Record of Interview

**Project Title and Code:**
SIGAR LL-02: Lessons Learned from Aid Coordination in Afghanistan

**Interview Code:**
LL-02

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**Location:**
Washington, DC

**Purpose:**
To solicit views on coordination during interviewee's tenure as [redacted].

**Interviewees:**
Grant McLeod, Subject Matter Expert and LL-02 Project Lead

**Key Topics:**
- [redacted]
- Strategic context: PRTs
- Securing donor commitments
- Ghani as Minister of Finance
- Lead nation system
- US Mission/USAID Kabul
- Lessons learned and recommendations
- US views on corruption

**Non-attribution Basis:**
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In summer 2002 things not going great. Why? Assistance program was quite small; NSC sensed a lack of coherence. NSC decided to do two things:

1) Send Karl Eikenberry to do army (namely) and police
2) Send me on civilian side

We were a pair.

David T. Johnson had begun assistance coordination at Main State for Steven Hadley (then Deputy National Security Advisor). I back-filled his place and we then took assistance coordination a step further, with setting up the Afghanistan Interagency Operations Group (AIOG). We pulled into one office suite representatives from Joint Staff, OSD, State, USAID, Treasury. They'd return to their home agencies, but had an office at State. This was forerunner of SRAP. USAID was well-integrated with the AIOG. It was a follow-on to what David Johnson had done but more formalized and organized.

This is how the Deputies Committees meetings would go: Hadley as Deputy NSA chaired, had allowed State to lead the AIOG. I took that as a vote of confidence because essentially, it was an extension of the NSC staff, but located at State. I would say today's NSC is micro-managing; it [the AIOG] would never happen under today's NSC.

Strategic context; PRTs

In general, the big pictures was, we have a battle to fight, security to establish; Karl Eikenberry was very focused on the ANA - that's where the big money was, not on the development or civilian side.

As Barny Rubin said at a USIP 2-day conference [KB note: Feb 2015], we were not there to establish institutions, we were there to win a war; let's be clear. To the extent that establishing institutions will help us win the war, OK.

When I got there, there were no PRTs; when I left there was one. It was as much for security as for development. It was an evolutionary time; we were trying different things. The amounts of money were small. PRTs were an innovation. PRTs were heavily dominated by the military. There was the idea that this is a way to get civilians out, but it never really worked. The military came up with "clear, hold, build."

Securing donor commitments

Tokyo commitments: to go to capitals in the Gulf, whose governments had made pledges at Tokyo, to ask them to follow through. US wanted to push donors. was instrumental in this too. He was at OSD (?), had lots of contacts. I remember well because it was during Ramadan, so people in the Gulf were grumpy. place to place. It was a good trip, though not much response from capitals. It was an indication of our attempts to get people to live up to their pledges. The aim was more to get contributions to the trust fund, than to get presence on the ground. We talked about investments, for example in infrastructure.

Ashraf Ghani as Minister of Finance
Ghani is a development-oriented guy. He knew how finances and project management worked. In terms of the Afghans’ ability to coordinate donors on the ground, Ghani was assertive in his push for Afghans and GIRoA to be in charge. Ghani was pushing the ARTF. He had working closely with him, and also . Ghani made a strong effort.

US Mission; USAID/Kabul

We were working out of the Old Chancery, and it was next to a field that hadn’t been de-mined! My office was in the library of the Old Chancery. Zal (who was at the NSC at the time) came out and would take the other half of the library.

Lead nation system; donor coordination by Ghani

The concept was great, but other nations said, the US is in charge of the Army, so we don’t have to worry. It led to an abdication by other donors. There was also a lack of resources. The Italians had their limited budget for rule of law, and maybe the US funded rule of law less than we would have otherwise.

Where donors split up the provinces, this was set up by Ghani. He chaired lots of meetings in a huge hall, with bilateral donors and NGOs - it was at the Council of Ministers. These were held monthly. It was more information-sharing; there were smaller donor meetings on coordination.

For example on health, where provinces were assigned to donors.

UN role

The UN had a more political role. did assistance coordination (also in Libya). Before 2006/08, there was not a coordination mandate. UNOPS did a pretty good job on some programs, but could have played a better role. Much of this depends on personality and the situation in country.

Models for coordination; need for strategy

1) the best model must be where the host nation plays that coordinator role well
2) UN as coordinator
3) it will never be the US but it can be a small group of donors

We felt the void of a lack of development strategy. Ghani attempted to fill that void in these coordination meetings. The highest order of coordination was on joint projects like NSP (National Solidarity Program): the second order is info-sharing; the third is chaos.

Recommendations for Congress

1) We can say give us more flexibility - appropriate a big chunk of money and we'll report back. Fewer earmarks. These make it very hard for us. (Though the number of earmarks is down now, I think way down.)
2) Even harder is to think through when money needs to come. In Afghanistan, it came very slowly. Iraq was the opposite! $18.4 billion [KB note: this may not have been all civilian.] he'd put in place a structure for spending $18.4 billion - that's just crazy. There were 3 to 4 layers of subcontractors. Petraeus was leading MNSTCI. He was starting the training program from scratch and asked for some money from the $18.4 billion. had to cut it from water treatment projects in the provinces, and PM Allawi's wife was the Minister of Water.

Appropriations staff dislike trust funds. There's less control; they want to approve how we spend money. You should do a study: the civilian money comes in proportion to the military's money. [KB note: his implied suggestion was to test this hypothesis.] We had a small footprint. But that gradually increased, in direct proportion to the military spending. It's a proportional relationship - it goes back to Rubin's comment about the security mission being #1.

The 150 Account has DoD, State, AID budgets. If they were in the same appropriations bill, we could make those tradeoffs.

PRTs were so militarily oriented because that's where the money was.

Lessons Learned

1) Occupation is a bad idea.

2) Have to have the host nation in charge. When I was in Iraq, we had Americans in each ministry. you have people who think they are the ministers. Tell them they are senior advisors now, not ministers.

3) Ability to have flexibility

Attitude of USG on corruption

We were not fully aware of the threat of corruption; we were naive. Sarah Chayes was an eye-opener to the level of corruption and how deep it was and damaging to our mission. Are we more aware now? I think so. Ashraf Ghani - I give him a lot of credit - he would go into Cabinet meetings and would accuse Ministers of specific cases of corruption to their faces. We don’t do that.

It's not like it wasn't being pointed out. Again, Rubin was right - we had other priorities. Then development, human rights, humanitarian assistance people were pointing out these bad actors.

Follow-up Items

None.