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Enhancing Civilian Agency Participation in Stability Operations

Stability operations (encompassing stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction) are intended to prevent or halt the deterioration of security, economic, and/or political systems; establish a safe environment for the local populace; shift responsibility for security, services, economic development, and governance from the intervening military and civilian agencies to the host nation; and rebuild degraded, damaged, or destroyed infrastructure.

U.S. plans for stability operations emphasize a “whole of government” approach in which civilian and military agency efforts reflect a common U.S. strategy, though such an approach has been difficult to implement in practice. The Army asked RAND Arroyo Center to assess the problems of civilian capacity for stability operations and to identify options for making key civilian agencies more capable partners to the Army in such operations.

Essential Civilian Agencies for Planning for Stability Operations

The Arroyo researchers identified the main civilian agencies for strategic-level planning of stability operations by linking the major categories of stability operations tasks to the U.S. civilian agencies that have expertise in these tasks. 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 is the other main partner, focused on the rule of law and democracy building. Specific agencies within the Departments of Justice, Treasury, and Agriculture also play key roles in strategic-level planning for stability operations.

Capabilities Required at the Tactical Level

Drawing on the experiences of Provincial Reconstruction Teams carrying out stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Arroyo researchers iden-

Key Points

- Only a limited number of government civilian agencies need to be involved in planning stability operations.
- Civilian agencies have relevant skills but lack capacity.
- Collaboration is impeded by structural problems that center on incentive issues.
- Real solutions must take place at national level, but DoD and the Army can take some steps to improve collaboration.

tified mission-essential tasks of proposed tactical-level interagency teams (Field Advance Civilian Teams, or FACTs) that would support the efforts of legitimate local governments to build public institutions that can deliver public goods and services. They compiled these tasks into occupational groups, identified appropriate civilian occupations, and then located required skills using federal personnel databases. The researchers proposed a basic FACT structure that has organic functional and organizational capabilities (see the figure).

Civilian Agencies Have Limited Capacity

Although civilian agencies have most of the skills required for large-scale, complex stability operations, they lack sufficient capacity. For example, most personnel in civilian agencies with expertise relevant to stability operations cannot be redeployed for these operations without damaging current domestic commitments. Unlike the military services, civilian agencies are focused on steady-state operations, which call for continuous full employment of resources and leave little slack in the system.

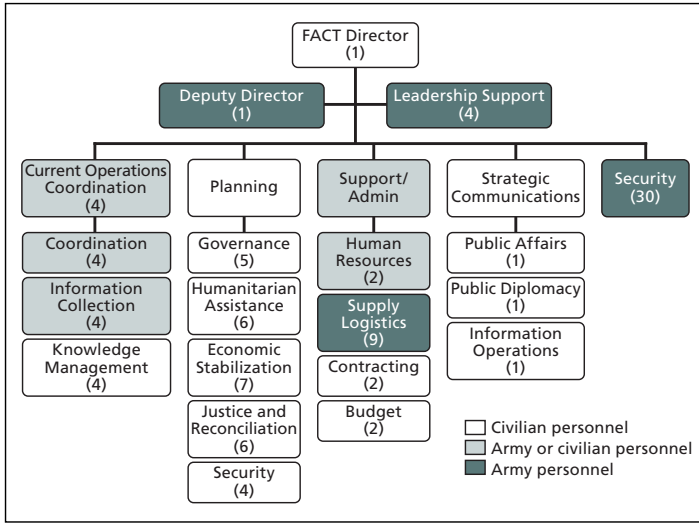
Moreover, stability operations are outside the main institutional goals of domestically focused

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Proposed FACT Structure



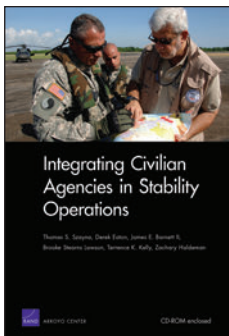
civilian agencies, and even for agencies having an international orientation, participation in stability operations may be tangential. Consequently, when national-level goals call for interagency cooperation, the contributions of individual agencies may be suboptimal unless other incentives for collaboration exist.

Structural Problems Require National-Level Solutions, but the Army Can Enhance Collaboration

Addressing the low collaborative capacity for stability operations can take place only at the national level, since the basic problems are deeply structural and inherent to the way public

organizations function in the United States. The federal public administration system needs to address the basic incentive problem that currently hinders cross-agency collaboration. An interagency “Goldwater-Nichols Act” might strengthen the links across agencies with a role in the national security policy realm. Other options include increasing stability-related personnel of the Department of State and USAID, funding and training the civilian response corps, holding civilian agencies accountable for stability operations efforts, and establishing a standing interagency planning capability for stability operations. The DoD could improve interagency collaboration by mitigating problems stemming from misaligned incentive structures, including institutionalization of cooperative venues and exercises that can fully integrate civilian assets.

The Army could take steps to increase collaboration with civilian agencies by increasing interaction, providing appropriate planning expertise, and easing the challenges of organizational change. For example, at the headquarters level, the Army could create horizontal links to build habitual connections and foster relationships between civilian and Army stability-related planners and organizations, reassess information-sharing policies to improve access, and assess the support it will need to provide to the proposed FACTs. The Army could also enhance its own Civil Affairs Branch by establishing additional active civil affairs planning teams, making such teams available to critical contingency-specific civilian organizations, embedding properly trained civil affairs planners in civilian organizations with stability-related expertise, and increasing the number of active-duty strategic and operational Civil Affairs planners and specialists within the Army’s force structure. ■



This research brief describes work done for the RAND Arroyo Center and documented in *Integrating Civilian Agencies in Stability Operations*, by Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, James E. Barnett, II, Brooke Stearns Lawson, Terrence K. Kelly, and Zachary Haldeman, MG-801-A, 2009 (available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG801.html>). This research brief was written by Susan K. Woodward. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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