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Institutionalizing Stability Operations: A Policy Analysis

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A Policy Analysis**

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AN INSTITUTE OF LAND WARFARE PAPER

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LAND WARFARE PAPER NO. 96, June 2013 **Institutionalizing Stability Operations: A Policy Analysis**

by Michael Kelly McCoy

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Foreword

The transfer from pure combat to stability and support operations is strangely both razor sharp and ambiguous. Balancing the transition between phases of an operation requires an institutional capacity focused on accomplishing not just victory on the battlefield but also on the stabilization and rebuilding of a nation.

This paper provides a policy analysis on how the U.S. Army can best institutionalize a stability operations capability. Drawing evaluation criteria from Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, three possible policy options are reviewed with a specific focus on the effect of timeliness in the transition between combat and stability operations.

Concluding the policy analysis is a recommended course of action designed to overcome current policy shortcomings. Principally, this policy analysis recommends the use of a dual-track—combat and stability operations—capability within the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle. The development of a Joint Center of Excellence for Stability Operations is also recommended in order to adequately professionalize and institutionalize the U.S. Army's ability to perform stability operations.



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3 June 2013

Institutionalizing Stability Operations: A Policy Analysis

Background

The 20th century offers a plethora of examples that demonstrate the necessity of successfully transitioning from combat operations to stability operations (Phase IV) and ultimately enabling a host nation's civil authority to assume complete sovereignty (Phase V). In the past decade, however, U.S. government attempts to conduct Phase IV/V operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with a whole-of-government approach have been marred by costly failures. In response to these failures, the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate in the Department of the Army has listed this development as a Key Strategic Issue, focusing on whether or not the Army should institutionalize capabilities required to conduct successful Phase IV/V operations.

The Problem

Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07, *Stability Operations*, identifies *time* as the “ultimate arbiter of success.”¹ By this rule, time is both friend and foe. Given enough time, resources and determination, U.S. forces will accomplish their stability operations objectives. A delay in implementation of stability operations and accompanying resources will embolden the enemy and make accomplishing the mission much more difficult. Under the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, the U.S. military will no longer be capable of conducting prolonged stability operations, meaning time is no longer on our side.²

Causes of the Problem

When the timing becomes an issue, the transition into Phase IV/V operations becomes a defining point; any delay could have disastrous effects. Two causes can be linked to a delay in implementation. The first is a lack of institutional focus on conducting Phase IV/V operations. The second is the resulting effort from anti-stakeholders, directly and indirectly confronting U.S. goals with a desire to discredit U.S. efforts and strain limited resources.

Institutional focus is a government-wide problem. There is no clear interagency process or guideline for involvement in planning, training or conducting stability and development processes.³ Involvement of agencies and departments outside the Department of Defense (DoD) is provided via loosely congealed working groups or on an ad hoc basis. Additionally, each

agency and department brings its own limitations, cultural nuances and varying degrees of resources. In short, there is no whole-of-government capability to meet this need.

Institutional focus is a Department of Defense problem. Although recent doctrine developments have provided a leveling approach to the importance of stability operations, the issue of quick implementation still exists. Published in October 2011, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0 (ADP 3-0), *Unified Land Operations*, has identified stability and Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) operations as being of equal importance to offensive and defensive combat operations.⁴ The next step is to have the means available to execute swift transitions or deliver stability operations and support to DSCA as an institutional capability.

Accounting for and countering anti-stakeholders. Anti-stakeholders are made up of former regime-led insurgencies, opportunistic criminals, third-country involvement and additional power brokers who will profit from failed Phase IV/V operations. The delay between the end of combat operations and the start of Phase IV operations enables anti-stakeholders to take action, acquire power and develop an operational base of popular support. As demonstrated in Iraq, by the time the United States was in full execution of Phase IV operations, anti-stakeholders, such as Muqtada al-Sadr, had already gained at least partial control over the population and were poised to disrupt attempts by the United States to meet its objectives.

Effects of the Problem

Failed Phase IV/V operations are equal to a negative return on a major investment. Leading up to Phase IV/V operations the U.S. government will have already substantially invested military forces, resources and capability in an operational capacity. Despite the significant capability of the U.S. military to accomplish its military objectives, failure in Phase IV/V operations means political and military defeat. The resulting effect is a significant drain on resources and capability for the U.S. government and its ability to project power to protect future national interests.

Hurricane Katrina Comparison

Hurricane Katrina offers a domestic metaphor of failed stability operations in the form of emergency management. The lessons in the cost of delay, due to limitations in institutional focus, are instrumental when considering the value of a quick response for Phase IV/V operations.

Background. Leading up to the 2005 hurricane, multiple interagency exercises and working group meetings were conducted. These meetings included the full range of government, from the local, state and federal levels.⁵ Despite an unprecedented movement of supplies in preparation for the hurricane, adequate warnings of its severity as it approached New Orleans and involvement from the full spectrum of government, nonprofit and private sectors, the needed response to Hurricane Katrina was delayed for up to five days.⁶

The problem. Planning, resourcing and execution of emergency management tasks were focused on the primary event—the hurricane. When Hurricane Katrina broke a levy and flooded New Orleans, 60,000 people were subsequently trapped in the city and had to survive for up to five days before emergency services could muster a complete response to a catastrophic flood.

The cause. The reactive—rather than proactive—design of interagency guidelines and procedures in emergency management limited the ability of the government to function under a cohesive structure that unified effort and resources. Despite President George W. Bush's

approval of Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco's request for a federal pre-incident state of emergency, the highest level of federal support, known as an Incident of National Significance, was not rendered until three days after the levy had broken. Ultimately, the reactive planning model resulted in prepositioning of supplies without the means to move them to the people who needed them and no means to move 60,000 people out of the flood zone.

The effect. In the interim of the delay, anti-stakeholders took form at the individual and collective levels, as survival instincts took hold and order became survival of the fittest. Ultimately, citizens of New Orleans developed a sense of mistrust of their government. Arguably, in the eyes of affected American taxpayers, there was a significant loss in their investment of tax dollars, along with resources and the ability of the government to respond to another natural disaster in a timely fashion.

So what? Whether the environment is domestic or foreign, complex environments such as natural disasters and war require organizations to be competent in their primary functions. The United States Army is the premiere organization in the United States government for taking and holding ground on foreign soil. To best protect the interests at stake in taking and holding foreign ground, the U.S. Army must institutionalize a Phase IV/V capability enabling interagency involvement, cooperation and coordination. In doing so, the focus must be on limiting the delay between the end of combat operations and initiation of Phase IV/V operations. Without a seamless transition, delay will ensue and anti-stakeholders will gain strength. The resulting effect will divert U.S. government capabilities and resources from being able to claim victory out of the settling dust of war.

Criteria

The underlying logic of ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, provides a set of foundational criteria to ensure effective implementation of decisive action objectives such as stability operations and DSCA. The criteria include the tenets of unified land operations, operational art and operations structure.

Tenets of unified land operations. The tenets of unified land operations are: flexibility, integration, lethality, adaptability, depth and synchronization. These tenets evaluate efficiency from a military perspective and will ensure that the proposed alternatives are evaluated against what best characterizes Army operations. Within this criterion, economic efficiency will also be considered.

Operational art. Operational art enables military action at the tactical level to achieve strategic end-states. Considering alternatives in terms of operational art requires the identification of strategic end-states with tactical goals that can be achieved through development of each of the proposed alternatives. Evaluation of operational art identifies the effectiveness of each alternative as it relates between action and end-state.

Operations structure. The political, administrative and cultural acceptance feasibility of the proposed alternatives is best measured by the operations structure. Each alternative is a program designed to enter into the military operations process, which is made up of three criteria: operations process, operations framework and warfighting functions.

Operations process. Every military action, whether in war or humanitarian effort, is developed out of the operations process: plan, prepare, execute and assess. Two of the most critical variables for this evaluation will be how each alternative affects the planning and execution of Phase IV/V operations.

Operational framework. Operational framework is a way to visualize how different capabilities fit into the operating environment. For the purpose of this analysis, the framework of deep, close and security operations will be the primary dimensions of consideration. Deep operations will focus on the ability to counter anti-stakeholders, as they are assumed to be building support from the population from below the surface of everyday life. Close operations will focus on the ability to provide timeliness of Phase IV/V operations. Security operations will focus on the effect of alternatives on the ability of U.S. Army units to maintain security.

Warfighting functions. The organizational design of the U.S. Army is divided by warfighting functions (WFF). WFF include mission command, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment and protection. As a measure of administrative feasibility, each alternative will undergo comparative review of each WFF to determine which function best serves each alternative.

Alternatives⁷

By balancing the problem with the criteria, three courses of action have been developed. First is the status quo, which is the resulting design created through the past 10 years of lessons learned and the application thereof. The second model is based on the U.S. domestic emergency response planning and execution process. The third is an adjustment of the status quo, wherein the force generation process is separated between preparation for combat and stability operations.

The status quo. The current design for Phase IV/V operations in the U.S. Army is based on a modular design of deployable brigade combat teams (BCTs) being augmented with specialized capabilities to meet the needs of their mission. BCTs are maneuver forces, meaning they are primarily made up of infantry, armor and other combat-focused units. When deployed in an operational environment, BCTs are solely responsible for their terrain. When BCTs deploy for Phase IV/V operations, they are provided with enablers such as civil affairs teams, human terrain teams and other specialized staff to assist in their ability to accomplish their mission.

At higher echelons, the U.S. military forms into joint task forces (JTFs) made up of two or more services. Coalition partners may also become part of the JTF. As problems unique to each Phase IV/V operation develop, the JTF headquarters is responsible for identifying these problems and establishing solutions for them. Solutions include the development of additional command structures given the capability of performing specified functions, such as developing and training host nation security elements.

Centralized training: The Incident Command System (ICS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS) model. ICS and NIMS together form a decentralized individual-based training certification process that is built to support the planning and execution of emergency management operations.⁸ Application of the ICS/NIMS model would require the development of a Joint Center of Excellence for Stability Operations that would manage instructors, training material and doctrine, certification standards and unit requirements prior to deployment.⁹ The desired end-state of the ICS/NIMS model is certification of Phase IV/V tasks held at the individual level that support unit-level missions and objectives. Ideally, the ICS/NIMS model would enable an infantry company to automatically transition from combat operations to Phase IV operations without the addition of multiple enablers, as in the status quo model.

Certifications in the ICS/NIMS model will span the varying levels of command. As requirements for an infantry company and a corps headquarters are vastly different, certification

requirements would reflect this variance. Additionally, as a Joint Center of Excellence, the ICS/NIMS model would serve as an enabler to the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) and a center for the whole-of-government approach to stability operations.

Split force generation. Requirements for generating a force for combat and requirements for stability operations vary greatly. School of Advanced Military Studies graduate Major Thomas Trayck argues that separating combat and stability force generation models enables units to be equipped, trained and set to conduct their specific mission.¹⁰ Under current doctrine, the U.S. Army utilizes the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle to prepare units for deployment. Within ARFORGEN, combat and stability operations are not mutually exclusive. Under this alternative, combat and stability operations become mutually exclusive.

The end result is a deployable set of forces wherein the combat-trained units would deploy only to conduct high-intensity combat operations. Once they complete their mission they would redeploy as soon as possible. Concurrent to the deployment of combat units, stability operations trained forces would also deploy and subsequently envelope the campaign. The required means to provide a set of units prepared for stability operations would draw from the already available pool of maneuver, operational support and logistical support units.¹¹ The primary difference between combat- and stability-trained units would be the mission focus and subsequent Doctrine, Organizations, Training, Material, Personnel, Leader Development (DOTMPL).¹²

Analysis: Course of Action (COA) 1: The Status Quo

Tenets of unified land operations. Modularity focuses the abilities of a unit to meet the requirements of the mission by adherence to the tenets of unified land operations. Flexibility, integration, adaptability, depth and synchronization are all dependent upon a unit's ability to adhere to the mission in accordance with these tenets. Economically, there has been over \$48 billion invested in the modularity design.¹³ To move away from a modularity design would incur sunk costs. Most significant, though, is that, of the three alternatives, the status quo offers the greatest lethality. Under the status quo, stability operations capabilities are added through enablers, which allows for maneuver forces to focus on more offensive combat-type scenarios. As demonstrated repeatedly in Sadr City, Iraq, in 2004, 2005 and 2008, switching from stability operations to high-intensity street-to-street urban combat is far easier than the reverse for maneuver forces.

Operational art. The modularity concept allows for a high level of operational art by clearly identifying the desired end-state and the means required to achieve it. Through modularity, planners are given the flexibility of mixing a variety of units that would not normally operate with one another. The problem becomes an issue of transition and timeliness, as the enablers required for high-intensity combat are different from those required for Phase IV/V operations.

Problems associated with combat units transitioning between operational phases have been demonstrated throughout history. In World War II, after months of "sustained high-intensity combat operations," U.S. Soldiers and German civilians regarded one another with a serious level of animosity until the U.S. Soldiers were relieved by a U.S. constabulary force.¹⁴

Operational structure. The ARFORGEN cycle governs the availability of forces, wherein effective planning, preparation, execution and assessment are achieved. The status quo enables a force design, at unit level, that is adaptable and capable of integrating into complex force design structures.

The status quo suffers from a dichotomy. Designing forces to meet the needs of a specific mission does not necessarily facilitate transitioning the ambiguous and sometimes concurrent

path of stability operations. Operational frameworks change as the environment changes, meaning the training, equipping and organizing required to meet these changes is nearly impossible. Considering the operational framework definitions of deep, close and security operations, they change as the environment changes from combat to stability operations.¹⁵ The modular units, then, lag in resources and are forced to manage the initial short-term problem of stability operations with combat-equipped, -trained and -organized units.¹⁶

Given the past 10 years of high operational tempo for the U.S. Army, modularity is administratively and culturally ideal. Modularity focuses on the WFF capabilities of movement and maneuver, driven by mission command and subsequently supported by all others. The Army, as an organization and culture, has accepted this design, as it enables infantrymen to focus on what they do best, supported in areas not in line with their traditional capabilities.¹⁷

COA 2: ICS/NIMS Model

Tenets of unified land operations. The ICS/NIMS model focuses the tenets of unified land operations on the individual. Whereas the status quo focuses more on the overall ability of a unit to meet the mission, ICS/NIMS empowers the individual through training and certification. It is then incumbent upon the individual to be capable of employing the tenets of unified land operations. By design, training and certifications are akin to puzzle pieces; if the individuals, both collectively and individually, are unable to piece the puzzle together, the system fails.

One of the most attractive aspects of the ICS/NIMS model is the potential of using joint funds. For an ICS/NIMS model to work, the concept must be adopted and utilized by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Through the JCS, the ICS/NIMS model would be applied throughout the services and encourage interagency participation from outside the Department of Defense via the Joint Training System. Given that stability operations take place on land, the U.S. Army is inevitably the proponent for running and developing the ICS/NIMS model. From the Army's perspective, this would be ideal, as the majority of costs associated with implementing the ICS/NIMS model would not come out of the Army's operating budget.

Operational art. Application of the ICS/NIMS model would require a top-down design of capabilities required and utilized per echelon. The ICS/NIMS model, as used for domestic emergencies, is designed for ease of knowing individual baseline capabilities. The ICS/NIMS structure is simple because there is no set organization wherein a specific number of certification types is mandated. Instead, it is a resource system designed to enable organization of capabilities in an ambiguous and loose environment.

The military version of the ICS/NIMS model would require an addition to the Manning, Task, Organization and Equipment (MTOE) lists that make up unit designs. Without necessarily increasing the number of personnel required, the adjustment would note certification requirements at each echelon.

The benefit to operational art is the timeliness in transition of capabilities. Instead of balancing the transition of Phase III and Phase IV operations with a unit designed for combat operations, the ICS/NIMS model would provide the immediate capability as an organic benefit to the unit's design.

Operational structure. The operational process of planning, preparing, executing and assessing can be viewed from two extremes when considering the ICS/NIMS model. If not properly managed, the ICS/NIMS model could wreak havoc on unit training requirements. As this model creates additional mandatory certifications, units will be required to complete these certifications

in order to deploy. Under a high operational tempo (OPTEMPO), as seen during the past decade, such a model could be difficult to employ and manage effectively for tactical-level units.

In contrast, by building the certification process into each unit's design, planners at operational and tactical levels are able to effectively plan the transition between Phase III and Phase IV operations. Given an understanding of common purpose and capabilities, ICS/NIMS-styled certifications can enable a fluid transition without having to wait for a follow-on force to assume Phase IV operations from a Phase III-designed force.

The operational framework maintains its duality, as seen in the status quo, but the dichotomous relationship is recognized by the development and management of the certifications in the ICS/NIMS model. By recognizing the dichotomous relationship, the individuals are then prepared to assume their separate roles as the environment changes. Under the status quo, this capability is not possible because the transition between phases is kept at the unit level. Through the ICS/NIMS model, the individual is empowered, meaning the unit will be able to adapt more quickly. Purposefully trained individual Soldiers will recognize changes in the environment and advise their chain of command. Such a design enables a bottom-up communication approach that increases a unit's ability to adapt rapidly to its environment.

Within the WFF, the ICS/NIMS model would serve as a complement to the variety of functions. Instead of creating a separate function, the ICS/NIMS model would build on current functions. Herein, though, lies the greatest weakness of the ICS/NIMS model: over-tasking of certification requirements.

Skills are perishable if not routinely utilized or trained, and there is no greater danger than training for noncombat-related skills when one is about to face combat.¹⁸ In World War I, officers and senior noncommissioned officers were pulled from training with their units prior to going overseas, and even on occasion from the front lines, to be trained on individual-level technical skills of new armaments. These interruptions brought on by an institutional need for individual-level certifications and training led to a degradation of unit-level effectiveness, cohesion and leadership.¹⁹

COA 3: Separating Combat and Stability Force Generation

Tenets of unified land operations. Adapting ARFORGEN into separate tracks of combat operations and stability operations has a varying impact on the tenets of unified land operations. Most notable is the issue of flexibility and adaptability, wherein units that are tracked onto combat operations will be poorly prepared for stability operations. As the U.S. Army contemplates cutting 13 brigade combat teams in order to meet budget-cut demands, it must be capable of deploying the full set of units required to accomplish the mission.

Additionally, the application of integration, lethality, depth and synchronization would be defined differently between combat and stability operations. The difference in definitions ultimately means a difference in capability. In combat, integration, lethality, depth and synchronization would relate to the employment of lethal fires and the ability to fight as a joint force from the air, land and sea. In stability operations, integration, lethality, depth and synchronization have more to do with intergovernmental agency collaboration and counterinsurgency.

A separation in definitions of the tenets between combat and stability operations may be a necessity. Given the drastic differences, units trained for combat operations will become counterproductive when placed into a stability operations scenario.²⁰ Under this paradigm, cost efficiency is key, as placing units into a combat operations-focused training cycle is to invest

time, money, personnel and capabilities to accomplish that mission. When a BCT is trained for combat operations but tasked to conduct stability operations, the investment is lost. By splitting the track of combat and stability operations, the investment of training and capability can be better managed.

Operational art. The environment of combat and stability operations is ambiguous, meaning it is inevitable that combat forces will eventually find themselves in a stability operations environment. At this point, critical synchronized planning and timely deployment of specific forces become critical.²¹ The risk is that the capabilities and focus of combat- and stability-trained forces are drastically different. By separating stability and combat operations, the capabilities to accomplish these two separate missions are achieved. In contrast, though, the means to manage the transition between the two missions is lost. Timeliness may be achieved, but it runs the risk of having an uphill battle after counterproductive moves are made by an unwitting combat force that emboldens anti-stakeholders.

Operations structure. The dichotomy of combat and stability operations is severed by splitting the ARFORGEN cycle into combat and stability tracks. As demonstrated in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom, where planning for stability operations did not receive the attention of the political leadership at the proper time, developing into a split-cycle program would force stability operations into the operations process.²² The planning, preparation, execution and assessment of operations would theoretically change to an effective balance of combat and stability operations.

The severing of the dichotomy is also apparent in the operational framework. Given the struggle of balancing the different definitions for deep–close–security in combat and stability operations in the previous two alternatives, splitting the ARFORGEN cycle enables units to overcome this challenge.

Administratively, splitting the ARFORGEN cycle would be relatively easy. Given the development of training, doctrine and organizational resources over the past 10 years, the U.S. Army is well positioned to maintain a stability operations development cycle.

The primary issue with splitting the ARFORGEN cycle would be the cultural and political feasibility of accomplishing such a task. The culture of the U.S. Army is focused on fighting and winning the nation's wars. The importance of stability operations today is far more accepted than in the past, but the immediate and catastrophic nature of fighting and winning a war will always be the focus of the U.S. Army. For the splitting of the ARFORGEN cycle to be successful, the stability operations cycle must produce the same level of professional advancement and complementary resource allocation as the combat cycle. Given the higher demand for stability operations over the past 20 years, it is assumed that the cultural and political feasibility is moderate to high.²³

Conclusion and Recommendation

Three key issues have repeatedly arisen in analysis of the alternative: the issue of capabilities being focused on the unit-to-mission versus individual-to-unit levels; the importance of developing an operational design capable of balancing ends and means to the timeliness of transition between combat and stability operations; and the dichotomy of combat and stability operations, whether they are mutually exclusive or not. It is clear that within each of these issues, no single alternative stands out as the correct solution. In evaluating the causes of the previously defined problem of timeliness against the proposed alternatives, a hybrid solution does stand out.

The status quo has been developed as a result of 10 years of experience in a high-OPTEMPO environment. Removing the status quo will create sunk costs, both economically and in the form of institutional knowledge. Comparatively, combat forces can mistakenly embolden anti-stakeholders by not recognizing that the environment is in transition from combat to stability operations. To balance against this risk, the institutional focus of DoD and the whole of government must be developed.

The U.S. Army is returning to a focus on training for and winning the nation's wars in a tight fiscal environment. Given the inevitability of stability operations, institutionalization of a capability to conduct such operations is vital. A Joint Center of Excellence for Stability Operations (JCOE-SO) can provide a forum for the institutionalizing of lessons learned over the past 10 years. To this end, however, the ICS/NIMS model as a whole would have serious operational structure problems if implemented.

Given the equalizing of combat and stability operations in Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, creating a dual-track ARFORGEN cycle would also be a logical advancement, though this scenario incurs the operational risk of not having enough combat forces available to fight and win the nation's wars.

Drawing together the strengths of each of the courses of action enables a potentially highly effective answer to how the U.S. Army can institutionalize stability operations. First, creating the JCOE-SO will institutionalize invaluable knowledge and experience. Second, a stability operations track in the ARFORGEN cycle could be developed out of the JCOE-SO. In creating a dual track, the gains of modularity would not be lost.

Given the joint nature of a JCOE, the split-track solution would arguably involve the whole of DoD, if not the entire federal government, to maximize the nation's institutionalized capabilities to meet a dichotomous demand. The end result would be an institutionalized capability that enables not only the transition to and execution of Phase IV/V operations but also the ability of combat forces to better manage the transition.

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