



National Security Watch

NSW 08-4

3 October 2008

Civilian Response Corps

by Richard Mereand

Introduction

On 16 July 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the creation of a Civilian Response Corps (CRC) within the Department of State. Recent legislation provided the funding to build the first pieces of an ambitious new project: a corps of civilian experts who would provide the “capacity and expertise necessary to respond rapidly to a reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) crisis.”¹ This is a welcome development for those in the U.S. Army who work on stability operations. The CRC will fulfill the oft-noted need for a civilian capability to match the capabilities developed by the military in recent years.

Stability Operations in the Post-Cold War Security Environment

In the two decades since the Cold War ended, the United States has embarked on no fewer than seven major military interventions abroad—more than in the previous four decades. From Kuwait after the Gulf War to Iraq after the toppling of Saddam Hussein, all have required significant stabilization and reconstruction after major combat ended. The dangers presented in recent years by weak and failed states have emphasized the importance of “winning the peace,” and a growing body of evidence suggests the long-term effectiveness of stability operations in restoring order and preventing further violence.²

Recognizing this, the Department of Defense (DoD) has made stability operations one of its core competencies alongside offensive and defensive operations.³ Soldiers can expect to be called upon to carry out all three at any point along the spectrum of conflict. Army doctrine conceives of stability operations as a progression encapsulated in the phrase *stability, security, transition, reconstruction*. This concept envisions the Army *stabilizing* a country or region, *securing* the environment, *transitioning* responsibility to civilian authorities and then assisting with the *reconstruction* of the country.⁴

Observers of recent U.S. stability operations have described two basic shortfalls: insufficient response capacity on the part of civilian agencies; and inadequate planning and coordination across government agencies. In Afghanistan, reconstruction efforts centered around Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) made up of both military and civilian personnel. However, when the teams were first formed, civilian agencies had neither sufficient personnel to staff them nor significant funds for reconstruction projects. Military personnel were often left to do the best they could with limited expertise and restricted funding authority.⁵ In Iraq, the working

This series is published on an occasional basis by AUSA's **Institute of Land Warfare**, designed to provide news and analysis on pertinent national security issues to the members and leaders of the Association of the United States Army and to the larger policymaking community. The content may represent the personal opinions of the author(s) and not necessarily the position of the Association or its members. For further information, please visit the AUSA website at www.ausa.org. Reproduction and distribution of this document is encouraged.

relationship between civilian personnel of the Coalition Provisional Authority and their military counterparts in Combined Joint Task Force-Seven was highly problematic. Lines of authority were unclear, planning and decisionmaking often produced culture clashes, and the division of labor was not always agreed upon.⁶

In both operations, improvements were made with time, but early efforts were hindered by the lack of advance planning, smooth coordination and timely execution. Military personnel already on the ground were sometimes frustrated; when they turned to civilian agencies with the relevant subject-area expertise, those agencies were not always able to provide leadership or advice.⁷ Funding was so lacking that the Secretary of Defense asked for and received authorization to transfer funds to the State Department for stabilization and reconstruction purposes.⁸ With so few civilians available, armed and armored Soldiers and Marines were often the only face of American assistance, which unintentionally alienated some local citizens and international aid organizations. The need for greater civilian response capacity and better interagency cooperation was clear.

Building Civilian Capabilities

In September 2004, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to coordinate the U.S. civilian response to stabilization crises. The S/CRS created within the State Department a planning capacity, armed with interagency authority from National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44, “Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization,”⁹ to match DoD’s planning capacity and harness the capabilities in other civilian agencies (the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice and Treasury, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development). In addition to planning specific missions, they have also been developing an interagency process for managing R&S missions.

Recognizing the need to quickly deploy civilians abroad, S/CRS soon developed plans for a Civilian Stabilization Initiative, to consist of planning and coordinating staff in Washington, and a Civilian Response Corps (CRC). The CRC are the personnel who will actually deploy abroad, and the plan calls for an eventual strength of 4,250: 250 full-time active members; 2,000 standby members who can be drawn from their regular jobs across the government as needed; and 2,000 civilian reservists who will be activated from the private sector and from state and local governments, much like military reservists.

The active team will comprise a substantial body of expert personnel, ready to deploy within 48 hours and put “boots on the ground” as quickly as the military. As they work full-time on R&S missions, these individuals should develop valuable working relationships with military organizations and personnel, helping to improve the coordination difficulties that have hindered recent operations. The standby and reserve members will provide additional personnel for larger missions and will allow the CRC to draw on a wider pool of expertise to meet the requirements of specific missions.¹⁰

For two years, S/CRS has had a small pilot group of active officers and standby members who have deployed to many places around the globe. The June 2008 supplemental appropriations bill provided \$75 million for the next step: \$50 million to hire 100 active officers and \$25 million to pay for 500 standby members. The administration’s Fiscal Year 2009 budget has requested \$248.6 million to fully fund the entire planned CRC, including the civilian reservists.

Implications for the Army

As the State Department builds the CRC, it will enhance the U.S. government’s ability to conduct stability operations. The creation of a competent civilian authority to advise during the early phases, take over during the transition phase and direct reconstruction efforts will address one of the problems identified in recent operations. Civilian experts will be more readily available, will carry a greater share of the workload and will provide more effective leadership than they have in the past. The Army will be able to focus on the

areas for which it is best suited—providing security and training indigenous security forces—and will be able to more quickly hand off other areas of responsibility to civilians as conditions permit.

The CRC is intended to complement the Army’s efforts and capabilities in stability operations. To make the most of the new organization, the Army will need to develop processes and procedures for working with it. The experience in Iraq suggests this will be neither automatic nor easy. Leaders on both sides will need to reach across the civilian-military divide. Some observers have suggested that military and civilian personnel should learn and train together, and not just in mission-specific pre-deployment training but throughout their careers.¹¹ There is growing discussion of expanding the idea of “jointness” to the interagency realm and perhaps legislation along the lines of the Goldwater-Nichols Act for the entire national security apparatus.¹² At a minimum, the Army will need to work closely with S/CRS and the CRC on stability operations to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. efforts.

The creation of a standing organization within the State Department should also help to attract and win more financial resources for reconstruction and stabilization projects, reducing the need for reprogramming or creative use of DoD funds. With S/CRS leading strategic planning for contingencies, civilian agencies should be better able to budget for them. And with a body of personnel dedicated to stabilization and reconstruction operations, Congress should be more inclined to provide them with funds to carry out their mission.

The Future of Stability Operations

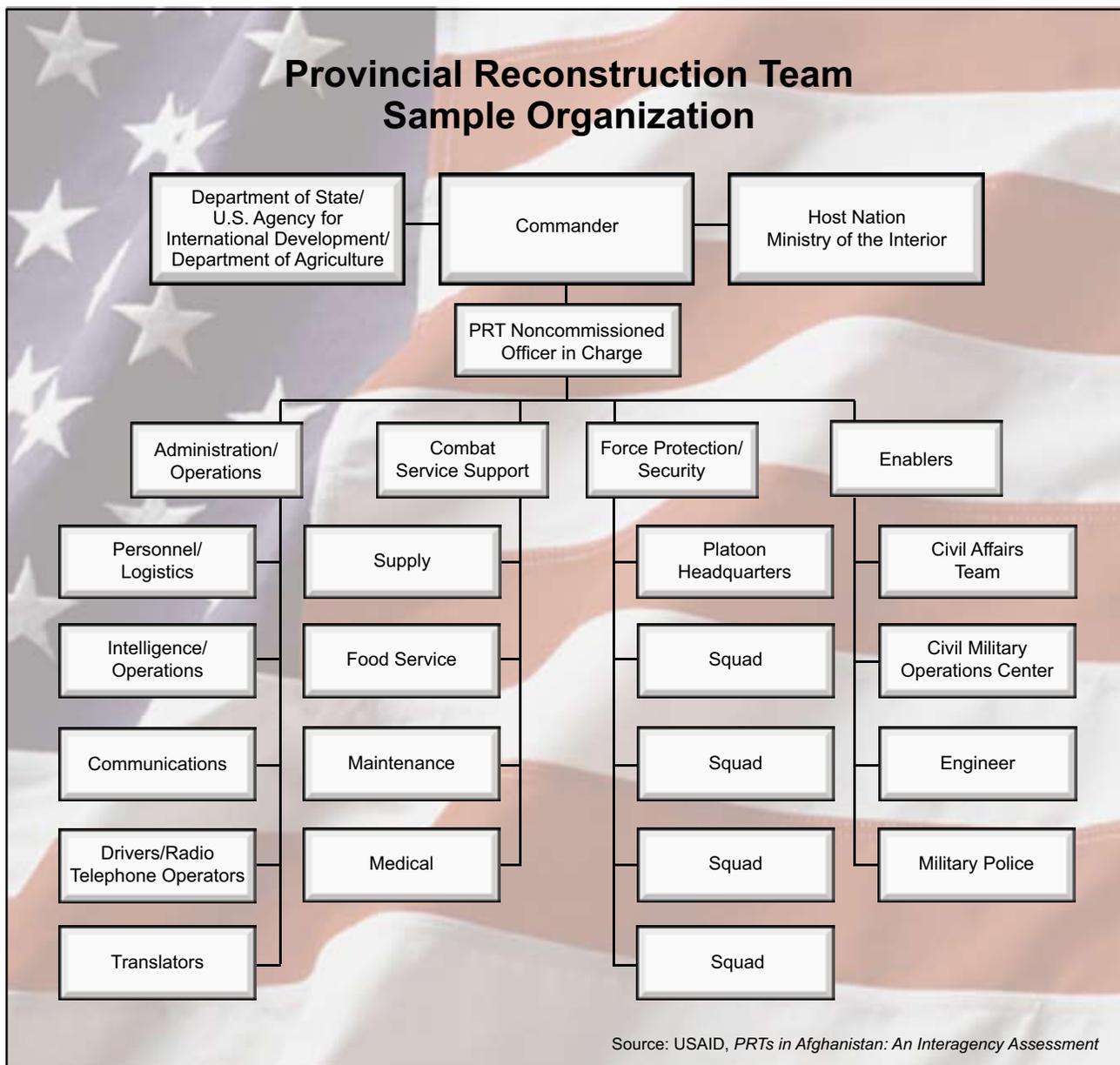
What will stability operations look like in the future? In recent operations, military and civilian activities were often planned and executed separately, and the coordination varied. In Iraq, centralized control of civilian operations by the Department of Defense was not as effective as it might have been. In Afghanistan, once the PRTs were formed and staffed by the relevant civilian agencies, joint planning by military and civilian authorities and integration of efforts at the local level proved more effective.¹³ This experience appears to have had a significant effect on planning for future operations.

Although not finalized, S/CRS’s Interagency Management System (IMS) describes a more robust interagency planning process than in the past, steered by a National Security Council working group with its own dedicated staff. Civilian planners are to be deployed to the relevant geographic combatant command, echoing the existing Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs). Field Advance Civilian Teams (which are described as similar to PRTs) will then deploy for implementation.¹⁴ Descriptions of IMS do not seem to include operational planning procedures, but the Afghanistan experience offers a model for it. Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan was located near the U.S. embassy in Kabul, and senior staff actually used offices in the same building. Military and civilian staff worked together on planning, built consensus on decisions and ultimately achieved smooth coordination and implementation.¹⁵

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan have generally gotten good reviews.¹⁶ The concept was imported into operations in Iraq in late 2005, and U.S. Joint Forces Command has recently begun the process of integrating PRTs into military doctrine.¹⁷ It appears that this will be the model for stability operations going forward. PRTs can bring civilian experts and military personnel together into one team that is organized by functional area rather than by parent agency. Properly staffed and funded, PRTs can offer both the unity of effort and the flexibility to provide the tailored local solutions that are essential to success in complex stability operations.

One assessment of the PRTs in Afghanistan noted that some other countries formed their teams before deployment, allowing time for them to organize in advance and train together.¹⁸ Many members of U.S. teams believed that they could have been more effective if they had been afforded the same opportunity. JFCOM has noted the lack of any interagency capability for training, and the need for it.¹⁹ For now, they are working with S/CRS to develop and carry out training exercises that include both civilians and the military. It is likely that in the future, formal training in serving on PRTs will be a standard part of stability operations.

Provincial Reconstruction Team Sample Organization



Conclusion

It remains to be seen whether the Civilian Response Corps will be fully funded and how it will develop, but it does indicate a belief in the value and efficacy of stability operations, and a commitment to improving the U.S. ability to carry them out. Even if it does not live up to its full potential, CRC can only be positive for the Army. It will provide civilian expertise and leadership whose absence has been missed. It will bring additional resources to a mission that has become a major part of the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, and it will help to keep Americans safe and improve the lives of people around the globe.

Endnotes

- ¹ Website of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, <http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4QRB>.
- ² For examples, see James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, et al., *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-building* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 2007), p. vii.
- ³ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations," 28 November 2005, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300005p.pdf>.
- ⁴ For greater elaboration see AUSA's Torchbearer National Security Report "The U.S. Army's Role in Stability Operations," October 2006, pp. 7–14, <http://www.ausa.org/programs/torchbearer/nsr/National%20Security%20Reports/TB-StabOps.pdf>.
- ⁵ Michael J. McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?" *Parameters*, Winter 2005–06, pp. 32–45, <https://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/05winter/mcnerney.htm>.
- ⁶ Christopher M. Schnaubelt, "After the Fight: Interagency Operations," *Parameters*, Winter 2005–06, pp. 47–61, <https://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/05winter/schnaube.htm>.
- ⁷ A paper written by the head of the United Kingdom's Stabilisation Unit provides a succinct theoretical framework for thinking about how civilian and military organizations should divide the work and the leadership in stability operations. See Richard Teuten, *Collaboration of military and civil agencies in a hostile environment: getting the balance right* (London: Chatham House, March 2007), http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/information_stabilisation_unit.html.
- ⁸ For a description of these "Section 1207 funds," see the S/CRS website at <http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=49R3>.
- ⁹ The White House, National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44, "Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization," <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html>.
- ¹⁰ For discussion of the types of personnel envisioned for the CRC, see John Herbst, "Statement Before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations," 30 October 2007, <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/rls/rm/94379.htm>.
- ¹¹ McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan."
- ¹² The Beyond-Goldwater Nichols project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies has done interesting work on this topic, available online at <http://www.csis.org/isp/bgn/>. Others include Schnaubelt, "After the Fight," p. 59, and Mitchell Thompson, "Breaking the Proconsulate: A New Design for National Power," *Parameters*, Winter 2005–06, pp. 62–75, <https://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/05winter/thompson.htm>.
- ¹³ Tucker B. Mansager, "Interagency lessons learned in Afghanistan," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, issue 40, 1st quarter 2006, pp. 80–84, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/4016.pdf.
- ¹⁴ Herbst, "Statement Before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations."
- ¹⁵ Mansager, "Interagency lessons learned in Afghanistan."
- ¹⁶ "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: An Interagency Assessment," 5 April 2007, <http://www.crs.state.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.display&shortcut=4F8N>.
- ¹⁷ U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams," Pre-doctrinal Research White Paper No. 07-01, 21 November 2007, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/other_pubs/provrecon_whitepaper.pdf.
- ¹⁸ See Office of the Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan." In Afghanistan, many PRTs are managed by other nations.
- ¹⁹ U.S. Joint Forces Command, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams."

Richard Mereand is a National Security Analyst with AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare.



Association of the United States Army
2425 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3385
703-841-4300 www.ausa.org