



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

Getting U.S. civilian and military officials to work together effectively during post-conflict interventions is an enormous challenge. In Afghanistan and Iraq the United States has experimented with "Provincial Reconstruction Teams," which combine civilian and military personnel. PRTs are intended to assist with security, governance, and reconstruction by enabling civilians to work in insecure areas. This report examines the U.S. experience with PRTs in Iraq, notes shortcomings, and suggests ways they could be more effective.

The report is based on statements by panelists at a public forum held at the Institute on February 14, 2007, and on interviews conducted by the author with government agencies and commercial contract firms that participate in the PRT program.

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**The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.**

*Robert M. Perito*

## Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq

### Summary

- Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are small civilian-military units that assist provincial and local governments in Iraq to govern effectively and deliver essential services.
- In January 2007 President Bush announced that the United States would double the number of PRTs as part of his plan for a "New Way Forward." Ten new PRTs will be embedded with Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) in Baghdad, Anbar, and Babil.
- The new PRTs will differ significantly from the ten original PRTs set up in Iraq in November 2005. Led by the State Department, most of the original PRTs are located on U.S. military bases and rely on the military for security and logistical support. Both types of PRTs in Iraq differ in staffing and organization from PRTs in Afghanistan.
- Start-up of the PRT program in Iraq has been troubled by interagency differences over funding, staffing, and administrative support and by the overriding challenge of providing security. Embedding the new PRTs with BCTs should help overcome many of these problems.
- Despite the problems, PRTs provide a U.S. civilian presence in areas that would not be served otherwise. Participants in PRTs believe they are having a positive effect.

### Background

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made an unannounced trip to Mosul on November 11, 2005, to inaugurate the first PRT in Iraq. The secretary said these new entities would "marry our economic, military, and political people in teams to help local and provincial governments get the job done." PRTs in Iraq were modeled on similar groups operating in Afghanistan. The former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, was credited with bringing the idea for PRTs from his previous assignment in Kabul. In fact, PRTs in Afghanistan bore little resemblance to those in Iraq.

U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan were commanded by an Army lieutenant colonel and composed entirely of military personnel, with the exception of single representatives from

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the State Department, USAID, and the Agriculture Department. Each PRT comprised two Army civil affairs teams of four soldiers each. One team was responsible for building small, quick-impact development projects using local contractors; the other ran the PRT civil military operations center (CMOC), which coordinated activities with the UN and NGOs. A U.S. Army National Guard platoon provided protection. The U.S. government established PRTs and then turned them over to coalition partners. All PRTs in Afghanistan are now subordinated to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and managed by NATO member states and coalition partners.

PRTs established during 2006 in Iraq were led by a senior State Department official and composed primarily of civilian personnel. The first three of a total of ten PRTs were established at Mosul, Kirkuk, and Hilla through existing regional embassy offices (REOs), the functional equivalents of U.S. consulates. These PRTs included representatives from the State, Justice, and Agriculture Departments and USAID, a USAID commercial-contract firm, plus Army civil affairs teams and other military personnel. U.S. military forces or commercial contractors provided security. PRTs provide security for U.S. assistance programs outside Baghdad.

President Bush announced an expansion of the PRT program on January 10, 2007, to help accelerate Iraq's transition to self-reliance. As part of the president's "New Way Forward," the new PRTs are to bolster moderates, promote reconciliation, support counterinsurgency operations, foster development, and build the capacity of Iraqi government officials to perform their duties. New PRTs will work at the city, district, and neighborhood level. The goal is to create areas where moderates will have political space to operate and violent extremists can be brought under control. The emphasis is on shaping the political environment rather than building infrastructure. Under the president's plan, the number of PRTs will double to twenty. Six new PRTs will be embedded with BCTs in Baghdad, three with BCTs in Anbar Province, and one with a BCT in Babil.

The teams will be established in stages. First, small teams composed of a total of forty representatives from the State and Defense Departments and USAID, plus cultural advisers provided by the Defense Department, will join the BCTs to conduct assessments and develop plans for future operations. These joint management teams will undergo pre-deployment training together and deploy in March. In the second phase, 140 specialists will join the advanced teams; a final phase will bring in 142 more staff. Of the civilian positions in the new PRTs, about 110 will be filled initially by military personnel called up from the National Guard and Army Reserve or recruited directly by the Defense Department.

The State Department will provide nineteen foreign service officers but will not be able to provide the other civilian personnel until Congress approves funding in the 2007 Iraq supplemental appropriation. At that point the State Department will recruit contractors with expertise in city management, business development, agribusiness, and other skills. Total staff will increase by 322. The State Department requested \$538 million in funding from the Iraq supplemental budget for the project. The new teams will be operational by June 1, 2007.

Under current plans, the BCT and PRT will be one team, which will receive guidance from both the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad and the commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I). Within the PRT, the BCT commander will take the lead on issues related to security and movement. The PRT leader from the State Department will have responsibility for political and economic issues. The mix of personnel will depend on the skills needed in the brigade's area of operation. Recruitment will emphasize intangibles such as the ability to work in a challenging environment and to live and operate in close quarters, in addition to expertise and availability.

The BCT will provide security, life support, and operational support for the PRT. In practice, civilian PRT members will be subject to Defense Department security regulations, less restrictive than those the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security imposed on the U.S. Embassy and the original PRTs. This will make it easier for civilian PRT members to work "outside the wire" and have increased contact with Iraqis. It will, however, involve

additional risks and the possibility of civilian casualties. The Defense Department will pay for security and life support. Each embedded PRT will receive \$20 million in project funds, up to a total of \$400 million. None of the new PRTs will involve coalition partners.

## Original Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq

The new embedded PRTs will differ significantly from the first ten PRTs established in Iraq. In these new teams efforts have been made to overcome problems encountered in the start-up phase of the PRT program. According to their official mission statement in the PRT handbook (November 2006), the original teams were to “assist Iraq’s provincial governments with developing a transparent and sustained capacity to govern, promoting increased security and rule of law, promoting political and economic development, and providing provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.”

Beyond “building sustainable capacity,” a term that refers to the “transfer of skills and knowledge from Coalition Forces to the Iraqi people,” there is no formal agreement among government agencies in Washington about what the PRTs are to accomplish. Ambassador Khalilzad and Multinational Force Commander General George Casey issued an “initial instructions” telegram establishing the PRTs, but no Washington interagency-approved doctrine or concept of operations governed the first PRTs in Iraq. Nor are there agreed objectives, delineation of authority and responsibility between the civilian and military personnel plans, or job descriptions.

The State and Defense Departments agreed in November 2006 to a memorandum of understanding concerning the provision of security and funding of infrastructure, life support, communications, and operating costs for the ten original PRTs. The agreement ended a prolonged interagency dispute that delayed the start-up and hampered the operation of PRTs, particularly those located on U.S. military forward operating bases (FOBs). During the first year, problems went beyond the provision of security to the lack of basic logistic support. Shortfalls included essential items such as office space, office furniture, telephones, office machines and computers, and even pens and paper.

Problems also arose with recruiting and training of civilian personnel. The State Department had trouble finding volunteers, particularly among essential mid-level officers with regional experience and language skills. The State Department Foreign Service Institute is offering the first predeployment training program for PRT personnel in March 2007. No specific training program previously existed for prospective PRT personnel, despite the fact that serving in a civilian-military unit under wartime conditions is a unique assignment for State Department and other civilian staff. There is an orientation course for all U.S. government employees going to Iraq.

The U.S. Embassy National Coordination Team (NCT), a part of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO), is responsible for PRTs in Iraq. The NCT coordinates PRT activities and provides administrative support, including all functions relating to civilian personnel. The MNF-I provides military personnel and supports PRTs operating from U.S. military bases. In practice the first ten PRTs had considerable latitude in determining their own priorities and method of operation, based on local conditions, available resources, logistic support, and personalities. This allowed for flexibility but also required PRT leaders to improvise.

Lack of established goals and information on completed projects makes it difficult to determine whether PRTs are achieving success, or whether better results would be obtained with another approach. Although it takes the interagency lead, the State Department has not yet done an assessment to determine if PRTs are achieving their purpose.

PRTs do provide a secure platform for U.S. operations outside Baghdad. With courage and determination PRT personnel are providing assistance to Iraqis who would not be

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served otherwise. Those serving in PRTs believe they are making important contributions despite the frustration inherent in beginning a new enterprise.

## **The PRTs in Operation**

Before the president's speech in January 2007, ten PRTs were operating in Iraq. The United States led seven, and coalition partners Britain, Italy, and South Korea led three. PRTs resided at either an REO or a military FOB, where the host installation provided force protection. The original plan for PRTs called for several future teams to be located at a single FOB that would serve as a regional hub of operations. A list of the first ten PRTs and their location is in Table 1.

This report does not comment on the three PRTs run by coalition partners, which differ significantly from their U.S. counterparts and from one another. All have a common objective, however: to expand the central Iraqi government's authority to all areas of the country and improve the ability of provincial authorities to deliver essential services.

### ***The U.S. Model***

The first ten PRTs in Iraq were small civilian-military organizations. According to the U.S. model, PRTs had sixty to ninety personnel; currently the largest PRT, in Baghdad, has seventy-five members. The numbers include up to thirty locally employed Iraqi staff. PRTs are intended to have the following complement of personnel:

- PRT Team Leader: State Department foreign service officer
- Deputy Team Leader: Army lieutenant colonel and staff
- Multinational Force Iraq Liaison Officer: U.S. military officer
- Rule of law Coordinator: Justice Department officer
- Provincial Action Officer: State Department officer
- Public Diplomacy Officer: State Department officer
- Agricultural Advisor: Agriculture Department official
- Development Officer: USAID representative
- Engineer: Gulf Region Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative
- Governance Team: RTI International, Inc. (USAID contractor)
- Bilingual Bicultural Adviser: Civilian contractor
- U.S. Army Reconstruction Team: Army civil affairs soldiers
- Military Movement Team or Protective Security Detail: U.S. military or contract security force.

A model PRT would have the following complement of personnel: State Department, six; senior U.S. military officers and staff, three; U.S. Army civil affairs soldiers, twenty; Agriculture Department, one; Justice Department, one; RTI International, three; USAID, two; and a military or contract security force of indeterminate size, depending on local conditions. Most PRTs lack their full complement of personnel, however, and there are time gaps between assignments. Absence of key staff reduces the PRTs' effectiveness and places additional burdens on those who are present.

In practice the size and composition of PRTs has varied based on maturity, local circumstances, and the capacity of U.S. agencies to provide personnel. Because the State Department has experienced difficulty in recruiting, particularly among senior foreign service officers, it has been forced to rely on junior officers and retirees. Currently 82 percent of PRT-related State Department assignments have been filled.

USAID has experienced similar recruiting problems, filling only 60 percent of its slots even while relying on contractors. Civilian and military staff have a high rate of turnover.

***Absence of key staff reduces the PRTs' effectiveness and places additional burdens on those who are present.***

Civilians normally serve twelve months, while civil affairs and other soldiers may serve from six to nine months. Changes in personnel often result in changes in PRT objectives and programs. New arrivals seldom overlap with their predecessors and are left to devise their own programs, drawing on their own expertise. This results in program stops and starts, which expend time and resources and cause confusion or worse among Iraqis when programs are abandoned in favor of new priorities.

### **Staff Functions**

PRTs operations differ depending upon location, personnel, environment, and circumstances. In general, however, staff members assigned to PRTs serve the following functions:

**Team Leader:** A senior U.S. foreign service officer, the team leader (TL) represents the State Department, provides leadership, and chairs the executive steering committee, which sets priorities and coordinates activities. The TL meets with the provincial governor, the provincial council, mayors, tribal elders, and religious figures and is the primary contact with the national coordinating team and other officials in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The TL is responsible for relations with the host institution and for ensuring that logistic and administrative arrangements are working properly. The TL's personality and experience strongly influence the PRT's objectives, activities, and success. As a civilian the TL does not command the PRT's military personnel, who remain subordinate to the commander of MNF-I.

**Deputy Team Leader (DTL):** Normally an Army lieutenant colonel, the DTL serves as the PRT chief of staff and executive officer, managing daily operations, coordinating schedules, and liaising with the FOB commander on logistics, transportation, and security. The DTL is the senior representative of the commander, MNF-I, and approves security for PRT convoys and offsite operations. The personal relationship between the DTL and the FOB commander strongly affects PRT operations. When these two share a previous friendship or service affiliation, PRTs report receiving better logistical and transportation support and can conduct operations effectively.

**MNF-I Liaison Officer (LNO):** A senior military officer, the LNO coordinates PRT activities with the division and FOB commander. These include activities related to intelligence, route security, communication, and emergency response in case of attacks on convoys. The LNO tracks PRT movements and coordinates with other U.S. military units in the area of operations.

**Rule of Law Coordinator (ROLC):** A Department of Justice official, the ROLC monitors and reports on the Iraqi judicial system and promotes access to justice for Iraqi citizens. The ROLC leads the ROL team, which includes civil affairs soldiers and Iraqi personnel, visits judicial, police, and corrections officials and reports on these conversations and local conditions to the U.S. Embassy. The ROLC encourages the embassy to respond to Iraqi problems and provides advice and limited training to Iraqis. The program emphasizes improvement of court administration, case management, protection of judicial personnel, training of judges, and promotion of legal education. ROL officers meet with corrections officials and monitor and report on prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners. PRTs have no project funding for ROL. The Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I) manages training and assistance for police, courts, and prisons without reference to the PRTs.

**Provincial Action Officer (PAO):** A State Department foreign service officer, the PAO is the primary reporting officer. He meets frequently with local authorities and provides the embassy with daily reports on PRT activities, weekly summaries, analysis of local political and economic developments, and reports on meetings with local officials and private citizens. Political and economic reporting by State Department officers in PRTs is valued because it provides firsthand information on conditions outside the Green Zone. The PAO assists others in the PRT with promoting local governance.

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**Public Diplomacy Officer (PDO):** A State Department foreign service officer, the PDO is responsible for press relations, public affairs programming, and public outreach through meetings at the PRT with local officials and escorting visitors to the PRT and its area of operations.

**Agricultural Adviser (AGA):** A representative of the U.S. Agriculture Department, the AGA works with provincial authorities to develop agricultural assistance programs and promote agriculture-related industries. AGAs are volunteers recruited from all agencies of the Agricultural Department to serve one-year tours. These representatives are selected for their broad interests in all agriculture-related activities. However, USDA tries to match its personnel's specialties to the specific needs of each PRT.

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**Engineer (ENG):** A representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the ENG trains and mentors Iraqi engineers working on provincial development projects. The ENG assists the PRT Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee in conducting project assessments, designing scope-of-work statements for contracts with local companies, site supervision, and project management. The ENG advises the TL on reconstruction projects and development activities in the province.

**Development Officer (DO):** The USAID representative coordinates USAID assistance and training programs and works with provincial authorities to promote economic and infrastructure development. The DO coordinates development-related activities within the PRT and supervises locally hired USAID staff. The DO is usually a development specialist working under a personal services contract with USAID. The agency is working internally to obtain authority for the representative to participate in approving all USAID projects and coordinating all USAID activities within the province.

**Governance Team (RTI):** Under a USAID contract, RTI International provides a three-person team that offers training and technical advice to members of provincial councils and provincial administrators to improve the operation, efficiency, and effectiveness of provincial governments. The team gives hands-on training in providing public services, finance, accounting, and personnel management. RTI International personnel take guidance from the USAID representative but function under a national contract administered from the embassy in Baghdad. RTI International maintains offices (nodes) in major cities that can provide additional specialists on request.

*RTI International personnel function under a national contract administered from the embassy in Baghdad.*

**Army Civil Affairs Team (CA):** The largest component of the PRT, Army civil affairs soldiers perform tasks across the spectrum of PRT operations. As reservists on temporary duty, CA soldiers represent a broad range of civilian occupations. PRTs make special efforts to use these personnel in areas where their civilian specialties apply. For example, a CA reservist who is a police officer in civilian life will be assigned to the PRT's Rule of Law Team. Because of recruiting shortfalls in civilian agencies, CA soldiers often substitute for civilian staff members, regardless of whether they possess the necessary skills and expertise. This practice reduces the effectiveness of the PRTs, despite the hard work and dedication of the soldiers involved.

**Bilingual Bicultural Adviser (BCA):** Normally an Iraqi expatriate with U.S. or coalition citizenship under contract to the Defense Department, the BCA serves as a primary contact with provincial government officials and local citizens. Advisers must have at least a BA degree and speak both English and Arabic. They also advise other PRT members on Iraqi culture, politics, and social issues.

### **Operations**

PRTs reside at FOBs and operate within the battle space of a BCT. They rely upon these "maneuver units" for security, transport, and logistics. Under an agreement between the U.S. Embassy and MNF-I, the BCT must provide enough military assets to enable three simultaneous convoy movements for PRT personnel. Each convoy must include three armored HMVs with crew-served weapons and eight shooters. Requests for movements "outside the wire" must be given 48 hours in advance. Failure of the BCT to provide

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transport on a timely basis can immobilize PRT personnel and prevent them from meeting with Iraqi officials.

Similarly, BCT failure to provide life support and work-related logistical support can stifle PRT activity. PRT participants report that they have spent an inordinate amount of time dealing with administrative and support issues. Since many Iraq PRTs are in the critical start-up phase, the efficient provision of administrative and logistic support is particularly important. Until very recently PRTs did not have an operating budget, and the absence of agreed support arrangements between the State and Defense Departments meant that PRTs had to negotiate with FOB military commanders for everything from batteries to living accommodations. Sometimes PRTs were so involved in internal administration and organization that they had little time to deal with the Iraqis. Now that the State Department will provide PRTs with a budget for administration and operations, PRTs will be able to pay the military for equipment and accommodations, which should improve cooperation and provision of services.

### ***Essential Functions***

According to President Bush, PRTs help “local Iraqi communities pursue reconciliation, strengthen the moderates, and speed the transition to Iraqi self-reliance.” To accomplish this mission, PRTs concentrate on three essential functions: governance, security, and reconstruction.

**Governance:** To date, the primary focus of PRTs in Iraq has been to improve the ability of provincial governments to provide democratic governance and essential services. Improving provincial government is particularly important given the decentralization of authority initiated by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Under Saddam Hussein, provincial officials received detailed direction from Baghdad. In the new order, provincial officials are expected to take initiatives without direct guidance from Baghdad.

Training and technical assistance is provided by a three-person team of civilian specialists employed by RTI International, which has worked under a USAID contract in Iraq since April 2003. The RTI program seeks to improve the efficiency of provincial government by providing policy analysis, training, and technical assistance to national ministries, their provincial representatives, provincial governors, and provincial councils. RTI specialists work directly with provincial officials to increase their competence. For example, they assist provincial council members to conduct meetings, develop budgets, and exercise oversight of provincial government activities. RTI experts also encourage transparency and popular participation by working with citizens’ and community organizations, hosting conferences, and promoting public forums.

Each RTI team is composed of experts in local government, financial management, and municipal planning. Some 60–70 percent of RTI’s staff is not American; most come from regional countries and include fifteen Iraqi professionals. Additional RTI experts are on call from the company’s regional offices. All RTI advisers speak Arabic and have extensive professional experience in their areas of expertise. Training programs are based on professionally developed modules and are delivered in Arabic, often by RTI-trained Iraqi instructors. Training and technical assistance programs stress practical applications. Areas of focus include computers, planning, public administration, and provision of public services.

The overall absence of security in Iraq negatively affects all aspects of PRT operations, but it has a particularly negative impact on efforts to develop effective local government. Provincial governors and other senior officials are subject to intimidation and assassination. Iraqi provincial councils often are afraid to meet, and provincial-level ministry representatives often are reluctant to attend work because of security concerns. In conflicted areas, meetings between PRT personnel and Iraqi officials occur infrequently or not at all. Iraqis are often unwilling to be seen with Americans or other foreigners or to visit U.S. military installations. PRT civilian personnel may be restricted to base during security alerts or may fear endangering their Iraqi counterparts if they are seen together. Cell

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***All RTI advisers speak Arabic and have extensive professional experience in their areas of expertise.***

***PRTs do not conduct military operations, nor do they assist Iraqi military forces.***

phones, e-mail and out-of-country meetings are used, but they are no substitute for daily contact and the opportunity to monitor and assist Iraqis in resolving problems.

**Security:** The location of PRTs throughout Iraq and movement of their personnel with heavily armed military escorts contributes to the overall security presence and has a reassuring affect on people in the areas where they operate. However, PRTs do not conduct military operations, nor do they assist Iraqi military forces. The only security role assigned to PRTs is force protection through provision of armored vehicles and soldiers to escort PRT personnel to meetings with Iraqi officials. Under an agreement with the State Department, U.S. military personnel assigned to escort civilian PRT members are to receive training in providing VIP protection, but soldiers may be uncertain about their responsibilities. In previous cases soldiers escorting PRT civilians have stood and fought when attacked rather than rushing their charges to safety. Or soldiers escorting PRT personnel combined these missions with scouting patrols to determine if insurgents were active in the area.

Differences over the appropriate reaction of military escorts have been part of a larger debate between the State and Defense Departments over whether to use military or contract guards to provide security and who should pay. Failure to resolve this dispute delayed the deployment of PRTs and has limited their effectiveness. After prolonged controversy, the Defense Department agreed that PRTs located at FOBs would receive military escorts. The State Department requested that the military provide dedicated escort units, noting that arranging for escorts on an ad hoc basis involved inevitable delays and adjustment of schedules. The Defense Department countered that dedicated escorts tie down military personnel and offered to organize escort details from available troops.

For U.S. personnel assigned to coalition-led PRTs the problem of escort security is even greater. The U.S. Embassy has ruled that movement security provided by coalition partners does not meet U.S. standards. Therefore U.S. personnel generally are unable to leave their bases unless they can make special arrangements with nearby U.S. forces. The State Department has agreed to hire contract security firms to protect these embedded U.S. teams, but the cost is prohibitive.

**Reconstruction:** The security situation places real limits on the ability of PRT personnel to promote economic development by counseling Iraqi officials, encouraging local leaders and business owners, and motivating outside investors. The USAID representative has primary responsibility for developing the PRT's economic development work plan, which should include all PRT assistance projects. PRTs have stressed construction of infrastructure including schools, clinics, community centers, and government buildings. They also have focused on developing human capacity through training and advisory programs.

Each PRT is provided with \$10 million in U.S. military Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) funding and receives project funds from USAID programs. CERP funds and funds for micro-credit projects will increase under the plan the president announced in January 2007. Although U.S. and other sources of outside funding are important, billions of dollars from the Iraqi government budget fund most projects. PRTs helped encourage the central ministries in Baghdad to distribute funds to their provincial representatives for project implementation.

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Central to the process of encouraging economic progress is the role of the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committees (PRDC), which prioritize provincial development projects and ensure they receive funding. PRDCs predate the creation of PRTs. Members include the USAID representative, civil affairs soldiers, other PRT members, and Iraqi officials. PRDCs develop a list of potential projects after consultation with the national ministries, provincial authorities, and local citizens. The objective is to ensure that projects are coordinated with both the national and provincial development plans. PRDCs examine possible funding sources and determine how project funding will be provided.

Working with the PRDC, the PRT provincial program manager (a State Department employee) reviews projects to determine whether they fall within guidelines for project funding. The PRT engineer provides a technical review of construction projects to determine feasibility. When PRDC deliberations are complete, the list of projects is presented



to the provincial council for approval, usually in a public forum. After further review, the list goes to the national coordinating team in Baghdad, which circulates the project list for additional review and arranges for funding in priority order.

After helping coordinate project selection, PRTs have only limited involvement in project implementation. USAID representatives cannot administer USAID contracts and are limited to monitoring local projects and reporting on their status to USAID contract officers in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. USDA hopes to contribute to the PRT development effort but is launching a nationwide agricultural development program administered by a consortium of American universities. The first USDA/PRT agricultural adviser, a rural credit expert, arrived at post in December 2006. USDA is now recruiting a second adviser; IRMO will hire four additional agricultural specialists. USDA has no specific PRT-related program and has received little guidance about what is expected of its personnel. It is not able to provide its representative with project funding.

**Funding:** PRT project funding comes primarily from CERP, the Economic Support Fund, the Development Fund for Iraq, and the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund. FY06 PRT program funds totaled \$470 million. The FY07 security and operations budget included roughly \$230 million for security; \$20 million for infrastructure, logistics, and operations; and \$12 million for IT, all from the FY06 supplemental appropriation.

### ***Future Prospects***

Embedding the ten new PRTs in BCTs should resolve many of the administrative, logistic, security, and funding problems experienced by the first ten PRTs in Iraq. It remains to be seen, however, whether the U.S. government can meet the ambitious schedule for establishing the PRTs, given the deteriorating security situation and growing opposition in Congress to the war. While activating reservists with the necessary civilian skills provides a quick solution, it also will be difficult for the State Department and other civilian agencies to provide personnel. Currently the State Department can fill only 83 percent of all foreign service positions; USAID has only 1,000 foreign service officers available worldwide. Civilian government employees are understandably reluctant to accept non-traditional jobs, endure hardships, and work in high-risk environments, especially if their role is uncertain and their time is spent struggling with start-up life support and bureaucratic problems.

None of the first ten PRTs will be moved or closed. There are questions, however, concerning the future of the original group, which will remain under State Department leadership. Most PRTs in Iraq are less than a year old, and efforts are under way to institutionalize operations. It is uncertain whether the first group of PRTs will produce meaningful and measurable results. Despite their vaguely defined mission, limited resources, and lack of measurable progress, the State Department believes they are making a useful contribution. This sense of optimism concerning the PRTs' potential was responsible for the State Department obtaining Congressional approval for an extension of the PRT mandate through FY2008.

Traditional U.S. government institutions (consulates) are supposed to replace PRTs over time, as Iraq's capacity for self-government improves. In the current security environment, it is difficult to see how this objective can be achieved in the foreseeable future. It is also difficult to see how PRT operations can continue if the U.S. reduces its military presence or withdraws from certain areas.

Without an infrastructure of U.S. military bases to provide logistic support and security, it would be impossible for PRTs to operate in conflicted areas of Iraq. The State Department would have to find an affordable and effective means of providing safe housing and staff travel at distant and dangerous locations. This would require the State Department to contract for security and conduct operations in combat zones, both of which are beyond its current competence and available funding.

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***Embedding the ten new PRTs in BCTs should resolve many of the problems experienced by the first ten PRTs in Iraq.***

***The State Department obtained Congressional approval for an extension of the PRT mandate through FY2008.***

## Recommendations

1. Operating in a war zone is not a State Department core competency, so the military should take the lead. Since ten of twenty PRTs will be embedded with the military, it seems reasonable to place the U.S. military in charge of all PRTs in Iraq, as in Afghanistan. None of the primary PRT functions—governance, security, and reconstruction—is a State Department competency. Nor is the State Department normally required to operate from geographically dispersed and heavily fortified bases in a war zone.

In Afghanistan PRTs are led by U.S. military officers. The State Department and other civilian agencies have an essential role, but military leadership provides unity of command. Putting the State Department in charge of PRTs in Iraq led to turf wars and raised questions about government security, funding, and administrative support that delayed implementation. To improve efficiency and ensure coordination it would be preferable to assign PRT leadership to the U.S. military, especially for PRTs that are embedded or operate from U.S. military bases.

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2. Improvisation should be replaced with an agreed concept of operations. After a period of experimentation, it is time to move beyond broadly stated objectives to an established concept of operations and a clear set of guidelines for all PRTs in Iraq. This effort must include a clear delineation of civil-military command authority within PRTs, including the supervision of contractors. U.S. government agencies in Washington should develop an agreed concept of operations and operational guidelines. These documents should be coordinated with U.S. authorities in Iraq and the Iraqi government, so they are consistent with Iraqi understandings of the role the United States will play in strengthening provincial and local governments. These measures should also be coordinated with our coalition partners so they are consistent with the operational concepts that govern coalition PRTs.
3. Priority assignments and specialized training should replace volunteering and on-the-job learning. PRTs operate in a highly stressful, unorthodox, and dangerous work environment for civilian and military personnel. Given the State Department's important role, it must prioritize PRT assignments so that all positions are filled with officers who have the proper rank and experience. This applies equally to USAID and other civilian agencies.

Utilizing retirees, junior officers, or civil affairs soldiers as substitutes for civilian experts limits competence and reduces effectiveness. Contractors, even those with relevant expertise, cannot substitute for federal employees who understand how their home agencies function and what is required to influence outcomes and deliver project results. Junior officers bring courage, energy, and enthusiasm, but it is impossible for them to have the same impact as veteran government employees, particularly those with language skills and social and cultural expertise.

***Post-conflict intervention is not a game for amateurs.***

Post-conflict intervention is not a game for amateurs. It is important to end the practice of using civil affairs soldiers to fill civilian vacancies where highly skilled civilians are required. A reservist who teaches high school in civilian life is not qualified to advise on establishing the school system for a province. Beyond adequate numbers, rank, experience, and expertise, those selected for these challenging assignments need mission-specific training before their departure from Washington.

The new one-week PRT training course is a start, but longer and more comprehensive training programs should be developed with the assistance of all participating agencies. Those deploying at the same time should take the training together, so that relationships form before people arrive at post and begin operating under difficult conditions. It is also important that personnel receive appropriate rewards for their service in terms of appropriate promotions and favorable onward assignments.

4. Life support should be an administrative function rather than a time-consuming aspect of PRT operations. Outside Baghdad, PRT participants report spending much

of their time dealing with life support issues and struggling with shortages of work-related equipment and services. Many of these problems resulted from bureaucratic turf fights in Washington. Now that they have been resolved, it is vital that the State and Defense Departments ensure implementation of their new agreements on PRT support. In the long term it is necessary to determine whether the State Department can conduct expeditionary operations in hostile environments without the Defense Department providing most of the personnel, plus security, transportation, communications, and logistics.

5. PRT advisers must have frequent personal contact with Iraqis. In a traditional society where personal relationships are all-important, it is imperative to give priority to maximizing access for PRT members to the Iraqis they have been sent to advise. Removing security requirements for Americans is part of the answer, but consideration should be given to utilizing citizens of other countries and Iraqis as well. Provincial support teams composed of Iraqis operate effectively in some areas, remaining in place to provide follow-up when U.S. personnel return to base. Thought should be given to additional alternatives beyond relying on cell phones, television conferences, and other technological fixes.
6. An effective public information program should replace the current silence concerning PRT accomplishments. Despite the importance of public support for U.S. efforts in Iraq, little information is publicly available about PRTs and their achievements. Basic facts, such as the number of PRT development projects or training programs completed, are difficult to obtain. Only recently have PRTs received attention in the massive amount of reporting by U.S. media on the Iraq war. Even inside the U.S. government, understanding is limited of the manner in which PRTs operate and what they have accomplished.

Since the consolidation of the U.S. Information Agency within the State Department there is a critical shortage of information officers skilled in public diplomacy. Most PRTs do not have an effective public information or public affairs program. It is unlikely that knowledge about PRTs extends beyond provincial officials and influential citizens who have direct contact with PRT personnel. Beyond the resident Iraqi-American cultural adviser and the RTI governance team, few PRT members speak Arabic. PRT members interact with Iraqis through interpreters of uneven ability with the inevitable possibilities of misunderstanding.

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**Table 1. Locations of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, February 2007**

Name	Location
Ninawa (Mosul)	FOB Marez
Ta'Mim (Kirkuk)	Kirkuk Regional Air Base
Salah al-Din (Tikrit)	Camp Speicher
Diyala (Baquba)	FOB Warhorse
Basra (Basra/U.K.)	Basra Air Station
Dhi Qar (Nasiriyah/Italy)	Camp Adder
Erbil (Erbil/S. Korea)	Camp Zaytun
Baghdad	Freedom Bldg., International Zone. 6 PRTs will be embedded with BCTs
Anbar (Ramadi)	Camp Blue Diamond. 3 PRTs will be embedded with BCTs
Babil (Hilla)	Hilla REO. 1 PRT will be embedded With a BCT.

**Note:** Babil was planned as a PRT hub that would serve Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniya, and Wasit; Erbil as a hub for Dahu and Sulaymaniyah.

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## Conclusion

With the takeover of most PRTs in Afghanistan by coalition partners of the ISAF, organizational models have proliferated. There are also now two distinct types in Iraq. PRTs have become part of the U.S. and NATO response to the challenges of nation building in post-conflict interventions. The term “PRT” has become something of a brand name for a civil-military organization operating in a war zone. This makes it difficult to describe how PRTs are structured or discuss their operations. It remains important, however, to monitor those operations and evaluate their performance. If PRTs are part of “the way forward,” as President Bush has said, then we must be certain they are configured to achieve their objectives.

## Of Related Interest

A number of other publications from the United States Institute of Peace examine issues related to Iraq and Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

### *Recent Institute reports include*

- *Civilians Will Make the Difference in Iraq*, by Daniel Serwer (USIPeace Briefing, February 2007).
- *Policing Iraq: Protecting Iraqis from Criminal Violence*, by Robert Perito (USIPeace Briefing, June 2006).
- *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified*, by Robert Perito (Special Report, October 2005).



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