A project of the Combat Studies Institute, the Operational Leadership Experiences interview collection archives firsthand, multi-service accounts from military personnel who planned, participated in and supported operations in the Global War on Terrorism.

Interview with MAJ Kevin Lovell

Combat Studies Institute
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Abstract

From March through November 2005 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan, Major Kevin Lovell served as program and project manager for the counternarcotics and police programs as part of the US Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District, based in Kabul. In this capacity, he planned, prepared and managed the construction of provincial, highway and border-crossing police stations, support facilities for the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the Afghan National Interdiction Unit, the Afghan Ministry of Justice's judicial/administrative complex and an aviation operations and maintenance facility. In this interview, he also discusses his disappointing working relationship with US Department of Justice personnel, his conversely excellent experiences with the DEA, how the construction effort overall fit in with broader strategic goals, as well as the challenges posed by security of construction sites and their geographic dislocation. Lovell also talks about one particularly "soul-lifting" experience with some Afghan children, stresses the need for more cultural awareness training and earlier planning, and articulates the one overarching piece of advice he'd give US senior leaders. "Our way is not the best way always," he said. "Our way is a great way a lot of times, but our way is not the best way always."

Interview with MAJ Kevin Lovell

24 August 2007

LL: My name is Laurence Lessard (LL) and I'm continuing my discussion with Major Kevin Lovell on his experiences during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Today's date is 24 August 2007 and this is an unclassified interview. What were your professional circumstances when you found out that you'd be going to Central Asia a second time?

KL: I was finishing a two-year tour with an Active Component/Reserve Component (ACRC) unit outside of Atlanta, Georgia, and had requested a permanent change of station (PCS) after those two years. I was fortunate and got a chance to go work for the US Army Corps of Engineers. I was assigned to the New York District, and this was the October 2004 timeframe with a PCS date of January. In November, I received an email asking me about my professional and personal information and date of my last deployments. About a week after that, a roster came out slating me for deployment in late summer, early fall of 2005. I contacted my gaining unit to see what the potential would be for some wiggle room, because my wife and I had just found out that we were expecting our second child and I did not want to help deliver my second kid and then three weeks later say goodbye, I'll see you in six months. So the two courses of action: one was feasible and one was unfeasible. As soon as I showed up at Fort Drum, that I would deploy as an individual augmentee and fill a slot either in the Gulf Region Division in Iraq or in the Afghanistan Engineer District in Kabul. The unfeasible potential was that the deployment be put off for three to four, maybe even six months, and then I'd deploy. So we were going to go with Plan A. Part of Plan A that was proposed to me was that I'd deploy as soon as I arrive and that I miss the birth, but I do five months and come home a month early. Another part of Plan A was that I would come home for the birth, but then have to go back and finish the last month, maybe do a month and a half. As I laid these two out to my wife, she said, "I want you home for the birth." She made it known clearly that I was to be home for the birth. The big holdup for my deploying was getting into housing at Fort Drum. We were told several times by people in the housing office that we would move right into housing and it would be that plus 10 days. I figured that I'd be gone to Fort Benning going through some predeployment training and then I'd be in Afghanistan, again. But it turned out that it was more like four and a half weeks before we got into housing. There was also a little bit of consternation between some guys who work at Human Resources Command (HRC) about when I would actually be authorized to leave my losing organization and arrive at my gaining organization. It was arguments over days, really, and that was frustrating because of the personnel system and the admin way that I had been brought onto the books. I had left the 92nd Engineer Battalion, change of command on 30 January 2003, which I believe was a Friday. On the Saturday morning, we left and drove across the state to Atlanta and signed in that Monday. I took 10 days permissive temporary duty (TDY). A Standard Installation/Division Personnel Reporting System (SIDPERS) transaction hadn't happened until 15 January, or after that, so somebody at HRC said I really hadn't shown up until like 1 February, which meant I couldn't leave until 1 February, and I was trying to cheat them by two months. I said I had a leave form that shows I signed in on Saturday, 31 January. "But that doesn't matter to us. You haven't done a SIDPERS transaction." I said, "Okay, 1 February plus 24 months gets you to 1 February. It doesn't get you

to 1 March." That's what their position was. So as a result, there were several things that were a little stressful leading up to the PCS, and then knowing we were pending a deployment as soon as I showed up was difficult. I was able to get my family, Claire and my, at that stage, year-and-a-half-old son, moved into an upstairs apartment in a garden-style four-plex apartment just off post at Fort Drum. I was around for a couple days after we got done unpacking and then went to Fort Benning for 10 days of predeployment training before I went over to Afghanistan the second time.

LL: How was the training at Fort Benning? How would you describe it?

KL: Some of it was standard predeployment training; some of it was exactly the same standard training that we gave to Reserve units that had mobilized and deployed. The improvised explosive device (IED) training sticks out as one of the better blocks that I'd seen. It was up to date, it was recent and I went down and commended the instructor on that. Some of it was a complete waste of time, though. There was a three- or four-hour block of instruction that everyone had to attend on pre-marksmanship instruction (PMI). That's some training we always go through before you go to the range. Myself and three other officers sat there and we're like, "This is ridiculous." We thought this was just a colossal waste of time. They could have sent me to the range that day and I would've qualified in much less time. I qualified on the first go-around, but I told the guy that since I was out there on Saturday, I would just as soon fire again because he had the rounds, I'd like to shoot better and it's been a while. But the PMI training I got that night didn't prepare me for the range. It was more like how to load a magazine and how to drop the magazine. I'm not saying it wasn't useful to other people, but they could've identified some people who probably needed that level of training, that super-basic level of training in PMI, and then people who were past that. Some of the training we went through was decent enough, of urban engagement with weapons or fighting in an urban environment. We were also fortunate in that there were a lot of special operations soldiers going through who were on their way to Afghanistan. That's the mechanism, for whatever reason, that was used to deploy them. They taught classes on the side during that day about operations in the urban terrain, having to occupy a room or on just simple tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). But for the most part, a lot of the training added in I didn't think was necessary. All officers are required to know map reading as a pre-commissioning requirement and then receive operations on land navigation multiple times throughout. Now some people don't, they ride a desk and they haven't touched land nav in 25 years. But for guys who have done that a ton of times, I think it could have been a check-the-block and move on to the next thing, and I probably would have gotten out of there three days earlier.

LL: Any language or cultural training?

KL: There was a cultural brief. There was not any language training that I recall.

LL: How was the movement over as an individual augmentee as opposed to being part of a unit?

KL: I was fortunate in that there were about 15 guys who were held over from the previous CONUS Replacement Center (CRC) block who didn't deploy. They were held over for five or seven days. So me and one other guy kind of piggybacked off them. In one respect, I didn't

have to go over as an individual; we went over together. Because we went over with like 15 bubbas over there, I know that it made life easier because we all got on a bus, we rode to Atlanta and then we got on a Delta flight from Atlanta to Baltimore. We got two humongous carts, plopped all our stuff on there and we got on a military chartered flight from Baltimore to Germany, to Turkey to Kyrgyzstan. Then we had to wait there and flew into Bagram. I went over with two other gentlemen: Lieutenant Colonel Johnson and Major Donald Pinkus.

LL: Once you got there, what did you find the working environment to be?

KL: Before I arrived, I was told that I would go to one of the area offices, one of the resident offices where we were building facilities, which were pretty austere. The decision was made later that I would stay in Kabul and be the deputy program manager and project manager for the counternarcotics and the police program. At that time, they were one program. It was fledgling and just getting off the ground. The first 20 projects were under way. Major Ken Nantz (ph) was the program manager and was working on planning the next two years worth of construction rounds based off guidance from Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A). So when I arrived, the first thing was that Kabul looked incredibly different from the last time I was there in 2002. Bagram looked a little bit differently, but it was interesting to go back there, walk through where some of our major construction projects had been and see what was there now, to walk by the brick building that used to house most of the soldiers from Bravo Company. The living conditions were nice. I had lived in a tiny room the last time I was there with one small light that worked most of the time. Here we were now living in basically double-wide trailers, or at that level of living. They had brought in a contractor and had hired him to build rooms inside these and run electricity, telephones and internet access cables. It was nice. I had voiceover internet protocol, a telephone which ran over the internet cabling, and a computer in my room. I had a brand new computer and a VOIP phone on my desk, with US access. They'd said, "Let's try and keep your conversations with home down to a decent level and get your work done." This was the first time I had worked with the corps, which is a civilian-dominated organization. The civilians there worked 75-hour weeks, or they had the potential to work up to 75 hours. I was fortunate in that I worked with some fantastic civilians. I had a contracting specialist who helped me named Susan Yarborough. I had a fantastic budget analyst. There was myself and Major Nantz (ph) in the section and Billy Matthias (ph) out of the New York District was our tech in the counternarcotics section, and he was fantastic. Because the civilians all volunteered to go, they were all motivated. That was really fantastic to work in that environment where everybody wanted to be there. The officers had all been tagged but they knew it was a six-month deployment. At that stage, a lot of guys had spent a year deployed, or they wanted to deploy because their peers had deployed and they knew there was a significant potential to get professionally developed and for their careers to be enhanced by being deployed. So I got to move in at just the right place at the right time. Unfortunately, Major Nantz's (ph) father-in-law had passed away or was very sick when I arrived. I was there for 10 days, his father-in-law passed away and he went back to the States for six weeks. I went from being the deputy program manager and a project manager for all the projects to being the program manager and the project manager for the entire program, for all the projects. On that same day, we got reports that our administrative and construction crews for five construction projects had been threatened by people who first identified themselves as al-Qaeda and then as Taliban. They had identified what cars people were driving in who were employed by the corps as construction contractors, where they lived, what routes they took to work, when they came,

what ethnic group they were from. If they came back, they were going to be killed, so that was a fantastic first day as the program manager. I'm not going to say they didn't prepare me for that in my Army career, because we always have to think of contingencies and securities, but there's this thing called the contract between ourselves and the contractor. There are things that are specified in the contract. If it's not specified, then it's not necessarily on him and it becomes a requirement for the United States government to provide for him, like security. So having to look through and familiarize myself with the contract parts and where to specify security and protection. I was learning a lot, sucking through the firehose. I made the joke that when I go back to Fort Drum, my life's going to be so much easier because, for example, a state policeman in New York is not going to say to me that if I come back here, he's going to shoot me through the head. So that got some chuckles from the people I was working with. I was fortunate that the people inside the Corps of Engineers, the Afghanistan Engineer District that I worked for, and the people I had to coordinate with who had basically supported CFC-A, the counternarcotics planners and the C7 section, were people who were familiar to me. I had worked with or gone to school with them before. So that made the work there, I'm not going to say easy, but it helped it significantly. The other thing is that, besides the boots-on-the-ground experience, I had been managing construction projects with the 92nd Engineer Battalion. I was also a master's degree student at the time. I had about a year and a half under my belt in classes through the University of Maryland on a master's of science in management in the project management track. So I was able to translate a lot of the things I had learned in class into the execution of my duties on a daily and monthly basis in that capacity. I was also able to see how the theoretical tied into the reality, outside of the security and the unique situations we operated under in Afghanistan.

LL: What were the major operations that you did during your six months there?

KL: I inherited 20 projects that were ongoing. There were several provincial police projects, one border-crossing site, two border-crossing projects, and the balance of those projects were highway police projects. So there was the tracking of those ongoing projects, receiving reports and holding weekly coordination meetings with the contractor who was being paid to do the construction and the contractor we employed to supervise their construction. Normally what happens in the corps is that US government employees provide quality assurance on the construction work. A contractor builds the project. He's responsible for providing quality control on his work and the Corps of Engineers employee provides quality assurance on the work, basically doing spot checks to make sure the materials are within spec, the construction standards are within spec, the methods are within the specifications either laid out in the contract or laid out in a manual that's specified in the contract. There was that weekly meeting between those two organizations. There was also planning. There were reports I had to prepare that were consolidated and then, I believe, sent forward to the Transatlantic Center. There was a weekly update I gave as part of the staff and as a project manager to the district commander, who was Colonel John O'Dowd. Then there was a weekly meeting I attended as part of the police working group headed by the German Polizei. The German government had been responsible for the pillar of rebuilding the Afghan police, and I attended that for information and to provide information on the status of the construction projects that we were executing. The person who had a seat at the table was the CFC-A section. They asked us to come provide supporting information as the executing agent for their policy. CFC-A developed the policy of what they wanted to build with US dollars in big projects and the Corps of Engineers was the

executing agency for that. We did it for the Afghan National Army (ANA), for the national police, the border police, the border-crossing site – basically the facilities that would fall underneath their Ministry of Commerce or International Relations or what have you. So, those briefs were kind of static and scheduled. There were also VIPs I had to brief. The director of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) came to visit projects later on and I had to brief her. The deputy secretary of the army for special operations/low-intensity conflicts came to visit and I was asked to brief her on the magnitude of the projects we were executing at that time. At that stage, the program had increased by about 100 percent through the planning and execution of two to three other major projects. Our program was the Afghan National Police/Counternarcotics Program, because counternarcotics money was paying for all those police projects. We picked up a requirement to plan … and actually the strategic human resources development plan (SHRDP) had been conducted before I arrived, or shortly after, for a compound for the National Interdiction Unit (NIU), which is the equivalent of Afghanistan's DEA. We also picked up the requirement after I arrived for the construction of a helicopter maintenance facility and a housing facility for their aviation assets. We also picked up a requirement shortly after I arrived for what the US Department of Justice representatives were calling a vertical justice task force. It was a compound to house an administrative courthouse and holding facilities for people who were alleged to have committed drug crimes. The idea was that the NIU would execute an operation in the field, and if they made arrests these people would be flown back to Kabul. They would then go through the Afghan justice system in Kabul in this facility that we were building. After they were tried in the courthouse in this compound, then they'd be incarcerated someplace, but not at the temporary holding facility there, but in one of their other prisons. So, we picked up three projects in a short span of time. In the meantime, we were trying to deal with the security situation that we had and some effort in the construction progress of a new contractor who had started work the previous November. It was busy, it was exciting and I learned a lot. I was fortunate enough to work, again, with some absolutely fantastic people who had all volunteered and wanted to be there.

LL: How much opportunity did you have to move around, to actually observe physically the projects as they were being executed?

KL: I had a lot more ability to move around this time because my projects were scattered all over. The ability to move around was tempered with where I could move around to. There's a reason we hired an external organization to provide quality assurance on our projects. A face like mine, pale white skin, sticks out like a sore thumb and sends a clear message to other people that the Westerners are building this here, and it probably isn't a school or a hospital. It might be, but it probably isn't. So that's why we hired an Afghan firm to provide quality assurance. The contractor who had been awarded the 18 projects I had inherited was FCEC. It was a conglomeration between a US passport holder who was born in Palestine and a man who ran a construction firm in Afghanistan. It was one of the few construction firms that was allowed to maintain its operation during the rule of the Taliban, because their work was so technically competent. I'm not sure how Mazin (ph), that's his first name, was able to find Mr. Tarshi (ph), but they did and they formed a conglomerate. The corps put out a call for small contractors. If you'd like to join a short list, you needed to submit the following information. They did and they were awarded the contracts. So, I was able to go out and check several of their projects. I was able to get to Gardez a few times to look at a holdup in one of the projects that was going on there. I had to do some planning with the provincial reconstruction team

(PRT) to mitigate the potential for repetition of the security situation I was having in another area. I was able to get to the border-crossing project, which was almost completed, Spin Boldak, which is a border-crossing point between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the southeastern part of the country. There was another project in Qalat, another two projects in Kandahar City, another project in Ghazni. I was able to take part in a recon to see where we would pick up potentially three more sites on the Kabul to Jalalabad road, so I got about three-quarters of the way to Jalalabad. I was then able to go to Islamabad, Pakistan, to the US Embassy, and brief the embassy staff – the chargé d'affairs, the deputy ambassador, and the embassy staff – on what we were accomplishing in Afghanistan and what we were prepared to do if they had the resources and the money, as well as coordinate and put some information out to some contractors. Then we met with the commander of their Coast Guard who was looking for the Corps of Engineers to do some construction projects, some towers, to help augment his observation capabilities on the coast between Karachi and then running all the way east, so about 21 towers. So, I got a chance to go to a lot of different places that were really neat and got to stand on the hill where supposedly Alexander the Great had one of his forts millennia ago.

LL: Were you partnered up with somebody from the Afghan government or from the ANA, something like that?

KL: I wouldn't say I was partnered up, but there was coordination that had to happen a lot. Myself, Bill Matthias (ph) and one of the translators from our office, a man named Shaffee (ph), that's his last name, and we just always called him by his last name. He spoke English fluently. I would have to talk quite often with the two-star general who was the commander of the highway police. We'd coordinate some security. When we went to Kandahar and drove to Qalat and down to Spin Boldak, our force protection was provided for by the Afghan highway police. I think we also had some Afghan highway police that provided some force protection when we did the route recon on the Jalalabad Road for future construction sites. There wasn't any specific counterpart kind of guy, because I was the executing agent for CFC-A and later the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A). We were the executing agent for their policy and their plans. There might have been a closer linkage that way. I'm not going to say it was fluid, but I had several stakeholders I had to worry about. It was interesting going from a hierarchal culture – an organization you typically find in the Army – to a more open, matrix-type, fluid organization where, as an agent, you have several stakeholders. You have one person who is paying the bills and they make the call, and that was the joint coordinating interagency group, which, at the time, was headed by Commander Donaldson. Before that, I want to say his name was Colonel Benson, but Commander Donaldson was pulling the strings in Tampa when Colonel Benson was on the ground, and then he came forward. Then there were the staff proponents on CFC-A, the staff proponents on OSC-A. Then there was the chief of station for the DEA. There was the US Department of Justice, the Afghan Ministry of Transportation, the Afghan Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Defense that I had to coordinate with when I had to get vehicles removed and an area demined or cleared 100 percent to civilian construction standards. There was another organization and a general officer I had to go meet with and get his "approval" or his cooperation to allow my contractor to remove these vehicles to another place. There were PRTs, the German Polizei pillar group … and those were just the stakeholders off the top of my head that I can think of that I had to coordinate with, sit down and break bread with, to run our plans by. Besides the VIPs that I told you about, I also had brief the chargé d'affairs from the US Embassy to Afghanistan in Kabul on the status of our construction

projects, specifically the last three big ones I talked to you about: the DEA/NIU campus, the vertical construction judiciary unit and the aviation operations and maintenance facility.

LL: How easy or difficult was it to coordinate with all these entities, especially given the fact that most of them were civilian entities?

KL: Some were much easier than others because some were much more focused on a product than others. Some were more focused on a process than others. My experience with the Department of Justice was not good, I'll be very frank. It was very disappointing. I found an individual to be unprofessional. When you're briefing the chargé d'affairs on what the scope of the project is, which has been laid out and agreed and was just about to go to contract, to say that … and this person had had the opportunity to buy in. Plus, there's a finite amount of money in the kit. It's just a harsh reality that when there's only so much money in the budget, this is all you're going to get. This individual, a grown adult older than me, was upset about that, thought there should have been more, and took the opportunity to say that this isn't going to be big enough. During my brief to the chargé d'affairs and when I said, "Well, can you tell me what would be big enough?" he couldn't and he didn't get back to me. He left it until the eleventh hour at the end of the fiscal year as we're about to award the contract, to say that this isn't big enough and that he'd rather have nothing. The thing is, it wasn't Department of Justice money. This was just really amazing. All the meetings I sat through with this individual who was the point man for the Department of Justice on this, so he represents the department. He either didn't want to see or did not see that this was free money that DOJ was getting from the Department of Defense and it wasn't going to roll over; it was going to expire like Cinderella at the end of the year. So get the money awarded or it goes to something else; and oh by the way, if we don't get it awarded to something else, it isn't going to get bigger next year; it isn't even going to be given because the Department of Defense and the Department of State had realized that this really should have been paid for by Department of State money. And oh by the way, too, their programming methods are three years out as opposed to a year out, so you're not going to see anything for four years, maybe five, with construction timelines in there. They said the sky was falling several times but did not engage or answer our information requirements. Well, then, if this isn't big enough, what is big enough? How many rooms do you need? How many people are going to work there? It wasn't until he finally brought his boss to a meeting. The interesting thing is that these two guys were also lawyers, so they're trying to tell us that no, you'll be able to use this money. So then there was a legal discussion. At this stage, nine months on, I was really starting to lose my patience. I felt like they weren't wedded to getting a product done; they were wedded to a process and they didn't want to listen. Then finally I got his boss to lay out for me and Commander Donaldson … and at this stage, my boss, a guy named Steve Stouduron (ph), I turned the program over to Steve. He came in and took over the program management, so I was able to concentrate on the project management, and another man came in from the Charleston District – Dennis McKinley, I believe his name was – and he was able to concentrate on the other half of the projects. Then we had a captain who came in. I was a major at this stage, but a young captain came in and he was going to take over my half of the projects. So we went from three guys in the shop to two – me and Willy – to me and another guy who was filling in for Willy while Willy went home in between rotations, then Will came back after about six weeks, to Major Nantz (ph) coming back and Major Nantz (ph) leaving, and then it was just down to two. Then Dennis came in so there were then three and then Steve came in so there were four. Each time around, we were bringing somebody up to speed,

divvying up the work, training them on how they do business there. So, those were the added issues you always have to deal with in an organization like that that's based on people who volunteer to deploy for a finite period of time. So anyway, Steve and myself and Commander Donaldson were able to convince these guys, "Well, you need to tell us right now, because guess what? Lovell's about to go walk into a room, sequester himself for about 18 hours and rewrite these specs up so we can put it out for bid here with like seven days to go, so then maybe we can get this thing awarded to somebody." Oh by the way, the vehicle that we're going to go through is probably going to get funneled into another project and it's not going to be handled through our contracting office here in Kabul; it's going to get handled through the Transatlantic Center – the Corps of Engineers in Winchester, Virginia. "You have to shit or get off the pot right now. You should have done this seven months ago the first time we asked you for information, when you stood up the first time in front of a VIP brief and said it wasn't big enough but couldn't answer the question." The DEA, however, I would go to work for them in a heartbeat because they were exactly the opposite. They saw us as an execution agent that was busting our chops to provide them with a product. I cannot recall her last name at this time, but Mary's her first name. She was a fantastic project engineer on the DEA aviation hangar project. We worked with the DEA chief, a stakeholder from another organization, Mary, myself, Commander Donaldson and other members of his joint interagency group that were forward there, as well as some aviation planners from OSC-A to map out their requirements. They were very forthcoming in their requirements, which is always nice when you have a primary stakeholder who participates like that. We came back with some plans. We were able to find some plans for some facilities that the corps had already built for a similar organization. We went through a design process, which I found to be very cooperative and very refreshing. We were able to get that project awarded and it was under way and should be completed by now, or at least close to completion. I hope by now that it's close to completion. This is 2007, it was awarded the end of 2005 and we started on it in 2006. It was an 18-month construction timeline. Most of the rest of my experiences were of that type, were from stakeholders that were forthcoming with their requirements, were very participatory in our design process and very helpful during the construction execution timeframe. The team members did include our contractors who executed the work. They worked very hard, which underlay one of the Afghanistan Engineer District's and CFC-A's major goals, and that was to build capacity. The idea was that we had a certain level of security in the nation, and as you build and you increase the infrastructure need, you improve people's lives. People will realize, eventually, that life is pretty good and that the central government and the regional government are providing a decent way of life, or a decent livelihood – and there's no reason to try and topple that. So then the security situation should get better and then that will allow further development of the infrastructure, which will facilitate a better security posture or a better culture of security in the nation. So, we had to build capacity to get there. We had to build capacity for small and medium to large-size engineering firms that were doing work in Afghanistan, whether they were international firms or national firms, and we needed to build the capacity for the national and international firms to hire local contractors to do the construction work. There were several organizations that did that. One of the major construction firms set up a school with their own dollars to train Afghan men in all the construction trades: plumbing, carpentry and masonry. They had not set up painting, steel work and welding yet. I do remember they had things set up in carpentry, masonry, in metal forming, especially in rebar work. The program was forthcoming for painting, too, so that was refreshing. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), during that timeframe, set up a school to teach individual construction

trades. We saw ourselves in the Afghanistan Engineer District as setting that capacity up as well, as we set aside specific projects that were within a certain dollar threshold and a certain size that would facilitate a small contractor bidding on that project and being successful. The goal for any district is to do that, to build capacity, because the more contractors you have who are trained, the more bids you're going to get on a project when you put it out for bid and the better the quality of data you will have of what actually is a competitive range. The more offers you can select from based on what their technical and cost packets look like, and the more construction that can happen simultaneously. So everybody wins. There are more men and women who are put to work. There are more projects that are going up at the same time. There are more supplies that will need to be produced, so they will require increased workload and capacity to produce lumber, to produce masonry products, to produce mortar and import cement or bag mix or asphalt, etc. So we saw ourselves, both directly and indirectly, as facilitating that capacity-building in the nation.

LL: What were the biggest challenges you had to deal with during your time there?

KL: The security was a big challenge. The language was a challenge, but I'm not going to say it was major. The culture was a challenge, but I don't think it was a major challenge either. Probably the security and the geographic dislocation of the projects from Kabul was probably the biggest challenge.

LL: What do you mean by the dislocation?

KL: I had a handful in Kabul proper that I could drive to. The DEA, the NIU, those three that I talked about, they were all by the Kabul airport. Then I had one police station that was being constructed close by. But the rest were a multi-hour drive or an overnight trip in a plane. I had to fly someplace and stay overnight, so some of them I only saw one time. That meant I relied on daily reports, a weekly rollup and daily pictures from my quality assurance contractor. Another challenge was the level of competence of both contractors and how they interpreted the contract to begin with. These panels come in and they're assembled in either the United States or the Middle East, and then they had to be flown in and trucked up. Then they would be assembled. They were basically Styrofoam panels with wire on either side of them. Then concrete with no aggregate, just sand and bag mix would be sprayed on these panels, and then it would be troweled and be sprayed in like two layers. Well, if you have 20 construction sites and you don't have 20 pumps, sprayers and hoses, then you're not working all at the same time, which means you're working sequentially, one after the other. A holdup in one project kicked everything else to the right down the line, whether it's because of security, whether it was because the Afghan Wireless Communication Company (AWCC) claimed that part of their property that they were authorized by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Communications was right where we were putting one of our police stations. Regional and local governments getting involved and blocking our own contractor's access from their own construction sites because somebody was able to get a document signed by the deputy to President Karzai. That was a challenge. But they were isolated. Probably the biggest, if there was a systemic one, was being geographically dislocated. If it was individual ones, it was the unsynchronized efforts within Afghanistan's own central to regional to local governments, and how a local police officer would often heed what a local or regional leader was telling him over what some piece of paper said that was signed by the minister of interior or the president. I can

kind of understand that even using Western philosophy, because this is where this guy's living every day and President Karzai isn't going to come down there and help him out. But this regional leader, his de facto direct employer … and when you factor in the tribal issues and their specific cultural organization that's in effect, so there were challenges and they were frustrating at the time. At the time, I could look at a situation analytically and say, first of all, it's not going to make any sense to get emotional; you just have to figure out which guy needs to get talked to, which button needs to get pressed, which stakeholder needs to get involved. So in that respect, that assignment really helped me think outside the box, past the Army mindset of, "Well, I'll just tell this guy that this needs to happen, he's going to tell somebody and this guy's going to tell somebody else." It's more us coming to the table and sitting down, eating some almonds, sharing some chai and I need to explain to you why I need to have this happen, because a lot of things there are built on personal relationships. So in that regard, the graduate-level classes I was taking at the time and since have really helped.

LL: Did you run into any instances where tribal or sectarian squabbling had a real effect on any of your projects?

KL: When I went home for my daughter's birth, I came back and the decision had been made by the stakeholder to cease construction on two of these five highway police sites. They were all on one road between Qalat and another city, because they weren't making significant progress. So the sectarian violence did, in effect, stop production at two or three of the facilities. But we relooked at the idea and there was one road with five police stations along that road. Maybe if you build two at these two places that are the ones that are furthest on, they cover the entire distance and we can apply the assets from the other two or three that are behind. Then, instead of having seven that are behind, we have five that are on pace to be completed on time. The last thing we wanted to have happen was a contractor fail, because if this contractor failed it would be years, potentially, before we got back. There would be legal activities that would have to happen. The money we had budgeted against this would be tied up, so default was the last thing we wanted to have happen. But then, we didn't want to accept a project that was under standard and would fall apart either. I would say they had some limited effect. If I put my red hat on and I joined the red team, if their effect was decreased ability or decreased presence along that road, they achieved that. But it was a conscious decision made by stakeholders and decision-makers based on the information we had, which was accurate. It allowed us to increase our capacity in other areas that were just as important and to finish projects or bring those projects up to being in line with the desire to be finished in a certain timeframe.

LL: Any difficulties getting back in time for your wife's delivery?

KL: Yes, there were, unfortunately. I was taking off on 18 June, scheduled to arrive on my son's birthday on 19 June. I didn't get in until 20 June, and that was minor. We were supposed to grab a plane, myself and some other people who had already gone north to Bagram. They were supposed to fly out the previous day. I got there and they were still there because flights had been pushed or delayed or they got bumped. We arrived in Germany, needed to get over to Frankfurt because we were all flying back to the States. The bus wasn't waiting for us; they had no idea where it was. We waited around for an hour and then we grabbed a taxi and we got there. I probably got there about 45 minutes too late to get on the flight that I was scheduled to get on, so that was frustrating. I ended up spending one night there, flew out the next day, got

back and my daughter was born on 22 June. I was home for about 10 more days and then went back, so it was good to see the kids. It was fantastic to be there for her birth and to play with my son James and see my wife. I got back and ended up having to spend some days in Germany because the flights kept getting cancelled. There were about seven of us who were trying to get back. The deputy C7 was there, Lieutenant Colonel Carl Gitchell. He had been sent to Tampa to go to a conference and was on his way back and I ran into him. He told me congratulations and we were able to get on a bird with some other guys, get down to Kyrgyzstan, and then it looked like we weren't going to get in. Now, Colonel O'Dowd was about ready to change command and we thought we'd be back with like five days to spare. But we got back the day before because we kept getting bumped. I wanted to get in also because I was due a report card and I hadn't had it signed off and I wanted to make sure it was squared away before he and his deputy left. The unit that was coming in to take over Task Force Phoenix in Kabul, I talked with one guy who said they were waiting but they're not getting all the planes they're supposed to. We asked who we could talk to because we just needed two seats. I went down to the airfield, talked to that guy and those two seats, well, he needed like seven more planes, so not getting two troopers in right now is no big deal. Yeah, okay, this afternoon and we got in, which was a pretty decent deal. It was nice to see Colonel O'Dowd again and be there for his change of command.

LL: When did your tour in Afghanistan end?

KL: Let's see, I got there in the middle of March. We got to Fort Drum in January. I didn't get to CRC until February. I got to Afghanistan like the first week in March, I believe. So it was March, April, May, June, July and August. I was supposed to leave sometime the end of August, September timeframe. With having Dennis McKinley in as new, Steve Stouduron (ph) showed up in the August timeframe and Captain Brian Shadalack (ph) had arrived. I looked at the calendar, 31 September is the end of the fiscal year and we thought we'd have some of these projects awarded during the summertime. Because of different things, it didn't happen. One of the contractors we planned on awarding one of these contracts to was put on a list that stated that the US government couldn't do business with them because they had defaulted on a contract they did for the Department of State someplace else in Central Asia. So then we had to relook at the mechanism we would use to contract that project out, or whether it would be four separate contracts for the vertical justice task force or would it be one major contract rolled up. So we went into the end of year with having not only to award projects we thought we might have gotten awarded during the summertime, but also having to do those and all the projects that were scheduled to be executed the whole next year for police stations. We went from like 12, to seven to five because of a shift in priorities from CFC-A to that. In the middle of August, I went to go talk to the deputy commander who, at this time, was Colonel Wee (ph), and to the new commander, Colonel Toomey (ph). I said I thought he needed to extend me until at least through the end of the year because I cannot, sir, in good conscience leave right now, right before the end of the year, the busiest time. We thought we would have maybe 12 projects to award and maybe three task orders to one contractor. So basically one contracting action versus the seven that you're looking at now, and they're all going to come down to the wire. We picked up another project in that timeframe, put the specs together and wrapped it up into another one, which was for a facility down at Kandahar for the British DEA organization that was operating. The work never stopped. We were constantly tracking current operations, the construction that was going on in the field, and planning next year's program. So, it was truly

program management between what we had going on this year and what we were planning for the next two years. I ended up staying the entire month of September to make sure contracts were awarded. I also wanted to make sure that the facilities for monitoring and controlling the execution of the construction for the next year's program was set up and that our methods and TTPs were set up for these guys to execute project turnover. The first rounds of projects were going to be done on their watch when I was gone, in the early springtime. I ended up getting home on 12 October, on my wife's birthday.

LL: What were the biggest professional lessons learned you took away from this deployment?

KL: One of them I already hit on and that is you have a series of stakeholders and they're all going to come with their own agendas. Some of them are going to come with an agenda that they want to get something done fast, some are going to come with an agenda and they want it gold-plated, and some are going to come with an agenda that it just isn't enough. Everybody wants something. That isn't bad or good; they have an agenda. They have an objective that they need to accomplish and the key is identifying what their actual objective is as opposed to what they're telling you. Sometimes what they're telling you isn't really their objective. And attempting, at all costs, to use win-win negotiating. Sometimes win-lose is the manner of the game because this guy wants a bigger whatever. But he doesn't have the money for it, he doesn't have any money, you're giving him the money for it, you're building whatever. At some point, I need to call in a closure. I need to call in the boss to explain to this individual or group. I learned again what incredible capacity humans have to care and help their fellow man. Under Afghan law, only direct relatives, I believe, can adopt children. Between the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Afghan war against the Afghan communist government, the Afghan civil war that followed, the war against the Taliban that followed after that, the Northern Alliance war against the Taliban that happened after that, all that created a significant amount of orphans in the country. As a result, there are multiple orphanages around Kabul and other major cities. Well before I got there, in the first year there was just an office of the Transatlantic Center and then later as a district, some well-meaning individuals with big hearts, a concept and a visualization, started organizing efforts with CARE and with a few local orphanages in town. When I got there, they had some activities and they had pictures of when they had dropped off a bunch of clothes to these orphanages. Why I bring up that only family members can adopt children is that what happens is, this becomes these individuals' home until they're 18 and then they're just turned out. They rely on donations primarily, so I wrote some letters and some fantastic donations came in. We didn't have a way to handle money, so I had to ask them to buy something instead. Send your used shoes over. If you want to donate money, please spend the money on packing the shoes and paying for the freight. We got $10,000 worth of donations from a lovely woman who works for, I believe, McDonnell-Douglas out of Fort Lee. Her name escapes me but I talked to her several times. They got 32 boxes worth of clothes that they collected and they were working on getting them over. I thought they had access to maybe some free space from DHL or from the Air Force and it fell through. They were about to send it down to Hurricane Katrina but then it worked out. I said, "Hey look, we have people who donated $10,000. What else do you need?" I talked to some of the people and asked them what things did they think the people outside of Kabul could use. The boxes showed up. I left and I asked Lori Lloyd, who was the district commander's secretary, who was involved, is it okay if I put your name down? I sent emails back and forth. She said sure and six weeks later, she had forgotten about it because there hadn't been a lot of activity, and these 32 boxes showed

up. Then she remembered and they were able to distribute these clothes to just a ton of kids. Another time, we had brought boxes and boxes of clothes over to CARE and then another day, we put together bags to where the school kids all got a pencil, a coloring book, a notebook – they got so many things. These kids all lined up and it was like Christmas. Shortly before I went home for my daughter's birth, I had been working very hard and I was starting to get mentally drained. There were still force protection requirements. Civilians just couldn't ride around Kabul. You had to have at least one military member in each vehicle. They needed a shooter because they're going down there and coordinate with the school, so I went down with a guy named Dan Florio (ph) from the New York District who volunteered to go over and was a hero himself on September 11th. There are many definitions of heroes and I'll go into that one in a second. That guy Jerry, who was from a district out west, I believe, we did some coordination with the school on when we could drop this stuff off. We got to walking around the school, and the Afghan schools are separated. The girls go to school in the morning and the boys go to school in the afternoon. We walked around and we totally disrupted any lesson that was going to happen that day. It was like we were rock stars. The kids all came out, they wanted to stand around us and they were all young girls. One girl in particular kept asking, "What's your name?" I said, "My name is Kevin. What's your name?" She understood and she'd say her name back. Then she asked everyone else's name. I took a knee so I would be at eye level with them, so they weren't looking up all the time. That experience was soul-lifting. We're doing all these other things, but here we can see something else that we're doing that's not worth millions of dollars, but just through the kindness and generosity of individual people's hearts, it's going to make an actual, active impression or have an effect on these young kids. The cycle of violence has got to stop someplace and maybe this is actually the ending of ignorance, and through education they'll remember that these guys who didn't look like us came. They gave us some stuff so we could go to school during the summertime, or so we could go to school, period. That was just one afternoon, a couple hours. I was not feeling good that day. I was coming down with food poisoning, I had the flu and I didn't really want to go, and I'm glad I did. I felt a lot better after that. There were about seven guys who came over from the New York District. Carolyn Pitino (ph) worked in public affairs in the harbors office in the New York District. She volunteered to come over and was the first public affairs officer. Eddie Quirk (ph), Dan Florio (ph), Rich Cronin (ph), Bill Matthias (ph), those guys all worked on boats that do some kind of maintenance, flotsam pickup in the harbor or the East River. They all volunteered to come over to work for Colonel O'Dowd when he went over. But before that, they were significant in their efforts to help alleviate suffering in the city of New York on September 11th and afterwards. Dan Florio (ph) was shuttling people back and forth in his boat from Manhattan to New Jersey, because there was no other way those people were going to get there. Bill Matthias (ph) is a surveyor and his boat does underwater surveys of the East River and the harbor. As the firefighters' boats were moored up on the south side of Manhattan to help execute fire control, they couldn't get their own water or they couldn't get electricity. It's either one or the other or both. So our boats brought them water and brought them electricity, besides ferrying guys back and forth across. At first, it was individuals on September 11th that day after the first tower came down, before the second one came down, Dan was ferrying people back to New Jersey, to Hoboken, I believe, and then there were guys who ferried people and material back and forth across. When Colonel O'Dowd was asked to go be the next district commander in Afghanistan and he let those guys know, they all dropped requisitions to go volunteer there and many ended up going back more than once. So, it was just as extremely privileging to command the soldiers I commanded in the 92nd Engineer Battalion and deploy with them as it

was to serve with these guys. There were probably hundreds of stories like that. There were around about 80 employees in the district. There were people who had been over in Afghanistan for a long time. Some people had been there two and a half years by this stage, or had done two or three deployments. The support they asked from their families was no less, if not more, than what a typical soldier does. Mom gets used to you coming home every night at five o'clock, and she didn't join the Army. She kind of joined this Department of Defense thing and you're going to come home every night. But now a guy like Mr. Springer, who works in what we call a civil works district that doesn't support a military installation but builds bridges and dams and those civil works projects, it loses a lot of its funding for projects because the money for the Global War on Terrorism is coming from someplace. A lot of that money is coming from civil works projects. Well, he volunteers to go over because that's where the work is in the corps. He knows he's making a real change in the world so maybe we don't have another 9/11 anywhere. He had finished one rotation as I arrived and he was starting another as I was leaving and that was his third. Mark Springer was his name. Bill Matthias (ph) had finished one while I was there, came back for another while I was there and asked to stay longer. Some of it was economic, some of it was because his friends were there and because he felt like that was the right place for him to be. Other guys were there, especially from New York, because they had friends and loved ones they'd lost on that day. Eddie Quirk (ph) was an electrician in the Navy, had retired and had done 20 years. Then he worked for the fire department as an electrician on their boats and retired from that job, and then went to work for the Corps of Engineers. So I know he lost friends on that day and feels a special kinship to the firefighters of New York City, as do most of those guys because a lot of them knew guys who were cops or firefighters. They felt a special calling to go over and that showed through in their work. They did not feel like they were just collecting a paycheck. They felt like they had a responsibility during their hours and they had a responsibility to their common man to help ease suffering in some small way.

LL: Based on this second tour in Afghanistan, if you could make a recommendation to the Army to make things run better, faster or smoother, what would you tell them to do?

KL: I don't know if faster is the right way. A guy who worked in the office with me who I learned a lot from named Lindy Wollner (ph) works at USACE headquarters now. His responsibility, when he was there, was as a mentor to Dr. Sharif, who was their minister of defense, and he was kind of a mentor for facilities and facilities management. One of the things he used to say and had on some of his slides was a quote from Lawrence of Arabia; and this isn't the exact quote, I'll butcher it, but it said that, "When we're helping people build their own nation, we must let them do it in their time and in their way, because we will leave and they will have to do it themselves." The crux of it is that we can't do it for them. We can help them, we can lead them to water, we can show them the map, we can show them where water is, we can explain to them why water is important. But they must internalize how it's important to get water, prioritize the trip to go get water and then drink water when they get there. I guess the overarching theme that I'd communicate to senior leaders is that our way is not the best way always. Our way is a great way a lot of times, but our way is not the best way always. Small caveat: we could've used some more cultural, I'm not going to call it sensitivity, but cultural knowledge when we developed and designed the projects for the Afghan National Army. Putting in Western-style toilets wasn't too smart. Putting in Western-style gymnasium-type showers wasn't very smart. We had the opportunity to correct that in future projects when we

realized that the commodes were being broken because the soldiers were trying to squat on them like they usually do, or the soldiers were getting hurt as they slipped off and whacked their knee into the wall, or putting in a shower in a culture where the men are used to using bathhouses. Maybe it would have been smart to put in a bathhouse. Then there were other issues we ran into, like in some of the projects there were wall heaters. The soldiers are used to hanging their things out to dry on lines and you explain to them that the wall heaters are a source of heat. Well, they'd hang their things over the electric heater and then the electric heater would burn up because you're not supposed to lay a soaking wet piece of whatever on it. They're used to washing their clothes in some standing source of water, whether that's a lake or a river, and then twisting their garments to ring as much water out as possible. When you put up all these towel racks, they just think that's a heavy-duty hanger for them to tie their trousers up against. As you start to do that, the towel racks get ripped off the walls. So if we would have had a little bit less hubris, thought how these guys normally live and provided a construction to that standard, then educate them on things … we can't just say, "Well, their way is the best way." It needs to be a melding of the two when it comes to urban planning, I think. One thing that we did good in some of the projects that I had was that we at least planned for the site for a mosque, for a place of prayer in these facilities. Then what I was told was that we would not build mosques. My personal philosophy is that we build places of worship on Army posts for US soldiers to attend. Many times, the facilities are ecumenical so the cross can be removed and the Star of David can be put up, so it's not overtly religious one way or the other. There were covers that were put on the Stations of the Cross at the chapel that was used for Catholic services, as well as Protestant and Methodist services at Fort Stewart. I have a hard time wondering why we wouldn't build some type of non-overtly religious facility but that still met some kind of basic requirements for a mosque in these compounds that we were building. We were going to leave it up to the Saudis to build the mosques, but then the mosque you get, the influence you get and the imam who comes and all these other external influences, potentially, are radical, anti-Western and anti-US. We have Muslim chaplains in the US Army. It just dumbfounded me, but it just seemed to me like nobody thought about that policy. It just needed to be a policy so we put it down there. But we didn't think it through and we didn't think through second-, third- and fourth-order effects, or the opportunity that building a mosque would have provided us to help shape and educate these young Afghan soldiers, these Afghan policemen and these NIU individuals. A camp was being built for the ANA and it was getting mortared every day until the mosque went up. Now, that's what I was told. I don't know how accurate that is. There could be other things. Maybe the guys left or maybe the guys who were mortaring the camp got smoked, but the mosque went up. If nothing else, it still gives these guys a place to pray and to receive their religious education from, and it also shows that we're not the great white Satan and we're concerned about their ability to get their religious education and practice their religion. If I could get a message up to anybody, it would be to think that our way isn't the only way. Sometimes we really need to think things out at the strategic level. Like, no, we're not building mosques. Well, then, what is our plan to build mosques? We have to ask these questions. What is our plan? Who else is going to build it? Because who else wants to go to a place that's dangerous to build a mosque? Radicals do. The same guys who developed all the mosques and madrassahs in these refugee camps along the Pakistan border, and look what happened. They developed themselves jihadists for their own benefit and that fit their own agendas, as opposed to us taking an opportunity to capitalize on the situation. The other way is probably for us to check our hubris at the door and think how did these guys live and what's going to make them comfortable. Maybe the Western standard

isn't always the best standard. Yes, I understand the goal of us wanting to bring Western standards, some Western thought processes into their culture, like equality of women, treatment of prisoners, humane contact into their legal system. But they have their own culture that's been established for 2,000 years as well. Maybe the bathhouse isn't a bad idea, not if that's what they're culturally used to. What it required was so many workarounds because these guys would go into the shower and the Afghan Muslim men are very modest, so they would not disrobe in front of other men. So you end up having to put in another bar and some other things, and oh by the way, after the fact put in little steps to hold the water in and having to create a small antechamber where they closed one curtain, they got undressed, they went into the shower, they showered, they came back out and then they put their uniform or their clothes or whatever back on. There's no reason why we couldn't put in Eastern-style toilets either. They make stainless steel and porcelain Eastern-style toilets and that would have been adequate. Some guys just weren't thinking during the design process. But on the other hand, that has to be balanced with a desire to acquiesce to general officers' needs. When I say general officers, I mean senior leaders in the ANA's needs. They got so much square footage. What I saw was certain individuals attempting to make this their little kingdom. They get a building with so many square feet and offices laid out for these different guys and the big guy on this post kicked the battalion commander out of his office. That was going to be his anteroom where he was going to set up a couch and where he would entertain people. It became very political with guys fighting about office size. They didn't understand that the foundation's already been done and what you got is what you got. So we saw that, too, and that caused a significant amount of frustration for the guy managing the ANA deal. He would stop construction on projects. I guess the last thing is to find a way to communicate to the middle managers. We didn't have a problem communicating to ministry level what the facilities would look like. But it was communicating what the middle managers could and could not and were and were not authorized to do as far as changing plans, which they're not allowed to do because they're not an agent of the government. If you give the contractor reason to believe that you're an agent of the government and this guy makes changes, then he holds the government liable. But at this stage the government is the Corps of Engineers, is paying the bill and the money is coming from the United States taxpayer, not from tax collection from the Afghan government. I guess we have to make these guys realize that you just don't have a free check, because they saw it as Christmas. I'm buying from the Sears catalog. I can just make these changes and I'm going to get what I want. Maybe we've gotten past that in Afghanistan now, but the next time we go someplace, there needs to be some kind of method to make sure these guys understand. We tried to do it quickly and we did it quickly, but I had an old boss who said that you can do it quickly the first time and then do it again, or you can just do it right the first time. The planning part, according to graduate school, texts, the Project Management Institute, the book of knowledge and USACE – project management doctrine is always the longest piece. When you rush through the planning phase of a project, you always pay for it in the end. I guess the overarching thing would be that, besides the cultural awareness and sensitivity in the mosque issue, you have to have guys early in the planning process planning these things out, because we know we're going to have to build them, and bring people in who are culturally sensitive to help with that planning. That's what I'd recommend for the next time, because there's going to be a next time. I got commissioned in May 1995. During my Army career, I have seen the Army execute contingency operations to Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. That's five in 12 years. At that rate, we're going to do another five in another 12 years. We know we're going to have to do it again, so we have to get the planning done beforehand.

LL: Is there anything else you'd like to add about your time in Afghanistan?

KL: I learned a lot. I worked, again, with some fantastic people. When I left, I told the people who were there that I thought the pinnacle of my Army career would have been company command and that I would never again work at an organization that was that fantastic. I told them that I was wrong. I was extremely proud of my time and very thankful for the organization I got to work in, the people I got to work with and the people that I learned from. I learned a tremendous amount from people about management, about business, about being a leader, and that you cannot always apply a hierarchal leadership style. I had studied the theory but I really saw it for the first time in that organization where that was reinforced significantly, that leadership style is a tool. It's like a wrench or a hammer. Sometimes you need a participatory leadership style like a wrench, where everybody is turning to get this nut onto this bolt. Other times you need to have a more direct leadership style, like a hammer and you're going to get this nail into this piece of wood. One leadership style is appropriate for one situation but it's totally inappropriate for another. That definitely got reinforced to me there. The Army has a significant civilian population in its workforce. I had studied the theory before that the Army is made up of three components: the Active force, the Reserve Component and Department of the Army civilians. But this is the first time I really had significant interaction other than the onesies and twosies that you find on military installations. I learned that it was definitely more of you explaining to people what's going on and letting them know what they need to do to get to a certain objective. Then everybody will pretty much come on board. There are times when you have to get stern with somebody and say, "This is what I need, you said you'd get it done then, when are you going to get it done? Because you're holding things up. There are five other guys working on this stuff." As they take their fifteenth smoke break of the day, it's usually those people who are holding the project up. So, I learned that those things are critical. The other thing that was reinforced was that more people are better sometimes in the long term. More people, in the short term especially, when they come in one right after the other, sometimes can be a pain. You get used to your own battle rhythm and then just handling things. Then to bring one person up to speed and then a couple weeks later bring another person in and integrate them, then to bring another person and integrate them is tough. It does not happen by accident; there has to be a plan for that. As I told Steve this, he was like, "Yeah? Well, tough. I'm here so you got to integrate me." And he was right. So I think for me, one of the personal lessons learned is that integration is more than just handing off the smart book. It needs to be visits to sites, thorough briefs, how we do business in this place, because each district does business a little differently. It needs to be specifics about the projects, specifics about the program, specifics and generalities about the culture and the assets that are available, and the stakeholders. He understood all those things, which made life significantly easier. It could've been a lot worse. The guys from the joint interagency group in retrospect had the biggest dog in the fight, but they were the biggest enablers. They got all these different people with agendas to come to the table so many times and get them pulling in a common direction. That really made my life easier. A lot of people saw the corps making the decisions. It's not. We're just the executing agent. There's a guy behind the curtain, a staff officer who's getting General Eikenberry to sign off on some position paper. Or it's the joint interagency group because they own the funds, they're writing the check and they're getting guidance from Central Command (CENTCOM), because they belong to CENTCOM. I can see their faces right now but the only guy's name I can recall is Commander Donaldson's, so I'll have the rest of the names for the transcript, but those guys were all just fantastic.

LL: Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Colette Kiszka