



## Briefing on Reconstruction Progress in Iraq

**Kristin Hagerstrom, Ramadi Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader**

**John Jones, Diyala Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader; John Smith, Baghdad 7 Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader**

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**MR. GALLEGOS:** Good afternoon. Appreciate your attendance this afternoon. As you all know by now, the President met with and participated in a digital videoconference this afternoon with the Secretary of State and Ambassador Ryan Crocker, our Ambassador in Baghdad, Iraq, to discuss Provincial Reconstruction Team efforts. We're lucky today to have three Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders who are here with us to share their stories and to respond to questions.

I'll first introduce them, I'll give them each an opportunity to tell you about themselves and the work that they've been able to do over the last several months in Iraq, and then we'll open it for Q's and A's. You can direct your questions to any of the three that you wish.

We have with us today John Smith, who is the leader of ePRT Baghdad 7. We have John Melvin Jones, who is the leader of our PRT in Diyala. And then we have Kristin Hagerstrom, who is our PRT leader in Anbar Province.

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** ePRT Ramadi.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** ePRT Ramadi. Thank you for the correction.

And with that we'll have John Smith begin.

**MR. SMITH:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today and share some good news and that about Baghdad 7. I guess that really doesn't mean anything logistic-wise and that. Essentially my area of operation is southern Baghdad. It's flanked by the Tigris River on the east and then Anbar Province and that on the west. And we cover the areas of Al Buayatha, Arab Jabour, Hawr Rajab, Adwaniya and Madarya.

I'm an Embedded PRT and what that means is we're embedded with the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, and that the Commander being Colonel Ferrell. They're an outstanding group. They're part of the surge mission and that. I've been in theater about three months on this tour. Previous tour I was Deputy Director of INL handling the police mission and corrections. And during this past three months as security has presented itself and that, some pretty tremendous things have taken place over on the eastern portion of our areas particularly and that in Al Buayatha and Arab Jabour and that. The Colonel -- Colonel Adgie, who is the Battalion Commander there and that, has done a tremendous job working closely with him and his team and that.

We've been able to do many projects related to improving the potable water condition as well as, since this is the Tigris, that's the main artery for this farming community. This is a very small community and that. You figure you've got 20- to 40,000 people in our area of operation, and farming is their income and that. So with the canals, it's important, you know, that they're cleared, cleaned, so that, you know, it can irrigate the crops all the way across our area all the way into an area closer to the Euphrates. In addition and that, we've formed and rebuilt one of the houses along the Tigris and turned it into a governance center. Now, what that's done for the area is it's become that community meeting place. From that, what we've started is a neighborhood council, which is the first step of governance in our area, and connecting them with the higher authorities within the area.

Ours is a unique area in the sense that we do not have an active district qada or nahia or representative in that, and that's only because of the battle space layout of it. So our northern area and that works out of the Rashid District and one of the unique things that has transpired, you know, from the formulating of the fledgling council is that through the district chairman in Rashid and that, and note that he is Shia and that, he came to the governance center and met with our predominantly Sunni area and that in our fledgling council. And at that point in time, you saw the connectivity and the mentorship starting to take place from this Shia, you know, government official, chairman, and bonding with the Sunni fledgling council and their chairman and that. And to this day and that, that chairman drives into that area which at one point in time and that was unheard of, and that five months ago that would have never happened. You know, that's the reputation that the area had. But now what you see is not only with him coming in, you have many -- the ministries' representatives and that for essential services that are freely coming into the area and you see, you know, many projects in that related to the potable water and the irrigation as well as electricity and that being led by the ministry representatives and the Rashid district, you know, in or out of the Baghdad Province. And so there's a lot of positive things there.

The farmer's union -- and I have to give credit to my USDA representative that's on my team and that he has done an outstanding job and that in formulating a brand new farmer's union in that area, and that -- which is critical and they're at the phases now where they've done a seed distribution and that where, you know, as a farmer's union and that it afford -- gives the farmers the affordable feed, seed and the things that they need to get back into business and that all is a building block toward, you know, giving employment and that to those that are currently involved with the CLC and also some of the other work initiatives being sponsored in that area.

And so you know, with that, that kind of gives an overview of probably the highlighted area that we're working in, then we come over to Hawr Rajab where Hawr Rajab probably -- it's at the next stage. We do have a fledgling council. We do a lot of stuff there in Hawr Rajab with the women's school -- or girl's school, rather. And through that and through working with the Iraqi women in the community and that, you know, over the next month or so and that, we will have our start up of a women's program and that that'll be basically, you know, Iraqi women-run. And that -- because, you know, that's one of the key elements, you know, if you're going to have social change and interaction and that, is that you have got to address the women and meet their needs. And then through either, you know, healthcare, education and also information and that. So that is one of our focal points in our area as well. So with that, open it up for any questions.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Brian Bennett from *Time* magazine. Prime Minister Maliki has said that this next year he will be focusing his government on spending money, reconstructing Iraq -- Iraqi money, particularly in Baghdad. He pointed out that Chalabi is to be -- to deconflict between the different ministries in helping to get reconstruction moving inside Baghdad. Has that -- have you seen any of that impact or down the line maybe impact Baghdad 7 as far as the Iraqis being able to move more resources out to your area or any discussions, you know, in the future?

**MR. SMITH:** Well, you know, from what I've seen is that there's been a very positive movement in the provincial rural services committee and that from the provincial council and that -- and it's based on a series of meetings going around to the various areas. I'll be engaged with one as soon as I get back to Iraq that will -- you'll engage with the Arcata chairman, the nahia chairman and we'll meet with the rural services committee chairman and that. And we'll discuss, you know, projects, needs and that -- and then we'll have a broader based meeting in that there will actually be more local to our area.

**QUESTION:** Can I just follow up on that? What kind of resources would you like to see for Baghdad 7 coming from the Iraqi Government? I mean, is there some channels that can be greased?

**MR. SMITH:** Resources as far as funding?

**QUESTION:** Funding, construction contracts --

**MR. SMITH:** Because, you know, basically it's relationship building and that it's working directly, you know, with the Iraqis, with the Iraqi Government officials and that -- and you build a relationship there and you find out what is their game plan. You know, they do have a game plan on how to expand essential services and things of this nature and it's getting to the discussion levels and that -- out in the boondocks, per se, where I'm at and that on how that's trickling down. And little by little, this will be one of the pieces that connects that. So it opens up, you know, the outlying areas of Baghdad to those services.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** You talked about providing, if I heard you correctly, farmers with affordable seed and feed to get back into business. First of all, how much money are you dealing with? And are you giving them this or are you just giving -- making it available at reduced prices? I was a little confused -- the seed, the feed, the --

**MR. SMITH:** Oh, the seed. Okay, how the farmer's union works is it -- once it's gone through a process and it's recognized as a farmer's union, the Iraqi Government and that, you know, we'll sell the seed and that at a reduced rate. This initial seed distribution that was assisted, you know, through CERP funds.

**QUESTION:** How much?

**MR. SMITH:** I don't have the exact costs from --

**QUESTION:** Are we talking thousands of dollars?

**MR. SMITH:** Right.

**QUESTION:** Hundreds of thousands of dollars?

**MR. SMITH:** Thousands of dollars.

**QUESTION:** Before we get too far down the line --

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to ask, what are CERP funds?

**MR. SMITH:** CERP.

**QUESTION:** CERP.

**MR. SMITH:** CERP. Those are military funds that are available through the commander.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** At this point, I'd like to -- John Melvin Jones. We'll come back to questions and answers from John Smith.

**MR. SMITH:** Okay.

**MR. JONES:** Good afternoon. I'm John Jones. I'm the team leader at the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Diyala Province. I know a lot of you heard a lot about Diyala. Diyala itself is located approximately 50 miles northeast of Baghdad. It's the heart of the insurgency as we know it today. There are still ongoing major combat operations in the province. The eastern borders with Iran, in the north, it borders Salah ad Din and Sulimaniyah province in the south, Anbar and south central Baghdad itself.

We are a rather large team. We started in October 2006. We -- approximate -- we right now have approximately 38 civilian personnel along with a civil affairs company from the brigade that hosts us and that is the 4th brigade of the second infantry division. I've been on the ground since February of last year. From looking at the province today and remembering what it was when I first got there, we've made some major strides. We worked very closely with the province governor. He is a unique individual. He is a Shia governing a province that is about 70 percent Sunni. He has survived eight attempts on his life in the last two years. He has been a major element for us in terms of allowing the PRT to have access to all of the key actors in the province.

We have a number of our personnel from the PRT stationed in Baquba, which is the capital of the province. They are our governance team. They work directly on a daily basis with the governor and with the chairman of the provincial council.

Diyala Province is rather unique. It's sort of a -- I'd say a microcosm of the country itself. It is about 65 percent Sunni, about 20 percent Shia, 10 percent or 12 percent Kurds and then there is a mixture of other, Turkmen and a few other smaller people -- groups of people in the province.

There are approximately 1.6 million people in the province. The city of Baquba, which is the capital, is about 350,000. There are several major population centers. In the eastern part of the province, we have Balad Ruz and Khanaqin; in the north, Muqadiyah; and in the west, Al Khalis. Our job, again, is to work directly with the local provincial leadership, to teach and coach and mentor them in how they should, in fact, be running their province. One of the major problems that we have had is, of course, security.

We moved from forward operating base Warhorse where we physically located to Baquba six days per week. We do that in up-armored humvees and MRADs, sometimes in striker vehicles. In order for us to move about the province at all, we must always go in armored vehicles. We haven't lost anybody on our PRT. Our convoys get hit constantly. This is almost a weekly occurrence. We meet at the government center. Normally, we invite officials from the province to come to the government center to meet with us.

In terms of progress, we have been able to get up and running a Diyala operations center. This is a center in which we have the police and the military on ready -- call -- on standby to handle emergency problems. We also have a reconstruction operations center that we've established in the government center. This center processes and administers grants based on spending Iraqi money. We have pushed through or helped the government of the province push through their 2006, 2007 and 2008 budgets. We are working now on allocating monies through the 2006 budget and the 2007 budget for reconstruction projects that are ongoing in the province itself.

Problems? Security. We have a major establishment of al-Qaida in the Diyala river valley. The Diyala river runs from the Hamran Dam in the north until it intersects with the Tigris River just to the west of the capital city of Baquba. That area is honeycombed with palm groves, swamps, small villages, and it's a hotbed of insurgent activity. Most recently, you've seen the development of concerned local citizens. These have been groups of local citizens, Sunnis mainly, who have decided that they don't like

the way al-Qaida has been governing their community and they've come to the coalition forces and asked for assistance to fight al-Qaida.

We have seen a drop in violence in the last two months, mainly because of these people coming over to the coalition side. But by and large, our problems right now are, how do we have a security situation in place so that we can, in fact, carry out projects; how do we cooperate or get cooperation from the central government in Baghdad. That has been a major headache for us. If you look at the newspapers, you'll see that Diyala Province is literally out of money right now because the central government, the central bank, has not allocated funds for us for the last three months. We're fighting that battle through the Embassy in Baghdad. This is just an example of the neglect that we have from the central government in Baghdad. The Governor himself often goes, hat in hand, to the various ministries in Baghdad to seek their cooperation, and we assist him and the Embassy assists him in doing that. Cooperation is long on words and short on action. So maybe I'll stop there and let -- want to wait until the questions afterwards, or --

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Have any immediate questions?

**QUESTION:** Well, yeah. What would you attribute that to other than neglect?

**MR. JONES:** I think what you have is an instance where you have a predominantly Sunni province and a Shia central government. Some of it is incompetence. So I would attribute a lot of it to incompetence.

**QUESTION:** Local or national?

**MR. JONES:** Nationally. I think our local people are ready. I think they know what they need to do. They know what the problems are locally. They just can't get the cooperation from the central government.

**QUESTION:** And you said that the situation -- there had been major strides since you got there, and you got there in February '06?

**MR. JONES:** February of '07. I'm sorry.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, '07.

**MR. JONES:** This is '08. Sorry.

**QUESTION:** Yes. You said there'd been major strides. But if you're still not able to get out into the province without a convoy and every -- and you're taking -- and the convoys are getting hit all the time, you know, what's the improvement?

**MR. JONES:** I think our improvement is in formulating policy within the province, within the provincial government itself.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MR. JONES:** We have those pockets now. We have a media center, for example. We have an agricultural organization. These, unfortunately, have to meet in the city of Baquba for security reasons.

**QUESTION:** Right, okay. But you say you've helped -- the PRT has helped the provincial government create budgets for the last three -- two years?

**MR. JONES:** That's correct.

**QUESTION:** And then this coming year? But if you're not getting any money from Baghdad, what difference does it make if they have a budget or not?

**MR. JONES:** That's a good question. That's a very good question. I think we have the plan in place, and I think when we get the operational funds I think we can move forward. But before this, you must remember there were no plans in place.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** You said you've been working through the Embassy in Baghdad with regard to break the logjam.

**MR. JONES:** Right.

**QUESTION:** It's been almost a year now.

**MR. JONES:** It's baby steps.

**QUESTION:** Why is there no progress?

**MR. JONES:** Baby steps. We're making small progress. We're getting promises from the higher-ups and I think we're seeing some trickle-down. We're nowhere near where we wanted to be and nowhere near where it should be, but I think we're making small steps.

Yes, ma'am.

**QUESTION:** Do you have any doubt that there will continue to be enough funds for the concerned citizens groups? I mean, I think there's something like 150 million in -- from the U.S. budget and that the Iraqis have said they would put up the same amount. Is that enough? Will that last throughout the year? You know, is there any concern that these guys will stop being paid into 2008?

**MR. JONES:** I don't have any doubt. I know there is enough Iraqi money to cover the cost. But again, this is something that, as John said before, that the Iraqis have to pick up. They've got to step forward and pick this up. We should not be funding that right now. It'll come through. But I'm certain that there are enough funds to cover the costs.

Okay, thank you.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Okay, Kristin? And then they'll all be available for more questions.

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Hi, I'm Kristin Hagerstrom. I'm a Foreign Service officer and I'm in Ramadi, in an Embedded PRT in Ramadi. In Anbar Province, we have, in fact, three Embedded PRTs -- in western Anbar, in Fallujah and in Ramadi -- and then we have something called the PRT in -- Anbar PRT. Anbar PRT works provincial level. I work municipal level. I work in Ramadi, which happens to be the capital of Anbar.

I arrived there in April of last year. It was the week the last mortar actually came on to the forward operating base where I live. And when I arrived, Ramadi was pretty much destroyed by the fighting. And remember that Ramadi was the declared capital of al-Qaida, their -- the caliphate in Iraq. They controlled that city. They had controlled it and it was a hard fight getting them out. There was no infrastructure. There were, you know, when you have IEDs, you destroy whatever sewer and water systems you have. Electricity was down. But there were -- and I think it was some date in March after a lot of hard fighting, there wasn't a single shot fired in the entire city one day, and it just kept getting -- still pretty -- very low level of violence at this point. The firing we hear going on now tends to be celebratory, soccer matches and whatever.

So we arrived at that point and it was the point at which we were able to go out. And my team, we go out every day. I have a team of ten civilians, ten military and civilian mix, who work for me. We're embedded with the 1st Brigade 3ID Army, even though we're in Marine land. Anbar is Marines. But we have two battalions of Marines within this Army brigade, plus there are some Navy and some Air Force, so it's -- and State Department and AID. It's quite a mix.

I work from the grassroots so I'm working at the municipal level. We have a functioning municipal government. We have a mayor. We have a city council. And in fact, I attended the very -- the second meeting of the city council. The mayor had been by himself -- he was a -- came in appointed by the governor in February '07. And when I arrived in April, it was the second meeting of the city council. And the city council people -- the members -- are made up of the heads of the neighborhood councils, and we have 11 neighborhood councils around the city. And the city, by the way, when you talk about the municipal, it much more is like a county for us, I believe, than an actual city because it extends out into some pretty rural areas.

When I first started -- and it's one of the things that's been very gratifying is seeing the change, because the very first meeting I attended of the city council, the Ramadi City Council, was, I have to say, very coalition force dominated. Mostly uniforms in the room. And most of -- when the mayor was talking and the members of the city council, they were saying, "Hey, you know, Colonel Charlton, what are you going to do about this and what are you going to do about that?" You know, it's wonderful to see now that we actually sit in a council meeting -- and by the way, when I first arrived, I would sit at the table with them and the colonel, you know, the head of the brigade, the commander, would sit at the table. We don't sit at the table anymore. We're at the back of the room and sometimes we're not even in the room. Sometimes we're listening in with a translator and we're not even in there.

And it's very gratifying to see that things are no longer directed towards us saying, "What are you going to do?" It's much more the mayor saying, "Okay, here's the issue. What are we going to do about it?"

There is much more -- and this is just atmospheric -- much more of, instead of looking to coalition forces for funding, they're also talking about other funding sources, including the Government of Iraq. And I still remember the day and I think it was -- it was during a city council meeting where a representative of the Health Ministry said -- turned to coalition forces and said, "No thank you, we don't need your money, we have some Ministry of Health funding coming for this dental college, so we don't need it."

That's happening, that Iraqi money is coming in, and we've really been working with the municipal government. One thing we did -- you were talking about Dr. Chalabi and his efforts. He actually came in with a group to Ramadi about a month ago with some representatives of ministries and actually, a group of -- including from Diyala -- of Shia sheikhs and it was a big sheikh meeting. I just happened, or I was invited -- I wasn't a participant. I was watching, actually, it was very interesting, 10 Shia sheikhs. I think the most interesting part of it was the euphoria of these people having gotten in vehicles down in Diyala and Mesa and I don't know where -- they came from areas south, and they got to Baghdad and then they just drove to Ramadi. And you got the sense that maybe four years ago, that was a common occurrence to jump in the car on a Sunday afternoon and drive to Ramadi. It's only -- it's less than two hours out to drive to Ramadi and drive along the Euphrates and they were there.

We really worked with getting ties back up through the ministries for funds and they've been very successful. We had someone from the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works -- we got them to come to Ramadi. And it was very interesting for them to come and realize, oh, there isn't shooting going on; we actually can come back in here. And we've gone back up to Baghdad and when I say "we," I mean we're working along with people who work for the municipal government and we're sitting with them, but they're leading the conversation.

And we have gotten -- we've gotten commitments on -- and more than commitments -- we've had commitments on raising salaries with some municipal employees, on sewer-sucking trucks. We talk about these things, sewer-sucking trucks and trash compactors and they actually deliver. I mean, we see them. They've arrived and it's a wonderful, gratifying moment when that happens.

I have to tell you also about economics. When I first arrived in April, there wasn't a business open in town that I saw. I mean, we would drive through and there was nothing. It was bleak; you know, think Stalingrad post-World War II. A USAID program, their community stabilization program, came in and went into probably the worst parts of town and set up and they started -- and working along with us, with the brigade to identify which storefronts could be opened, what could open -- we know where the owner is and probably wants to open and if you remove their concertina wire, who could open their store. And working with them to give them grants and it's not -- and they didn't give them cash. What they give them is a store.

See, you came in one day and within 30 days, you know, you -- it was in-kind contributions and you had people fixing up their storefronts. And in the store, if you wanted a barber shop, if you wanted a butcher shop, a bakery, you know, some of the worst parts of town -- there are nurseries now, you can buy rosebushes. The stores are open. You have -- and it has a rebound effect. I mean, it's not only the ones who get the grants. It's the neighbors who are also there and things that we didn't have anything to do with in that sense of, we didn't fund this, but you look around and all of a sudden, there's a motorcycle shop there or there are internet cafes. People are responding and this is coming back and it's the Iraqi people doing this.

I wanted to talk about women's engagement because that's been very gratifying. We also have programs with widows. You have a large group of women, I don't know the number, don't ask me, who are solely supporting their families there. And we really -- we found that the most -- the more community-based you can be, the better. And we're working through these neighborhood councils to set up -- they usually set them up and then we help them with some of the funding for sewing machines and kitchens to do, you know, some processing of food, or computers. And you get a lot of bang out of that. You get women who can support their families after doing this.

And it was very good the first time that I had one of these local women leaders come back and say, "We just distributed our first" -- because they work it as a co-op, almost -- you know, "I just gave the women who are working in there \$150 each this month," and that's a good wage for -- in Ramadi and that was very gratifying. Another thing that we did was help them get together and have something -- I guess Ramadi, you know, pre-conflict was very much known for its poetry. And we had the women get together for a poetry event, just women reciting original poetry to each other and also, they did art exhibits at the same time. They did some of their arts and handicraft and I'm working, in fact, on a fine art exhibit right now trying to tie it in with the University of Anbar just to get these things back out there again.

We also did with the -- there is a four-year women's college in Ramadi. Once they graduate from the college, they then can teach from high school on up and we worked it -- you know, that had been closed by al-Qaida. It hadn't been operational for a couple of years and we went in and really worked with the municipal government to get some of the poorer girls -- to get them some stipends so that they could buy supplies and get transportation in.

I'm going back next week. I'm very excited about being there, about doing this. My tour is over in April, but I'm going to extend for a few more months in Baghdad just to help out some.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Questions?

**QUESTION:** I have a question for the three of you. I would like to know what proportion of the population has the electricity running and up in their house.

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Do you know, one of the problems we have is, we got probably from zero in Ramadi and this summer in Ramadi in August, we probably had the best electricity in all of Iraq and then we went bad because -- and it wasn't the lines. The lines were all up. It was the electric generation coming off the Haditha Dam and what happened was they got the 400 kV line -- kV lined up, reattached to Baghdad, so Baghdad was getting the electricity.

It's -- there's an electrical generation problem at this point, but you have local community-based, very small generators around town so, you know, you fly in Ramadi at night, it's lit up, so -- but it's not off the national grid at this point. And this is an issue that they're really dealing with at the provincial and the national level because it really is an issue of enough generation of electricity at this point.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MR. SMITH:** In our area, being rural as it is and as the security has increased and that, like over in Al Buayatha and Arab Jabour and that, the length of hours and that, that they do have electrical power and that has increased significantly and that to where, you know, they've got eight hours of power a day. Now you get over into the western part and that where, as things are progressing in Hawr Rajab and that, you're talking about, you know, four to six hours a day and that and then Ad Dawudiyah and that some of the other areas -- now, keep in mind, these are areas that are just now becoming secure. And as that -- and along with that in that meeting with the minister of electricity, their representative for the area in that, you know, as the security comes up, she's taking the issue back up through the governmental channels and that because that's where the power is regulated, you know, for our particular areas coming out of the city of Baghdad. And so you know, when I go back there this evening -- actually, I'll be back there in a couple of days, I'm hoping that in Ad Dawudiyah and that and Hawr Rajab that the power has increased there from the -- some of our initiatives, you know, over the last two or three weeks.

**MR. JONES:** In Diyala, I guess we're the odd man out. We get anywhere from two to four hours per day and that's in the main cities, Baquba and Balad Ruz maybe, Muqdadiah. By and large, the 400kV line that comes out of Baghdad never really reaches Diyala Province. There is a small line that comes out of Iran, but it only provides 70kV, as they call it, which means that it's very weak. And if you're connected to it, particularly in the cities like Balad Ruz and Baquba, you don't even have enough current coming into individual households to run a lamp. So it's very weak. And so if you fly over the province at night, you'll see some areas lit up. But they normally have their own generators like the hospital, for example.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** I have a question for Mr. Jones.

**MR. JONES:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Jones, there are people inside this building who think that -- shouldn't conduct diplomacy in a war zone. I was wondering what you think about that.

**MR. JONES:** That's something that we've all had to wrestle with. I think, you know, that's the place to conduct it. I mean, if it's secure enough, you have to have that fallback. You leave a vacuum and as we've seen in our province and I know in Anbar, particularly in Baghdad, it's going to be fueled by someone. So I think you need to have that gap filler and I think that's where the civilian diplomats come in, the developers come in and you have to have that. Otherwise I think this is a place, unlike any that we've dealt with before in our history, it will generate into chaos very quickly.

**QUESTION:** And based on your long experience in Iraq and elsewhere, when do you think it's going to come to pass that you won't have to go out in -- fully armored up?

**MR. JONES:** I have no -- I can't even hazard a guess. I know we all put our helmets on and our vests on and we --

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Actually, I would say that a lot of -- I don't know if I'm (inaudible), but some of -- we happen to go out and, also in armor and humvees, because that's what our vehicles are and Rhinos and whatever. But there are a lot of people working out there just with uparmored Suburbans and all that. So it's -- you want my prediction? Within Ramadi, within six months we would be able to move in armored Suburbans, yeah.

**QUESTION:** I just want to know what U.S. involvement and progress has been in rebuilding the energy infrastructure at power plants, refineries? Is there -- you know, she talked about electricity a minute ago, but could you just sort of describe?

**MR. SMITH:** Well, I don't really know. In our area we really don't have that much of involvement with that development that you see up north in the IZ.

**MR. JONES:** It's very basic --

**QUESTION:** Sir, can you come to the microphone, please?

**MR. JONES:** Oh. It's very basic in Diyala Province. For a period of time there, every time we would stand up a tower, it would get knocked down. And so it's one of those questions I think that would mean that we need to get the insurgents out of the area before we can really have a stable system in place, and that includes things like electric generation, protecting the oil refineries and portable water and this kind of thing. It's going to be a while. So until we can get security straight, we're not going to really have a system.

**QUESTION:** Is it -- is there U.S. involvement, though? I mean --

**MR. JONES:** Yes. There are CERP funds, there are U.S. dollars, there is -- there are a lot of Iranian dollars being put into this. They have their own engineers. They know their systems. They come out to see them. They make recommendations and we help them to implement them.

**QUESTION:** I've got a few questions for Mr. Jones and then one for all of you.

Mr. Jones, in Diyala, how much of a role are the Iranians playing at this rate, and how much of it is positive and how much of it is negative in Diyala? You mentioned they were doing something just now.

**MR. JONES:** You know, that's really sort of out of my lane. I think you need to really talk to the military guys about that. We don't see Iranians. We have heard stories, of course, from officials that things have been going bad because of Iranian influence. Personally, and for other members of the PRT, we haven't had any direct contact with Iranians.

**QUESTION:** Okay. I thought you mentioned just a minute ago that the Iranians were contributing --

**MR. JONES:** There's an electric generation plant in Iran that supplies a small amount of electricity to the province.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MR. JONES:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** All right. And what do you think is the risk of these -- what did you call them, cooperation councils or --

**MR. JONES:** Yeah. Concerned local citizens.

**QUESTION:** Concerned local citizens?

**MR. JONES:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** What is the risk of them turning into militias?

**MR. JONES:** I think it would depend on where they are and what the influences are. I know in Baquba, it has helped. It has cut down on the violence. There is some inter-militia fighting, but by and large it does not involve coalition forces getting involved. And I could say without a doubt that it has calmed the city of Baquba. There are other parts of the province which it hasn't worked as well yet, but I think they're aiming at that. And I think for us in and around Baquba, it's had a calming effect.

**QUESTION:** And where did you say the location of your PRT -- where you all located?

**MR. JONES:** We are at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, which is about 8 miles outside of the capital city of Baquba, north-northwest of Baquba on Route 2 that goes north into Kirkuk and that area.

**QUESTION:** And just for all of you, I mean, it does seem like the success of these missions is increasingly dependent on the willingness of the national Iraqi Government to cooperate, and that seems to be the dividing line between the two successful PRTs and the one that has been struggling more. And so what do you think it would take, what should the U.S. -- what can the U.S. do and, you know, what will it take to get the cooperation of the national government? Are there -- are the Sunni members of the government so weak that they can't --

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** We're seeing the cooperation. I mean, we're starting to see it. And it's very gratifying because it wasn't there before. And to see them coming in and willing to put money in, and we're actually seeing those links. So you know, when the security situation -- once it opens up, once you have the security, anything's possible. Then you have the Iraqi -- and a lot of it is capacity, is the capacity of the national government to be able to actually spend money, to actually budget and just execute budgets all the way down. But actually, I've been very gratified to have a commitment from someone -- a ministry -- and have them deliver within 30 days or 40 days -- you know, they say we're going to send a truck and they send the truck. And it seems small, but it isn't. You know, this is what keeps the city going. So I'm very gratified to see how much of that's going on.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up on that?

**QUESTION:** If either one of them want to --

**MR. JONES:** From my perspective in Diyala, I think it's a question of, I think, a number of factors: one, lack of respect; two, incompetence. But I believe that with the current government there is a willingness. The problem, I think, is putting that into action. And for us, they use the excuse of security as being the answer to all of our requests. For example, how do we get money to the province? Why can't we have electricity in the province? And they all cite security as being the reason. So I think once we get the security situation under control, I think we'll be in a better position to say -- then we can ask the central government to, in fact, concentrate on doing things for the people of Diyala. But right now, I think they're using security just as sort of a crutch.

**MR. SMITH:** I think in our area, which, you know, like I said, up until probably, you know, three, four months ago, this was an area that's predominantly Sunni. There are people all around Iraq that there's no way that they would have come down into our area and that, just -- and this is years past. This is just a traditional type of an area.

But what you see happening and that with the CLC, and it's like anything in that you've got to seize the opportunity and that, which I believe that's what we're doing and that, and building the relationships with the government. Because what you're seeing with the CLC, you're seeing people taking -- standing up and, you know, in other words, you know, taking control of their neighborhoods. They're tired of it. They're tired of it. You know, this is a means. And yes, is it being subsidized? Yes, it is. But at least they're starting to see some funds coming into their pocket. They're starting to see some progression and that, you know, with the small businesses coming up. They're starting to see the farms come back into operation. They're starting to see some of the healthcare move into the area.

And this has all trickled down. They understand this is not going to happen fast and overnight. But these people are survivors and they're smart. They know what -- they know how to run their businesses and that. And this is a relationship. You build the relationship, you know, with them. It's a relationship of trust. And that's -- I think is the positive aspect that's coming out of the PRTs is it's a relationship, it's a partnership. And you know, it's just like a friendship and I don't think any one of you out there and that have not been engaged in a friendship and understand the commitment that you make with a friendship. You stand side by side, back to back. And that's what they're starting to see from us, and it's a slow progression. But it's based on that relationship and that. And it can work.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Last question to Farah.

**QUESTION:** Obviously, under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was very centralized and I'm wondering if I were to walk through your area right now, what evidence of the central government I would find. And a lot of PRT and ePRT personnel have talked about trying to generate a feeling of self-sufficiency in these towns, and I'm just wondering whether this is even realistic. I mean, if provinces are having trouble getting money, how are these -- how is government money going to trickle down to these towns? That's my first question and I have a couple more.

**MR. SMITH:** You want to try to --

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Yeah. Yeah, you're right, and so when the Iraqis decided in their constitution they wanted a very decentralized government, well, you know, we don't have -- that isn't what they had. They had public works, they had the people who pick up your trash were federal government employees, and their salaries were established by the federal government. And you know, the salary comes in, somebody has to go to Baghdad, pick it up, bring it, they distribute it out. So everybody who works in the municipalities actually works for the central government in everything.

**QUESTION:** Even today?

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Even today.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Yeah, even today. So it's -- it makes it difficult and it's working with those -- you know, we have people we call -- the people who do electric and

municipal services and education and health, they come and meet with the mayor and the city council to talk about -- you know, and they're responsive and it's amazing how responsive they are, considering that these guys don't really work for them. But they're very responsive and -- but we do have to go back up to the central government when we have issues of, you know, "We need trash compactors," because that's the way it's going up.

It's one of those issues that Iraq needs to deal with is, if they want this decentralized structure, they've got to come in, I think, with some enabling legislation, probably, to decentralize a bit more. But yeah, that's what you would see. You would see a lot of federal government employees. That's --

**QUESTION:** Are you trying to teach these guys to be self-sufficient and get their sources of income from somewhere else?

**MS. HAGERSTROM:** Well, that's an issue. It's interesting because there is such a large source of income at the federal level. I mean, it's what, \$2 trillion in reserves of whatever it is because -- since the price of oil is up. It's a lot of money up there and so -- they actually, there are some -- mostly, the small municipal services are a bit self-sufficient because they do have fees. There are some fees for permits, documents and permits and those sorts of things, so there's a lot of self-sufficiency in that and they probably always were.

We also have state-run enterprises we deal with. We have a large ceramics factory in Ramadi that finally -- and we're working with the Brinkley group, the DOD Brinkley group, got part of the line almost up, so we've got some ceramic fixtures, some toilets and sinks are being produced. It just started a couple -- you know, about a month and a half ago. So yeah, but you can imagine even the businesses -- you know, this type of business owned by the central government. It's very, very (inaudible), yeah.

**MR. JONES:** There's one thing, it's the provincial powers law, that we're all looking forward to. This will enable the provinces, once it's passed by the national legislature, to, in fact, be more decentralized. And so we're hoping that the central government will pass that act this year so that that will give a little bit more autonomy to the local qadas and provinces. So that's an element here, but -- no, I agree with Kristin completely. It's a question of the capacity of the central government to meet the demands of the people in the provinces and it's just not there right now.

**QUESTION:** And just -- how do you envision the local citizens groups changing after it goes to Iraqi hands? Do you imagine that they're going to try to get these guys to fall into a chain of command? Because right now -- or are they expected to pay for something that they don't control?

**MR. SMITH:** Well, I think some of the things that are being looked at right now, of course, is that -- kind of like a public works group and stuff, that will be coming in -- in other words, just like our municipalities that we have here in cities and that, you know, your municipality work crews and so forth. Also too is having, you know, for the IPs, Iraqi police candidates and that, granted, you know, there's a lot of people that want to be police officers and that but don't have the skills. So then you have -- that's where you draw into your community and that and use your resources from your local teachers to have, you know, some literacy classes to bring them up to that level as well as, you know, like with the Iraqi Army and then -- as some of the fledgling factories and that that were devastated before are put back into operation, farms start getting back in, the produce starts moving and that, the jobs will start filtering out.

**QUESTION:** But it will change? It sounds like it will change --

**MR. SMITH:** Right.

**QUESTION:** -- and morph into something else?

**MR. SMITH:** Yes.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** With that, thank you all. I appreciate it.

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