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Integrating Civilian Agencies in Stability Operations

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Summary

Since 2003, there has been a great deal of activity to revise the way that the United States plans and conducts Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations. The primary emphasis of the changes is on ensuring a common U.S. strategy rather than a collection of individual departmental and agency efforts and on mobilizing and involving all available U.S. government assets in the operation. Two founding documents, both signed in late 2005, gave direction to the process. On the civilian and interagency side, National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) established a broad outline of the new approach and gave general guidelines as to the development of the interagency process regarding SSTR operations. On the military side, Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.05 provided the structure to revamp the whole way that the armed forces plan, prepare, and execute SSTR operations. There has been a great deal of activity in terms of complying with NSPD-44, and there has clearly been progress. But one of the most vexing problems centers on the whole issue of civilian agency participation in the planning for and implementation of SSTR operations.

The question we examine in this report is how the Army can assist in making key civilian agencies more capable partners to the Army in the planning and execution of stability operations. The research sought to identify the specific agencies with capabilities relevant to stability operations and the areas of leverage that the U.S. Army has when it comes to making these agencies more effective partners for the Army in stability operations.

The Army has great interest in the success of NSPD-44 and its goals of a “whole of government” approach to SSTR operations, but the Army also has low leverage over the process. In addition, the DoD and the Army are in a position of trying to move the interagency collaborative process forward and simultaneously planning in case it fails. Moreover, planning for the option of the NSPD-44 process failing has the potential of helping to bring about that very effect, since it will remove the incentives for greater effort by the civilian agencies to meet the goals of NSPD-44.

The Essential Civilian Departments and Agencies

Using a “top-down” approach to identify the key U.S. government agencies that have capabilities useful in SSTR operations, we identified the most important agencies that need to be involved in the *strategic-level* planning and implementation process for SSTR operations. We focused on the agencies that have the appropriate expertise, an externally focused capacity to act, and the developmental perspective that is essential in SSTR operations. Identifying the main actors allows for the formalization of their roles as lead agencies in specific domains as well as the agencies that will be supporting them. We used the Essential Tasks Matrix (ETM) sector-level tasks to structure our findings. We also used post-2001 U.S. budgetary trends in terms of funding of external stabilization and reconstruction efforts as a check on our results. We assembled a sector-by-sector list of the lead and primary implementing agencies for all of the ETM sectors. Table S.1 is a summary list of organizations that will be the most important interagency partners for the DoD in any future SSTR operation.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the necessary partner, as it is the only major U.S. government organization that focuses solely on international capacity building and development. The U.S. Department of State (DoS) is the other main partner, with its input focused on the rule of law and democracy building. The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) is an important provider of technical assistance in rule of law–related training for foreign officials and

Table S.1
Key Interagency SSTR Operation Planning Partners

<p>Department of State</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) • Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) • Democracy and Global Affairs (G) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (G/DRL) – Population, Refugees, and Migration (G/PRM) • Political-Military Affairs (T/PM) • International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (P/INL) • Office of International Health Affairs (OES/IHA) • Regional Bureaus <p>Department of Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal Division • Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training (OPDAT) • International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) <p>Office of Management and Budget</p>	<p>U.S. Agency for International Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy, Conflict & Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Office of Democracy and Governance (DG) – Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) – Office of Food for Peace (FFP) – Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) – Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) • Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade (EGAT) • Global Health (GH) • Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC) • Regional Bureaus <p>Department of Treasury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) <p>Department of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
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police officers. The U.S. Department of Treasury is a key supporter of USAID's economic stabilization efforts. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (DoA), through its Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), provides technical assistance and training to promote sustainable agricultural production and economic growth. The Office of Management and Budget has a crucial underlying role in coordinating the funding of any SSTR effort. Of course, the list of departments and agencies where relevant SSTR expertise resides in the U.S. government is far wider. However, the list above includes the essential U.S. government organizations that must be included in the strategic planning process.

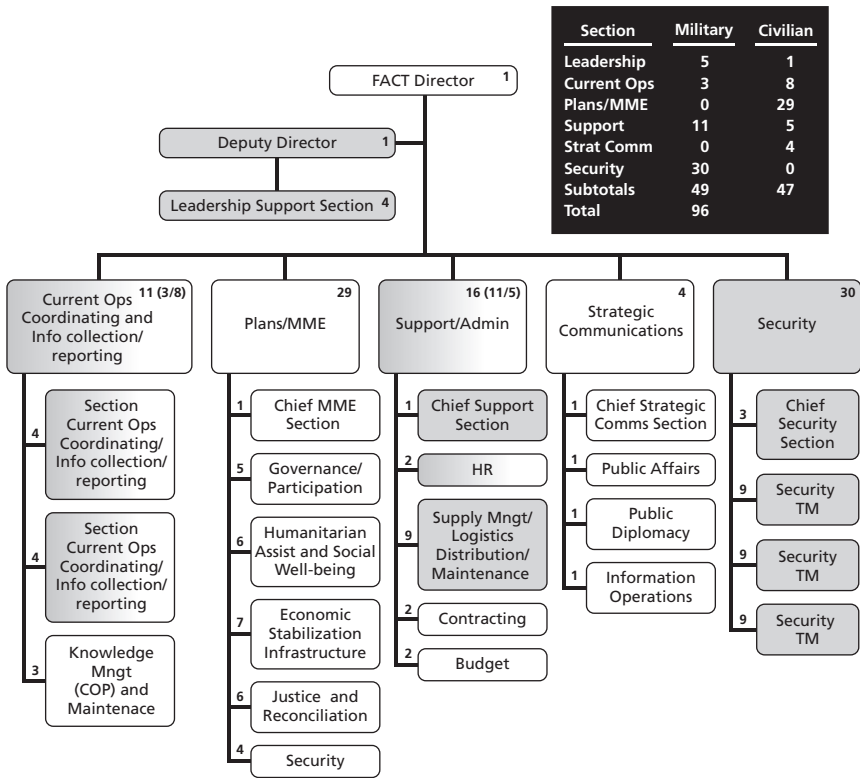
Civilian Personnel at the Tactical Level

Using a “bottom-up” approach, we developed a method of finding the expertise and skill sets required at the *tactical level* of SSTR operations. Needs for specific skills are context-dependent. Using our method, planners can identify where in the U.S. government the needed skills reside, in readiness to draw upon them to assist in the implementation of SSTR operation goals. We relied on the experience of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) (including direct communications with PRT personnel currently or recently deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq) to come up with the operational concept for a tactical interagency team and define the capabilities that such interagency teams might require. We categorized the capabilities that tactical interagency teams might require into functional and organizational and then developed eight mission-essential tasks for the teams: (1) deploy; (2) assess the operational environment; (3) promote effective and legitimate local political authority and civil administration; (4) implement programs to address operational environment needs; (5) assist the local government to identify and resolve infrastructure needs; (6) provide security coordination; (7) protect the organization; (8) sustain the organization. This process allowed us to identify the civilian occupations that are appropriate to augmenting the interagency team, on the basis of the mission that might be assigned to it. Using federal personnel databases, we then developed and tested a way of locating the required skills in the U.S. government. The method is usable by planners to identify sources of civilian expertise that would augment or supplement military personnel engaged at the tactical level in a SSTR operation. The expertise may reside in purely domestically oriented departments and agencies that do not have the capabilities to deploy personnel to a SSTR operation. Reachback capabilities may need to be developed in such cases.

Based on our assessment of the capabilities that might be needed for the interagency tactical teams, we developed an organizational structure for a Field Advance Civilian Team (FACT). The standard template for a FACT is presented in Figure S.1.

Some of the tasks in a FACT can be carried out only by military personnel. Other tasks can be done by either military or civilian

**Figure S.1
Proposed Field ACT Structure**



NOTE: Gray background: Army personnel; white background: civilian personnel; mixed gray/white background: either civilian or Army personnel.

RAND MG801-5.1

personnel. Highly skilled civilian personnel may be more appropriate for some positions.

Why Aren't the Civilian Agencies More Effective?

While civilian agencies clearly have many of the capabilities required in SSTR operations, they lack the capacity. The two primary DoD interagency partners, DoS and USAID, are relatively small organizations with limited surge capacity to support large-scale, complex SSTR

operations. In fact, based on the numbers and availability of appropriate personnel, the organic capacity of the Army in stability operations (most of all, Civil Affairs) can dwarf the capacity of USAID and DoS. Moreover, numbers alone tell only a part of the story. There is a very different orientation between the civilian agencies and the military. The former's organizational focus is on the steady state, while the latter's focus is contingency response. In a nutshell, the difference boils down to the contrast between the way a fire department and a police department operate. A fire department exists to deal with occasional but potentially serious threats to public safety, such as fires and natural disasters. Fire department personnel spend their days training for putting out a fire and are on call to respond to a disaster. A police department exists to provide security from criminals. Police department personnel spend their days patrolling and reassuring the public through their presence. They react to sudden major outbreaks of crime in one area by redeploying personnel from their usual duties, though that means that some areas then have less police presence, thus putting public safety at more risk in those places. Granted, every police department has some capability to shift resources to meet emergency needs, but its general mode of operation differs from that of the fire department.

Civilian agencies operate on the police department model of continuous full employment of resources and have little slack in the system, whereas the military operates more on the fire department model of preparing for a contingency. The different orientations mean that, in reality, unless the United States made a choice to abandon or scale down many of its responsibilities abroad, most of the civilian personnel with SSTR-relevant expertise cannot be redeployed for SSTR contingencies without a damaging impact on current U.S. commitments. The creation, under the auspices of DoS's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), of a civilian active and reserve corps aims to address the basic problem of a lack of deployable civilian personnel with SSTR-relevant skills and increase the overall availability of such personnel. While potentially promising, the effort remains at an early stage of growth.

Although myriad specific problems in civilian agency participation in SSTR operations have been identified, they can be categorized

into a few major issue areas: (1) lack of financial resources and constraints on use of these resources; (2) shortage of deployable, appropriate, and trained personnel; and (3) approaches to planning that are not fully compatible with planning conducted by the military. There is a structural nature to these problems that explains, at least partially, why they have recurred despite being identified repeatedly.

There is a basic difference in the type of planning and approaches to planning between DoD and the civilian agencies. The gist of the difference is that the military has a deliberate planning process that is useful in crisis-action planning, and planning takes up a great deal of effort at DoD. In contrast, and reflecting their steady-state focus, the type of planning conducted at civilian agencies tends to be more akin to what the military views as programming. The reasons for such a situation are embedded in the mandates of the organizations and their incentive systems. Planning processes at civilian agencies reflect an approach to planning with resource constraints in mind, since, in comparison with DoD budgets, the DoS and USAID budgets are minuscule. The limited resources and regular budget cuts for the main civilian SSTR-relevant agencies have fostered a culture of planning that boils down to appropriation of resources (i.e., programming) for what is feasible and achievable in a persistent context of uncertain funding and in conditions of open-ended missions.

Incentive Problems with Collaboration

Interagency collaboration for SSTR operations—as outlined in NSPD-44—means a change in existing patterns of behavior by the relevant U.S. government agencies and departments, and, as such, it entails organizational change and adaptation. But organizational change and adaptation in public organizations is not a simple matter, and despite the presence of dedicated individuals in place, interagency collaboration on SSTR operations has fallen short of expectations, especially of those in the military.

The basic problem that has led to less-than-desired interagency collaboration in SSTR operations centers on incentive problems faced by

public organizations. Even though national-level goals may call for collaborative action, unless an agency has an institutional incentive to participate in such action, the extent of its participation is likely to be suboptimal from a national perspective. High-level exhortations and directives for organizational action that are not aligned with the basic mission of an organization do not have much chance for success, since the incentive system is aligned with the primary mission of the organization and not with what the directive may exhort the organization to do.

Any nontrivial collaborative action by a public organization is unlikely to entail minor costs because of the elements required for organizational change and the limited flexibility of public organizations to engage in quick organizational change. Since the costs of organizational change often come from a reshuffling of resources, the change entails a reprioritization that can only be justified in terms of the organizational mission. This makes alignment of collaboration-induced change with the public organization's mission especially important. Even when an organization's primary mission is modified, or, in other words, in a situation where the basic incentive problem is addressed, there are structural impediments to organizational change that can delay and eventually dilute the extent of change. These are aspects that are common to any organization, and include individual-level reluctance to change, existing organizational structures that inhibit new behavior patterns, and difficulties in funding the short-term costs of change. Finally, and looming over all change in public organizations, there is the fact that high-level political support and interest in any given issue tends to be fleeting, and yet only sustained high-level executive attention is likely to lead to long-term organizational change.

The incentive problem represents a basic contextual factor for DoD interaction with civilian agencies in SSTR operations. The central aspect of all of this is that participation in any form in SSTR operations by U.S. departments and agencies that are domestically focused is outside of their main institutional goals and brings up the incentive problem. Even for those agencies that have an external orientation, participation in SSTR operations may be tangential. Put in other words, the problems are deeply structural and inherent to the way public organizations function in the United States. Modern public administration empha-

sizes institutional autonomy, compartmentalization, and concentration of expertise and specialization. Such a structure is not easily adaptable to cross-cutting and highly complex problems. SSTR operations are highly complex and require a variety of expertise for purposes of development.

Rapid action and major contribution of personnel or expertise by a domestically oriented civilian department or agency to a SSTR operation is not a realistic expectation, as these agencies are not structured for nor capable of such actions. In effect, the civilian agencies are asked to participate in a process that is outside of their basic mission, yet such action entails organizational adaptation in circumstances where the incentives for organizational change are lacking. The civilian agencies that are externally oriented (USAID, DoS) or have development and externally oriented components (such as DoA's FAS) are at least oriented in line with the demands of SSTR operations, but they are fully engaged and, with the exception of some minor components such as USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs), are not structured for rapid action. Moreover, their incentive systems are aligned with their "standard" mission.

Studies of successful organizational change under nonincentivized conditions indicate that leadership is the central factor for the success of interagency collaboration among public organizations. The crucial role that leadership can play is in enacting a common view of the problem domain and convincing the stakeholders that they have both high stakes (interests) and are dependent on others for a solution to the problem (interdependence). Building a collaborative network of managers in agencies with skills relevant to SSTR operations also can promote organizational adaptation and change. Over time, such a network will amount to incremental gains in trust and ability to collaborate.

Options

There is no silver bullet available to the Army to fix, in the short term, the problem of civilian agencies' low ability to participate in the planning and implementation of SSTR operations. Addressing the causes of the low collaborative capacity for SSTR operations can take place

only at the national level, since the basic problems are structural. There are a number of department-level steps that DoD can take to improve planning and coordination, though they address the symptoms more than the causes. The Army can take some steps that complement and may launch a long-term process of incremental change in interagency collaborative capacity.

National-Level Options

The options below focus on addressing the fundamental structural impediments to increased collaborative capacity. Truly tackling the causes can be done only at the national level, and the steps entail changing the basic incentive structure. The list of potential steps includes the following:

- Congress and the President launch a debate on a fundamental reform of federal public administration in the national security sphere, focusing specifically on SSTR operations as the current most pressing need.
- Either alone or in conjunction with an interagency Goldwater-Nichols Act, the Congress and the President establish a standing interagency planning capability for SSTR operations.
- Congress and the President adopt a long-term plan to increase the capacity of the Department of State and USAID to participate in SSTR operations.
- The President approve an oversight and implementation plan for NSPD-44, with specific benchmarks and metrics to assess progress.
- Congress increase funding for the civilian corps.

DoD-Level Options

The options below focus on mitigating some of the problems stemming from misaligned incentive structures at the level of federal public administration. While the steps do not address the basic causes, they can ameliorate some of the symptoms and increase collaborative capacity. The list of potential steps includes the following:

- DoD institutionalize and regularize the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) and encourage interagency participation in this organization.
- DoD create and institutionalize a J-9 at the Combatant Command (COCOM) level.
- DoD set up an annual interagency national-level “Title 10” game focused on the planning and execution of a SSTR operation, and with civilian agencies having a high profile.
- DoD create an interagency SSTR “battle lab” that would focus on interagency organizational and conceptual tasks.

Army-Level Options

The options below focus on increasing interaction, providing appropriate planning expertise, eliminating impediments to collaboration, and, in general, acting to reduce the civilian agencies’ costs of organizational change and adaptation and build an interagency collaborative network. The Army can provide enablers so as to offset the low capacity and disincentives to organizational change. It is our premise that simply expecting the civilian agencies to act just because of a high-level directive is not enough. We have two sets of options. The first set outlines the options that HQDA can implement. The second set of options deals with Army Civil Affairs. The reason we present these as two sets of options is based on what we heard repeatedly in the course of our research, that Army Civil Affairs “is broken” (a comment we interpreted to mean that Army Civil Affairs is a branch of the Army that is probably facing the most stress in terms of repeated deployments and demands placed upon its personnel as part of post-2001 operations). Since Civil Affairs is where the Army’s expertise on civil-military planning resides, and since Army Civil Affairs planning teams could play the role of enablers of civilian agency participation, the situation needs quick attention and action.

The list of potential steps for HQDA includes the following:

- The Army create horizontal “grassroots” links that can build habitual links and foster relationships between civilian and Army SSTR-related planners and organizations.

- The Army create an up-to-date database and enforce a system to track the SSTR-relevant civilian-related skills acquired by all active and reserve personnel as well as its civilian employees.
- The Army assess the extent of support that it will need to provide to FACTs and the changes to Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMPLF) that cooperation with FACTs entails.
- The Army reassess information sharing policies from the perspective of more flexibility and decentralization in access control.

The list of potential steps that are centered on Army Civil Affairs includes the following:

- The Army establish additional active Civil Affairs Planning Teams (CAPTs) or their functional equivalents.
- The Army explore the feasibility of providing Civil Affairs (CA) planner support to the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG) Secretariat, Integration Planning Cell (IPC), S/CRS, and USAID.
- The Army establish a more robust standing strategic and operational planning capability that can support both interagency and Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) SSTR operations civil-military operations (CMO) planning.
- The Army ensure that its CAPTs, functional specialists, and G-9 staff are adequately trained and ready to support interagency and GCC planning efforts.
- The Army embed properly trained CA planners in SSTR-related organizations that have a planning function.
- The Army increase the number of active duty strategic and operational CA planners and specialists within its force structure.