



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)

+ BOOKMARK ...

[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Countries](#)[Youth & Education](#)[Careers](#)[About State](#)

You are in: [Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs](#) > [Bureau of Public Affairs](#) > [Bureau of Public Affairs: Press Relations Office](#)  
> [Press Releases \(Other\)](#) > [2007](#) > [November](#)

Special Briefing

Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

November 30, 2007

## Briefing On Reconstruction Progress in Salah ad Din

[View Video](#)

**Steven Buckler, Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader; Dave Bailey, USAID Representative; Col. McBride, Commander, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)**

**[Via Satellite]**

(10:30 a.m. EST)

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Okay, good morning, everybody. We are here at the State Department this morning and we're going to have a briefing on the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Salah ad Din. And we have with us Steven Buckler of the Provincial -- the Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader; Dave Bailey, the USAID Representative; and Col. McBride, Commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne. And they're going to speak to us briefly about their activities and accomplishments, and then we'll open it up for questions and answers. When you ask your questions, if you could provide your name and your affiliation, that would be wonderful.

Gentlemen.

**MR. BUCKLER:** I think in order to get right to the questions, I will be very brief and maybe just explain very quickly the relationship between the three of us. In addition to being joined at the hip -- you may not be able to see that on the camera -- Col. McBride and the Brigade Combat Team provide the military resources that let us move around, which is crucial. In addition, there are several military affairs officers with which we interact on a constant basis in the field. David is my -- works in the PRT with me and is the portal to all of the AID programs that we're working to bring into the province with their funding and projects.

So that's pretty much the relationship between the three of us in brief, unless Scott or David has another sentence or two to add.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Okay, great. Questions? Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** Gentlemen, this is David Wood from the *Baltimore Sun*. Could you talk a little bit about --

**COL MCBRIDE:** Hi.

**QUESTION:** Hi, Colonel. The balance between short-term and I guess mostly CERP funding and longer-term, employment-producing work that you're doing and how you balance that off and what is the proportion of each?

**MR. BUCKLER:** Who wants to field that one?

**COL. MCBRIDE:** If I could have heard it, I would field it, but I didn't hear the question.

**MR. BUCKLER:** The question was how do we -- go ahead, please.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Can you repeat the question?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, it's David Wood from the *Baltimore Sun*. Could you talk about how much money and effort are you putting into short-term, immediate-employment kinds of projects using CERP funds, for example, and how much of your effort and money is going into longer-term, permanent infrastructure-building kind of work?

**MR. BAILEY:** This is David Bailey, USAID. USAID has a program that is going to start in the province next month, and it is a community stabilization program. And it will be focused on short- and long-term growth. It will have a vocational component as well as a business development component. And the funds that will be available to the province through the program will be approximately 20 million and it will focus on the key stabilization cities in the province. And we are working closely with our military colleagues in targeting how those funds will best be spent in order to employ military age individuals as well as provide them, again, immediate jobs as well as vocational skills training that will allow them to have sustained employment.

**QUESTION:** Colonel, could you talk a little bit about what you're doing with your CERP funds and how that fits into the strategy of the PRT?

**COL MCBRIDE:** I can't hear it.

**MR. BUCKLER:** He asked what we're doing with CERP funding and that meshes with PRT and PRT programs. I'll take a shot at it.

The CERP funding -- now, I can be corrected here if Colonel McBride or David want to chime in -- is largely project-

oriented. What we're trying to do in the PRT itself, exclusive from the AID funding and that of CERP, is to work more closely with the Iraqis to get them to spend their own money. I wouldn't want to let this interview pass without trying to -- without underscoring the central focus of that for the PRT. I don't want to get off your question here, but I do want to direct it a little bit. And that is that the purpose of the PRT, as we've laid out here in Salah ad Din Province, is to work with both provincial and the local level -- the provincial council and the city councils and district councils throughout the province, we help them do their own budgets, and then when they receive the budget allocations from Baghdad, spend it. That, to me, is the real future direction of where spending in the province should go. And given that we've been at it about a year and a half, I'm pleased with where it's headed.

I'd take a look more at -- this is perhaps as much personal as professional opinion -- the CERP and the AID money as accelerating development, but the Iraqis, as we help them build capacity, will follow in the same direction that I hope the CERP funding and the AID funding are going now.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Lachlan.

**QUESTION:** This is Lachlan Carmichael from AFP News Agency. Just to follow up on one of the earlier points about employing people of military age, can you provide figures as to how many have been employed, what kinds of work that they're doing, how much more you have to go?

**MR. BAILEY:** Well, there are several thousand now that have been employed through programs in the province now that, again, concentrate on males of military age. And we are doing a survey now to try to get the accurate numbers based upon those that we have now. And we're looking to transition those programs over into more long-term, sustainable job opportunities for these individuals. And this is where the community stabilization program will come in and also this vocational education program.

And we're also, as Mr. Buckley said, working very closely with the GOI, the Government of Iraq, and the Ministry of Education and the vocational schools that are here resident in Salah ad Din Province, and hopefully -- and work to bring up their curriculum and finance vocational training equipment in these schools to where we can have really a holistic view on employing these individuals, doing vocational training, again, to where they'll have viable, sustainable job opportunities when the training is through, also targeting that training based upon the industrial infrastructure that is located here in the province of Salah ad Din.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Charlie.

**MR. BUCKLER:** Can I talk about the Iraqi perspective and contribution here, too? We had a meeting just this last week with three officials from the Government of Iraq who came up from Baghdad because the ministry of labor, ministry of education, ministry of higher education are combining in a program specifically geared to reintegrate the young men who are now involved in the security contracts. So the Iraqis themselves are specifically targeting this group. David is addressing the broader census of young men and women who are un- or underemployed, but the Iraqis are very, very focused on the need to transition the young men now involved in security into vocational employment programs. It's good stuff. I'm very impressed at what they're planning on doing.

**QUESTION:** It sounds like this is the hardest group to employ; is that correct? And what kinds of jobs specific -- I

mean, concretely, what are they doing? Building, carpentry, or are there other kinds of vocational skills?

**MR. BUCKLER:** That was a good chunk of our conversation. I have my own list of what I think they ought to be going in, exactly those sorts of directions, simple -- not simple by any means, but key trades that certainly would lead to employment and if there aren't jobs, self-employment. These are all, you know, plumbers, electricians and whatnot.

The approach the Iraqis are taking, and it's a valid one, is they are really trying to study what the economy needs and they are taking a look at that now. We haven't looked at the projections. They are looking where they think the employment opportunities lie now because there is a fair amount of industry here in Salah ad Din province, but we haven't looked too far in the future. So that's a question that remains to be answered, but they're working on it.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Charlie.

**QUESTION:** Charlie Wolfson with CBS News. I guess for the team leader, can you describe how much money you've gotten from the central government so far since you say the key aim is to work with them and to try and get them to send money to you? And also, to the Colonel, if you could pass along the question, how the security situation is in terms of getting you out and about in the province and whether it has improved or gone downhill, whatever?

**MR. BUCKLER:** The '07 budget for the province Salah ad Din, for their capital construction is about \$80 million, so that's what they're in the course of spending now on infrastructure projects. The '08 budget, the percentage increase that they're talking about now, I think, is 57 percent increase. That's still in the negotiating stage, but the point being they're looking at a big increase from 2 -- from '07 to '08. And if you -- I think if you look at what a provincial or a state government looks to from its capital, it is to send money. And from that standpoint, I think Salah ad Din and the other provinces that are getting their provincial capital budget allocations are doing well. That's a service that I think the central government is doing well.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** We'll wait for the Colonel there to -- and then if you can just speak to the security situation.

**MR. BUCKLER:** Just bear with us, we're -- as we're waiting for the mike here. Go ahead, Colonel.

**COL MCBRIDE:** I can't hear back here.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** They were asking about the security situation and the ability for --

**COL MCBRIDE:** I can't hear.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** If you guys could pass that along to him, the question.

**COL MCBRIDE:** Ma'am, I can hear you now. Go ahead. Go ahead with your question again.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Great. Charlie, would you like to repeat your question?

**QUESTION:** Colonel, it's Charlie Wolfson from CBS News. I'm interested in the security situation and the ease or lack of ease from your standpoint of getting the PRT team out into the province to meet with local officials as opposed to having local officials come to you.

**COL MCBRIDE:** Well, two points to make here. One, I think we're doing fairly well with that. We allocate platoons of soldiers to enable the PRT to go out and do the work it needs with provincial, district and city officials on the ground in the province. I mean, that's the only way they can effectively do their work.

The second thing that the PRT has (inaudible) which is very promising, is the concept of -- as it has grown bigger with more capacity, is the satellite PRTs which we have now in Samarra and Balad and other places in the province which allow subject matter experts, whether it be agricultural, economic, governmental, to go and work with battalion and company commanders on the ground, hand in hand with city and district officials, so we're now extending the region, the capacity-building from the provincial out to the district and city governments. So, I mean, I think that's going pretty well; always room for improvement, but it's certainly going in the right direction. I'm encouraged by it.

**QUESTION:** And just as a follow-up, Colonel, I'm trying to get a sense of whether you can go out pretty much without being attacked, whether you have to worry about this, how many attacks have you had or not, and maybe none at all. I'm just trying to get a sense of the security situation when these teams go out.

**COL MCBRIDE:** It's uneven. It depends on where you go in the province. I mean, for example, I was in Balad two days ago. It is probably a situation that is very permissive. I mean, you'd get a sense of these things. They can go in there -- a PRT rep could go in there and operate fairly easily with a minimum amount of security. Now, if you contrast that to places where we have the security situation is a little bit more tenuous, I would say Bayji or Samarra, for example, I mean, they've got to go in there secured. I mean, we still have work to do there, but the point being you have to -- you can't wait for the security situation to become perfect before you -- before we get into economic revitalization and to governmental capacity building, whether it be civil administration or whatever. So those things have to be concurrent because those are the things that affect the population.

So it's uneven across the board. I will argue that the most effective work happens in places that are the least secure. So -- and to their tribute, they have never backed down from going into some of the most tenuous places that we have in this province, because that's where the most good is going to be done.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Sir, in the back.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. This can be for all the panelists: Mr. Buckler, Mr. Bailey and Col. McBride. This is Rodney Livingston at the SPNN.NET Television Network in Washington, D.C.

What percentage of the U.S. in-country personnel have prior Vietnam experiences and/or use Vietnam as a playbook? And then the follow-up question would be of the 30 million roughly in population, what percent is planned to participate in these types of programs and activities, noting that the United States has great difficulties at some of these same tasks?

**MR. BAILEY:** Do you want to take the first part of that one?

**MR. BUCKLER:** I was going to say that the first part of that one, I don't know the answer except that I was a participant in the Vietnam lottery but my number didn't come up. I'm at the outer edge of the age group that would have had any Vietnam experience, and I'm I think by several years the oldest one of the three here.

Don't hear very many, if any, analogies to Vietnam experience here. You'll hear the occasional discussion of the CORDS program but what we have in place of that, of course, is the cooperation between the BCT and PRT. I think CORDS may have been a little bit more tightly coordinated, but I wouldn't change this relationship in favor of any alternative model. This one is as good as it can be.

The second part of your question -- 30 million people and being involved in -- what sorts of activities did you have in mind -- development or political participation or what areas of public life were you --

**QUESTION:** Specifically in the programs that you're trying to start, that you have started, that you have established and those successes of the total population. Looking at a picture in the United States of some of the same tasks that may need to be accomplished there are trying to be accomplished in the United States, and so I'm just looking for some guidance on the outlook there, noting that we have some of those same tasks to accomplish here.

**MR. BUCKLER:** I think I'm being responsive to your question. If I'm not, press me. I don't want to duck. Much of what the PRT is trying to do is close up what I -- I don't like to sound too Strangelovian here but the governance's gap. As Colonel McBride pointed out, we're stationing PRT people in the major cities throughout the province. And as I said earlier in my introduction, in order to work with the city and district governments there, Colonel McBride and his divisional headquarters have a program to take the governor and deputy governor and other officials in the province from here to Baghdad to enable them to work -- politic directly with the various ministries that have to support provincial activity. So the goal is to be all-inclusive, but the first one, I believe, is to close up the communications and administrative gaps that separate the local from the district from the provincial from the national government, and that's where I think we're being very helpful.

So again, we're trying to enable them to govern over everyone without even parsing it into too many subdivisions of what that broader span of governance is. And we want to make the water, the electricity, the fuel distribution, the sewage and all these public services work. But I think our first step is to enhance government coordination across the countryside.

**MR. PHILLIPS:** I think we have time for one or two more.

**MR. BUCKLEY:** Did I address --

**QUESTION:** Yes. Yes, sir. Thank you all, gentlemen.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Ma'am.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) Scoop Media in New Zealand. My question concerns microgrants and grants in-kind. How do they -- are you giving those out, and how do you make the decisions about those and how does that actually work? Is something being paid back?

**MR. BAILEY:** USAID has through its implementing partner, Izdihar, has opened up the first microgrant program on Salah ad Din province in Tikrit. And this was opened two weeks ago. We have been given 1.2 million in loan capitalization and through CERP funding we have received over \$301,000 for operational costs for 12 months.

We currently -- the interest rate is approximately 12 percent and the loans are provided through an organization called (inaudible), which is an registered Iraqi NGO that went through extensive training through loan officers to prepare them for this program. We consider it a very good program and we're going to also open virtual microfinance centers in Bayji, in Balat, in Ad Dujayl and in various other locations within the province. And because investment is a political need here, this will meet that gap, whereas the banks will not lend to small business owners because of the onerous collateralization requirement.

So we see this as a first step in injecting badly needed loan capital into the province, especially with regard to addressing the small and medium-sized businesses and we will be continuing looking for other sources of loan capital that we will be able to supplement the money that we already have.

**QUESTION:** I have a follow-up, a quick follow-up. Just about interest, I think in Muslim countries, they don't generally -- they don't use that concept so readily as we do. Is there a cultural problem with that?

**MR. BAILEY:** Very good question and we had to address this under Islamic banking laws. We were very sensitive to that and had come up with a package of compromise guidelines that the Iraqis have accepted here and in Anbar and in Baghdad that allow us to customize the interest or the administrative fee that we charge based upon the ideology or how strict the -- they wanted to be within their various region. But we have been very sensitive to that and we've been able to work around that quite effectively.

**QUESTION:** Gentlemen, Charlie Keyes with CNN. I just wanted to follow up what the Colonel said, that some of the most effective work was done in the least secure areas. There are people in Washington who still claim that you cannot conduct diplomacy in a war zone. Could you speak to that and maybe flesh out your comment about operations in the least secure areas?

**COL MCBRIDE:** That's a good question. If you go talk to the population on the ground and I'll use Samara and there are other places -- Bayji is another place in the province -- they will tell you, for example, that you have a multifaceted problem in a particular area. It's a problem set and we still have a lot of work to do in the province. We're making some good progress, but what I'm talking about is, as you're securing a place and making it more secure for the population, the population also wants to see some economic progress.

For example, in Samara, lines of commerce are severely restricted because of the security situation. What we are working, in conjunction with the PRT, with the Iraqi leadership is to open up those lines of commerce. In other words, you have to accept a degree of security risk to realize a gain in overall security. Security -- personal security doesn't stand alone in and of itself as a solution to this problem. You have to look at the lives of the ordinary people, so he cares about whether he can go back and forth.

For example, in Samara, many people have to take a ferry to go back and forth across the Tigris River. That's unsatisfactory to the population. It's unsatisfactory to us. So we're working multiple lines in conjunction with our partners

in the PRT to make that better, working with governmental leaders, working to provide better essential services. They can't be done consecutively. They have to be done concurrently in order for it to be effective. Is that a satisfactory answer?

**QUESTION:** Good, thank you. Thanks for talking to us.

**MS. PHILLIPS:** Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.

**2007/1069**

Released on November 30, 2007



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[About state.gov](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)