Extending the Phase Zero Campaign Mindset
Ensuring Unity of Effort

By THOMAS P. GALVIN

Proactive peacetime engagement activities reassure allies and partners, promote stability and mitigate the conditions that lead to conflict. We base our strategies on the principle that it is much more cost effective to prevent conflict than it is to stop one once it has started.

—USEUCOM Posture Statement 2006

The above statement succinctly explains the central purpose behind Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) programs. In the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) alone, there reside dozens of nations whose stability is in serious question and whose problems affect not only surrounding nations but also the AOR as a whole. For example, ungoverned and misgoverned areas in Africa are providing safe havens for transnational terrorists and organized criminal elements seeking to attack U.S. properties and interests. Armed conflict is severely destabilizing, and often it arises from factors such as poor governance and struggles for power, endemic corruption, limited economic opportunities, longstanding practices and traditions that violate human dignity, and humanitarian problems such as drugs, pandemic disease, HIV/AIDS, severe drought, or famine.

Consequently, the geographic combatant commanders (GCCs) play an important role as part of an interagency process led by the Department of State that seeks not only to prevent armed conflict, but also to help nations provide for their own people through good governance and providing basic needs and services. The United States achieves its national interests through unity of effort that ties policy with execution, especially in the political-military arena of interest to the Department of Defense (DOD).

If only things were so simple. Unfortunately, that unity of effort suffers due to a number of factors, many of them internal to the U.S. Government. On one level, the challenges are bureaucratic in nature, including budgetary restrictions, lack of interagency transparency, mismatched authorities and responsibilities, slow responsiveness, and outmoded legislation. The results can include poorly coordinated bilateral efforts that cause the target nations to seek assistance elsewhere or, worse, contribute to its instability. There have been numerous instances where our own well-intentioned laws and bureaucratic processes interfered with our ability to engage other nations, especially the same developing nations whose assistance we seek to cultivate in the war on terror. While the formation of these laws and processes was driven by legitimate concerns, the unintended consequences have had a deleterious effect on U.S. ability to meet fundamental objectives of establishing enduring partnerships. Some of the particular legal or bureaucratic problems have already been repaired, while others are in the process of being fixed.

On a second level is the problem of the overall cultural mindset that relegates TSC and other noncampaign activities—collectively referred to as Phase Zero—to secondary status behind traditional military requirements, such as training, equipping, maintaining, mobilizing, and employing the force. The mindset extends across the U.S. Government, but not without reason. After all, the bread and butter of the military is combat. We remind ourselves of that fact daily as a nation and military at war, and we expect that our fighting forces are fully equipped and ready. This is not to say that anyone considers Phase Zero unimportant. Quite the opposite is true. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) makes it clear that "addressing regional conflicts includes three..."
### Extending the Phase Zero Campaign Mindset

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levels of engagement: conflict prevention and resolution, conflict intervention, and post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. However, there is a default tendency to equate the military to warfighting, misbalancing the resources needed for the military’s role in prevention, stabilization, and reconstruction. Thus, it is difficult to resource the total Phase Zero campaign; impacts on Phase Zero considerations are underrepresented as laws and policies are proposed and established. What should be fairly small and simple operations to build partnerships and military capabilities to support U.S. interests become more difficult and complex than necessary.

Perceptions are key during Phase Zero. We may be the world’s lone superpower, but from the perspective of our target nations, we can appear sluggish and difficult to work with. That sends the wrong message not only to longstanding allies, but also to emerging partners, who are just as likely to seek assistance from another nation instead.

Phase Zero Now

In the 4th Quarter 2006 issue of Joint Force Quarterly, General Charles Wald, USAF (Ret), did an excellent job describing the value and importance of Phase Zero activities at the GCC level, going so far as to describe Phase Zero as a campaign unto itself. He defined the phase as encompassing “all activities prior to the beginning of Phase I [traditional joint campaign]—that is, everything that can be done to prevent conflicts from developing in the first place. . . .” The preventative focus of Phase Zero is less costly (both in blood and in treasure) than a reactive approach to a crisis.” He described Phase Zero as “operationalized TSC,” a convergence of TSC activities with information operations and traditional military operations that drives the campaign toward achieving a set of desired strategic effects.

How the GCC determines which TSC efforts to operationalize is a straightforward process. TSC provides the ways and means applied against national requirements to engage with a particular country to meet U.S. interests in accordance with the NSS. The Department of State establishes national policy toward that nation and promulgates plans, but the lack of corresponding authorities incurs extensive requirements to request and justify resources with an agency whose priorities may differ. If the GCC had a peer regional authority in State, they could discuss and resolve disputes, but no such regional authority exists. Instead, State allocates resources nationally, which greatly slows the allocation process and is less flexible than needed.

This situation is problematic within USEUCOM, which is responsible for TSC with 92 different countries. Given authorities to match responsibilities, USEUCOM can effectively employ the interagency process to shift resources in response to crises or changes in the strategic environment while ensuring compliance with national policy objectives. The additional steps required to secure (and sometimes resecure) and redirect previously budgeted resources severely inhibits USEUCOM responsiveness and disrupts TSC plans and operations, without particular gain.

The second challenge is the competition for Title 10 resources within DOD. This includes not only seeking adequate resources on an annual fiscal-year basis through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) but also securing forces for specific activities through the Global Force Management (GFM) process. GFM is the current DOD process of assigning, allocating, and apportioning forces to combatant commanders for conducting military capabilities to support operations, without particular gain.

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military operations. It takes the total available forces and capabilities and applies them against current and anticipated requirements. While Global Force Management was a significant improvement over previous processes, it has a downside in that the Services ultimately control the distribution of resources with the geographic combatant commands lacking direct influence in their allocation. Hence, while the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan directs GCCs to develop TSC plans, the commands do not have the authorities or resources to execute them. As with State, the geographic combatant commands and Services may differ greatly in priorities of allocating resources, potentially resulting in the commands’ needs not being met.

The third problem is legislative in nature, as the unintended second- and third-order effects of standing laws or statutes interfere with Phase Zero planning and execution. One example is a provision in Title 10 that restricts the use of U.S. funds to transport foreign forces from one AOR to another. While this enforces the responsibility for GCCs to execute TSC within their AORs, it also restricts the ability to offer, for example, the use of the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany for a combined exercise involving militaries from the U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Central Command, or U.S. Pacific Command’s AORs. Another example was the legal prohibition against all use of Federal funds for nations who were signatory to the International Criminal Court but who did not sign a bilateral Article 98 exemption with the United States. The prohibition was clearly established through the lens of traditional military operations as a means of protecting Servicemembers during combat, training, and exercises, but did not consider Phase Zero implications. Between its enactment in January 2003 until its removal in the 2007 NDAA, this restriction took a great deal of flexibility away from the GCCs due to its blanket nature. For example, geographic combatant commands could not offer International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs to key partners in the war on terror. If it had only prohibited activities that would place Servicemembers at risk of arrest and prosecution, the GCC would have retained a range of options to continue engagement.

While all three challenges highlight the inherent difficulties that geographic combatant commands face in meeting their responsibilities, they also highlight the disjointedness of the interagency approach to Phase Zero. Because Phase Zero effects can only be achieved through the concerted efforts of all elements of national power, it requires a strongly synchronized interagency effort. Instead, it is currently a military-led effort that often seems a square peg stuffed into a round hole, with TSC activities culturally viewed as second priority for the military. It should not be assumed that elevating Phase Zero activities would automatically take U.S. forces out of the fight in current operations. Instead, it would improve the calculus of the Government’s efforts to meet the NSS, ensuring that the laws, authorities, responsibilities, and allocation of resources to prevent conflict and build the military capacities of our partners are as effective and efficient as those that mobilize, train, equip, and deploy our own forces for combat. It would ensure that all elements of national power are focused, synchronized, and participating in unison. As a Center for Strategic and International Studies report states, “strategic and operational planning should be done on an interagency basis” to ensure unity of effort.

Phase Zero Campaign Basis

There are two paths reform could take. One is to institute a thorough interagency process on top of the existing bureaucracy to centralize Phase Zero and traditional campaign plan management. The other is to work within the existing system and fix what is possible quickly. We must consider that the processes in place that support Phase Zero are not completely broken. Some reforms have already been instituted that will better facilitate and resource Phase Zero activities, so it seems counterintuitive that a new level of national bureaucracy would improve efficiency or effectiveness rather than complicate matters further. It is better to focus on fixing what is broken and changing the mindset in order to ensure that Phase Zero impacts are considered in the course of doing business.

Before recommending fixes, it is best to recap what the Phase Zero campaign means and where its requirements are derived. The NSS contains numerous references to the need for working with other nations to address common security threats. Consequently, the National Defense Strategy identifies four strategic objectives for the defense establishment to support the NSS:

- securing the United States from direct attack
- securing strategic access and retaining global freedom of action
- strengthening alliances and partnerships
- establishing favorable security conditions.

The first objective focuses internally and is achieved largely through the establishment of sufficient U.S. military capability to defeat our enemies, then employing them in such a manner to dissuade and deter our enemies from attacking us. The other three, however, are externally focused and describe
what we hope to gain from our relationships with other nations.

As a companion document, the DOD releases security cooperation guidance that directs the GCCs’ planning and execution of Theater Security Cooperation within their AORs. The roles of these documents were succinctly described in the 2003 testimony of General James Jones, USMC, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

DOD’s Security Cooperation is an important instrument for executing U.S. defense strategy by building defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access and en route infrastructure. Theater Security Cooperation, an element of DOD Security Cooperation, involves those activities undertaken by the [GCCs] to implement this guidance.10

By nature, pursuing political-military relationships often requires time, trust, and persistence. Developing new military capabilities within the United States is difficult enough, and encouraging such development in other nations can be tough, particularly in postconflict situations or among poorer or weakly governed nations. Time is needed to ensure that capabilities are developed properly and employed in ways consistent with our interests. Also, absent a crisis, access to another nation’s infrastructure usually comes only after our relationship with it has matured. The decision to provide us with such access often comes at a political price to the national leader. Hence, the United States must demonstrate sufficient commitment to that nation to prove that opening access is in its interests as well as ours. Thus, while TSC strategies and their subordinate CCPs are influenced by dynamic diplomatic, informational, and economic relationships between the United States and other nations, achieving the goals and objectives of any TSC strategy requires a degree of consistency and reliability. It is important that other militaries get the message that when the U.S. military commits to an activity, it follows through unless the political situation becomes prohibitive.

Here is where the bureaucratic and legislative hurdles become problems. The mismatch of responsibilities to authorities places undue influence of the diplomatic situation on TSC execution, causing the appearance of unreliability. Furthermore, the unintended consequences of U.S. laws and regulations create inequities that cause us to treat certain countries differently from others. They inhibit the ability to procure resources under certain circumstances that should have no impact on military activities. For TSC strategies to support our national objectives, geographic combatant commands require the flexibility to apply the right resources where and when they are needed and the capability to work for the long term to ensure the solidity of our important military-to-military relationships.

Recommendations

Below is a specific list of reforms aimed at improving Phase Zero. Most lie at the interagency level within the executive branch or as legislative reforms. While a couple of the recommendations are internal to DOD, it must be noted that Defense has already taken aggressive action to support this campaign, such as pushing through Phase Zero–related funding efforts in the 2007 NDAA. However, more work needs to be done.

Expand the Scope and Authorities of the JIACG. The most important organizational reform relates to the primary interagency vehicle available to the geographic combatant commands, the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG). Joint Publication (JP) 3–08, Interagency, Intergovernmental Organizations, and Nongovernmental Organizations Coordination During Joint Operations, Vol. I, defines a JIACG as “an interagency staff group that establishes regular, timely, and collaborative working relationships between civilian and military operational planners.”11 JP 3–08 identifies the JIACG’s main purpose as to participate in “deliberate, crisis, and transition planning”12 but does not mention a role in Theater Security Cooperation. Consequently, JIACGs are designed to handle the reactive side of the spectrum and not to facilitate proactive conflict-prevention tasks. JIACGs need the skill sets for both operational planning and TSC, as they are the perfect forum to help coordinate TSC activities between the geographic combatant commands and other governmental agencies.

A second problem with the JIACG is that it serves an advisory role primarily,13 with limited decision or execution authorities. To be effective, our interagency partners must empower JIACG members to make decisions and coordinate regional interagency security cooperation activities in a fashion similar to how Offices of Defense Cooperation and Defense Attachés operate within U.S. Embassies.

Mature the Interagency Process to the Regional Level. Interagency plans and activities will be more efficient and effective as current initiatives infuse a regional approach to security cooperation, as opposed to strictly bilateral cooperation. This will allow TSC efforts to focus on common interests and threats among nations in a region, acknowledging that national borders are of little consequence to historical tribal loyalties, regional pandemics and humanitarian conditions, and transnational issues such as terrorism. It will also facilitate the development of longer-term engagement plans of 5 to 10 years that would inform the GCC 1- to 2-year focus on CCPs. These should use an effects-based deliberate planning process with concrete measures of effectiveness to facilitate multilateral TSC events and encourage regional security solutions among less-governed areas.

The State Department, which previously worked almost exclusively in a bilateral fashion, is also taking a more regional approach in its transformational diplomacy initiative for much the same reasons in order to deal with challenges that are “transnational and regional in nature,” and using regional “collaborations . . . [to] facilitate a more effective approach to building democracy and prosperity, fighting terrorism, disease, and human trafficking.” Clearly, this has potential to enhance the mutual accomplishment of our respective missions in support of national objectives. The challenge is to converge the GCC’s efforts with those of State’s emerging regional mechanisms, along with the efforts of other interagency processes.

Tie Country Funding Levels to Regional Goals. As Theater Security Cooperation should have a regional focus, so too should the resource allocation processes. The current structure built on priority countries may not achieve the desired regional effects, but funding processes that support regional contexts will definitely support our bilateral interests. A new model that directs funds to
regions and countries in support of regional objectives will strengthen the overall regionalized interagency process and achieve better results.

Increase GCC Budgetary Influence and Authority. Geographic combatant commands have insufficient influence over the vast majority of security cooperation funding and have limited discretionary authority. In fiscal year 2005, the State Department controlled 70 percent of TSC (Titles 10 and 22) funding in the USEUCOM AOR. The USEUCOM commander, who is accountable for TSC execution in his AOR, controlled only 3 percent of discretionary TSC funding.14 Expanding the JIACG or other interagency vehicles is not sufficient to give the flexibility necessary to the GCC to initiate Foreign Military Financing, IMET, and Section 1206 funding requirements with new or emerging partner nations or to address emerging requirements as they arise. The geographic combatant commander needs expanded discretionary funding authority to create efficiencies to accomplish his mandated political-military requirements in his area of responsibility more effectively.

The transformational diplomatic initiative currently under way in the State Department offers great opportunities to correct this problem. By taking a regional approach, State will operate from a perspective similar to the GCCs, which should facilitate handing over discretionary funding authority to the geographic combatant commands to meet State regional policy objectives. But we need not wait for those relationships to build. With the right authorities, GCCs would make significant progress by executing their existing CCPs.

Add Flexibility to Title 10 and Title 22. While there should be a divide between Titles 10 and 22 that reflects the responsibilities of the Departments of Defense and State, the total lack of flexibility complicates Phase Zero efforts, hamstringing the allocation of the right amount of resources to fund activities that blur traditional military operations and TSC. We need to look at this problem from the perspective of our target countries. They see only one source of assistance: the U.S. Government. Our processes should preserve that perspective. The U.S. Government must find ways to allow Title 10 to fund foreign assistance activities and Title 22 to fund certain types of operations while preserving the overall authorities of the respective departments and informed congressional oversight.

Continue to Expand Section 1206 Authorities. Beginning in 2006, Section 1206 of the NDAA gave the Department of Defense the authority to spend up to $200 million in programs intended to build the capacity of foreign military forces worldwide.15 That year, the section only granted that authority for two specific purposes: to "conduct counterterrorist operations" and to "participate in or support military and stability operations in which the U.S. Armed Forces are a participant." Although the fiscal year 2007 act includes extensions to Section 1206 traditional authorities through fiscal year 2008 with the annual authorization raised to $300 million, the purposes for which the funds can be used did not change.16 This excludes many proactive conflict-prevention activities that seek to enhance internal stability of partner nations by inculcating values such as civilian control over the military.

Supporting good governance, building strong democratic institutions, and developing future capacity for employment on operations as a U.S. partner are what a developing nation needs most. Section 1206 or similar authorities should cover a broader range of TSC activities that support these other vital goals. Also, despite the extension, Section 1206 is still viewed as a temporary program, while the intended effects require a long-term commitment to the target nations. Consonant with other budget authority recommendations above, Section 1206 should become a permanent part of the NDAA.

Eliminate Restrictions on Cross–Combatant Command Funding. Title 10, Section 1051, paragraph (b)(1) expressly limits the use of GCC funds to support a "developing country’s" participation in a TSC activity "only in connection with travel within a unified combatant command’s area of responsibility in which the developing country is located or in connection with travel to Canada or Mexico."17 The purpose was to enforce the unified combatant command boundaries to reduce the potential for redundant activities. That was acceptable when the AORs were clearly defined and distinct in their orientation. Modern global trends are blurring the AORs together, such that even developing nations have interests in other parts of the world. We have interests in ensuring that all our desired partner militaries have at least the opportunity to train and grow together, even if it means offering to send a unit from a drug-ridden sub-Saharan African or Central Asian nation to a worthy counterdrug/counterterrorism exercise in South America. Our prohibition on actions such as this makes absolutely no sense from the perspective of our partner, who has no reason for concern about our unified command plan. Combatant commanders must be able to execute TSC plans across GCC boundaries seamlessly. Doing so requires adjusting this section to provide the necessary spending authorities.

Strengthen Phase Zero Language within the UJTL. The Universal Joint Task List (UJTL) includes a number of strategic tasks and subtasks that are Phase Zero in nature. However, many of the task names and descriptors could be more strongly linked to their purpose. For example, overarching Strategic National Task 8 is called "Foster Multinational and Interagency Relations." This name does not reflect what
its subtasks require joint headquarters to do, such as supporting or conducting activities that seek to prevent conflict and build the capacities of other nations. A better task name would be “Foster Conflict Prevention through Multinational and Interagency Cooperation.” Stronger Phase Zero language in the UJTL would result in better Phase Zero language in the combatant command’s Joint Mission Essential Task Lists and therefore better integration of Phase Zero purpose and requirements during resourcing activities.

Other Intra-DOD Reforms. Significant progress has been made to reform DOD internal business practices to integrate myriad TSC strategies, but there is still more to be done. For example, regional centers, such as the Africa Center for Strategic Studies and the George C. Marshall Center, report to the USEUCOM commander, but they receive their policy direction from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and their funding from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. The regional centers would operate far more efficiently and effectively if the geographic combatant commands managed all aspects of operations and resourcing under policy guidance from the policy Under Secretary. Other initiatives such as the Global Force Management Board are still new, and their roles in supporting the TSC needs of GCCs are as yet unclear.

The Vision

These and other individual reforms will only achieve the full effect of establishing unity of effort if there is a common vision of how the interagency plans, conducts, and manages the Phase Zero campaign. Once operationalized into a standing interagency Phase Zero Campaign Plan, it will become easier to translate the NSS into a series of specific objectives geared toward preventing conflict while facilitating DOD responsibilities to plan for, fight, and win the Nation’s wars. The campaign plan would establish a common language for the desired strategic effects from Phase Zero activities and help facilitate working with Members of Congress to ensure that future legislation is harmonious with Phase Zero objectives. It would provide a long-term solution to aligning authorities, accountabilities, and responsibilities of the GCCs and the emerging regional interagency entities.

The Phase Zero campaign has already proven itself invaluable at the GCC level and directly supports the efforts of our fighting forces. Actionable intelligence, basing and infrastructure, sustainment capabilities, and coalition force commitments come from strong relationships between the United States and its partners. These relationships do not come about quickly but are built over time through a committed GCC effort that supports accomplishment of the key objectives in the NSS. The challenge now is to fix that which inhibits the geographic combatant commands and build the foundations for successful Phase Zero accomplishment in the future.

In the current dynamic global security environment, there are no nations we can afford to ignore. If we want to bring other nations on board as our partners, we have to provide the geographic combatant commanders with the flexible and responsive resources with which to do so efficiently, without undue bureaucratic delays. Otherwise, we may miss opportunities, and could risk having to later expend far greater resources to clean up another regional conflict or another emerging threat to U.S. security.

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NOTES

1 General James L. Jones, USMC, statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 7, 2006, available at <armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2006/March/Jones%202006-07-06.pdf>
8 U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 1051, paragraph (b)(1), available at <uscode.house.gov/download/title_10.shtml>
12 Ibid., II–20.
13 Ibid.
14 The funding for Theater Security Cooperation activities in the USEUCOM area of responsibility for fiscal year 2005 was $484.2 million. Department of State programs including Foreign Military Financing (FMF), IMET, peacekeeping operations, and international narcotics and law enforcement totaled $348 million, or approximately 70 percent of the total. Twenty-seven percent, or $130.2 million, was for DOD programs already earmarked, including the budgets of the Regional Centers for Strategic Studies, the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program, humanitarian assistance programs, the Counter Narcoterrorist Program, and various joint combined exercises. This left 3 percent, or $11.9 million, for the GCC’s discretionary use. USEUCOM’s State Partnership Program is a key TSC effort that receives 90 percent of its budget from these funds. These figures do not include a fiscal year 2005 FMF grant to Israel.
17 U.S. Code, Title 10, Sect. 1051.