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STABILITY, SECURITY, TRANSITION, AND RECONSTRUCTION  
OPERATIONS: TURNING POLICY AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES  
INTO OPERATIONAL LEVEL ACTION.

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy, or the Department of the Army.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

16 May 2006

## **Abstract**

### STABILITY, SECURITY, TRANSITION, AND RECONSTRUCTION OPERATIONS: TURNING POLICY AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES INTO OPERATIONAL LEVEL ACTION.

In the last six months, the President, Department of Defense, and State Department have all issued directives that establish Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations as a fundamental component of diplomatic and military strategy alike. This elevated status for "nation building" operations comes in the wake of a series of highly critical reports about the stagnation of stabilization efforts supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The purpose of this paper is to identify reasons for that stagnation and recommend potential remedies for it.

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## INTRODUCTION

As the U.S. military progresses through a period of significant transformation, we find that operational level responsibilities are being pushed to ever lower echelons of command. Those responsibilities associated with the Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) mission are particularly noteworthy. Previously, most SSTR tasks outside of the "Security" domain were primarily the responsibility of a Combatant Command, if not that of a U.S. Government (USG) agency other than the Department of Defense. Now, commanders at the two star level must be prepared to accomplish those same tasks as well.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze current and/or developing policies, strategies, and capabilities of the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of State (DOS) and their sister agencies in terms of the SSTR mission. This analysis will demonstrate that, regardless of changes initiated primarily at strategic levels, there are shortfalls in the mechanisms used to translate strategic level planning into action at the operational level. Once identified, the remainder of the discussion is dedicated to a proposal for a potential remedy for those shortfalls—the development of the Operational Reconstruction Cell.

## **Defining the Requirements: A Look at NSPD-44 and DODD 3000.05**

At present, the U.S. Government finds itself in a period of dramatic change in both its structure and its ways of doing business. Perhaps more than any other agency, the Department of Defense exemplifies this fact. The U.S. Armed Services are not only mid-stride in the process of "transformation", radical changes to force structure and composition, but they are also faced with significant modifications to their roles and responsibilities in support of U.S. policy and strategic objectives.

One of the most significant of these role changes within DOD is the increased emphasis on military support to stability and reconstruction operations. Since the completion of post-World War II reconstruction operations in Europe and Japan, the U.S. military has been predominantly concerned with combat operations and the establishment of security in otherwise hostile environments. Beyond that, stability or reconstruction tasks have been assumed to be the responsibility of civilian agencies<sup>1</sup>. DOD Directive 3000.05, however, officially changes that interpretation of the military's role. Now, DOD policy states "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission...given priority comparable to

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. non-DoD agencies such as Department of State, USAID, etc.

combat operations".<sup>2</sup> In order to fully understand the basis of this change, we must take a closer look at DODD 3000.05 and the directive from which it was derived, National Security Presidential Directive #44 (NSPD-44): Management of Inter-agency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Although similar observations have been made in reference to operations predating Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)<sup>3</sup>, the probable impetus for the development of NSPD-44 and DODD 3000.05 comes from several reports and analyses of on-going operations in Iraq. One such report from the U.S. Institute of Peace cites interagency planning problems, poorly defined roles and missions, and capability mismatches between military and civilian agencies as the key factors in the problematic execution of stability operations in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> NSPD-44 and DODD 3000.05 represent an attempt to fix these problems, but analysis of these directives demonstrates that they fall short of that goal.

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<sup>2</sup> United States. Department of Defense. *Directive 3000.05 (DODD 3000.5): Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. Department of Defense, 28 November 2005, para. 4.1.

<sup>3</sup> Buss, John C. *The State Department Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization and its Interaction with the Department of Defense*. Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, Vol. 09-05, July 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Ward, Celeste J. *The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Governance in Iraq: Lessons Identified*. Special Report 139, United States Institute of Peace, May 2005.

NSPD-44 is the base document from which SSRT tasks are defined and responsibilities are assigned to the various executive departments and agencies in order to accomplish those tasks. The directive states, "The Secretary of State shall coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts, involving all U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities."<sup>5</sup> By virtue of this designation alone, there is a potential unity of effort problem in the conduct of SSTR operations.

In scenarios like OIF, where major military operations and SSTR activities occur in the same time and space, parallel plans are required for each because they are led by different agencies. NSPD-44 outlines State Department and DOD coordination responsibilities aimed at resolving potential conflicts in these situations<sup>6</sup>, but problems are still likely at operational and/or tactical levels where units tend to be executive agents for both plans. In such a case, one of two problems is likely to occur: either lower echelon commands are left without guidance when DOS developed plans are not communicated beyond the strategic level, or they are put in a

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. President. Presidential Directive. "Subject: Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization." National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44, 7 December 2005, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.5.

position where they subject to the conflicting orders of "two masters".

While DODD 3000.05 clearly adds emphasis to the military component of the SSTR mission, it places potentially overwhelming responsibilities on DOD Components and contributes to the confusion with roles and responsibilities outlined above. The directive concedes, "Many stability operations tasks are best performed by indigenous, foreign, or U.S. civilian professionals", but goes on to state, "Nonetheless, U.S. military forces shall be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so."<sup>7</sup> In order to accomplish this "be prepared to" mission, the directive defines dozens of requirements for the various DOD Components including the Regional Combatant Commands (RCCs).

One example of the RCC requirements is the task to conduct intelligence campaign planning for stability operations including analysis of things like social structures, infrastructure systems, and sanitation and health structures.<sup>8</sup> Each RCC has the capability to perform such analyses within the framework of its Standing Joint Force Headquarters Core Element (SJTFHQ (CE)) which contains a core

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<sup>7</sup> DODD 3000.05, 28 November 2005, para. 4.3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., para. 5.9.2.

of civil and/or social infrastructure experts in its ONA and Plans Cells<sup>9</sup>, but that capability is limited when it comes to planning and executing simultaneous JTF operations within its region.

In this scenario, JTF responsibilities are delegated to subordinate commands which are fully capable of command and control (C2) of combat operations. They are not, however, organically equipped or manned to plan or execute SSTR missions. Therefore, the RCC is forced to divide its resources and support each JTF with diminished capabilities.

**Implementing NSPD-44 and DODD 3000.05:  
Current/Developing Strategies and Capabilities in Support  
of SSTR Operations**

The State Department and DOD both recognize the importance of SSTR missions and the inherent difficulty in accomplishing them. As such, each department is aggressively pursuing the development of new and/or refined strategies, procedures, and capabilities focused on achieving SSTR objectives in complicated, interagency environments. In this section, those initiatives sponsored by DOD are identified and

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<sup>9</sup> United States. Department of Defense., Joint Forces Command. *Standard Operating Procedure & Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures For The Standing Joint Force Headquarters Core Element*. 14 December 2004, sec. 2.04.

analyzed followed by a similar analysis of State Department initiatives.

Beyond the guidance provided in DODD 3000.05, DOD efforts to improve SSTR related capabilities are focused in three primary areas: transformation/expansion of U.S. Army Civil Affairs (CA) forces, incorporation of organic CA staff/liaison elements to Army commands at all levels battalion and higher, and the continued development of RCC staff components like the SJTFHQ (CE) and the Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group (JIACG).

With respect to the transformation of forces, current CA force design projections show nearly a 100% increase in Active Component troops and significant restructuring of units to meet U.S. Army modularity requirements. In the USAR units, the increase in troop strength is not as significant (~15%), but unit restructuring is comparable to that of their AC counterparts.<sup>10</sup> Without a doubt, these changes will result in increased SSTR related capabilities.

The benefits, however, will surface predominantly at the tactical level. Although CA units do have some capability to plan and/or manage major infrastructure, social services, and government functions, their primary expertise is in the

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<sup>10</sup> United States. Department of Defense., United States Army Civil Affairs and PSYOP Command. *Organizational Design Paper for Civil Affairs FDU 05-1*. 30 June 2005.

performance of "triage" in those areas until they can facilitate a hand-off of responsibility to another agency. Similarly, the new, organic CA assets being fielded at Division-level and below will provide significant assistance in "disaster response" type operations. Higher order tasks, however, are beyond their capabilities.

RCC capabilities in staff components like the SJTFHQ are significant and consistently improving with experience gained over time in these relatively new organizations.<sup>11</sup> Those capabilities, however, are typically most influential in the strategic-operational band of the operations spectrum and limited in "multi-tasking" ability as explained in the previous section. When RCC staff limitations are combined with the tactical focus of CA units, the end result is a gap in capability to support SSTR missions at the operational level.

Under the direction of NSPD-44, the State Department organized the U.S. Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). The intended purpose for this organization is to be the primary non-military vehicle/lead agent for the planning and execution

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<sup>11</sup> SJTFHQ (CE)s have only been a DOD-mandated requirement since FY05. United States. Department of Defense., Joint Forces Command. *Standard Operating Procedure & Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures For The Standing Joint Force Headquarters Core Element*. 14 December 2004.

of SSRT missions per the provisions of NSPD-44. On paper, the S/CRS is a robust outfit comprised of five linked staff sections: The International Diplomatic Coordination/Military Liaison Division, Monitoring and Planning Division, Humanitarian/Reconstruction/Economic Stabilization Division, Transitional Security/Civil Administration/Governance Division, and Resource Management Division. Each division, in turn, is a combination of specialists pulled from the full spectrum of U.S. Government (USG) Departments and Agencies. Additionally, the S/CRS also plans to develop regionally-focused, deployable planning/evaluation teams once the initial organization is established. Unfortunately, budget constraints have stunted the organization's development. S/CRS had no budget at all until more than a year after its inception, and it is currently funded to fill only thirty-seven of eighty designated positions.<sup>12</sup>

Even if the S/CRS becomes fully funded and manned, it will still have to overcome significant roadblocks with respect to interagency coordination and interoperability in environments where combat and SSRT operations occur in parallel. S/CRS planners have identified this problem and are

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<sup>12</sup> Buss, John C. *The State Department Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization and its Interaction with the Department of Defense*. Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, Vol. 09-05, July 2005.

currently developing models for planning/liaison teams that would deploy to work with units at the operational and tactical levels.<sup>13</sup> Although these teams would be a positive step in the direction of effective joint SSTR operations, they are not the entire solution by any means—especially in the short term.

First, the S/CRS has to grow to the point that it could field the teams. Second, the current S/CRS models are temporary in nature even under optimal manning conditions. As it stands, the teams would be pulled “out of hide” from the existing organizational structure rather than establishing permanent teams that could work on a regular basis with a supported unit. Thus, such teams would only be an asset to a Division/Task Group level staff deploying as a JTF HQ in a crisis situation. However, in terms of future operations and contingency planning, that same staff remains incapable of thorough SSTR related planning on an everyday basis.

**Bridging the Gaps of SSTR Operations: The Development of  
“Operational Reconstruction Teams”**

The aforementioned policies and initiatives, military and civilian, all have benefits and pitfalls in terms of SSTR

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<sup>13</sup> James W. Ruf, S/CRS Planner, telephonic interview by author, 1 May 2006.

mission accomplishment. By their joint/interagency nature alone, it is unlikely that a perfect solution will ever be found for the conduct of SSTR operations. This is particularly true in the context of operations like OIF. In OIF, SSTR activities lose traction where "the rubber meets the road" at operational level's lower end<sup>14</sup> because relevant USG civilian agencies are understrength and unable to dedicate support, and their military counterparts lack the expertise and/or organic capability necessary to do so.<sup>15</sup>

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) utilized in Afghanistan and being fielded now in Iraq are a positive step toward bridging that gap for the supported commander by providing planning expertise and interagency know-how in the short term. With that in mind, it is probable that the same concept would have long-term benefits after some modifications. That is why development of "Operational Reconstruction Cell" (ORCs) should be an integral part of DOD transformation and development of SSRT related capabilities.

The ORC proposed here would be a combination of the PRT, SJFHQ (CE), and S/CRS concepts to form a *permanent* planning

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<sup>14</sup> Although they are traditionally tactical units, Divisions and BCTs/RCTs are often responsible for execution of operational level SSRT supporting tasks. From author's own experience supporting OIF, 2004-2005.

<sup>15</sup> McCaffrey, Barry R. "Academic Report-Trip to Iraq and Kuwait, Thursday 13 April through Thursday 20 April 2006." United States Military Academy. Department of Social Sciences Memorandum, 25 April 2006, p.5.

and coordination cell at the Division (or service equivalent) level operating in conjunction with the unit's future plans element.<sup>16</sup> In concept, the cell's capability/experience level falls somewhere in the range between that of a PRT (fully manned, minus its security component) and the analogous component of a SJFHQ (CE). Lastly, it is manned primarily by representatives of applicable USG civilian agencies or departments like USAID, DOT, and DOS serving short, two or three year "field tours", as opposed to hiring contracted "permanent party" civilians with expertise in the same disciplines. Together, these specialists would provide the planning capabilities required for SSRT operations, as well as considerable savvy in conducting interagency coordination.

At first glance, the ORC concept seems superfluous as a permanently billeted entity. However, its utility becomes apparent when we go back and look at how the concept can be applied to the policy and implementation problems identified in the sections above. Such an analysis demonstrates how the ORC dramatically increases SSRT capabilities at both the

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<sup>16</sup> Because of the mid/long term nature of SSRT-type operations the "future ops" orientation of the cell is essential and analogous to SJTFHQ counterparts at the RCC level. United States. Department of Defense., Joint Forces Command. *Standard Operating Procedure & Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures For The Standing Joint Force Headquarters Core Element*. 14 December 2004.

Division and RCC levels and supports S/CRS requirements as well.

One potential employment option for the ORC is to deploy it, along with pertinent members of other staff sections, to priority countries in the RCC's theater. Done in a fashion similar to the Military Liaison Elements (MLEs) deployed by the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), an ORC+ would conduct a short term link up with a Country Team in the supported RCC's AOR. Once there, the team would be able to conduct functional assessments and initial coordination as directed by the RCC staff. Such a deployment could pay several dividends.

The primary benefit is that the RCC meets the SSRT planning and assessment requirements dictated by DODD 3000.05 while maintaining the ready status of its SJFHQ (CE). Meanwhile, the deployment of multiple ORCs from supporting commands helps accomplish the "engagement" objectives that are a part of every RCC's Theater Security and Cooperation Plan (TSCP). Also, military members of the ORC+ gain valuable interagency experience in a "down range" environment, as well as the converse benefit of the civilian staffers gaining valuable insight into the military side of interagency operations in a deployment environment.

The ORC could make incredible contributions to unit readiness in several ways at home station as well. First and foremost, is the obvious benefit of having subject matter experts readily available for improved planning at the Division level. Whether the planning is for a disaster response mission typical of the unit's traditional tactical role, or for SSRT operations in contingencies where the Division assumes the operational role of the JTF HQ, the unit is better off for it.

The ORC would also be an invaluable tool in expanding the professional development of leaders at subordinate levels. This could be accomplished by teaching SSRT and/or interagency process related classes in support of (Non-Commissioned) Officer Development Programs. Field exercises would also be greatly enhanced through the ORC's ability to develop more comprehensive and realistic civil-military oriented training scenarios.

Lastly, the ORC concept could help break the tendency for things to get "stove-piped" in the SSRT planning process as explained above. Conversely to the increased exposure of unit to the civilian side of SSRT related training, the ORC civilians' short duration tours would be long enough to make them comfortable with the military side of interagency operations. yet short enough to maintain turnover and provide

the same opportunity to a broader population of personnel from the other USG agencies and departments. Such bi-directional exposure could have noticeable long term effects because "stove-piping" is often done simply because a lack of familiarity of requirements and procedures outside of one's normal comfort zone.

### **Conclusion**

Although NSPD-44 and DODD 3000.05 are far from perfect documents, they still provide the base for the establishment of SSTR operations as a fundamental component of U.S. diplomatic and military strategy abroad. DOD transformation initiatives and the continued development of the S/CRS are building upon that base. However, interagency coordination requirements are still clearly problematic and leave plenty of room for improvement, and developing concepts like the Operational Reconstruction Cell show great potential to take SSTR operations to the next level. Realizing that potential will certainly come with a significant cost, but we must be willing to pay that cost if we are serious about improving our SSTR capabilities across the range of U.S. Departments and Agencies. If critical components like the State Department and USAID continue to go without adequate funding, no policy,

procedure, or tool developed will overcome the problems inherent to the conduct of SSTR operations.

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