might be willing to do that. I mean, KBR has people banging down their door to go over there. You know, why can't we contract to man, to get the appropriate skills to these PRTs? Because although you see progress as you're there—I mean, you can always find something to feel good about and convince yourself that you do all these wonderful things, but all of it is for naught if we don't fix the governance piece, because that includes … to me, governance also includes good leaders for the security forces. If you don't have those, then everything that you've accomplished or every project that you've completed will just deteriorate in a couple of years. They won't take care of it because there's nobody there to make them take care of it, and there's nobody skilled to take care of it because you haven't taught anybody how to do it. You can do it to a certain extent. You can teach the guy the skills, but if you don't have somebody to sit there and tell them to do it, so you supervise him as he does it, and to pay him, then you really haven't gotten to the root of the issue. That, I think was the—I mean, I can take the frustration of dealing with the Afghans—the "you promised me this, you promised me that," that kind of thing, and their little intertribal and interregional intrigues and stuff. I love that stuff. That's fascinating for me. But it's, I guess, the lack of imagination, skills, and resources on how to execute reconstruction at the tactical level so that it's more effective. That's the first thing. That's the first lesson or recommendation I have.

The second would be that it is all fine and dandy for there to be a plan in Kabul on how to execute things like counternarcotics, Alternative Livelihoods, etc., but if you're not physically involved or empowering somebody at the tactical level to implement the plan at the tactical level, it is not going to happen. If you don't maintain positive control and actively influence the program from start to finish, from strategic level to the tactical level, it's not going to happen on the ground the way you thought it was going to happen. It's not going to get the effect that you want, and it's very frustrating to have directions through the military chain

of what you're supposed to do and not have any linkage in the other agencies and to see them lack the ability to influence their own programs at the lowest levels. I mean, there is no coordination of these efforts, and a lot of that happens—when you give a contractor money to go execute something—let's say it's Alternative Livelihoods; that's the best example I can think of, the most vivid example I can think of—and he's not even working in areas that, one, you need him to work in to support the military campaign, or you need him to work in because it actually affects the narcotic program, then why are we giving this guy money if he's not going to do it? And if nobody is monitoring him, he has no incentive to try and meet the goals of the program, but rather to just keep the program and their contract going and going forever. These guys are off on their—I mean, they get this big bag of money, and then they send their guys out, and they're not—*we're* just not making any progress. We're spinning our wheels because nobody is watching, and I find that very frustrating. I mean, it's easy to sit back and be critical, Monday morning quarterback it, but it's an attention thing and it's a supervision thing that I think—and it's an imagination thing—that we are kind of falling short on. The lack of attention, manpower, and supervision is just going to drag this thing on and on. It's not going to be short, anyway. Even if we were executing perfectly, it wouldn't be a short-term issue.

And then the last thing I would say—the very last, I promise—is that this is not an Afghan issue. This is a regional issue, and the only people this border makes a difference to is us and the Pakistani government, for some strange reason, because the whole Taliban/al Qaeda issue is not going to be solved until we figure out that this is not a fight here and here [indicating the border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan on a map], it's a fight here [indicating the entire map], and we have to attack—I mean, we have to attack it as a unit, not as two separate issues, which we're doing now, and if we can enable our Coalition partners in Afghanistan—you know, the Afghan National Police and units for the Ministry of Interior—why can't we enable units of the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan to do the same thing? I'm very frustrated by that, and I know other people who are as well, but it's just … anyway, those are the things I learned.

And I also learned something else. I have a great respect for the National Guard that I really didn't have before. I did not have high hopes for the people that I worked with, but they totally changed my opinion 180 degrees. I mean, the Texas National Guard guys were fantastic. And I can't say that my impression was the same of the reserve augmentees that I had, but the National Guard guys were great, and the Air Force and Navy guys that I worked with really were great, too. They had a great attitude. They stepped into something

they never expected, never wanted to do, and really were motivated and got the job done and did a good job. I mean, I'd worked joint before, but that was really a great joint experience.

DR. MUNDEY: **So where did you go after Tarin Kowt?**

LT. COL. FONTES: Here, to the War College. I'm just marking the days until I can get back either to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Well, thank you very much for coming and speaking with us. I think that your insights are going to help our projects tremendously. Thank you very much.**



Lt. Col. Anthony J. Hunter (USAR) *served as Commander, Gardiz Provincial Reconstruction Team, one of the earliest provincial reconstruction teams, from May 2003 to early 2004. He was interviewed by Lisa Mundey at the U.S. Army Center of Military History on 27 February 2007. Colonel Hunter volunteered to go to Afghanistan with the 321st Civil Affairs Brigade at the time that the provincial reconstruction team was being established. He describes the terrain around Gardiz, the tribal factions and warlords that held influence in the region, the component parts of his team, its command structure, and U.S. Special Operations Forces and Coalition troops operating in the immediate area. After Colonel Hunter arrived, the team continued to oversee projects that started before his arrival, including schools, wells, medical clinics, and bridge reconstruction, and he explains his interactions with the local populace, who expected the Americans to come with lots of money, and his struggles with a corrupt local government. The interview concludes with Colonel Hunter's assessments of the team's accomplishments and his thoughts about the Afghan people.*

DR. MUNDEY: **This is Dr. Lisa Mundey interviewing Lt. Col. Anthony Hunter regarding his time as commander of the Gardiz Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT]. It is 27 February 2007. The interview is being conducted at the Center of Military History. Sir, are you sitting for the interview voluntarily?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Yes.

DR. MUNDEY: **Do you have any objections to the interviewing being used by historians or researchers with the understanding that you will be quoted or cited accurately?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: No.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Thank you. Well, let's start at the very beginning of the story. When did you learn you were going to deploy to Afghanistan?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: At the time, I was beginning to complete my command time with the 448th Civil Affairs Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, and contacted a friend of mine, who was the S-3 [staff officer for operations] at the 321st Civil Affairs Brigade, and found out that they were getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan. At that time, I volunteered, when my command tenure was over, within February of 2003, to transfer over to the 321st down in San Antonio to deploy with them in whatever capacity that they would need me. So, that's how that started. Basically, I was a volunteer looking for an opportunity.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Given that a lot of the people who have gone to Afghanistan have been individual augmentees, or bits and pieces, did the entire 321st Brigade go to Afghanistan, or just parts of it?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: It was the same type of thing—the situation existed with the 321st. One of their subordinate battalions was slated to go, and then the brigade headquarters, to form the [C] JCMOTF, which was the Coalition [Combined] Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force, to form that organization. The brigade commander, Colonel [Mackey K.] Hancock, would form that headquarters and be the CJCMOTF commander, and then there were other soldiers that were pulled from other civil affairs battalions, 1st of the 407th up in the northern part of the United States, and some other places. So, it was the same type of conditions that existed for the deployment of this particular organization because there were too few and far between, stretched out with 38-Alphas [military occupational specialty for civil affairs specialist].

DR. MUNDEY: **Sure. About how many folks actually deployed? Just a round estimate.**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I want to say, roughly, about 250, I think. Something like that, but I'm not exactly sure, really.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. What was your awareness of the situation in Afghanistan before you actually got there?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Other than what I had read in open-source materials, I wasn't prepping for the deployment at the time. We didn't know the opportunity was arising. However, we knew that the situation was still somewhat volatile, especially in the south, and that there was still Taliban remnants running around. There were warlords usurping their authority and gaining control of areas again, as they had done prior to the Taliban's existence. And so, we knew that the threat level was a medium-to-high threat level in the south, and pretty much benign in the north and in the west. We had an idea where these PRTs were going to be established and

that we were going to be responsible for manning those organizations, also, as we deployed.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, what guidance were you given about what these PRTs were about?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: We really didn't have a lot of information on what the structure was going to be like, other than the fact that we knew where they were going to be located. We were trying to determine, based on commander's bios, their military experience, their civilian skill set, where we were going to actually place these commanders in these particular areas, whether it was a volatile area down in the south, or whether it was a more quiet and benign area in the north and the east. So, we spent a lot of time as a staff, not only coming up and developing somewhat of a campaign plan to try to attack this problem in Phase IV, in reconstruction and stability ops, but we were also looking at what really was the mission of the PRT and how was this organization made up as an ad hoc organization, as we understood at the time. So, there was really an issue of trying to find out from somebody, you know, what this animal was like, and that was pretty difficult at the time. We were talking to some of the staff that were already over there manning the [Combined Joint] Civil-Military Operations Task Force and giving us some basic information on the structure of the organization, but it was a very fluid and flexible concept. It could change, even while we were en route.

DR. MUNDEY: **Did these PRTs have any relationship with the earlier Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Some of those cells, I think were … at least at the locations where those cells were deployed. The PRTs were growing out of some of those locations, if they were strategic enough, if they were set up to be adjacent to a UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan] office, which I think was the original design. There were five, I think, original UNAMA offices out there in Afghanistan, so they decided to collocate these teams near those sites, and then build upon them as they developed the PRT concept. But most of these teams, at the time, were supporting [C] JSOTF, the [Combined] Joint Special Operations Task Force, at that particular time, and they were essentially assigned or attached to them and not necessarily part of a CMO, or civil-military operations, structure, or civil affairs structure, at the time.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Was there any particular training that you guys went through before you deployed or that you put the soldiers through before you deployed?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: We concentrated primarily on force protection operations—not only individual soldier skills and tradecraft, but also

convoy operations, because we knew we'd be going out and conducting long-range assessment into the hinterland, and that meant that we needed to know how to communicate; we needed to know how to use weapons; we needed to know how to drive vehicles—you know, right-hand drive vehicles, manual transmissions, these type of things, which a lot of the young soldiers didn't know how to. They didn't grow up that way, so a lot of the older officers were actually driving in a lot of the vehicles once we got in country until we could teach young soldiers how to drive those. So, we focused on those, primarily. We didn't have—one of the things that, had I known then what I know now about what we could have trained on, we would have definitely focused on contracting; on basic horizontal engineering concepts; statements of work; these type of things that are all involved in this process—the funding; understanding OHDACA, the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster and Civic Aid funds; understanding what CERP, Commander's Emergency Response [Program] fund, could do for us. We didn't have any idea, really, what these funds were and how they were available, because most of our training back at home station centered on supporting that war fighting division that we were attached to, or assigned to, and we had that command relationship with. Primarily, we were responsible for manning the civil-military operations center, collocated with our division TOC [tactical operations center] and then have teams, Civil Affairs Teams-Alpha, going out and doing their thing. So, that was a gap for us. It was a training gap for



Colonel Hunter (*far left*) briefs General Richard B. Myers (U.S. Air Force), chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (*second from the right*), and others on the activities of Provincial Reconstruction Team Gardiz, 30 July 2003.

us. So, we had to learn on the ground, kind of an on-the-job process. It was painful to try to understand that, especially with the difficulties and the legalities that are involved in contracting, which was new to a lot of us. We had a lot of guys that were in law enforcement that can handle the force protection aspect of it very well, and I think that was what helped us stay safe in the environment. I didn't lose any soldiers going into there and coming out. But, we did have a lot of catching up to do on the other aspect, on the primary aspect of, you know, these reconstruction projects.

DR. MUNDEY: **When did you find out your specific job and your specific location?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: That was juggled around a couple of times. Because I was brand new to the unit, nobody knew me, other than my bio and my ORB, officer record brief, I provided to the command element, so I had to kind of interject myself into the process and say, "Look, these are the skill sets I am bringing." I was a law enforcement officer at the time as my civilian occupation. So, I had to basically sell myself and said, "Look, I want you to put me into the hottest area you can find. I think that is where I think could do my best." Originally, they had me slated to go to Bamian. Then that shifted to Herat, and then finally, to Gardiz. Once I got on the ground, I did get to do a site visit to Bamian, when at that particular time I was still going to be going to that PRT, and then at the last minute, the command group decided to change and shift some personnel based on—and, in fact, there were other officers that were earmarked to man these PRTs that were also new to the brigade, brought in from other units, that they had to get a good feel on what their capabilities were—not only what they look like on paper, but how they interacted and how they worked in the environment. So, that led to a lot of the changes in decision making that was going on on the ground when we first got there.

DR. MUNDEY: **Could you describe your arrival in Afghanistan? When did you arrive? What was in-processing like? When did you eventually get to Gardiz?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: We flew into … well, we transited from here, from Fort Bragg, on C–17 over to Frankfurt, Rhein-Main Air Base, to refuel there, and then we continued on into country and landed on May third, 2003, in blackout conditions. The entire camp at Bagram was blacked out, and just kind of corkscrewed our way down in the tactical landing approach. Got out in pitch-black darkness. Was led into their in-processing center, which, we essentially got some basic emergency contact information for us, and then started moving us out into the tents that they had set up in a temporary holding area for us. The following day, then we were moved over—well, actually, the following day the staff

was moved over to their building where the CJCMOTF was set up and started doing the coordination with the individuals that they were going to replace. We started, as time moved on—a couple of days, we got used to the environment, self-acclimating to the atmospherics of what was going on there. At Bagram, we were starting to link up with our counterparts at the PRTs. That was dependent upon the security situation, depending on the weather, those type of things. It was May, so we didn't have too many issues with weather, but transportation issues, especially out in Herat and Bamian, which were far off, and Konduz, for that matter. Those officers and commanders and CA [civil affairs] teams had to wait a couple of more weeks before they could get out to their locations. Some of them, I think it was longer than a month. I was on the ground at Bagram, I believe, for about—it was about almost two weeks, and then I linked up with my counterparts at Gardiz and loaded up and went down.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Could you describe Gardiz to me, to someone who has never seen it, as much detail as you can?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: It takes about four hours' drive from Bagram to Gardiz. And about an hour south, you go into Kabul, so you have to wind through. There's no pass around Kabul, so you have to wind through the congestion there, and the extremely heavy traffic and mass confusion and chaos. And then once you get through there, you are back on the rural roads again, moving at quite a high rate of speed, as fast as you can safely to avoid any small-arms fire or possible IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. The trip, other than just being overwhelmed with the terrain, was pretty uneventful, and the terrain varied from craggy cliffs and rock cut-outs, you know, the narrow passageways to just flat-out open desert in some areas, with very minimal vegetation. But, always surrounded by some kind of mountain range somewhere, ranging in size from nine thousand to fourteen thousand, fifteen thousand feet in elevation. We maintained—in Kabul, I think the elevation around there is about two thousand feet, and then once we started heading south, the elevation increased. When we got over the last pass, mountain pass, into Gardiz, we were about 7,500-foot elevation in Gardiz itself. So, you come through a mountain pass, and then it starts opening up again, and you see another mountain range to the south, and in between the pass mountain range and to the south was where Gardiz city is actually located in kind of a wide valley—kind of a Wild West type of town. You know, just kind of out there in the middle of nowhere. There are some trees and vegetation in the area, especially around the towns and villages that are in the area, because of the irrigation control that is being done for the crops. So, anywhere you see any kind of vegetation that is taller than five or ten feet, you will know that there is a village that's pretty close by in those areas. Other than that, it's pretty

barren. But there were two small mountains on the other side of Gardiz in between the southern mountain range that I described, and the PRT is a compound that basically sits off a paved road that leads out to Khowst. So, as you go through Gardiz and you approach and cross the last bridge over the river … it is basically a dry riverbed through Gardiz. You will go about another mile, and then on the right will be the PRT compound. And the first compound you will see is the [C]JSOTF compound, the one where the predominant forces flew out of for [Operation] ANACONDA, and right behind that is another with four towers, and that's the actual PRT compound itself. That's basically the setup of the two compounds themselves, and then you have got the perimeter—Hescos and barriers around it, with a pretty good standoff, about two hundred to three hundred meters, in some places.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. And ethnically, what were the people in that particular area?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: All Pashtun, because that's the entire Pashtun belt through that area. So, we're talking about, predominantly, Ghilzai, the major tribe group, Mangal, Jani Khel, Zadran, these types of tribes in the area. There's many, many more. I can't really recall. But, predominantly, that mix of rural, agrarian society—you know, pretty simple farmers, mostly uneducated, illiterate population. The individuals that we dealt with that actually worked for us—obviously, the interpreters, and some of the representatives for the government, the provincial government—were educated and spoke English quite well.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. And in terms of the security situation, which groups were more active in that area? Al Qaeda? Taliban? HIG [Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin]?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: The majority of our problems, really, concerned one of the major warlords in the area, in the pass heading toward Khowst, which is Pacha Khan Zadran. He is actually now a member, I believe, of the lower house now, but he was creating a lot of problems with the old ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces] corps commander that was there at the time. There was this constant rivalry was going on between the two. So, that really occupied most of our time, as far as the security situation was concerned. There were some Taliban remnants in the area, and we couldn't specifically identify, or we didn't receive much information, about al Qaeda and how they were operating. But every now and then, you would hear of IEDs, or firefights of a small nature, or small-scale ambushes, hit-and-run-type tactics. Other than that, the ODAs that went out, the Operational Detachment-Alphas, the Special Forces teams, probably got hit much more often than we did. We only had maybe one or two instances at all of close calls of anything happening

to us, and they were small-arms incidents. There were no IEDs that struck any of our vehicles. However, within hours of passing, typically coming from Bagram back down to Gardiz, we would pass an area about an hour later, and the [C]JSOTF guys would pass through, and they would get hit by an IED. Now, they wouldn't suffer any casualties, but they were definitely targeted. And I think a lot of that was attributed to the way we—and I don't want to put this the wrong way, but the way we conducted ourselves on the ground, the way we were dressed, the way we traveled—we didn't have the beards. We didn't have sterile uniforms. We were clean shaven. We were visibly marked with patches. I think the locals started identifying the USACAPOC [U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command] patch with the sword and the two lightning bolts as people that were going out and doing reconstruction operations and doing assessments and meeting with local leaders and this type of thing, and meeting with local *shuras*. That, I think, separated us, for the most part, with what [C] JSOTF was doing, and therefore, we weren't targeted nearly as much as they were. But, for the most part, the security situation was pretty benign, even in the south, for us. We could freely move about and cover a lot of ground without, really, any fear of any attacks or anything like that. I mean, it was amazing. My predecessor, Col. Chris Allen at the time, had already traversed almost the entire five-province area that we were responsible for, and then took me back out to these areas to introduce me to the major tribal groups as part of my right-seat ride, indoctrination, and train-up to take over the PRT. So, he had already kind of set the groundwork for a lot of these areas, but we still had areas to cover, out to the far west and Paktika and Ghazni to continue more assessments in those areas. And, like I said, other than weather problems or vehicle breakdowns, we didn't have any issues with the locals or with any Taliban elements. In fact, we stayed in a lot of the ANSF, Afghan National Security Forces, compounds that they had spread out all over the country. We sheltered with them when we were on long-range overnight patrols.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. And what were those five provinces that you were in charge of?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I was responsible for a five-province area roughly the size of South Carolina, is what I can equate it to. It was a lot of area to cover. It was obviously Paktia, which was—the seat was Gardiz; Paktika to the southwest; and then, to the west, was Ghazni. We also were responsible for Khowst Province and the southern part of Lowgar. Now, I had one civil affairs team, down at Shkin in Paktika; one team was in Khowst, at Chapman Air Base there, adjacent to [Forward Operating Base] Salerno; and then the other three teams I had were at Gardiz and would go out and do their assessments from that location.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Now, it is my understanding that each PRT is somewhat unique in the way that they are organized. Could you describe your PRT—the components of it, and, kind of, your internal organization?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Yeah. I think our PRT was probably the one that was most … I mean, if you could see a doctrinal document outlining the structure of what at that time everyone believed a PRT should look like, I think we were it. We had a headquarters element. We had the civil affairs teams. I had five civil affairs teams at the time. We also had a base defense element, consisting of troops from the 82d Airborne initially on, and that changed later on to a cav unit from the 10th Mountain, and to a field artillery unit. And then we had civilian representation, civilian augmentees into the PRT, which consisted of a representative from USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development], a representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a Department of State representative, and then, later on, about the latter half of my tenure there, we received an MOI [Afghan Ministry of Interior] rep, basically a general from the Afghan National Police, who stayed inside the compound with us. So, roughly, we had about 150 troops on the ground there, to include all parts of the organization.

DR. MUNDEY: **And whom did you report to?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I reported directly to the [C]JCMOTF commander, and that was pretty much on a daily basis through e-mails at the time. We had kind of a rudimentary e-mail system and weren't up on the SIPR [Secure Internet Protocol Router] system yet. We didn't have that available, so we were communicating basically on a commercial broadband net and had our own satellite there at the PRT.

DR. MUNDEY: **Other than the PRT, were there other Coalition or American units operating in that area?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: The only other U.S. units that were operating in the area at the time were [C]JSOTF. They were essentially hot-bunking it out of the next compound over. I mean, whenever there was a particular mission that was going on, you'd see more of those elements come down, whether they were Navy SEALs or Ranger elements or Special Forces teams from both the active component and National Guard. They'd come in and conduct missions for a few days, and they'd be gone. So, it was constantly changing. But no other Coalition forces in the area. However, when I first arrived, we had two Italian officers that were embedded with the PRT. One was an operations officer—actually, he was an artillery officer, I believe—and the other was *carabiniere*, the Italian police. So, they stayed with us, and at the same time that Col. Chris Allen was taking me out and kind of showing me the

area, the two Italians would go with us. They were basically determining, you know, what role could the Italians take in a PRT in the future, and consequently, now they have the Herat PRT.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, what did you learn in that handover transition time about your area and about what you were going to do?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I had a pretty good idea of the major tribal leaders in the area that I had to deal with, of course, the governor and some of the district subgovernors. We obviously didn't get to cover all the ground, because we only had about two weeks, but we were out on the road constantly for that entire time. Got introduced to the poppy trade and the growing season because the poppies were in bloom at that time. In fact, they were being harvested. We could walk right down to the fields. So, that was quite beneficial, to be able to get out and see what area that I was dealing with and the different types of terrain and those challenges that—especially coming in the winter months that were to come, and what challenge we would face. So, that predominantly took the most of the two weeks, just getting comfortable with what was on the ground. And then after that, we were basically left to our own devices to take on the projects that were already being initiated, which was—I think there was roughly about sixty to seventy projects that were already initiated in the area. Now, most of these were low-level projects—you know, the foundations of schools being built, wells, and some medical clinics—the typical, the top three types of projects that you would see funded by OHDACA.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Is there anything that would approximate a typical day at a PRT?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Yeah, there was a lot involved in the maintenance of the facility. One of the things I focused on coming into the PRT was basically improving the quality of life. I mean, I think every commander coming in was eventually doing that. So, that took a lot of our time. I tasked my NCOIC [noncommissioned officer in charge] to work on that, along with my XO [executive officer], Maj. Andy Mazerik. So, he was responsible for basically coordinating with my chief groundskeeper, who was a local Afghan, who actually went into Kabul and bought us supplies and did this kind of thing for us—anything we couldn't get through the military supply system—and basically kept the camp running for us.

We would cook breakfast in the morning. We had Army cooks there. There were three to four Army cooks assigned at any given time. So, we would cook the breakfast meal. We would have an MRE [Meal, Ready to Eat] or just whatever we could lay out for lunch, and then a cooked meal in the evening. Most of the day, in the morning time, roughly

about nine-thirty to ten, the civil-military operations center, which was another one of my majors, led his team out to man the CMOC, which was located in the governor's compound in Gardiz, and that was their place of duty from basically ten until about four in the afternoon. They would handle anything that came in, any locals. Once they got established and word started getting out, individuals would come into them and use them as a conduit through the governor; or, if they had any other particular needs, or if there is collateral damage or anything else that they thought they could submit a claim to the government, they would come to the CMOC. Back at the PRT, our other teams were going out on assessments—either, one, they were going out on assessments; or they were going out and QA and QC, which is quality assurance/quality control on existing projects that were already being built. They were going out and inspecting those sites and making sure that they were staying within the standards that we wanted to have, based on the contract that we had agreed upon, and basically making payments to the contractor so he could pay his workers on an intermittent basis. Then, also, continued on with more route reconnaissance, looking for our ODA. We had one ODA team that was located in the PRT. It was a National Guard team, and they would go out and do basically split-base operations. They would have one team would go out and recon a route to a particular area that we wanted to go out and do an assessment on. They would plug all that information into their GPS, come back, back brief us on the routes and everything and whom they stayed with and all that. They made arrangements with the Afghan National Security Force in the area, district subgovernors, whoever they could talk to about places for us to stay along the way. And then, we would take another team out with the other half of the ODA and go out. Again, they would provide security for us at the time. The base defense guys would remain at the PRT because they couldn't exceed a ten-kilometer radius outside the PRT That was their fence, basically. And then, we would take the ODA out and go out on these long-range patrols and conduct assessments.

Periodically, I would meet once a week with the governor. That was typically on a Monday or a Tuesday, to try to set, basically, what priorities we had in mind and what the central government was looking at and trying to coordinate those things. We identified some of the issues that he was dealing with on a day-to-day basis, which there were a myriad of those. And, along with that, we would also meet typically on Wednesday or Thursday, with the local UNAMA office, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, right there in Gardiz. I can tell you, we had a fantastic relationship with that organization, with the people that worked there, because through establishing that relationship, we were to gain information on the other NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and what they were doing out on the ground,

because typically they would not associate with us, would not talk to us, for obvious reasons, and the only way we could get information on their projects and what they were working on so we could de-conflict these things and not have any redundancy was to go through the UNAMA office and have a good relationship with them.

Toward the end of the day, teams started coming in, and typically we would have a meeting around 1800 or 1900 at night. It was a daily staff meeting, and we would do that in the mess hall, and we would go over basically everything that happened during the day—anything that the governor had brought up, any other priorities that we might have—and each representative, all my civilian counterparts, would give their part of it; my civil affairs teams that were out on the ground and recon and did their assessments, brought back their findings; and then, the CMOC, what they had dealt with during the day and so on. So, that worked very well. We had a pretty good situational awareness and understanding of what was going on.

The big issue, though, at the time, was, we didn't have any money. CERP was not available to us. I had lobbied for nine months at the time I was there on the ground to get CERP funds for the PRTs. Just prior to my redeployment, CERP money was authorized and approved for the PRTs. Typically, it was available to maneuver commanders and for black operations, or OGA [other governmental agencies], whoever else was operating out there. They had that money any time they wanted it. But it didn't make any sense for us. We had very limited funds in OHDACA at the time allocated to us, and so we were reliant on some other source of funding that we could use, and CERP was it, and there wasn't any reason in my mind at why the PRT couldn't have this money and use it because there were many times when we would get out to areas and need this type of funding to put in a well—especially wells, more than anything else. A $3,500 to $5,000 well was typically what you would put in with CERP money or repairing some infrastructure that critical infrastructure that needed it in the town that was destroyed or damaged. So, that was probably one of our biggest challenges initially.

DR. MUNDEY: **Did the USAID representative have access to funds at this time?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Very limited access. A lot of these funds were still tied up in whatever litigation they were tied up in or how they were going to disperse them throughout the country. We weren't seeing much of that, other than the projects we were already managing that had been established. Again, those were not CERP funds. They were OHDACA-funded projects, through USAID. So, there was a lot of further assessment going on, setting priorities, trying to figure out what areas

we could go to next, and then identifying those needs out there and then kind of setting ourselves up for "Okay, we're gonna wait for this bucket to turn over and all this money starts flowing to us." That did not happen until—about the same time the CERP approval came down, these funds called Economic Support Funds were funneled down, and at the time, it was going to be upwards of $60 million that was going to be funneled throughout Afghanistan and we were going to get our lion's share of that in Gardiz, based on the success we had with the projects in the areas that we had assigned priorities to back then. If I would have stayed another six months, you know, or another year, I could have really seen a lot more progress, I think, with the inclusion of those particular funds to really do something in a timely manner. It was very frustrating for us to go through, and I mentioned earlier about the painfulness of this contracting process—to understand it and the slowness of how it worked and go through this. And once you looked at the timeline you would typically have six months within the time that you identified a project and the time that it was completed. That was anything from a well to a one-story school—something that was pretty rudimentary. Structures and they were—once people got on the ground and started working, you could complete them pretty quickly. But the funding process and the inspections and the bidding, everything that went along with that just took an inordinate amount of time, especially with the contract itself and the legalities of the contract, making sure it was exactly right. One of the things that I kept expressing to the [C]JCMOTF commander when we would go up once a quarter for our PRT meetings up in Bagram was "You know, we're trying to apply a twenty-first century template to a country that is two hundred years behind us, and we have to adjust." Understanding we are dealing with funds and we have to be accountable for those funds, but we have to adjust for those things, and, you know, in that environment, to speed up the process, because one of the biggest challenges I had there was managing expectations of the local populace. You know, when you go out there and you talk to them, they expect a lot from you. The Americans have all the money, and they expect you to deliver. If you say anything—"I'm going to go back and check on this. I'll get back with you"—everything becomes a promise to them. So, when you come back, they don't expect an answer from the first question they gave you in the first meeting. They expect you to bring money and have guys behind you ready to build, and they thought the Army was going to do that. So, we had to really make them understand; and also, legitimize the district subgovernors, who were typically appointed and not necessarily from the area, as a voice and as somewhat part of the central government influence and authority that would come down and provide them these assets so that we could put an Afghan face on everything we did. That was a huge challenge. Not having the funds to do that made

it very frustrating on the ground to deal with, especially when you go back and second and third time to deal with these large tribal groups, you know, that we are doing all the right things, that we are eradicating poppy, that we are ensuring stability in their areas, and you couldn't provide them anything tangible. It was very, very difficult and very hard to swallow.

DR. MUNDEY: **You mentioned difficulties with the contracting process. Did you find any problems dealing with an uneducated population with regard to that?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: No, but with the typical graft and corruption that goes along with any kind of business transactions you could do in the country. We had to be careful of that because when we had the bidding process, guys would change. They would submit bids for projects under a different name, which would be a relative of the original person that would submit another bid. So, it took us a little bit to kind of catch these things. But once we identified who these people were and, through representatives that we had in the government working for us, too, then we could understand who was not playing equitably and who was trying to cheat the system. At times, we would go out, and clearly they would not meet the construction requirements. Now, obviously, Afghan construction requirements are not anywhere close to what we have here in the United States—I mean, that is understandable—but you can hold them to some kind of standard based on the materials that are available to them and the technologies available to them at the time. A lot of these guys would try to get away with some real shoddy work and then plead ignorance and this type of thing, and you could literally push some of that, and my guys were pretty tenacious. My civil affairs team leaders that would go down there were—and my engineer that I had assigned to me, too; he was an Army engineer. They'd go out there and just literally push down walls in schools and explain to these guys, "This is not the kind of quality we are needing." You know, the bricks that they fired or the cinderblock bricks that they made up were just crumbling in our hands, and we saw that on more than one occasion, that we had to literally just tear down entire walls and foundations and just start from scratch. So, those type of things just ended up costing more money. They knew what they were doing. They were pretty good business people. They are shrewd. But the graft is part of the process. I mean, it is natural, there are kickbacks involved. Everybody gets paid off one way or the other. We just had to really watch that part of it and keep control of it. I mean, there was no way we were going to stop it. We knew that was just a way of life there. But to limit it to something reasonable in that process was helpful.

Where we dealt with uneducated people—when we got into some of the deep rural areas doing our assessments, we had some—it was frustrating at times trying to explain to them this process. I mean, we couldn't just show up with money and a guy and a truck and a digging outfit and start going at it and dig this tube well. It was more complicated than that. I think they realized some of that. But it goes back to managing those expectations and understanding and explaining to this population, this uneducated population that, you know, "This is what we can do for you, but it is going to take some time, you know? Don't expect it right away. And, we need your help, too, in this respect, to find individuals that could be in part of the bidding process, local contractors that you know, guys that do building, a guy that you trust. Send them to us. Get them involved in the process, and we'll get this project going." So, I think once they understood a lot of that process, they were understanding—not necessarily patient, but they were at least understanding in what we were going through.

DR. MUNDEY: **How far out were your CA assessment teams able to go, since you said you had an area about the size of South Carolina?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I mean, typical trips went up to—when we started out from the east, we would go up to the border area in Khowst and up in the northern part of Khowst. We were required once a month to go—and this is a requirement that was levied to us by CJTF-180 [Combined Joint Task Force-180]—to coordinate with the Pakistani border guards, and we did a couple of visits up there, just basically to see what was going on, the issues and problems they had and report back. But on the way, we'd do assessments all the way to the border in those areas, and those trips typically took about six hours one way, and you are talking about only sixty kilometers, seventy kilometers, but an inordinate amount of time to traverse the terrain because it was so difficult, and the elevations involved. Out to the south, we went down as far as about three-quarters of the way down into Paktika, out in the middle of just absolute barren desert. We didn't see it fruitful to go much farther because, at that particular time, there were fuel issues that we were dealing with, issues of security. We didn't know exactly what the security situation was down there. We were kind of vulnerable in that position. We did have communications and the ODA that was with us, but we were a small group, and we could have easily been interdicted and our guys could have gotten hurt if we would have pushed it too hard. We did cover a lot of ground in a lot of the northern and central part of that province.

Then, on to Ghazni, we established a good relationship—and Chris Allen can be attributed to a lot of this; he really established a strong relationship with the governors in the

area. Asad Ullah Khalid was the governor in Ghazni at the time, who is now the governor of Kandahar. He was very pro-Karzai, pro-American, could speak English, educated. He assisted us and actually took us out to areas, far areas, out in the southwestern part of Ghazni that we surveyed. We had to cut one of those trips off short. What made it difficult after the new regime came in, I should say, after some of the—before the transition to CJTF-76 [Combined Joint Task Force-76], when General [Lt. Gen. David W.] Barno got on the ground, they started tightening up our span of influence. We were restricted to a ten-kilometer area, just like the base defense guys were, and that really threw up a red flag for us because we had projects that were outside of this area that we could no longer touch unless we went through—and then we had to go through a normal CONOP [contingency operation] process to get approvals for our convoy operations that were going out and how long they were and everything else. Well, when you have got operations like DRAGON FURY going on, we were basically shut down. We were, you know, "Stay in the camp. Don't go anywhere until this is over with. And then, if anything breaks, you guys are going to go out and fix it." So, that really limited us and what we could do. Well, that kind of carried on after that operation, and that really never got resolved, even until the day I left, of trying to expand this influence again, because at that time they were looking at forming additional PRTs above the five that they had, established in those locations that we already were. And also, for me, to go out and recon a location in Ghazni, which I established the PRT in Ghazni, also. So, that really, really put kind of a crimp in our operations at the time, and I don't know if we ever got around that. There was a lot more control over and a lot more visibility with the maneuver commanders on the ground when they started these regional development zones, of where we could go and what we could do. And then our team started getting split up to man these new PRT locations. So, that really changed the whole dynamic of things. So, a lot of the contacts I have made and a lot of the outreach that I had made and all the assessments I had made in these far areas, I could no longer touch for quite some time. It was now going to be the responsibility of the new PRTs, once they got established and established their rings of influence to go out and do that.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, given the fact that you had restrictions on funding and then literally restrictions on the geographic location that you could go out to, what would you say were the biggest projects that you ended up doing while you were there?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: A couple of the largest projects we had—two of them right there in Gardiz, actually. The large, high-dollar projects were focused in the provincial capital in Gardiz, and the teacher training institute was one of them. It was a large

project funded, over $100,000; and then there was about $200,000, I think, that was put into the all-girls school, basically, an all-female, very large school that was built in the town there. Basically, we got an old Soviet building that we refurbished. This wasn't a ground-up build like the teacher training institute, which was a ground-up build. We had the only central government–sanctioned, U.S.-funded girls school that was there. I had a good relationship with the teacher training institute. They would supply those female teachers to go and occupy that school and train there. So, those were the two major projects. Everything else was smaller projects, schools and clinics in the area. There were some bridges. There were a couple of projects, roughly in the $40,000 to $60,000 range, that were bridge reconstruction projects. They were already identified and ongoing when we assumed the PRT, and those were OHDACA-funded USAID projects that we still had the responsibility for monitoring and reporting back. Those reports would be conducted and written up by the USAID rep to provide that information. So, we kind of managed them and we were kind of the transportation for him to get out and look at these sites, but he would provide those reports back. When we were developing the economic support funds or earmarking priorities for those, we were looking at … and we were really kind of left up to our own devices, the PRT commanders, to determine where was the best place, in conjunction with rural reconstruction and development programs that were coming out of Kabul and what the central government wanted us to do, but we were really focusing and left to our own devices on coming up with priorities in our AOs [areas of operations]. I focused predominantly on district infrastructure. We had about, I think, about $50 million, of which we were probably going to get $10 million to $15 million of that for our area, and I was going to focus that almost entirely on building up that district infrastructure—the judicial system and the court system, part of that in Gardiz, some of the provincial structure there, but predominantly to the districts; building up the police stations, building up the district centers, the local judicial systems right there in the districts because in my mind, at that time, I thought, "If we lose districts out here, we lose that connection. We are going to lose the country and it will remain unstable because that influence has to extend out, and we have to give that power to that provincial government to be able to do that." And then it was focusing on district structures and focusing on the immediate impact needs—the wells, these type of things, survival. I should say that was first in the districts. And then after that was the roads, the feeder roads that came off of Ring Road and connected everything together.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. What was the status of the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army [ANA] at the time you were there?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: In fact, we maintained a close relationship. One of the Afghan security force commanders was there. He was one of the corrupt commanders that was dealing with Pacha Khan Zadran, the two that were infighting together. Eventually, Kabul relieved him and sent him away and got rid of the police chief. These two guys were in cahoots, basically, and got rid of these two guys and sent a new governor down, and a new chief of police. These two guys came in with a whole new idea of how they were going to resolve issues. The governor was very keen on having the tribes resolve their own issues, empowering the police to enforce. But the biggest problem with the police—and this is how we got involved, because a lot of my guys were law enforcement guys, and so they had a propensity to gravitate toward the police and help them with their issues and problems. One of the major projects we were funding in town for them was the police headquarters building, which needed about $90,000 worth of reconstruction, and then just outfitting them with equipment, weapons, belts—with everything they needed, transportation, trucks. The German government was providing a lot of the transportation of the vehicles for them through the Law and Order Trust Fund. But we established a good, strong relationship with those guys, and they basically provided security in the town itself. During the voter registration process, which we got involved with, with DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of militias], that process, we were very close in coordinating with the local police on those issues. So, we had a good, strong relationship with the chief of police and his guys.

With the ANA, during the latter part of my tenure there, the *kandak* battalion was moved into the Gardiz PRT area, between the two compounds. So, at any one time we had roughly a company-minus or so of ANA guys out patrolling, and they would predominantly do operations with [C]JSOTF. Now, prior to this, I would take—I had fifty Afghan security force guys that we were employing for just basically base defense, outside the wire, basically, maintaining the two access points coming in on the paved road that was running alongside the PRT compound going from Gardiz to Khowst. These guys, we would take out on patrols with us for extra security. I stopped that when the ANA got on the ground, and I started pulling ANA squads and sticking those guys with us because they were the true, legitimate representative of the government's new fledgling army. That worked out very well, because now, especially in the rural areas, the remote areas, people would say, you know, "Who are these guys with the different uniforms? Who are they?" "Well, this is your army. This is the Afghan National Army." "Oh, I didn't know we had an army." So, we made amazing inways into these tribal structures and into these local government structures by showing them that "The central government is there, and they're out here to

help you." So, we got those guys very closely involved. And, again, the police would have the inner cordon, basically, of voter registration processes; and then DDR processes, the same thing; and then the Afghan National Army we had available—whoever was available at the time would do the outer cordon for these areas, and the PRT would function in the liaison capacity and observe and report on the whole process and what was going on. So, it worked out very well. We were very close-knit with both those organizations.

DR. MUNDEY: **Were there any other Coalition groups that you worked with?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: No. When I made a couple of my trips out to Khowst, I went over to Salerno and I met with the Task Force NIBBIO commander and talked to him. Basically, I told him who I was. You know, he knows I had a team down there in Chapman operating adjacent to OGA and the Special Forces guys there, and so we established that relationship, and anything they needed, and vice versa. But it just so happened that they concentrated predominantly in that area. We provided them information on what we found out there through our assessments—tribal rivalries, whom you could trust, whom you couldn't, who was going to give you trouble, what were the areas they could focus on. So, we provided them information in that respect that they didn't really have on the ground for when they were conducting their operations. So, that part was good. But as far as the reconstruction side of the house, they had their own funds. We coordinated these things and we were aware, and so we could de-conflict, but they had their own funds that they were using to work on projects there. We used them as a liaison to the small UN field office that was out there to gain more information on what they were funding and what UN was funding and that type of thing. That was probably the most fruitful part of that particular meeting. But other than that, they were never in—you know, they never moved farther to the west into our area. They mostly stayed in Khowst.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Now, you had mentioned the poppy fields before. Was there anything that you did for counternarcotics? I know that that had always been kind of a sticky situation of "What are we going to do, what we are not going to do, with that?"**

LT. COL. HUNTER: The Brits really have the charter for counternarcotics. Ours was mostly of awareness and reporting of where these patches and where these fields were, where the predominant growth was. The Department of State rep that I had with me was keenly interested in it, as most of the ambassadors at the time coming through there, especially Ambassador [William B.] Taylor. Originally, Chris Allen took Ambassador Taylor out to these locations, showed

him the fields and what was going on, and then also showed him the tribes that were not involved in the poppy growing and that "Here is where we have an opportunity to provide reconstruction funding. Provide projects to these tribes and show the other tribes that 'Hey, if you cooperate with the government and you eradicate poppy and you keep the place stable and provide your own security, this is what you are going to get.'" That is kind of the—you know, the carrot-and-stick kind of approach we took to this thing. So, in the area in Gardiz, around northern part of Gardiz, it was mostly hashish that was growing in those areas, and not so much poppy. You would see poppy in the valleys heading out toward Khowst and all through that area, and then you'd see some more in Ghazni, but more hashish in Ghazni than anything else that I saw. We were also privy—and just because of my law enforcement guys were interested in this type of stuff, too—we were privy to those seizures that were made by the local police because we had already established that close relationship with them. We knew what they were taking and how much of it they were taking and providing that information back, and because we were in the loop of identifying and were aware of these things, we could report that up. That was reported to the central government, into MOI, so they were aware of it, too, so that hopefully nothing was missing between the time this was confiscated and the time it was sent back to Kabul to be destroyed. So, that was two people reporting on it. It was not only the local police through their chain of command, but we were also putting pressure on MOI to say, "Hey, this is what we saw down there. Your guys did a great job, and make sure it gets up to Kabul and gets taken care of." But we weren't really involved in it, necessarily, I mean, we didn't touch at all any kind of eradication process. It was just a twinkle in somebody's eye at the time, I think, at that particular time, someone wrestling with the idea of how they were going to deal with this. The way we dealt with it was typically by, you know, co-opting those tribes that were not part of that process, who were not involved, with appealing to their Islamic faith—you know, the tenets of the faith and not to get involved with drugs, not only consuming it, but altering the mind and all this kind of stuff from a religious aspect, and then providing reconstruction that way. So, that part of it worked. Specifically, the Mangal tribe is one of the larger tribes in the area, influence of about four districts. I had control of four districts, and I influenced about four more, and there wasn't any poppy in any of those districts. You could see a line between that district and the next tribe over where poppy was growing where we focused a lot of our efforts. But, then again, the frustrating part came in … I could talk the talk a lot of that, but I couldn't back it up with funding at the time, a lot of funding, so things kind of trickled in. So, we really had to keep those guys close and then kind of feed them as much as we could to keep them on the line so we could get projects to them, so we could

keep their interest and patience as they continued on with keeping the poppies out of the area. A lot of it was growing there.

DR. MUNDEY: **Were you involved in any of the combat operations in the area?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: No. We had to interject ourselves into [C]JSOTF and what was going on with their operations because we never knew, and we wanted to make sure we weren't crossing over each other at the time. We went through the CONOP approval process. So, it was two different requests going up to headquarters, you know, through the [C]JSOTF chain and through the conventional chain, but sometimes—and there was some de-confliction that went on there, but we never really knew what was going on and where they were at, so, daily, we would meet with those guys and they would brief us on what they were doing, after we established some of this relationship and kind of broke the trust barrier kind of thing. We had some difficulties with that early on, but kind of got through that and worked it out. Then they were able to share a little more information, and they knew that we were a force multiplier for them because, if they ended up destroying something through collateral damage, they would have to turn to us to fix it. No longer did they have their civil affairs teams, those original teams we were talking about, associated with them anymore. Those were all farmed out to the PRTs and to the new PRTs that were setting up and expanding, so they had to look to those PRTs to provide what I called "soothing operations," where we would go out and if there was—in fact, we had two incidents that occurred, one of them in Ghazni, and one of them in the east, where an A–10 strike on two different compounds had killed some family members. And so, we had to go out and start the process of payments and offering humanitarian assistance and supplies to these families, you know, and talk to the tribes about our regret in these type of actions and everything else and try to basically soothe their minds. That worked very well, and they started to depend on us some more and more to do that. I think they, at the same time, became more cognizant of the impact of some of these operations and what they had done to the populace to lead them against what they were doing. I mean, if anybody are professionals of counterinsurgency, they are, but they also like to break a lot of things, and then we always had to go in and fix a lot of those things, too. So, kind of maintain those close relationships that we had with the tribes.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, you would characterize your relationship with the Afghan people as fairly good?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Oh, yeah, I think so. You know, when we got into the south of Paktika, you could tell the Taliban flavor, even in the provincial government in Sharan. You could tell one day

they were Taliban, and one day they were progovernment, depending on who was arriving at their doorstep and who was putting pressure on them—no open hostility, but you knew that there was that part of them that existed. But for the most part, everywhere we went—and this is part of *Pashtunwali* and part of understanding the culture—they accepted you into their homes; they fed you; they lodged you for the evening; they provided security for you, doing all these things knowing that, you know, you come there in goodwill. But it boiled down to three things: respect, respect, and respect. If you would give that to them, show them their worth and you were there to help them, I mean, they would just about give the shirt off their back, not only in providing you with the things I mentioned, but also providing you with information on what was going on, not just telling you what you wanted to hear. That was part of building this relationship. It was critically important to be able to get that trust out so that we could get verifiable information from them and not just what we wanted to hear. I had a THT, a Tactical HUMINT [human intelligence] Team that was also assigned, attached from [C]JSOTF—assigned to [C]JSOTF, but attached to me on the ground working. So, I had a good relationship with these guys. They were out, obviously taking their taskings from their operational maneuver element in Bagram, but we also communicated on a daily basis. They back-briefed me on some of their sources and operations that were going on so that we could provide them the latitude where they could operate, but also supplement, and we had some of their guys also man the CMOC. As people came in, they would provide information. They would interview them and stuff like that.

And then we had tactical PSYOPS [psychological operations] team on the ground, also with us that was on loan from [C]JSOTF, and I would use them to coordinate and produce small and low-level leaflets, communications. One in particular that came to mind was the children in town were buying a lot of the toy guns that were made in China. They looked like little miniature AKs and little machine guns. They were black. I mean pistols, too, and they would run out in the streets and stuff and they would, you know, "bang, bang, bang" and they would point them at us. Well, our guys were getting kind of nervous because you never knew when one of these kids was actually going to haul out a real weapon. So, we had to communicate with the governor in this respect and also put out leaflets and distribute those out to the parents and everybody else that "Hey, this is dangerous for your children." Finally, the governor took it upon himself just basically to make the store owners take all these products out of their stores and not sell them at all. I mean, it was either black or white. There wasn't nothing in between. I mean, that's the way he was, and that's the way he would do things—to our

benefit, in that particular case. But that worked very well. And they would also, at times, during the voter registration process or during DDR, they could use their loudspeaker to provide information. We would put an interpreter in there with them and provide any information for crowd control and anything else they would get involved with. So, they were very valuable in that respect. So, they were part of that structure, too, that I talked about earlier. I failed to mention those two critical aspects of it.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, how did you end up in Ghazni?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Well, Ghazni was—obviously, because it was part of our responsibility, but as they were looking at expanding the number of PRTs on the ground, basically we were charged with conducting a reconnaissance of an area to place the PRT, and that is really all it was. In conjunction and coordination with the governor there—who we already had a great relationship with—he took us out one day and gave us about five different options of where we could site the actual facility. And then, finally we settled on one location that was pretty close to the Ring Road that was being built there, and that is where it stands today. So, we had the incoming teams that were coming in with the 364th Civil Affairs Brigade that replaced us. Some of their teams were already being earmarked to go down and man that PRT, so they were actually building and assessing and doing everything at the same time. So, they really had a big project ahead of them, but we kind of laid the groundwork in the facility and set up the contracting and that type of stuff, and getting the funding to provide the support they needed to get that place built up to some kind of living standard and conditions, and the force protection that went along with it. The PRT was also established in Khowst, at a different location, I think, out—I think it was a different location outside of Chapman. But I let my guys determine where they wanted to site that because they had a good relationship with the Italians over there and with any other U.S. forces that were operating at Chapman. And then the team in Shkin—we never got far enough to where we were going to establish—there was talk about establishing a PRT in Sharan in Paktika, but that never materialized while I was there. It is now. It is existing now there, but they would have been the team that was responsible for setting that up. We had already established some communication with the provincial government there, but they were very weak and very prone to Taliban influence at the time. They were kind of the people we didn't put a lot of emphasis with, and we told them that. You know, it was like, "You know, you are not doing enough to stabilize your area. There are a lot of issues about corruption and these type of things that we are aware of, and we are not going to provide you anything until we can get more cooperation." We went down there to visit a hospital one time, and they nearly kicked us out

of there. I mean, they just didn't want us there at all, and so we really felt something going on there that was not right. So, we kind of pushed them off and forgot them, left them off to the side for a while. And then, I think there was also talk about establishing a PRT up in Lowghar area, or in Wardak, and I think there is one now being established in Wardak, north of us and south of Kabul. All those had an impact on how many of my guys were starting to be taken away from me to man these other PRTs before we were redeployed because there was a lag time between a couple of the teams that I received from a different battalion and they stayed a little bit longer after I left, as new teams came in, because they weren't originally part of the 321st or the 1st Brigade. They were outside from another brigade, so their deployment times were just a little bit different, off about thirty to forty days.

DR. MUNDEY: **At what point did you leave? What date?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: It was … let me see … right around the twelfth of February, I think it was. Right around that time frame, the twelfth or fourteenth of February, we redeployed.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. So, as you were leaving, what was the state of affairs? What was still left to do?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: Well, it was actually a good news story. We had a lot of the areas already assessed. Even though we were, kind of, were still restricted, you know, as far as our movement was concerned, we had the assessments out. The projects were already there being built. Now we had the economic support funds coming down, being approved. We had a CERP that was being approved, so the funding was there. So, the new commander was basically set up to go ahead and run with that, and the priorities were already established in conjunction with the minister of rural reconstruction and development on what we were going to do for the districts and go forward. So, everything was looking very well. Camp improvements, by far, were going a lot stronger. We had built we had an old tent, an old GP Medium tent there, where we had our gym inside, and we built a new hard facility inside the compound itself where we were going to house our new gym. And then next to that, we were going to build an identical facility where we could have just for briefings and our meetings and all the visitors that were coming in because we knew that we were still located where we were located and there were still going to be more people coming out to visit us. Along with our hardstand mess hall that we had built previously, digging another well into the compound itself. So, all those plans were coming to fruition—building harder structures with the base defense guys who were just located outside the PRT building itself, improving their living conditions and their security and their force protection, constant camp

improvements. I think by the time that our replacements came in we conducted about two weeks of right-seat ride and prepared them very well for what we knew of the existing situation at the time and what we had to focus on. Now, equally as important, force protection as it was, and the contracting aspect and all the things we learned there. And what our engineer had done, and, by the way, who had developed three basically standing drafting templates for us to use for small, medium, and large schools, where none existed before, where we could go right in and apply this particular template to it. We knew how much it cost, and we knew how much materials were involved in it and how much time it would take, so it really streamlined the process, and everything was already preapproved and ready to go. So, kudos to my engineer for doing that and trying to streamline this agonizing process. So, a lot of those things helped set up the new guys for success, I think.

DR. MUNDEY: **Great. You had mentioned earlier that you detected a change when General Barno arrived. Could you just talk a little bit more of what your understanding of echelons above you, what was going on? What the priorities were?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: I think his main priority was establishing of the redevelopment zones, establishing these brigade sectors. He also knew that there was going to be expansion of the PRTs. So, now he had the challenge of trying to determine where these bodies were coming from that were going to man these PRTs because the civil affairs units were basically tapped out. Iraq was starting up now. A lot of the civil affairs units were earmarked for Iraq and brought into that picture, so we kind of had to figure out the system of robbing Peter to pay Paul. So, the PRTs—essentially existing PRTs, the U.S. ones, were starting to be gutted of teams. When it came down to leaving one team left with me physically on the ground, where I had five before, who were going out to man these other locations? And then, trying to determine back at CONUS, USACAPOC was pulling their hair out, trying to determine where we are going to get these individual augmentees that we talked about at the very beginning to man these organizations. And then, now that whole system has changed into sister services, you know, actually conducting PRT missions now to support the lack of civil affairs guys that were available. But, so, I think his focus really was—I mean, obviously you had a force protection issue that he had to deal with. The situation was getting a little bit more tenuous, at least in the east, based on MOUNTAIN LION and those type of operations that were getting ready to go on and were ongoing. So, at that time the south was fairly quiet. There was not a whole lot going on there. The east was where a lot of trouble was going on, and Khowst was always volatile, with a lot of the cross-border moves and cross-border attacks that were

going on there. So, that is—I think he focused more on the operational aspect of that. And then, you know, the PRT was a side note. So, we were kind of restricted on where we could go and what we could do in that time frame. So, not having that money was available to us, and then being restricted in that respect, really kind of shut down some operations. Over the last few months that we were there, it was pretty tough, and it really kind of shut down a lot of things that we were doing, but there are reasons for all that. I don't fault the higher headquarters for any of that. I mean, the money situation, the funding was all happening back here. Those issues had to be resolved. They were complex issues that had to be resolved. We know that funding and getting that money in takes time. So, we were just in that particular time, you know, that it—there, where we just had that gap, and we had to deal with it. We had to do the best we could with what we had.

DR. MUNDEY: **Right. Okay. Do you have a funny story about when you were in Afghanistan?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: The only one I could really … well, there are probably quite a few, but, I mean, they are probably something you wouldn't want to publish. Probably the one that was just most ironic to me was, you know, we had touted with a lot of the visitors that came that the area was pretty stable and quiet, and we had basically unfettered access all over our five-province AOR—you know, freedom of movement. It was great. We had great relationships with the tribes and all that stuff. Well, we took, I think it was, an ABC News team out to one of our schools that was right there in Gardiz. It was probably about twelve kilometers from the PRT compound. Everything was going great, and they were out there looking at the school site, and all of a sudden, they took on some small-arms fire. Somebody was pot-shotting at the school itself, and our guys that were out there. It was so ironic because nothing had happened to us for such a long time that we thought that the press might have had something to do with it and set it up just to make it look good for TV because it was so boring for them just to see this school being built. But, so that was kind of a local joke amongst us in the compound was, they had some hand in paying some guys off: "Hey, take some pot shots in our direction. Don't shoot at us, but just make it look like it." But there were rounds that were impacting around the schoolhouse, and we knew that we were being fired upon. So, in that particular case, more of my guys earned the combat action badge in that particular incident. So, that was kind of funny, if you can think of it being funny. I mean, nobody was hurt, thank God, in that respect, but it was just really ironic that it just so happened the timing was just perfect at that time. So, it gave them a good story, you know? Here's the guys out here, building a school right in the middle of a firefight [laughs]. So, good on them. But,

yeah, that was probably the most significant thing that I thought.

We did get rocketed a few times while we were out there, but it was almost comical to see that their lack of aim and discipline in that respect. I mean, they usually remotely fired anyway, and it was just like shooting bottle rockets and where they go is where they go. But we did have one that impacted the compound, the ANA compound, about two hundred meters out from our walls where the [inaudible] company had left the night prior to that. They had been occupying that particular tent that was hit. There would have been some casualties. So, we were very, very fortunate in that respect. But that was really the only anecdotal thing I could think of that was kind of funny.

DR. MUNDEY: **So, what do you want people to know about Afghanistan about the time that you were there, about your experience?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: You know, the PRT is a proven concept. If there is anything I can say, the PRT is a proven concept. It works. As long as you provide the resources for it and give them the latitude to move around to conduct their assessments, to establish those relationships, you know, with the local government representatives and the tribal representatives that are out there, the concept works, and we need to continue to develop that into doctrine. We need to fund these PRTs and the organizations, whether it is through the State Department—get them involved heavily in Phase IV operations and the planning of that. Now that they are taking part in manning that is a great thing, too, because along with them and USAID—you know, they know how to take that into the next step as to building and reconstruction, which is a lot more becoming an Army function, but we are not necessarily really good at that. So, that is a way to do that. That is a means to an end, I think.

And the country itself more than anything is … you know, we have got these canned briefings about the culture and what we should—the dos and don'ts about Arab culture and all this stuff, but you don't really know any of that until you get on the ground and you start establishing these relationships and start talking to people and understanding where they are coming from and finding out that they are a lot like you. But having respect for them and understanding the culture from that ground perspective and being immersed in it is what really makes the difference and what really makes us a better organization to be able to deal with future events like these. The country is absolutely beautiful. It has been—it is war torn, you know, twenty years over. I mean, it is really unfortunate, but it has a lot of potential. And I think the people want it to go as long as we can produce for it. You know, part of it is managing those expectations, but you

need to be able to produce and provide that security and provide that reconstruction and those projects for them. And I think you will win them over. It is just going to take a while, and that is the key that, I think, a lot of people didn't understand is, this is definitely not going to happen overnight. This is a long-term process. It is going to take a while.

There is a phrase that we like to use a lot. It was on the bottom of all my briefings, was "influence without occupation"—you know, do as much as we can to influence the situation there without physically being in their space is what we wanted to do, and that is kind of what we did in the PRT concept. We went out and we affected what we could, but when it was time to get out of their way and let them do, let them bring up and rebuild. That is what we did, and let them put their face on the situation. Great experience. I would do it again in a heartbeat. I really would.

DR. MUNDEY: **Okay. Anything else you would like to say?**

LT. COL. HUNTER: No, I think that is it. Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

DR. MUNDEY: **Thank you very much. Your insights are going to help our study, without a doubt. Well, thank you, and this concludes our interview.**



***Mr. Raphael Carland**, a former U.S. Army officer, served as the Department of State's political adviser in the Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team from August to October 2005 and the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team from October 2005 to February 2006. He was interviewed at the U.S. Army Center of Military History by Christopher Koontz and Lisa Mundey on 20 December 2006. Raphael Carland discusses his educational and military experience before joining the Department of State and his decision to volunteer for provincial reconstruction team work in early 2005. After assignment to the Tarin Kowt Provincial Reconstruction Team and deploying to Kabul, he was diverted to Farah in August 2005 to assist with the impending parliamentary election. Mr. Carland provides a description of the team's organization and its command relationships with Combined Joint Task Force-76 and the International Security Assistance Force. He also explains his duties as a civilian political adviser and the roles of other civilians in the team. Mr. Carland served as an election monitor during the election of September 2005, and he mentions the security measures and voting methods used by the Afghans for the election and arrives at a favorable evaluation of the election process. Farah was a relatively peaceful province, and Mr. Carland describes the ethnic customs and economic development of the local populace. After the election, Mr. Carland moved on to his original assignment in Tarin Kowt. The local government there was corrupt, the economy was primitive, and insurgents operated with greater frequency in Oruzgan Province than in Farah. In comparison to the low-level counternarcotics efforts in Farah, the Alternative Livelihoods Program was in place in Tarin Kowt, and the team worked with local government and mullahs to discourage poppy cultivation. At the conclusion of the interview,*

Mr. Carland comments on the difficulty of evaluating the success of provincial reconstruction team missions and suggests changes to improve training and operations.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. This is Christopher Koontz of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Today is the twentieth of December 2006. We are at the Center of Military History [CMH], and I'm interviewing Raphael Carland, who was a member of the provincial reconstruction teams [PRTs] in Farah and Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, between August of 2005 and February of 2006. Also sitting in the room is Dr. Lisa Mundey, also of CMH. First of all, sir, are you sitting for this interview voluntarily?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. And do you have an objection with our using the material in this interview, as long as you're cited correctly?**

MR. CARLAND: No.

DR. KOONTZ: **Thank you. Okay, what I'd like to have you do to start the interview is briefly discuss your professional background. How was it that you got into the PRT business?**

MR. CARLAND: Originally, at the State Department, they had been interested and made an open Afghan desk in what had been South Asia Bureau, which is now the South Central Asia Bureau. They had let the word go out that they were looking for candidates to fill the PRTs at the State Department political officer position, and since then there were many positions that were relatively new and they were kind of out of sync with—they were one-year assignments. They were out of sync with the two-year bid process for the foreign service officers. They were struggling to react to this, and they weren't, I think, completely sure what kind of folks they were looking for at the time. So, they put out the word they were really interested in former military, and they were looking for people to come in and fill as much time as they could. So, I, as a civil servant, as part of this Presidential Management Fellows Program, which allows me to move about for about two years in the federal government, was uniquely available for this, and they were particularly looking for people with former military experience. They had viewed that some of the internal workings of a PRT were as important as the external, so an understanding and then the ability to get along with the military was valued; and, the willingness to go into situations that were less permissive than usual for the State Department.

So, I went down, and I was interviewed by the deputy director of the Afghan desk, who vetted all of the assignments. I think at that time—this was in the fall of 2004—the PRTs

were still fairly young, only a year or two old, and still very personal recruiting. It wasn't seen or foreseen as a regular or yearly move that had gradually expanded in Afghanistan, and then greatly expanded in Iraq, so there was still just a basic interview process. I think they were comfortable with my military experience and my willingness to go, and the fact that I said I would go anywhere. They named a couple of the provinces that I might eventually go to—Oruzgan, Zabol, or Konar; all of which, they said, were less permissive than most—and I said I was comfortable doing those, and at that point, we started going through just the basic paperwork to get me there.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned you had former military experience. Tell me about that.**

MR. CARLAND: Basically, I was an ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] officer. I came out of Georgetown University ROTC program, and I spent four years in the U.S. Army. I was a Signal Corps officer, and I had served in Germany with signal and intelligence units in V Corps. And then, I had also served as a partnership officer with the German Army, which I think was the most intriguing and interesting part relevant to my military experience—just an interest



Raphael Carland, Department of State representative to Provincial Reconstruction Team Tarin Kowt

and ability to work with a different group—although no comparison between the Germans and the Afghans [laughs], but just a willingness and ability to interact with those folks. And then following the Army, I had gone to graduate school at Tufts University, where I had gotten a master's in international security and diplomatic studies—a medley of development, human rights, transitional justice. I mean, when I heard about the PRT from someone—actually, one of the first PRT guys—while I was in graduate school, I knew this was it. This was the ideal job for what I was studying and what I was interested in, in working with the government.

DR. KOONTZ: **And then, secondly, what were you doing with the State Department at the time when you applied for the PRT opening?**

MR. CARLAND: I was working in the European Bureau in the Office of European Political and Security Affairs, which is usually the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], and to a lesser extent, the EU [European Union] Military Office, because in Europe, all security is initially NATO. I had been working on a number of civil-military issues in terms of getting civilian assets in NATO geared toward supporting the military, and reverse; and I had been working on, at the time—this is coming up—stability and reconstruction, S&R, and trying to get them to gear their military more towards it. Although NATO had done a lot of that in Bosnia and Kosovo, that had been more peacekeeping, and the permissive environment had allowed a different—had a lot of the two, civilian and military, with one another, but as it was clearly becoming an insurgency in southern and eastern Afghanistan, that was no longer acceptable. Definitely, as it became clear, the military couldn't depend on NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] and international organizations to operate in these areas, and they had to start looking for their own people. So, definitely I was interested in it professionally, and I had been in on some of the Afghanistan policy, as well.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, you've applied for the PRT job. You're told that you get the job. Did you take any kind of preparation, or did you get yourself, I guess, you know, kind of mentally ready?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes. First of all, I just—at the time, again, the program was very early. I mean, now there're a number of different courses they're trying to teach here at NDU [National Defense University] and AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] and the military, the State Department. They were all doing a number of things, but at the time it was pretty nascent. So, I just found as many former PRTs as I could, talked to them. I got in touch with the guy that I was replacing. I went around and talked to many Afghan policy

people in the Joint Staff, the Office of Secretary of Defense, the Army Corps of Engineers, USAID.

And then, I also signed up for early-morning Pashto. It took about four or five months of about an hour every morning, and that was helpful, to an extent—more just the fact that they had four different Pashto instructors who would come in at various times in the morning, all led by this one gentlemen who was actually a formal royalist army officer. So, it was sort of useful—some basic vocabulary and speaking pointers. It was useful in getting some of the cultural introduction to what Afghanistan was going to be like, and that was helpful. More language would have been more helpful [laughs].

DR. KOONTZ: **Going into this job, what was your state of knowledge about Afghanistan at that time?**

MR. CARLAND: I think in terms of U.S. policy and activity there, I think fairly extensive. I think I had good access. People were very willing to talk to what was going on, and through my office and their working with ISAF [NATO International Security Assistance Force] and OEF [Operation ENDURING FREEDOM], I had good access to documents. My office was right next to the main action officer on NATO and Afghanistan, so he definitely just tossed me everything that he was seeing.

In terms of Afghanistan, culturally, I read a lot, which was helpful, to an extent. I found, actually, in some cases, everyone focuses on the influence of wars and *Charlie Wilson's War*, but once I got there, I actually, in some ways, found some of the books that I read about nineteenth century and beyond, and earlier than that in history, seemed to be a little more helpful in understanding sort of the tribal differences and the ethnic differences. We have a very short memory, as Americans, as I'm sure you guys are painfully aware of as people trash documents and get rid of stuff. Definitely, we saw everything sometimes in the lens of the Soviets and radical Islam. When I was there, it was very useful to know about the two tribal confederations, the Durani and the Ghilzai, and the fact that these two parties have been struggling. The Taliban actually gets to do some of this grand stuff. To most average Afghans—definitely, to the leadership—they are hard-core radicals from what I can see, but to the foot soldiers, this is a way of kind of excluding tribes who have been marginalized in three hundred or so years of Durani rule, who were now getting a chance to act through the Taliban and kind of overthrow the Karzais and the kings and the Populzai tribe that had ruled for three hundred years because, prior to that, the Ghilzai had ruled for about three hundred or four hundred years. That was interesting to know because, then once you started to see the districts that were the most restive, they were usually majority Ghilzai districts. From what we could

see, from the people we captured and interrogated and stuff, they were usually from that confederation of tribes. That was interesting, and something that I sometimes wish we just had a better handle on and a better grip on because I think parties get associated with the tribes they support. They don't see us as representing the Afghan government, but they see us representing, advocating, a tribe. I wish we understood that better.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you got the job, and you're doing your research. Let's head to Afghanistan. Tell me about the deployment process that got you there.**

MR. CARLAND: It's all commercial flights. You go from Washington to Frankfurt to Dubai, and then from Dubai, you take—at the time, I took the UN Humanitarian Air. Then you come into Kabul. Got picked up, usually with a random group of other embassy folks. They take you to the embassy, you get temporary housing at what they call "the Hooch." That's basically just a, you know, CONEX [container express] with, you know, a very nice little bathroom, a desk, a bed. Sometimes, it's just difficult getting out to the field. At the time, PRT Air, the USAID-contracted air service, was down. I spent a little a longer in Kabul than would have been normal. I guess I spent about almost two weeks there. Usually, they like you to come in for about a week, make the rounds of consultations in the embassy, USAID, the Afghan Reconstruction Group, the pol section, the econ section, all those folks. Go around the corner down to Camp Eggers, where CFC-A, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, was. I tried to talk to some of their folks. Then I made trips. Because I was there longer, I went over to ISAF headquarters and talked with a number of those folks. Originally, from the moment I arrived, I knew I was going to Tarin Kowt. On the day that I arrived I was told, "There's a gap for the election. We need you to go to Farah first. The guy that you're replacing has agreed to extend, and we don't have anybody out to Farah, so you need to go there."

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. So, you were originally slated to go to Tarin Kowt, and Farah was a diversion?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes. And so I tried to find out as much as I could about Farah. Luckily, I was in e-mail contact with a guy who had been there who moved around and is sort of a legend in the service. His name is Mike Metrinko. He was in Tehran. He's one of the few guys who could speak fluent Dari, and he had been moving all about the west, so he was an excellent guy to talk to. And then, as I said, working with ISAF, just trying to get an idea of what they were doing and what their link was, because right then, NATO had just expanded into the west, and so actually the PRT in Farah was only the U.S. force under ISAF command at that point. While they were under ISAF, it wasn't clear what their chain of command—

it wasn't clear what any of the PRTs' relationships were, because at the time, they had what they called regional area coordinators, which have now since been transferred to regional commanders.

So, I just talked to as many people as possible and tried to get connections, because I definitely saw from what folks who had been PRT people had said, one of your key abilities as a State Department rep is to understand the process in Kabul and understand the process in Washington, and have connections that you can reach back to. By being a civilian, there is a much flatter chain of command and easier access, whereas military have to go up to their commander, and then they get funneled into a staff section, and then the ability to get to where they need to go is often restricted by their chain of command, whereas a civilian can just call somebody up and say, "Hi. I'm down in Farah and trying to set up a chamber of commerce. Will you work on this?" That was useful, so that's what I tried to do—get as many e-mails and contacts and, you know, sitting in somebody's office, shaking their hand and talking to them for about twenty minutes will make a huge difference towards getting help when you e-mail or call them in the field. When I made it out there—I had gone up there, actually, briefly to Farah with the ambassador who was doing a visit, like about half way through.

DR. KOONTZ: **Ambassador [Ronald E.] Neumann?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes. And so, I had an idea of where I was going, and I briefly met everyone and saw the area. I actually deployed out there in August and was in Farah until the middle of October.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, you're finally getting out of Kabul, and you get to Farah. Tell me about the PRT that was stationed there. First of all, tell me precisely what's your position, and what are your duties or tasks in this position?**

MR. CARLAND: Well, talking about the PRT would be a lot easier than talking about my position [laughs]. PRTs were funny. They were right out of a John Wayne movie—Fort Apache, four walls, four towers, flag in the middle. The PRTs all had kind of a model, a basic model. Some guys, basically a platoon of National Guard—at the time it was Texas National Guard—were infantry; and then a civil affairs team; usually, a small ANP [Afghan National Police] team; medical; and then the rest was basically services—cooks, mechanics, and all that. So, it came to be about ninety-five to a hundred personnel. And then, usually what they had with civilians—State Department, USAID, and, sometimes, some kind of contract agent for the UN office, and maybe, sometimes, a police mentor of some sort—although when I arrived, I was the only civilian there, which is one of the reasons they wanted me. With the election coming up, they wanted

a civilian, someone there, to be an election monitor. As it turned out, I was the only international election monitor in Farah [laughs].

When I arrived, it had been—it was interesting because I think the positions were still very much evolving. I had replaced a very senior, very knowledgeable Central Asia hand. I had a different set of skills. He spoke fluent Dari. He knew the governor. He had been very good friends with the governor's father in the seventies, when he served in Kabul. So, it was a completely different relationship. Because of this, he often could go out on his own and could do things on his own because he didn't need translators. At the time, the situation was permissive enough—relatively so—that there was a State Department SUV, and he'd jump in that with some of the others. I think the police would meet him at the PRT gate, and he'd go downtown on his own, and you would never hear what he did. Of course, I couldn't do that—not the least of which was that what little Pashto I learned was pretty useless in a Dari-majority environment. But one thing I did try and do was kind of sync up.

The PRT military often didn't really know what the State Department and the USAID guys were doing, and so one of the things I thought—one of my real duties right off was to make that better so that the military would see the civilians as an asset not only in and of themselves, but what they could bring from Kabul—which, it was particularly hard for the State Department person, because USAID guy arrives with money. He has the quick impact funds, as well, he can tap into these large, national programs. He can build buildings. So, the military's carting him around and providing security and so on and so forth because they're getting something out of it, whereas for the State Department, it's a little harder at first. Having been a military guy, I understood, "You don't command troops. You don't have equipment. You don't have money. What use are you to me?" But I think within a few weeks, I was definitely a part of the command team, and I would spend several hours a day in the commander's office talking with him, talking through programs. He gave me, basically, veto power over his CERP [Commander's Emergency Response Program funds]. When he was going over the CERP programs, he said, "No, the State Department guy has to sit there." I suggested a few programs, and I nixed a few programs, just for a broader idea, you know? Just, "Well, let's think through some of this. You want to do volunteer center? Well, that works in the U.S., because we have a volunteer culture. We have a culture outside of the government in society. But, you know, in an Islamic, Afghan, culture, there's really nothing that exists like that. It's a statist system. So, if you create a building that no one owns, then all it is is a piece of concrete that a bunch of squatters will live in. And if that's what you want to do, that's great; but if that's not, a ministry has to own it.

Somebody has to own it; they have to take care of it; they have to build a wall around it." We hated spending extra money on the wall, but to an Afghan, it's like giving them a chair with no legs on it and saying, "Well, you can put the legs on yourself," if you build a building with no wall, because to them, it's "Oh! They'll be able to see my women. They'll be able to see us and what we're doing. They'll see how rich or how poor we are." You know, it's just little things like that that sometimes I think folks didn't always appreciate.

So, that's what you bring. You try and bring some expertise; sort of an outside view; an understanding some of the politics that, you know, a lieutenant colonel or a major out in the field just doesn't have access to. Not that they—had they had access, they could make these decisions without me, but the fact is, they didn't. They worked from the PRT to the regional command; regional commander went to Bagram; Bagram went to CFC-A; and then, you can go over to the embassy, which by that time, you know, that's kind of just too hard to do.

DR. KOONTZ: **Who was your commander then? Do you remember his name?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes, it was Dave Wylie. He's a civil affairs officer.

DR. KOONTZ: **What rank was he at the time?**

MR. CARLAND: He was a lieutenant colonel.

DR. MUNDEY: **Can I just interrupt? Did you know the exact chain of command for Lieutenant Colonel Wylie? Whom did he actually report to? We're a little bit confused with that one.**

MR. CARLAND: This was the problem in Farah. Because it was under ISAF command, technically, he directly reported … he was OPCON [placed under operational control] to ISAF, but he was ADCON [placed under administrative control] to [Combined Joint] Task Force-76, and therefore, RC [Regional Command] South in Kandahar. All his logistics came through Kandahar. We did not rely on the—because, you know, in NATO, each country more or less is responsible for its own logistics. This was actually something evolved, even in the short time that I was there. There was Brigadier General [Umberto] Rossi, an Italian, who was working out of Herat. He came down several times, and there were sometimes some awkward conversations with him because both Dave and I were both very open: "We want guidance. We work for you." He said, "Well, it's very difficult for me to coordinate it. It's very difficult for me, as ISAF. We're always afraid, as in all these missions, if we give an order to the Americans and they don't follow it, then I can never give

you an order again, you know? So, I have to be very careful about what I tell you to do because if you don't do it; or if you're always looking over your shoulder …" This is a perennial NATO problem. But, we raised some issues with him, and he worked very hard.

At the time, the Italians commanded ISAF, and Lieutenant General [Mauro] del Vecchio also came out to visit us, and actually followed the chief of defense, Admiral [Giampaolo] Di Paola. The Italians were very good about reacting to our concerns. Farah is out in very much the fringe. There are many fringe places in Afghanistan, but it's definitely—we were hours from Herat, hours from Kandahar, so we were very worried about MEDEVACs [medical evacuations]. So, we wanted to work out of Herat. We were concerned about close air support. We were concerned about QRF [quick reaction force] issues. Who would come rescue us if we were in trouble? Actually, it worked. Just in the time that I was there, they ran a couple of exercises with us, and they sent people down to develop that relationship. But, yeah, it was complicated. After I left, I think General Rossi became a regional commander, and then at that point, definitely for operational issues, we would fall directly under him.

DR. KOONTZ: **You're a former military officer, and you've mentioned that in your previous experience, you had worked in V Corps, and you'd worked with the political assistance office. Did that give you any kind of help in dealing with ISAF?**

MR. CARLAND: I think so. Especially working at NATO, I definitely had a better understanding of the way ISAF worked, of just the way NATO worked, and some of the reporting and the things that we can access to. I think it helped to explain away some of the problems, so that far from being, you know, malicious intent on the parts of these feckless, nefarious Europeans, you'd understand that this is the way NATO works, and this is what people will be looking for, and these are the problems. There's a lot of concern over the ROE [rules of engagement], but you can actually get a copy of it, and you'll go through it, and actually, the ROE is almost virtually the same between ISAF and OEF. That's not the issue. The issue is how you choose to use your troops because an ROE it's purely reactive. That was something that they didn't understand. Oftentimes, they were very worried that "We won't be able to shoot if we were shot at," and that sort of thing. So, it was good to be able to know that it'll be okay.

I think, militarywise, I definitely was able to talk with them and get them to talk with some people at ISAF. I wouldn't say I was a primary figure in this, but I think I was able to help get into the office with some folks and to send a couple of messages to the embassy, which made it across ISAF.

We did get very quick action. I mean, we had the brigadier general come down one week; the very next week, we had a three-star; just randomly enough, we had a four-star come in after that. I think that helped.

On the civilian side, though, it was a little more difficult. I actually had a very good relationship with the Italian POLAD [political adviser], but even then, it was a struggle. NATO is a primarily military organization, and so, over time, there is a chain of command; but on the civilian side of PRTs, there's no real chain of command within ISAF. You report up to your embassy; your embassy reports it to the capital; maybe, the capital shares it with Brussels, and maybe it doesn't. We had these sort of voluntary reports we could send in, but it's not—that's just information sharing. There's no sense of what are the objectives, or whatever. The military and USAID would get out this is, you know, "These are our objectives for development. We're going to build new roads, irrigation, and utilities." Those were the priorities for USAID. And similar for the CERP programs, but with a greater interest in the training or employment issues. On the European side, nobody really coordinates that. So, from province to province, the Afghans are often concerned who's in their province, what do they do, and what are their priorities? That's a problem right there.

DR. KOONTZ: **All right. Did you get any civilian add-ons to the PRT after you showed up?**

MR. CARLAND: Yes. There was a USAID person assigned there. He had been on leave, and then he injured himself, I think, moving his daughter into college. He dropped something heavy on his foot, so he was out for like a couple of months—so, the entire time I was there. And then, we did get an engineer from one of the USAID implementing partners, which in that province was the International Office of Migration. We got an Australian contractor, who lived downtown at the UN compound. He was sort of our quality assurance/quality control for our projects, which was really very useful for the construction projects. And then in time, I think some police mentors were assigned there.

DR. KOONTZ: **So, on these construction projects, these are the soldiers in the PRT that are doing that work? Those Texas Guard guys?**

MR. CARLAND: No. The civil affairs guys would go out and—I think they would look for programs and projects, and then we would make it known that we were interested in it. And we also tried to work closely with the local Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development [RRD]. We worked with the RRD ministry; there was an irrigation ministry; there was a Ministry of Public Works. It all depended on the particular region. It was very patronage based, so it just depended on

who happened to be the minister. Some were very helpful, and some were not very helpful at all. They would go out and identify projects against a budget, sort of a notional budget, that was sent down from Bagram, and they would try and identify it. It was a little more difficult in Farah because it's the fourth-largest province. It's stretched out. It's a very long province, with mountains, deserts, and very little international presence. The PRT was collocated—in an adjacent compound was an ANA [Afghan National Army] battalion, a *kandak*, with an ETT, an embedded training team, of national guardsmen, and that was it pretty much for the international. So, for us to do projects, it was a little more difficult.

But I will say that while I was there, the primary concern of the PRT was planning of the election security plan, which we were concerned—the parliamentary elections, which were held in late September '05—that this would be, A, logistically very difficult; and B, this would be an opportunity, given how spread out everything was, for the Taliban to cause a lot of trouble. So, we basically focused on that, and that was definitely an IO [information operation] because it really gives you a sense of how much, at the provincial level, the government is struggling to exist.

DR. KOONTZ: **Obviously, this is one of the more of the important things, so let's go and talk about that. You were talking about the geographical challenges that the size of Farah posed. What were the other challenges in getting the election carried off?**

MR. CARLAND: Mainly for our part, security. There was an UN OPS office—you know, Office of Project Service—but they were doing most of the election. I had a former Australian military guy who had done these sorts of elections before, who'd worked on the presidential election. Actually, on the election side the Afghans were fairly skilled. They'd run the presidential election the previous fall. They used all the same methods. There were lots of concerns over the ballots and transporting the ballots, and what have you, but actually, it all went off relatively well, and it seemed like it would.

The biggest concern was just security. There just was no security in huge spots of the province. The Afghan National Army had a *kandak* there, and they were mostly northerners—not necessarily not Pashtun, but just not from around. That's where the biggest problem was. They didn't know the province, and they were a military unit. You tell them where the bad guys are and they'll go get them, but they weren't police, which is what you really need to provide area security. So, we were dependent on the Afghan National Police located in the province, and they were a rough lot, at best—mostly focused in the provincial capital, very corrupt, poorly trained, and poorly equipped.

The previous commander was fired. He just picked up all the equipment and took most of the best-trained, best-equipped police and moved them to his next job, which was another police job [laughs]—and that's the way it works all the way throughout the country. So, they were in a pretty bedraggled state, and so we were concerned about that—just trying to get them organized, and trying to get them to actually make sure that there were guards at each of the police stations.

But on election day, I went out and about, and visited a number of, in the Farah area and outside of Farah, polling sites, and they had it under control. Luckily, there was no reason for the police to act because, in the end, I think they just had to hire a lot of local guys with weapons and use them for the day, which is not how you would ideally like to see security provided, but …

DR. KOONTZ: **When you did that election monitoring duty on election day, what were you doing? What were you looking for?**

MR. CARLAND: We had a checklist. Election monitoring is a well-trodden path since the 1990s, so we had a checklist. I forget, but it had like twenty things that we had to check on. We had gotten a little bit of a briefing before I had left for the elections from an elections expert. Basically, I just talked to a few people in line: "How long have you been waiting? Do you know who the candidates are?" And then, to make sure of the process, how are they going to check their IDs against the voter rolls? Are they being marked off, and are there people around? Are there party members—there were a few parties—are they allowed to witness this? because we didn't have a whole pile of people in there. So, I think the rules were to bring them in [one] at a time. And then, were the people provided with the proper place to do it? I think so. I went down to a number—not the least of which was "Did they check your ID?" It was interesting. Only the women's poll checked my ID [laughs]. They were very unhappy about that, but we were told to go check at least one women's polling center.

And so, that was mainly it. It wasn't very interesting because everyone was there. I'm not really sure—everyone wanted to vote, but I'm not really sure they knew what they were voting for. In fact, I witnessed a number of times—you know, some old guy comes in; gets his ballot; looks at it; comes back, and says, "What am I supposed to do?" and everybody's looking over at me [laughs]. I'm just like, "You guys go ahead," and the polling officer said, "Well, you vote for one who's the best." And the old guy said, "Well, who's the best? Where's [President Hamid] Karzai? Where can I vote for him?" "No, you can't really do that." They had a little picture, and then each candidate was randomly given a little symbol, like a lamp, to a book, to a wheel, or

something, and then, a picture as well. Some of the rolls were pretty huge because there were no parties, so you have, like—I think there were like thirty-some people in Farah running for, I think, ten or eleven provincial seats. And then, everything's tallied up to see whoever won. So, it was interesting, too, because it means people who won might collectively have actually won like less than a third or a quarter of the vote, simply because they had the most. In fact, one of our interpreters was quite angry afterwards. Somebody won, I think, with like three thousand votes. He's like, "Well, I have three thousand relatives. I should've run! I could've won!" [Laughs.]

DR. KOONTZ: **I've actually seen the figures for Farah, and, like you said, it was just a few thousand, and not even pluralities. I mean, they were, you know, 6 percent, 7 percent. I think the leading vote getter got something like 13 percent or something like that.**

MR. CARLAND: Yeah. So, that was interesting, but actually looking at it, they did mostly represent, I would say, the power distribution, if not the actual demographics of the ballots. But sometimes, in some ways, that's more realistic. I actually never met with the provincial council or anything because I left. I departed before the elections results were reported.

DR. KOONTZ: **And you mentioned that you weren't sure what people were voting for. I'm not sure that people in America necessarily know what they're voting for, either.**

MR. CARLAND: Yeah, though this was a whole new thing because at least you can vote Democrat or Republican, and you know there's a bucket of issues that are there. With no parties, there was definitely an interesting look.

DR. KOONTZ: **Yeah. There's no slate that you can say, "Well, I bet this guy is probably on my side."**

MR. CARLAND: Exactly. So, it's all by individuals. We were all very frustrated by that, but I think it definitely reflected Afghan history. It's just, political parties to them are the Communist Party and the Islamic parties—all the people who destroyed the country in the Russian invasion and the civil war. So, there's a very big suspicion of political parties.

DR. KOONTZ: **As you said, the election went relatively well, as you described it. It had, I want to say, something like 195,000 people registered, and had an over 50 percent turnout. I wish that could happen in the United States. That would be, you know, certainly seen as very successful. What do you attribute the success of the election to?**

MR. CARLAND: I'd say, in terms of just coming off, experience. They had the relatively recent experience of the Afghan presidential

election, so that really helped—that you could do one or the other. People were relatively experienced. And, although it's different teams, there were a lot of plans left over on the security side that the military was able to follow: "This is what happens when the ballots need to be exported; this is where some of the issues were; this is how we want to run security for the counting place." So, I think a lot of that helped.

And I think for the elections, in terms of security—I don't know what happened as much as in the east and in the south, but in Farah, I don't think the Taliban was well organized at that point. I don't think there was a real, even then, a complete understanding that this was something that they would want to stop. Maybe now, if you had an election, you'd get a different reaction because they know these elections can confer a certain amount of legitimacy that is maintained.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. There's two ways that we can go from here. I guess, you had mentioned in the beginning, or a couple times, the kind of opposition that you were getting, and that Farah was relatively permissive environment. What level of opposition were you getting it from; and, more importantly, whom were you getting it from? Is it just Taliban, or is it—**

MR. CARLAND: No, that's the key thing in Afghanistan, which the authorities in Kabul, both ours and theirs, were just starting to get a handle on. It's interesting that Farah, from a military standpoint, was a green to yellow province, to use the stoplight charts that everyone is very happy with. There was very little Taliban activity. But then you look at—I think it was ANSO, the Afghan Nongovernmental Security Organization, just this sort of info-sharing body. They would rate Farah as actually fairly dangerous, as a red province, for civilians. I think there was a disconnect between security and safety and insurgent activity—that not having insurgent activity does not make the region safe. In fact, in some ways, it made it less safe.

If you were an Afghan civilian, at least in that time period, and you're on the eastern border in the south, you were actually safe, because there were a lot of troops—international, ANA, ANP—patrolling the roads out there. In some respects, as long as you weren't in any way associated with people on a prescribed Taliban list, you were safe; whereas, when you went out to the west and to the north, there was very little Taliban activity, but it was just lawless. It was like the Wild West. I mean, that was a big problem in Farah. People were very afraid to travel on the Ring Road. They were very afraid to travel on roads. It was just a security vacuum. I mean, the departure of the previous police chief had a lot to do with that. Apparently, he was quite a vicious guy, by all accounts,

but he understood law and order. He understood: "Nobody hurts the NGOs or the Westerners because they bring the money," and when he was replaced by a weaker—to my mind, less competent, more rapacious—individual who just wanted to make money, then suddenly it just became … you know, right off the Ring Road, they called it something like "the Mountain of Death," where they were just robbing people on the Ring Road and killing them.

This definitely had an impact because the NGOs start to bleed away because they can't operate, and a lot of the NGOs can't afford the level of security, which is, I think, something we didn't fully grip. When we say a village or an area is secured, that means we have defeated all of the Taliban. But there's always a disconnect: "Have you asked an NGO or an Afghan citizen? Do they feel safe? Does an Afghan health official feel safe driving in a pickup truck with a rifle across his knees? Is that safe enough for him?" And if he says "no," then that village is not secure, that district is not secure. It's not safe. Whereas, I think we drive around in Humvees, and we say, "Oh, no one shot at us. This place is secure."

DR. KOONTZ: **So, this is kind of brigandage that's going on on these roads? This is just generic Afghan criminality. It's not politically oriented?**

MR. CARLAND: I think you would see some connections, but it's not organized. There was a kidnapping of a contract worker, a British citizen, who, as it came out, had been robbed; and then, once they had them, they were like, "Well, what do we do with him?" So, they took him to their mountain hideout, and then they started calling their buddies and trying to communicate and trying to find out "What do we do with this guy?" And so, then you say, "Well, whom are they connected to?" They obviously have personal family connections with various insurgent groups, but are they insurgents? They were clearly just after the money, you know? But then this gets racked up as a Taliban event, and it's hard to count. They ended up killing the guy. So, yeah, that stuff was of issue.

Especially where there's a level of brigandage, having police on the road and taking money from you is one thing. Most of the people see it—it's actually a fee-for-service economy. There are no real taxes, and most Afghans don't want to pay taxes. But if you're driving on the road and the Afghan National Police, the Afghan Highway Police, are out there, and they shake you down for a little bit—actually, I found a lot of people didn't mind that because it meant that that they were out on the road, and "Yeah, why wouldn't you pay them? They gotta feed their families." But it's when they take you out and they shoot you and they steal your truck—to an Afghan that's just too far, you know? So, they were a

little more comfortable with that, but that was a big deal in Farah. It was just a very dangerous province for civilians, and right when I was there, the last NGO, this German NGO, departed. They were down to closing out the last of their projects with us, and they would only come down once a week from Herat because it was too dangerous. That was sometimes frustrating because it was something that slipped beneath our radar. We were so focused on the bad guys that we weren't seeing a sort of disintegration of law and order at the district level.

DR. KOONTZ: **One of the things that I was curious about is how would you describe the people of Farah? You know, who are these people that you're trying to help out? What's the level of their economy? What's the level of development in Farah?**

MR. CARLAND: Farah was much more developed than Oruzgan. Farah's an old trading city. It was very political. I got the sense that it was about—I wouldn't say it was two-thirds Tajik and one-third Pashtun. I got the sense it was more half and half because a lot of people were Pashtuns. But women, by and large, would just wear scarves around their hair, which is much more closely related to Iran, to the West. Literacy, at least amongst the officials and the people that I met, was general. Their needs were—they were interested in trade. They had just set up a chamber of commerce, and I worked with them to try and get them linked into the national chamber of commerce. They were thinking, certainly, at a higher level. They were working on getting the generators in the town up and going. I think, actually, just recently, they got it up with the help of Iranians—which is great—to supply electricity. But their expectations were "We want lights. We want air conditioning," and these are things that I think most people—like, there are a lot of generators. At night, you can see light through the city. A lot of people could afford this, so it was a different area. Once you went outside of town, it was rural Afghanistan—very poor; very dry; a huge poppy-growing province.

DR. KOONTZ: **We had spoken with somebody else who was in one of the eastern PRTs who had described it as, you know, coming straight out of 1359.**

MR. CARLAND: Yeah, absolutely. Most of what I'm talking about right now is Farah, but once I got out to Oruzgan, it was very, very different. It was different, and just much more entrepreneurial. I think the security situation allowed a lot of really interesting ideas—you know, developing a cattle market; they were building fruit juice factories—fruit is a big deal in Farah; and really into trying to build a road to link up an Iranian road that went right up to the border and stopped, and then it was just sort of a smuggler's trail from there. And definitely, guys understood that all these goods

come in to Persian Gulf ports in Iran, and you then they have to go all the way up and cross over to go to Herat. So, these guys are like, "Well, if we could get a border crossing there, and another road, we can cut off hundreds of miles." There was just definitely a broader understanding of economics, supply and demand, and this sort of thing, and trying to get into the Iranian market, where they could undersell the local Iranians with their fruit products and whatnot. So, that was good. I definitely felt like the education level and the ability to sort of visualize was a lot better.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about that chamber of commerce and how that facilitated that sort of economic development.**

MR. CARLAND: I only met with them once. I got more involved once I got to Oruzgan with theirs, but they had a business association. They had just gotten accredited. They had gotten their letter of accreditation from Kabul. They were trying to figure out what they wanted to do. They were talking about dues. They were talking about building a building. Of course, they were very interested in us building a building and us providing this and that, and we said, "No, no, no. Actually, this is precisely what a business is supposed to do. You build your own building." Actually, they went to one of the senior, wealthier business provider that had, sort of like, a hall—you know, like a VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars hall] or something—where they would meet and discuss. One of their big ideas was trying to get the cattle industry started and experimenting—you know, a couple of businessmen were experimenting, trying to get Iranian or some Pakistani cows. The problem is, it's just hot. It's 130 to 140 degrees. It's a desert basically out in Farah, and they were trying to import cows that could survive that kind of heat.

That was interesting, and it wasn't as sophisticated. I talked to them a lot about the new government, and they really had no relationship at all with the elected government. So, I was trying to unleash lobbyism on these poor, unsuspecting Afghans. I'd say, "You know, you have these elected officials, and these guys can advocate for you. You know you want money for a road. You should know that the U.S. government is not going to build a road to Iran, I'll tell you that much. But if these are things that you want, then you need to advocate for them, and you need to be connected to these people, and to the provincial council, as well. These guys are even closer to you," although it wasn't really what their role was, so I wasn't able to explain that as easily. But there were a lot of complaints about having to go up to Herat or all the way to Kabul to get documents, like business licenses and things like that. They felt like they had to pay a lot of bribes, and they had to tip all the time. I said, "Well, you know, then, you want the Ministry of Trade to set up an office in Farah. How do you do that? You get

your people up in the *meshrano jirga* [House of Elders, the upper house of the Afghan National Assembly] to make this happen for you." They were like, "Oh, yeah!"

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Did you do any liaison work with the GOA [Government of Afghanistan] or the provincial government?**

MR. CARLAND: Absolutely. That was one of my primary duties. I worked a good bit with mostly with the governor, since it was just me. The civil affairs team was broken up into two teams—a CAT [Civil Affairs Team]-A and a CAT-B. The CAT-B, I think, was also called the CMOC, the civil-military operations center. They, because they had more people, worked a lot with the ministries and tried to get a survey of who the ministries are, what they were supposed to do, and what were their resources. And then, I worked more directly with the governor and with the police chief. One of the things I was trying to do was also to set up weekly meetings, like a weekly security meeting, or at least just weekly meetings together where we could sit and talk. Because I think the PRT commander and I had both come in fairly recently—the PRT commander had taken over just a few weeks before I arrived—so I was like, "This is haphazard. You need to set up these regular meetings, interactions, with these guys and start like a reconstruction and development weekly meeting, a security weekly meeting." We had been doing this for the elections, but I was saying, "This needs to continue, where you get the police chief, the army chief, the government chairs, the NDS"—the National Directorate of Security; basically, their FBI and KGB. They're all like the KGB guys; at least, the good guys were—"to discuss what's going on in the province, to communicate." I think our interagency process is that some of these guys just don't talk, and they just do things. And then, also to get them to start focusing on outside of Farah, because it became very Farah-centric, because that's what was directly in front of them. Some of these districts were just, you know, on the edge of civilization, and you can get a lot of loyalty from them with very little, in some of these district seats, by just building them something—anything—to show that the government was there.

So, I worked with the governor. The governor was an interesting individual—he was an actually an American—Ezatollah Wasefi. His father had been a minister in the Daoud government, I believe, and had been very close to the Karzais, but he had fled when the Russians invaded, so he'd actually grown up, for the most part, in the U.S., which made him, in some respects, very easy to deal with, because he spoke very good English. I was trying to get a little bit on him to get a little organized. I definitely think he improved, because this is a big jump for a lot of these Afghan-Americans. They're educated; they're patriotic;

they want to go out there; but it's a big jump from running a business in America, where there are rules and laws, and then coming to this deeply tribal politics. I was trying to get him to work more with the police. He brought a police chief with him, but, really, the deputy police chief ran it, because he was from a family in Farah and was connected. He had relatives up in the Ministry of the Interior.

I guess the big issue, really, became the Afghan National Police. We were always trying to work with them—you know, "You need to reorganize. You have too many officers, to start with, and too many of them are in Farah. Very few of them are trained. Too many of your district police chiefs are in Farah. They should be out in the districts. Equipment seems to end up in the headquarters—all of the trucks, and the weapons, and the radios. It's all in the headquarters, and this stuff is designed for people far out." And then, accountability: "We give you stuff. What happens to the stuff?" So, that sort of problems. The police, I think, were at below 50 percent of their authorized strength, and I think very few of them had been trained. The main training facility was up in Herat, and to send a bunch of guys up there, it was hard for them to get up there, and it was unsafe, even for a group of ten policemen, to travel on the road all the way up. So, that was an issue.

That was probably the main issue we just kind of harped on because the election security stuff really brought it painfully to our attention. This was the main problem. It wasn't a huge Taliban issue. It was just very lawless and dangerous in this province, and people were very unhappy about it. It was all the businessmen would talk about. Briefly, for the election, they sent in about three hundred to four hundred police from Kabul who were disciplined, were all in uniform, all had new weapons, and it made a big impression on the locals because they didn't steal. They weren't harassing the locals. Off the bat, all of the locals were like, "We want new police! We want trained police! We want the police not from the province! We want! We want!"

DR. KOONTZ: **So, could you do anything other than just bring these issues up with the local government that they needed to do, or could you …**

MR. CARLAND: You acted as an advocate up in Kabul. In the short time that I was there, I basically just sent—I just did a lot of looking around, and then I basically made one report to Kabul. It was just an unclassified discussion of the police, and then just basically the problem in Oruzgan. Pretty much everything—all development, the governance, the progress—hinges on the police. I think right after I left, we did get bumped up on priority to get some police mentors and to get a little more love from Kabul. They're looking at an open insurgency in some of the other provinces, so

it was always hard to get attention to the provinces where there weren't any problems. We used to joke, "All we need is one good Taliban attack, and then we'll get some love from the capital!" [Laughs.]

DR. KOONTZ: **How influential were the mullahs in that particular province?**

MR. CARLAND: I don't know, having only been there for a little bit. I assume they were. They were fairly influential in a different way than they were, necessarily, in the really deeply Pashtun belt. For instance, women would walk around with just a head scarf. Very few people wore burqas, and I think they were mostly Pashtun. On several occasions, some officials kind of said, "Those are poor, rural folk who had just moved to the big city." So, there was that. I'd assume so, because all Afghans are very religious. I think that's something we miss, sometimes—you know, when we say "The Taliban are religious extremists," you get sort of a nonplussed response: "We're all religious extremists. We're Afghans. This is our religion. This means everything to us."

DR. KOONTZ: **I don't want to put words in your mouth, but we're trying to establish, kind of, similarities and variances between the individual PRTs, and this other PRT person we had spoken with mentioned that one of the things that she had identified as a problem was that the PRT structure doesn't necessarily work with core competencies—that you have military people doing civilian things, and then civilian people get bled over into military aspects. Did you notice that, or have a problem with that?**

MR. CARLAND: Yeah. I didn't … I mean, it was just the reality of the situation. What are you going to do? The military, maybe, at the strategic level, say, "Oh, we don't do this. We do this." But we've trained these captains and majors and colonels too well. If something needs doing, then they'll do it, which does cause problems. You put three airborne infantrymen in charge of setting up a provincial medical program, they will come up with—the military is about process. They will design a provincial medical program. They will be careful, but they will design it, because, hey, they were told to do it, and they'll do it. That's sometimes a problem. Definitely you would see—you know, you scratch your head, and just, "Oh, what were the assumptions that went into this?" From their military background, they didn't come up with the assumptions. Definitely, like training the police—we heavily militarized the training of the police. We're basically training light infantry, paramilitary light infantry, which is what the military knows how to do, and it's what that they need, I suppose, but they're not police. And then, there's all this crime and there's problems with the judicial system and whatnot. Well, these are all, you know, formed units. They'll go out and fight the Taliban, but they're not

patrolling downtown because they're not being trained to be a police force. You can see that as, sort of, the runoff.

I don't know. I mean, the military's there, and the job needs doing, you know? I think it's unfortunate because—and again, this is just my personal opinion—we have come up with that concept of unity of effort instead of unity of command. To my mind, this doesn't put to the best uses—it just involves a lot of coordinating and just telling other people what you're doing and going ahead and doing it. Well, that doesn't really help, and it doesn't integrate. At the tactical, operational, level, the military's doing a lot of things; but at the strategic level, they don't want to share out this—I mean, a lot of this stuff just has to be under the military, because the military has the infrastructure; they have the people; they have the helicopters; they have the equipment; the life support; the force protection; and all the stuff that you need; but they just don't have the expertise. Often, they look at advisers as advisers, not necessarily as implementers: "I'll take your advice, so long as it doesn't cost me anything or make me have to change things." It's institutional. Personally, you can do a lot, but that basically means the institution has failed.

DR. KOONTZ: **I'll tell you what. We've been going at this for about an hour and a half. I wanted to switch over from Farah over to Tarin Kowt. Why don't we just take like a couple minutes' break, and come back and we'll do Tarin Kowt.**

[Interruption to proceedings.]

All right. We're back interviewing Raphael Carland. Let's get you out of Farah to Tarin Kowt. So, you're finally going where you were supposed to go in the first place. What did you do there?

MR. CARLAND: I transitioned over. In this case, I replaced someone, Dan Green, who had been there since the spring. Tarin Kowt was a very different province, kind of more in the line of what you would expect. Where Farah had been more of a traditional peacekeeping mission, Tarin Kowt was the Afghanistan you read about. It was the home of the Taliban. Mullah Omar was from the province, and a number of his lieutenants were also from the province. A very, very conservative Pashtun area, and I think in the whole time I was there, maybe I saw one woman without a burqa on, and probably no more than a few dozen women at all, all in burqas. They were very conservative, religious. There was a very strong Taliban movement, obviously, up in the hills and some of the out-districts. A lot of drugs, a lot of warlordism and militias. Basically, where it had been lawless in Farah, in Oruzgan, it was organized. There was the governor, who had his militia; and there was a police chief from a different tribe, who had his own. Basically

through the DDR [disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration] process, the governor and the police had relaundered their militias. The governor had an Afghan Highway Police battalion, although there was no highway at all in Oruzgan Province, but he had some sort of deal with the interior ministry, and the police chief now had the Afghan National Police. That said, this was a good thing. Both of these militias were considerably smaller than the older militias. A lot of people thought this was a big failure of DDR. I thought procedurally, this was not a bad thing to go from having fifteen hundred armed men to having four hundred. That's not a bad thing, and the government was not responsible for paying for four hundred of them. That's not bad.

And then, there was also a much stronger Afghan National Army presence. There were two *kandaks*, and then there was a much more significant—well, not necessarily significant in size, but definitely in span—of U.S. There was the PRT in the central district. We were collocated with a Special Forces unit; and some Coalition SOF [special operations forces] units; and then an Afghan compound; and an airstrip, all surrounded by one big berm. There were also three fire bases out in the three most restive districts: Charchina, Deh Rawod, and Khaz Uruzgan. They also had their own small civil affairs team attached with the ODA [Special Forces Operational Detachment-A] teams, sort of working on the similar programs and projects. So, there was much more significant presence, which had a different impact. There was a lot more they could do in the province. The province is also geographically like a quarter of the size of Farah. Lots of mountains. Significantly, no paved roads. We had just recently paved the Tarin Kowt–Kandahar road, but that was a strip of maybe sixty kilometers leading out to the south of the province. The rest was all dirt roads.

And this province—this is also to give you a sense of it—was dominated by two tribes, the Popalzai and the Barakzai. The Popalzai are the tribe that Karzai comes from. There were definitely progovernment and antigovernment forces, although beneath it, there was definitely this constant tribal rivalry. Between the most dangerous districts, Deh Rawod and Charchina, there was a lot. They were majority Popalzai areas, which brought the most resistance. And then even within the Durani tribe, the Popalzai was the governmental side, and the Barakzai was the police chief's tribe, and there was fairly bitter infighting. Sometimes it was hard to tell when—you know, the comment "green-on-green violence" was often used because any attack on the governor, the police, was, of course, Taliban based, and, you know, sometimes even if they were in relatively safe areas, you would not be wrong if you assumed perhaps somebody else was involved. So, that's where we were.

It was much different. Whereas Farah had electricity, paved roads, concrete buildings, like, sort of, a street grid, in Tarin Kowt, there was maybe a dozen concrete buildings and no paved roads—we paved them while I was there—mostly mud buildings, maybe four thousand or five thousand people in the village. There were a lot of villages right in the Tarin Valley. They were all connected, so there was probably, I would say, an overlay, of fifty thousand or one hundred thousand people in this one valley area. But it wasn't at all like Farah. It was a very different environment.

The illiteracy … I don't know. I would go 95-plus percent, which definitely had a huge impact on how you could build capacity within the government, within the local economy, and the local city forces. For me, just as a personal comment, it gives you a sense of the impact of illiteracy. You think people who are illiterate are basically like yourself, only you can read and write, and it's not like that at all. Your inability to read and write means you are unable to really conceptualize. You can't really think about things beyond your immediate surroundings. So, you think of trying to plan into the future or plan multiple geographical areas—like, the idea of running a battalion operation with multiple companies—you can't do that if people are illiterate, or you can't do it very well. Or, trying to run agricultural programs, and the minister of agriculture just remembers everything. It was hard to explain to people how difficult this made this. Every meeting, often, started much more in depth, just trying to explain, "What did we do last time? What have we been talking about? What money was…"—you know, there's always this sort of "Oh, is it $5,000? Is it $6,000?"—which, you know, when we're trying to keep accounts in books, it's enormously difficult. So, that was the province.

The PRT had, really, just an outstanding PRT commander, [Lt.] Col. Robin Fontes. She had been in Kabul for a year in the political-military integration team, and then she'd come down to Tarin Kowt. Really ideal. She knew the minister; she knew Afghanistan; she'd lived out here in the region before, in a less intense environment just up in Tajikistan, during their civil war; and then, her own MP [military police] background—she definitely had an understanding of sort of paramilitary operations less than warfare, other than warfare, whatever the acronym was.

So, that helped, and also the physical locations. We had a single headquarters building. I shared an office with the USAID representative, which was very helpful. We were about one room over from the commander's office and civil affairs team, which I felt integrated things. Just the physical localities had a lot to do with my influence and ability to have an impact, a positive impact, on the operations. The USAID representative there had been there for a long time. He ended up being there for two years. He was there when the

PRT started—an American ex-pat who is from Indonesia. He was out in East Timor and in Sumatra, building roads. So, he was a builder, so it was interesting. Again, it depends on whom you get. He was a tough guy. He was really good at running programs, getting them started, and he was a road builder—just a builder, basically.

The program was much different, because it was a more well established PRT, because the Americans had been there much longer than Farah. There was much more familiarity with the province. Kerry Greene, the USAID, had been there for two years, so he knew his way around. I think there was much more familiarity and much more willingness to go out, even though the environment was not permissive. So, in that respect, a very different environment. In terms of going out, I'd probably go out almost every day, sometimes twice, in the morning and the afternoon. I'd try and get out of Tarin Kowt about once a week. Our meeting schedule was we'd run two staff meetings in Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, which allowed us more flexibility. Then we started also running a weekly reconstruction meeting and a weekly police meeting. So, in that respect, we tried to work on more of that.

In terms of force protection, whereas in Farah, you'd go down in, basically, the State Department SUV, and then



Colonel Fontes and Carland at the Provincial Reconstruction Team Tarin Kowt office

behind you, they'd be driving. You'd just need a shooter in the vehicle with you, and then behind you, there'd be a Humvee, one Humvee, that could go into town. Here, no unarmored vehicles left post. We worked with, usually, convoys of at least three Humvees. I always wore my body armor, at least in the convoy. When I got there, I'd take it off before I'd go into a meeting, but certainly once you got outside of the compound, you'd always wear it.

One of the other issues, too, is the level of isolation of the province. It was pretty much only—the western part of the province through the Helmand River had a little more contact. It was a great way to ship drugs. It was one of the primary drug-growing areas. For the central part of the province Tarin Kowt, there was one road that led down to Kandahar, and it was paved right as I arrived, but that was the main link. So, one of the missions that I saw was "Really, we need to work on the road and getting some more security down on the road," which we were trying to do. We were trying to get the highway police, trying to get them involved and stationed down there. But also, trying to introduce one of those oil-spot strategies that folks talk about, trying to build up quality of life in Tarin Kowt, which involves safety. It involved bringing in electricity. I worked a bit to—I think it fell through as a security deteriorated after I left—but I got a number of cell phone operators from Kabul that started talking about setting up a tower.

One of the big dearths we had, because of the illiteracy, is there are very few trained engineers, trained doctors. People who are in Oruzgan are from Oruzgan, which really limited what you could do, and it really hurt in terms of the projects you may have bid out. After a while, we knew. You knew to look through a contract bid, and if so-and-so's name wasn't on it, you knew they had no trained engineers, so there was no way they were going to build the building, which definitely limited us. So, we started moving away from buildings right as I arrived because a lot of buildings were collapsing because they weren't well built. Because there were just small CA teams and USAID officials, you can only QC the buildings so often. So, you had to limit, sometimes, your projects. The PRT commander and I definitely agreed a few well-done projects are much better than many half-done projects. I know on several occasions, we baffled our commanders by requesting less money than was available. They couldn't understand: "Why don't you want it?" "Unless you want us to give out gym bags full of cash …" which we can do, and we have done, but in terms of actually doing something, there's just no capacity. There's an absorption rate in the province, which sometimes, again, people in Kabul didn't fully understand. There're only half a dozen trained engineers, and of them, only two are university trained, and they were both ministers. They

had administrative tasks, as well as that. So, that affected us.

And you always have to get what I always called, sort of, the vision problem. We build a building—a community center, or a multifunctional, judicial—you know, we can visualize what this will look like; but to an Afghan, it's just a building with a roof. So, the police will move in, and it's a police station. We'd say, "We also want the prosecutor and the judge." "No, we really don't want them to move in, and we have the weapons, so they won't move in." When you're building projects, you definitely have to incorporate that. There're so many things we take for granted inherently—these invisible connections with different parts of society and issues that can tend to be unrealistic in doing some of these programs. I think the PRT commander, the USAID guy, and myself, we sat down and spent a lot of the time—probably almost half of every day—just sitting, talking through some of the issues. We definitely wanted to focus more on tangible goods. Roads were a good thing for us.

And then, we also got this thing called the Alternative Livelihoods Program, which had many different functions. It was supposed to be this counternarcotics thing, but it got all tacked up, and the people running it didn't want it to be a counternarcotics program. One part of it was really useful for us, called the cash-for-work program, which we used for irrigation programs. We'd just keep guys out there digging, digging out irrigation ditches. There are these things in Afghanistan called *karezes*, which are like sort of underground canals. The Russians, because the *mujaheddin* had used them as tunnels, had gone around dropping dynamite down each one and had ruined the system, but the villagers were trying to get them back. Oftentimes, they'd be ten to fifteen meters under the ground, and they'd collapsed. So, they'd have to dig down, redo the roof, and then bury it back up. You'd have, like, these wells every hundred meters or so. So, this is a great program for getting people employed. It gives the villagers something they could work with. Oftentimes you build schools, you build clinics. Those are really things that capture our imagination, but you need nurses and doctors and teachers that they just don't have them. So, it's almost like you have to shoot a little bit lower.

DR. KOONTZ: **You mentioned Colonel Fontes. Tell me about that PRT. Was it about the same size as the other one, or—**

MR. CARLAND: Yes, it was pretty much the same line. The commander of our force protection was a permanent National Guard guy from Texas. He was a company commander, so it was very comfortable, because he kind of stacked the deck. All of our squad leaders were E-7s [sergeants first class], and just the quality of the National Guard team there was

outstanding—really, really sharp guys. Squad leaders were E-7s. Team leaders were E-6s [staff sergeants], which, given the security situation in Oruzgan, was very warranted, but it helped a lot. I mean, a couple of these guys actually—halfway through, they could speak pretty good pidgin Pashto, and they were actually very useful. When we were inside, they were talking with the kids, talking with local farmers. It was just a very impressive group.

An interesting observation, too, that some folks made in the difference between the Iowa National Guard and the Texas National Guard is sort of with the ethnic breakup. Whereas sometimes the Iowans—and I wasn't there to see this, but I can see this—the Texans just got along with the Afghans a lot better. They were much more comfortable. When you see the makeup of the National Guard—you know, African-Americans, Latinos, white guys—they all kind of speak Spanglish, anyway, because they're from Texas, so this step to another culture wasn't as shocking. I felt like relationships were as good as you could get—you know, as you would get. They weren't just, you know, kind of, knuckle draggers there to keep it safe. They were actually an active part of the team, and very good. After a few missions, I definitely started, at least, meeting the sergeant in charge of the force protection and kind of out-briefing when we got back: "This is what we're doing. This is what we've got. This is what I've accomplished." Or "We didn't get anything accomplished today." That was good to sort of build the bond because then you're asking these guys to stand out in the heat for an extra couple hours while you're eating lunch inside, and they're standing out in the 110-degree heat, that sort of personal relationship counts.

DR. KOONTZ: **How about the civilian add-ons to the team? You mentioned there was you, and then there was the USAID guy.**

MR. CARLAND: It was the USAID guy. We also had a UN engineer, who was contracted. He didn't technically—they worked out some legal thing, because the UN didn't want to put any personnel on the PRT. He was a Welshman, and he was the implementing partner for USAID. So, he would be our engineer for a lot of these programs. So, there was the three of us, and then we got a couple of police mentors. They were retired police—I think one was from Salt Lake City; the other was from Idaho—and they were there to mentor the police. Sometimes, there was a struggle. They were good guys and definitely good cops, but they were being brought in at a managerial level. They had not been managers, they had been police. The previous guy we had had to reschedule, Art Smith. He was actually the police chief of Hagerstown, Maryland, and he had been really good—in fact, apparently, they had sucked him up and put him as a mentor in the interior ministry

to a general. He's the kind of person you want, which was unfortunate. We just never have enough of the people that we want, because, you know, someone who's been a patrol sergeant could do a certain level, but when you're putting him with an Afghan colonel who's a provincial police chief, he didn't necessarily have the experience. So, they're kind of talking past one another. That was one of the things I really got involved in, because the police, again, one of the key things. So, I worked a lot with them.

The other interesting aspect of the PRT is we were also collocated with the Special Forces company headquarters and a few ODAs, which was a good relationship. In some ways, I think the SOF guys were easier to work with, sometimes, than the conventional maneuver units. You'd hear horror stories from some of the others where PRTs were collocated with maneuver battalions and the maneuver battalion commander, of course, would take over, and all the Afghans would look to him because, of course, he had five hundred men under him, whereas the PRT had fifty armed men, and Afghans understand that ratio. The SOF guys definitely understood counterinsurgency, and they understood civil-military relations, and that was good. So, there was a lot of sharing and crossover in that respect.

We were also collocated, again, with an Afghan battalion, which had an ETT, which we would work with, although it's a different dynamic with that ETT. Again, it's just sometimes—the one in Farah—the commander, again, had been uniquely perfect. He had been the head of the Vermont National Guard's partnership program with Macedonia. He'd spent a lot of time in Macedonia working with an underdeveloped military and underdeveloped system. He had a couple of Special Forces sergeants, so they definitely understood the FID, foreign internal defense, training. And these other ETT guys—they were all good guys, but they were tankers from Kentucky. You know, give them a tank and give them some bad guys, and they'd have run wild, but training light infantry in a potentially dangerous environment? They would go out with two or three of them with a squad, very unpredictable, going too far out. I don't think there was a lot of trust between them and the ANA. That was something that was always frustrating—the training mission. This is the key, getting the ANA and the ANP to fight; sometimes it wasn't the right match, while meanwhile, the SF guys—this is what they're really good at—they're being tagged for these kill/capture missions, which, you know, they're very good at, but we also need to do the FID mission, which I think they got turned to right as I was leaving.

Then there were Coalition special forces guys there, which also made for some interesting interaction. One of the unique

things, too, about Oruzgan Province was that it was actually a joint special—we fell under CJSOTF, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, which had a very different dynamic than a lot of the other PRTs. We fell directly under a Special Forces group commander. There were two Special Forces battalions in the country, and then there was a PRT, and from my observation of the interaction, the group commander treated Colonel Fontes like one of his three maneuver commanders, which gave us a lot of access and a lot more help. From what I can understand, in RC East, they had a brigade commander, four battalions, nine PRTs. Three of the battalion commanders, he's been working with for years. These are his infantry guys, and then you've got all these random PRT people doing stuff. I think a lot of the PRTs just got lost, especially trying to get up to Kabul.

DR. KOONTZ: **When you got there, you mentioned that there was a governor, and he had his own militia; and then, the police chief has his militia. The governor—that was Jan Muhammad Khan at that time, right?**

MR. CARLAND: He was replaced right after I departed. I had met with the guy replacing him, and we thought it would be a good change. His claim to fame was, he had been a *mujaheddin* leader of great skill and ability back in the eighties, but he's an illiterate soldier and, to be honest, his soldiering skills were highly in doubt by the time we got out there. He didn't go out on campaigns, and the one or two that he went on, I think, was described as piratical by some of our advisers. They said, "We didn't see any Taliban. He just burnt and stole things." So, there was a feeling of "Well, he's got to go, because he's just holding things up." And, it was also sort of shocking—the level of corruption. Sometimes, he would find ways to not just siphon things off. He would take everything—not just some, not part, but all. At a certain point, you can't do anything. So, a lot of the governance, the provision of services for the people, were really getting—I just don't think he cared. I don't think he understood. I mean, the guy was an illiterate farmer from a village: "I grew up without school. I grew up without having water. Everyone's fine." We definitely thought we needed something else.

But there was definitely an understanding, which I think had a lot to do with, just from my perspective—we urged with the governments for all the southern provinces, and there was a big turnover right in the winter time frame with the governors, from these sort of autocrats—these sort of warlord, strongman-based guys—to technocrats. But we saw a real dip in security, and we sort of saw that coming. If you replace these two key guys and then the militias, do they still stay in uniform? Do they still go out with the same alacrity that they had before? Probably not, and that seemed to be so, which is unfortunate, because while the police chief's militia—I don't know. They just really didn't

do a whole lot, and they just basically kept to their inside areas, and so while he was considered a big Taliban fighter, I never saw him fight any Taliban when I was there. But the governor's nephew, cousin—I don't know—was commander of the highway police, and he was good. He was respected. He would go out and fight, and his militia definitely would go out and fight with our guys, and they really appreciated. But, you know, you get to the switch-off from the security situation to governance. They kept using the militia. We kept saying, "You need to use the ANA." They said, "Well, the ANA don't know the area as well. They're not as good fighters." "Well, maybe we need to train them a bit more, but you're using the highway police as essentially a military force, so they're not on the highways, guarding the Tarin Kowt–Kandahar highway," which was the key link to the rest of the country. So, that was sometimes some of the civil-military friction.

We really urged very strongly for the governor to fire all of these district police, which he did—which, again, caused some friction, because he was a good fighter. He would provide troops, but he was taking local businessmen to the main square and beating them until they gave up their businesses. So, you know, it's that government or security—which is more important? This district had been a safe, progovernment district, and now it's Taliban crawling all over, you know? It's because the local officials are horrific, and you're driving people into the arms of the insurgents. So, there were those sort of issues.

For my role, I definitely took on the governance role. I worked a lot with the provincial council. I met a lot with the president of the provincial council, who was also the chief mullah of the province. That goes back to my earlier comment, that definitely religion was much more significant. Most of the senior people, because they were educated, semieducated, they'd be mullahs often.

And then, I had worked just from my—out of pure inexperience, the embassy had said, "We want more economic reporting." I had really no background except for, you know, four semiattended econ classes I took as an undergraduate. So, I said, "Well, what do you mean by that?" "Well, this one guy, he's on the chamber of commerce." So, I had worked on chambers of commerce, and here, there really was nothing. The guy before me had kind of organized, at least, a meeting, and I was trying to follow this, trying to get them to organize into officials, but this was really beyond my ability. Getting them to meet was hard enough, and then there are all these arguments about who was president, who had been elected, and the fact that half the people in the room had weapons [laughs] … maybe this wouldn't work. So, I realized I couldn't do this. So, I got in contact with some folks at the Commerce Department

back here in Washington, just for some connections and whatnot, and by a chain of events, they connected with this group called CIPE [Center for International Private Enterprise]. It's loosely affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but, basically, it goes to the developing world and helps them set up chambers of commerce, both nationally and locally.

So, you know, I started working with the guy, and it turned out to be very good. This gentleman came down. He brought a senior official, who is also Karzai's youngest brother—of course, in Oruzgan, the Karzai name is very big. I got them to sit down and talk with a lot of the businessmen, and it was exactly what they needed because this was all beyond my capacity. I couldn't do this, but what I could do was, find this and bring it down to the province, which I thought was one of the important roles, was coordinating and facilitating, which are fairly weak words, but this was it. I brought these guys down, and we met several times. We got documents set up that they would officially establish something. Then, we also set up a six-month action plan where someone from the CIPE would come down once a month, and we'd get them started, and they started collecting dues and coming up with, sort of, community projects. One was just, I think, cleaning the gutters. There were these big, like, two-feet deep concrete gutters which just get filled with, you know, God knows what. But then, we told them, "When the rains will come in the winter, the entire downtown area will be flooded. You guys have to …," and they're like, "Oh! Somebody else should be doing this! Why isn't the government doing this?" "Well, they're not, so you guys should do this," and they kept ignoring us. This guy worked in Africa and he worked in Southeast Asia, and it was just the ideal experience of talking to them in a way that they understood, of how this will benefit and why they should do this. I think they set up some father-son training programs, some basic accounting, and some basic capital-amassing issues. That's always an issue. There's no banking system, so there's no way to mass capital, which is always a big problem in a place like this. But at least, in one little area, you can start that. So, that was one of the things that I thought was good to bring a sense of economic governance.

He was very good. Like, one thing he did was, connect it between father and son. He said, "We want to focus on young men who will inherit from their fathers" because if you just trained a young man in something, he'll go to Kabul. As soon as he has any skills that can get him the hell out of Oruzgan, he's gone. So, you had to be sort of ruthless and focus on skill sets that will make them wealthy men in Oruzgan, but not outside Oruzgan, so they have to stay—which, you know, was kind of harsh. It's a horrible

place. I know I was glad to leave. But, again, from a civilian aspect, it was really useful.

And then, one of my personal efforts was to get a Roshan cell network down. I went through our econ section and got in touch with the Roshan people and started planning an interaction, and they eventually sent a team down. I think they had been there a year before, and the governor had demanded 50 percent of their profits, and they said, "Well, you need cell phones more than we need your business." So, one of the things we did is we facilitated the governor before they met. The commander and I met with the governor, and we said, "This is a really big deal. We should make it as easy for them as possible to come down here," and I think the governor got this sense that a lot of people in Kabul were watching this. I don't know if it ever came off. It would've been good because one of the things we are always trying to do was give the people a sense of the outside world because the Taliban could always compete with us and say, "What have the Americans done for you? They blow up houses. They kill people. What do they do?" So, it was always very tangible. The Roshan network had been turned on in Farah right when I arrived, and it was amazing. A day after, everybody had a cell phone. People had bought cell phones months in advance. All the Afghans had cell phones, and they were all text messaging one another. It's a huge symbol of modernity, of central government, and all that sort of stuff.

That was sometimes why Jan Muhammad was a little tough to work with because I don't think he completely grasped how important that type of thing was. From what I heard, [Governor Maulavi Abdul Hakim] Munib has been a very good. He has cabinet meetings; notes are taken; he asks questions; and he demands follow-up, which is a big difference, because Jan Muhammad would just have these random conversations about the weather and about his days as a *mujaheddin* fighter. After a while, sometimes the governor wouldn't even show up. It would just be basically his old war buddies sitting around talking. So, those are some of the good things.

DR. KOONTZ: **Tell me about the transition over to the Dutch taking control? How did that affect your operations?**

MR. CARLAND: I was just there at the very beginning. There was definitely a lot of interest in how this was going to come about because the Dutch definitely had a preconceived notion. They definitely believed—because I stopped in The Hague on the way back and talked with some of them—one of the things we really wanted to do was to convince them to keep a State Department official there. They were very uncomfortable with that. They had not allowed, up in Bagram, a State Department person. They were more than willing to take

a USAID person because they provide you the money, but they were very uncomfortable with this. One of the things I was trying to say is, "You shouldn't see this person as a U.S. spy in your area. You should see this as your personal liaison to the U.S. government, as someone who has the right contacts in the embassy, has the right contacts in Washington, and can tell you what the Americans are doing, because if you get rid of all the American people, that means you'll have to work your own embassy, cross over to the U.S. embassy to find out what's going on, and that may take time, and things may change on the ground." I think I was able to convince them, so they did end up taking a State Department representative there.

They came in with a lot of preconceived notions. One, which is very common in continental Europe, is that a lot of this insurgent activity is caused by the U.S. presence—that we cause it by attacking, by stirring things up, by blowing things, by killing women and children. And, you know, we've always said, "The Taliban were there before we got there." There are a lot of these tribal structures that they feel we've exacerbated. Well, they've been killing one another for two thousand or three thousand years. I think they're quite able to do that with or without us. And their concept of force protection—they came in with way more troops. I think there were never more than about like four hundred Coalition troops, most of whom were American, but a few not. They brought in like a thousand, like an entire infantry battalion or artillery battery—Apache helicopters and all this sort of stuff. So, it was interesting how they were going to manage this massive—and of those four hundred, a lot of them are spread out in fire bases. So, in Tarin Kowt, there were maybe two hundred or three hundred Coalition people. They were going to bring in two thousand, so that was interesting how they go about doing that. How they saw interaction with the local government—they were very interested in tribal dynamics. One thing I was impressed by was they hired this one guy who lived and worked in Afghanistan for a long, long time, and he knew the region very well and was trying to focus on smaller projects, focus on village solidarity, which I thought was good. I mean, I wouldn't say all the things that they were doing were good, but it was interesting.

As much problem as we have with civil-military, the Europeans are much far removed from, have much less mature understanding of, civil-military interaction. They're very restricted in what they can do and how they can work with the military. In their military, their civil affairs guys, they're not allowed—CERP is a very American concept. Very few other allies can do that sort of stuff where the military can do development and humanitarian assistance programs, which basically goes against, I think, the Oslo Declaration. It's this UN understanding of what civilians

and the military can do, and almost all the Europeans have signed on to the Oslo Declaration. And so, that's troublesome, and the military can't do it, but then their development people are very dependent on NGOs, as our USAID is. They basically contract everything out. But go to Oruzgan, there are not NGOs. There are no NGOs, which I think they really didn't understand.

DR. KOONTZ: **Just because of the security?**

MR. CARLAND: Yeah. In places like this, I mean, you're really out of luck for any sort of international support, which I don't think the Dutch, again, really, completely understood. They thought it was because we don't get along with NGOs. I think they've learned. They're actually one of the primary people behind creating this CERP for southern Afghanistan. I think it's something like €2.5 million for the military to actually spend after they wreck stuff in some of these big military campaigns. But, you know, there definitely wasn't a—I think their sense of security was more reactive and very Bosnia, Kosovo related. You provide area security, and just the threat of your being there—which, in a postconflict context, you need humanitarian space that's defended so NGOs and civilians can do all their stuff. But we were always concerned, and as it seems to have turned out in the south, that this is an act of insurgency. The enemy is very actively seeking to kill you and undermine you. Building a hospital or a school is not a neutral or apolitical act. That is extending the reach of the government, which is exactly counter to what the Taliban want.

DR. KOONTZ: **When you left Tarin Kowt, were there any kind of noticeable changes that you could point to as a result of the PRT's work?**

MR. CARLAND: I felt that in Tarin Kowt, yes. There definitely was. We were paving the roads. There was definitely more commerce. The paving of the Tarin Kowt–Kandahar highway definitely was bringing more goods. The market was definitely full of goods—oftentimes out of reach because the security costs added to the costs, so it was definitely not something that peasants could afford. There was enough security. There was a newly set up little bus system that would go out to the villages, drop people off, and bring people back, so people were coming in. It was just a combination of—I'm not sure how much of an impact, just given the big offensive that the Taliban pulled. I haven't been there since, so I'm not sure what the goal is, but this was always the problem the PRTs—metrics, metrics, metrics, metrics. How do you measure success? It was hard to see. That's why I thought the roads, some of these more tangible programs; and self-started ones, like the chamber of commerce, like Roshan, like these bus programs, that were all run by the Afghans. This is all their business. You can't undo a road when the

road is built. I thought those were the projects we should focus on and that will have a lasting impact. It definitely felt like the schools, clinics—if the U.S. left tomorrow, I don't know if the Taliban would take over, but a conservative band of Pashtuns would take over, and I think the schools would all go away; and, I think, a lot of the clinics, just for a lack of functions, supply system. A lot of the police would most revert back to just sort of a tribal militia. They'll maintain order at the behest of the most powerful tribe. So, it's a hard thing. It's one of those things. You'll know it when you see it, but you won't know it when it's happening. You're trying to change the way people think and these folks have been doing their thing for a long time.

DR. KOONTZ: **This is going to be kind of a touchy-feely question here to end this interview. If there is anything that you learned in Afghanistan, either about yourself or the way that international diplomacy works, or about human nature, or anything, that has changed in the way that you think in kind of broad terms? Is there one, you know, big lesson that you learned during your time in Afghanistan?**

MR. CARLAND: I felt, to an extent, the United States, and the United States government, in particular … we are fairly narcissistic navel-gazers. We spend an enormous amount of our time trying to do things internally. We assume that, basically, everything else is a reaction to either a failure to act or an act on our part, when a lot of these processes are going on before we arrived, after we arrived. We have an enormous—obviously, because we're wealthy and powerful—impact to influence things. I'm always frustrated when "The Taliban are resurging because we didn't do this and this." Well, they're also resurging because they have their own process. Every winter after the summer campaign, they go and do their own AARs [after action reports] in Quetta or wherever in the Persian Gulf, and they say, "We need more money. You know what? We see these Iraqis. They're using these IED [improvised explosive device] things. We should figure out how to do that. Obviously, the Americans they can't do anything against them." Or "Wow, NATO is taking over in the south. This is do-or-die time for us. If we can kill enough Brits and Canadians, the Europeans will go home, and the Americans aren't coming back, so let's do it." We assume that the opponent is a ball of clay to be shaped by us, and, you know, when I was a lieutenant, we were always taught the enemy gets the vote, and the enemy has been voting quite a bit in all of this. That's sometimes sort of frustrating.

And then, too, one of the other things is, sometimes—which is why I'm glad that you guys are doing this—I learned this quickly in regard to this policy, but it connects with the larger NATO thing that I've been working on. A lot of the world is very incremental in the changes you see, and you have

to have perspective to see the changes, to see where you've come and where you're going. I'm just surprised by the constant turnover of personnel, both in Washington and in the field. We're still talking about training Iraqi and Afghan military, whereas people have been talking about this for years. How is it that it's so difficult to maneuver things? Personally, I think it's just amazing. Even the military—we have a very consensus-based decision-making process, and if one group doesn't want to do something there, we just don't—in a lot of these senior documents, there are just very few implementing mechanisms: "You will do this, or you will lose your job. I will see to that." I just wonder what Eisenhower or Roosevelt would think, seeing the way these institutions—you know, I feel the pain sometimes looking at this when I'm trying to work this. You just can't get these institutions to do what you want them to do, what you're telling them to do. I'm just a junior bureaucrat. I have no idea, and once I do, I'll probably use it to foil people who are trying to do what they want [laughs]. It was pretty shocking to see war on a peacetime footing—even more so on the civilian agencies in the military, but even in the military.

DR. KOONTZ: **Okay. Well, we've cooped you up for three hours in this room. We'll go ahead and shut this down. On behalf of the Center, I want to thank you for taking the time to do this.**

MR. CARLAND: Thank you so much. I do appreciate that.

DR. KOONTZ: **We do really appreciate it, and once again, thanks for taking part in this.**

Glossary

AAFES	Army-Air Force Exchange Service
AAR	after action report
ADA	air defense artillery
ADC	assistant division commander
ADC-O	assistant division commander-operations
ADC-S	assistant division commander-support
ADCON	administrative control
ADVON	advanced echelon
ALOC	air line of communication
AMF	Afghan Militia Forces
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANG	Afghan National Government
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AO	area of operations
AOR	area of responsibility
ARCENT	U.S. Army Central Command
ATO	air tasking order
BCT	brigade combat team
BCTP	Battle Command Training Program
C2	command and control
CA	civil affairs
CAC	U.S. Army Combined Arms Center (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas)
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CAS	close air support
CASH	combat surgical hospital
CAT	civil affairs team
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
CEXC	Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan
CFLCC	Coalition Forces Land Component Command
CG	commanding general
CGSC	Command and General Staff College (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJ-1, etc.	*See* Staff Sections.
CJCMOTF	Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF	combined joint task force
CMO	civil-military operations
CMOC	civil-military operations center
CMTC	Combat Maneuver Training Center (Graf-Hohenfels, Germany)
COAD	campaign objective assessments board

COC	command operations center
CODEL	congressional delegation
COIN	counterinsurgency
CONEX	container express
CONOP	contingency operation
CONUS	continental United States
CP	command post
CPX	command post exercise
CRC	Continental U.S. Replacement Center (Fort Benning, Georgia)
CSS	combat service support
CTC	combat training center
DA	Department of the Army
D.C.	District of Columbia
DCG	deputy commanding general
DCG-O	deputy commanding general-operations
DCM	deputy chief of mission (embassy)
DCU	desert combat uniform
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DGMO	Directorate General of Military Operations
DIME	diplomatic, information, military, economic (elements of national power)
DIVARTY	division artillery
DMAIN	division main command post
DoD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DREAR	division rear command post
DTAC	division tactical command post
EA	executive assistant
EBO	effects-based operations
EIPG	Embassy Interagency Planning Group
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
ETT	embedded training team
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
EW	electronic warfare
EXSUM	executive summary
FA	field artillery
FAO	foreign area officer
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan)
FDC	fire direction center
FID	foreign internal defense
FOB	forward operating base
FSO	fire support officer
FST	field surgical team
GOA	Government of Afghanistan
GOMO	General Officer Management Office
Hesco	Hesco Bastion Concertainer (prefabricated container)
HIG	Hezb i Islami Gulbuddin

HUMINT	human intelligence
HVT	high-value target
IBA	Interceptor body armor
ID	infantry division
IED	improvised explosive device
IG	inspector general
IGO	international governmental organization
IMO	information management officer
INL	U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
INTSUM	intelligence summary
IO	information operations; international organization
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (NATO)
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
J-1, etc.	*See* Staff Sections.
JAG	judge advocate general
JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition
JEMB	United Nations Joint Electoral Management Body
JFCOM	U.S. Joint Forces Command
JMD	joint manning document
JOC	joint operations center
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center (Fort Polk, Louisiana)
JSOA	Joint Special Operations Area
JTF	joint task force
K2	Karshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan
kandak	battalion-size unit of the Afghan National Army
KBR	Kellogg, Brown & Root
KIA	killed in action
LAV	Light Armored Vehicle
LNO	liaison officer
MASCAL	mass casualty
MDMP	military decision-making process
MEDCAP	medical civil action program
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MEF	marine expeditionary force
METL	mission essential task list
MEU	marine expeditionary unit
MILVAN	military van container
MOI	Afghan Ministry of Interior
MOS	military occupational specialty
MP	military police
MPRI	Military Professional Resources, Inc.
MRAP	Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (armored vehicle)

MRE	Meal, Ready to Eat
MRX	mission rehearsal exercise
MSR	main supply route
mujaheddin	Muslim holy warrior
mullah	Muslim religious leader
MWR	morale, welfare, and recreation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	Afghan National Directorate of Security
NDU	National Defense University (Fort McNair, D.C.)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NOFORN	not releasable to foreign nationals
NSDD	national security decision directive
NTC	National Training Center (Fort Irwin, California)
OD	Special Forces Operational Detachment
ODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment-A
ODB	Special Forces Operational Detachment-B
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation
OEF	Operation ENDURING FREEDOM
OER	officer evaluation report
OGA	other governmental agency
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster and Civic Aid
OIF	Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
OMC-A	Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan
OPCON	operational control
OPFOR	opposition force
OPSEC	operations security
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
P2	Paktika and Paktia provinces
P2K	Paktika, Paktia, and Khowst provinces
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PAO	public affairs officer
Pashtunwali	Pashtun moral and ethical code
PCS	permanent change of station
PDSS	predeployment site survey
POI	program of instruction
POL-MIL	political-military
POLAD	political adviser
PRT	provincial reconstruction team
PSYOPS	psychological operations
PT	physical training
PTDO	prepare to deploy order
PVO	private volunteer organization
QA	quality assurance
QC	quality control
QRF	quick reaction force
RC	Regional Command
R&D	reconstruction and development

RDZ	regional development zone
RFI	request for information
ROE	rules of engagement
RPG	rocket propelled grenade
R&R	rest and relaxation
RSOI	reception, staging, and onward integration
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (NATO)
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas)
SCI	sensitive compartmented information
SCIF	sensitive compartmented information facility
SETAF	Southern European Task Force (Airborne)
SF	Special Forces
SGS	secretary of the General Staff
shura	Afghan local council
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SIPR	Secure Internet Protocol Router
SIPRNET	Secure Internet Protocol Router Network
SITREP	situation report
SJA	staff judge advocate
SOCCENT	Special Operations Component, U.S. Central Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOP	standard operating procedure
SSR	security sector reform
Staff Sections:	
S-1	Personnel
S-2	Intelligence
S-3	Operations
S-4	Logistics
S-5	Plans
S-6	Communications
S-7	Engineering
S-8	Comptroller
S-9	Civil-Military Affairs
STRATCOM	strategic communications
SVBIED	suicide vehicle-borne IED
TACON	tactical control
TACSAT	tactical satellite
TDA	table of distribution and allowance
TOA	transfer of authority
TOC	tactical operations center
TO&E	table of organization and equipment
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
TTP	tactics, techniques, and procedures
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UE	Unified Endeavor
U.K.	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission-Afghanistan
USA	U.S. Army

USACAPOC	U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USAR	U.S. Army Reserve
USAREUR	U.S. Army, Europe
USARPAC	U.S. Army, Pacific
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USMC	U.S. Marine Corps
UW	unconventional warfare
VETCAP	veterinary civil action program
VTC	video teleconference
XO	executive officer

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