



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

**-Dispatch from Iraq: Winning the Peace-**

By Stephen Fakan  
DS Special Agent

March 10, 2008

*DS Special Agent Steve Fakan arrived in Iraq in April 2007, and has been embedded with a Marine Corps combat unit in Camp Fallujah as the leader of an Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team. During the past year, his team has trained, assisted, and advised Iraqi citizens on how to develop their nation's capacity for growth and progress. He will depart from Iraq in September 2008 for his next assignment as the Principal Officer in Karachi, Pakistan.*



PRT Team Leader Stephen Fakan (right) meets with the Mayor of Fallujah.

One night in April 2007, we boarded the Marine CH-46 helicopter at Taji, Iraq. It had to be a night flight to avoid the possibility of ground fire. Having just completed our week-long counter-insurgency training, my two-man core team and I were en route to our final destination at Camp Belleau Wood and the 6th Regimental Combat Team located within Camp Fallujah, Iraq. We would spend the next year embedded with a Marine tactical combat unit, working in partnership throughout the 1,900 square mile battle space known as Area of Operation Raleigh.

Coordinating reconstruction and counter-insurgency efforts are not the normal daily fare of a Diplomatic Security agent, but they are no less important. Managing the programs and activities of the inter-agency embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team (ePRT), comprised of DoS, USAID, USDA and active-duty and reserve military personnel, has helped sustain the security foundation that was hard won by the Marines in Fallujah and its sub-districts. The last major fight in Fallujah took place on July 4, 2007.

In January 2007, President Bush recognized the need for more civilian capacity and called for an increase in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across Iraq. Ten more teams were added, and my 17-person team was part of that civilian 'surge' of volunteers. We worked side-by-side with the Marines, capitalizing on the changing security landscape. This change was brought about by cooperation between tribal groups and coalition forces that uprooted and destroyed al-Qaida's influence throughout Al Anbar Province.

The ePRT concept is noteworthy in that it is the first time interagency civilian/military teams have been embedded within Regiments. The ePRT was designed specifically to tackle the challenges at the municipal or grassroots levels of Iraqi society.

Many of the skills I have learned during my 23-year career in Diplomatic Security easily translated to leading an ePRT and, in fact, have helped ensure its success. As a Regional Security Officer, I developed and worked with contacts in the countries where I was assigned, supervised people and programs, engaged in creative thinking, spent a lot of time in negotiating positions, and managed budgets. Overall, the experiences are not all that different, except for the type of ‘G-ride’ and the environment in which I worked.

The focus of my team, ePRT Fallujah or Anbar 1 as we are designated, is on “tactical diplomacy.” Our mission is to reinforce and stabilize the security of areas that are at times permissive and semi-permissive.

We do this by engaging the Iraqi society at all levels, working across what we call “Lines of Operation.” We travel throughout the operating area with a designated Marine security element to promote democratic values, business, industrial development, and to mentor city management officials, build or repair essential services, and promote good governance and the rule of law at the municipal, district, and sub-district levels.

Some of the activities my team is actively pursuing include:

- Establishing city councils at the district and sub-district levels
- Installing a solar-powered water pump test project
- Repairing and upgrading irrigation and desalinization canals for over 30,000 acres of farmland that will affect tens of thousands of persons in farming and other agricultural and downstream business activities
- Assisting two state-owned enterprises in resuming full production capacity, including funding for equipment modernization, tools and dies

We also have surveyed several irrigation barrages in the area, and will push forward with the installation of micro-hydro power generation units to help alleviate electricity shortages in the district.

Additionally, our efforts have led to the donation of 12 solar-powered water treatment plants, each capable of generating 30,000 gallons of fresh water daily, from a private benefactor. We are in the process of moving these facilities from the United States to Iraq for distribution to remote areas of Fallujah.

Throughout all of these activities our main goal has been to empower Iraqis to find Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems and sustain the country’s capacity for growth and progress. Bottom-up governance and independent problem solving are quite a tall order for a country that is accustomed to being governed from the top down by decree and where free-thinking was discouraged.

From our perspective, while the Marines are winning the war, the ePRTs are winning the peace.

Other DS agents have served and will continue to serve on Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq.