

DASD Davidson Speech for SOLIC/NDIA Symposium

“Defense Initiative for Defense, Diplomacy & Development Operations”

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Introduction

Thank you Irene for that kind introduction. I was honored to be invited to speak to this audience.

Also, special thanks to:

NDIA, Meredith Geary, and Jim Gavrilis for their efforts to make this a successful conference.

All of you for your efforts in the current fights and to make the SOF community as potent and effective as possible.

I am humbled by the opportunity to address you today. I have a soft spot and a great deal of respect for the SOF community – and not just because I spent 2 years working in SO/LIC. My first introduction to this community was as a Navy brat, fresh out of college, living in Coronado, CA. I had a few friends in the SEAL team training there – a few who made it through and a few who did not. So I learned then what it takes to earn one’s way onto these teams. Meanwhile, I worked part time at an art gallery – owned by 2 former Navy Seals. These guys were really cool. They took me on the SEAL obstacle course on the beach, taught me about Vietnam and world politics, and they almost convinced me to jump out of an airplane in the months before I started pilot training (my dad convinced me that arriving with a broken leg would be a bad idea). But they also taught me about art and

culture – so I learned that there were many many sides to this special community and the individuals who comprise it.

Most people know that the SOF community has been absolutely essential to the work that's been done in the last ten years -- from the initial fight in Afghanistan to civil affairs, SFA, and direct action today. What people don't always appreciate is how much you have learned – and how much the rest of the force has learned from you. It was the SOF community who kept the intellectual candle burning on ideas like FID, COIN, and UW – well before FM3-24. While we were all learning Air Land Battle Doctrine in the '80's and practicing “big war” at the NTC, SOF was fine-tuning the concepts that would be rapidly leveraged by the rest of the military during the Iraq and Afghanistan fights. I know this would have been a much steeper learning curve without the knowledge brought to bear by SOF. Now, and in the coming years, as we pursue the Secretary's priorities that he laid out in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, SOF will continue to play an indispensable role as operators and as a source for new ideas and concepts.

My current vantage point:

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans, I preside over a relatively new office in the OSD structure, an office dedicated assisting the Secretary in fulfilling the his Title 10 responsibility to issue planning guidance and review military plans.. The fact that my office exists at all speaks to how seriously the Secretary and my boss, Undersecretary for Policy, Michele Flournoy, view the planning process and their duties to personally

review high priority plans. My office also sets the OSD's long range guidance for contingency plans, and facilitates interagency coordination on planning. It is through that lens that I see the steady demand for SOF carrying us through the current conflicts and well into a future in which, preventing future conflict is a top priority and operating with a complex array of partners is an imperative.

The Quadrennial Defense Review lays out the need to prevail in today's fights, prevent and deter, prepare for future conflicts, and preserve the force. Last night, Admiral Mullen discussed the challenges we face in carrying out the last "P" – preserving the force. Today, I would like to unpack the two middle "p's" – prevent and prepare and discuss how SOF will be critical to both of those core priorities.

So what kind of conflicts are we trying to prepare for and prevent?

Our Evolving Security Challenges

We live in a time of sweeping global change. New actors, good and bad, have the power to affect our national security like never before. The challenges we face—nuclear proliferation, global pandemics, climate change, transnational criminal organizations, and terrorism—are more complex than ever. We also have a larger threat from non-state actors than we could have ever expected – they are less predictable than traditional state actors and increasingly empowered. Some transnational criminal organizations are becoming equally destabilizing to the countries in which they operate.

This array of challenges means that future conflict will look more like the fights we are in today than the fights we used to like to

prepare for. Like Afghanistan and Iraq, they will be complex and population-centric. They will require, as both of the conference's award winning papers made clear, savvy, culturally aware, fighters as well as a 21st century approach to intel. They will require delicate approaches to transitioning to peace – may or may not be the same as a handoff to civilian agencies or the host nation. The lessons we have learned over the last 10 years must not be forgotten.

These complexities are compounded, as Admiral Mullen also discussed, by an emerging period of fiscal constraint for our federal government. Therefore, we must ask “what can we do smarter, more effectively, and more efficiently while still meeting our defense priorities to protect the American people?”

As this community well knows, this type of conflict requires constant vigilance and an increased understanding of the context in which we operate. In our approach, we must emphasize unity of effort with the entire US government and beyond. This concept is something that the SOF community is familiar with, and that this community has refined with different interagency stakeholders at different times. I will come back to the idea of interagency (3D) coordination, but let me highlight the fact that dealing with increasingly savvy adversaries in fighting and preventing conflict will require more than just **coordination** with our interagency partners. Coordination and planning is necessary, but not sufficient. We need insight and knowledge.

Just as SOF studied and developed concepts for UW, FID, and COIN, so this community will need to put their brains around these new challenges. For instance, the nexus between crime and security is a key challenge. Our bureaucratic structures and

our cultural pre-disposition to bifurcate military power from law enforcement, has created a security gap – one that is being exploited by insurgents in the field as well as increasingly sophisticated transnational drug cartels and traffickers regionally, and on a global scale. We need to understand better how these bad guys operate and develop game-changing approaches to counter them. Yes, this will be a whole of government effort, but it begins with the hard intellectual work. [social science and case studies as well as intel]

So, unity of effort in a 3D context will require new thinking and serious ‘brain power’ in order to truly understand the best means for collaboration. The military need not become experts in diplomacy and development – but neither can they be ignorant of the basic tenets of these other two “D’s”. In order to be effective, we must know enough to know what we don’t know – and know enough to know when doing nothing may actually be better than doing your part.

Let me say a few words about the Diplomacy and Development and how it applies to prevention.

The other two D’s:

The thinking of USAID and State Department leadership continues to evolve.

The Secretary of State has pledged that her department will be the spearhead for civilian agencies in working in a “more unified, more focused, and more efficient” manner. She is championing the idea of the importance of “civilian power.” As we transition in Afghanistan and Iraq, this is an important theme. These transitions mean we in DoD will have to determine down to the

tactical level, what “support” to civilian power means. Work is on-going and evolving on this. Primary step is to ensure we have a shared understanding of the problem and tasks at hand.

A few months ago, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah addressed a group of national security professionals at the National Defense University. He said:

“Much of the divide that exists between development practitioners and members of the military occurs not because of a difference in philosophy or in goals, but because of a difference in perceptions.”

He highlighted the evolving discipline and profession of development and made it clear that there are no set answers. The development community has learned a lot in the past 2 decades as well – especially about the nexus between development/economics and conflict. He highlights how theories and approaches have evolved and the current focus on: good governance; monitoring and evaluation (evidenced based approaches); the importance of context; and the need for approaches that are sustainable.

Still there are debates in this field about whether and in what circumstances outside aid and intervention could actually make things worse. [example – flooding a place with money when the economy can’t handle the influx of cash; over-paying locals; building unsustainable schools; empowering wrong actors with other projects; etc] All can have perverse economic effects that can also sometimes catalyze conflict.

Similarly, there are instances from a whole of government perspectives when we need to know what NOT to do.

Let me move onto the idea of prevention to explain what this mean for us.

Preventing Conflict

While the QDR prioritizes the importance of winning the fights we are currently in (prevail), it also clearly emphasizes prevention. As we come down from Afghanistan and Iraq, we will be able to devote more resources to preventing conflict. This is important, since the flip side of prevention is sustainable peace – ensuring that the gains we make in our current fights are sustainable by the host nations we have been assisting. Both of these types of tasks – sustainment and prevention - will require similar approaches, intellectually and with respect to interagency coordination – all the way to the tactical level.

Our whole of government approach to Colombia is an excellent case to examine. We have been working with the Colombians for decades on countering narcotics because we know the instability that accompanies the drug trade fosters a dangerous mix of trafficking and other illegal activities that impacts U.S. security.

This was not solely a military campaign. USAID, in partnership with the Colombian government, has launched several successful programs aimed at directing farmers away from coca cultivation. We've seen coca cultivation plummet by as much as 85% since 2005, with minimal replanting. This is of course in addition to the significant military assistance we've provided to Colombia. Stability and clam has come to villages across the country.

The importance of a dedicated and active host nation cannot be dismissed. While the US's Plan Colombia is probably a “best case” for our own efforts in demonstrating how to apply all

elements of power, collaboratively and (importantly) with the support of Congress, to enable multi-year funding; the Colombians were clearly and rightly in the lead. Now, as they look to not only sustain the peace they have won, but also to rebuild the economic foundations of their society, we have a different type of partnership with them.

Assisting a country facing internal conflicts (SFA 1.0) might require different skills and approaches than SFA 2.0, which would be aimed at helping partners help others. If we can enable stronger regional partners to lead and to enable others in their neighborhoods, we might just work ourselves out of these jobs. SOF can play a key role here in line with our national security strategy, which emphasizes the role the US plays in catalyzing multilateral activity toward shared problems.

Warning:

As we increasingly focus on preventing conflict, we should pause to consider the **promise and peril** of outside assistance – from our security role, similar to USAID’s challenges.

The fundamental challenge will be to ensure that the 3 legs of the 3D stool are balanced. Just as misapplied economic aid can have perverse effects, so is history filled with examples of how well trained and educated militaries can become sources of instability or lead coups in weak states. Without the balancing force of a stable and competent government or economy, focusing on “our part” in the security sector might have a negative effect.

At the tactical level, you can appreciate this. Let’s say your unit is tasked to spend some CERP money to build a road or a school.

Then your state or USAID partner comes to you and says that the host nation is not on board with those projects and are unable to work on them. Thus, having an outside military complete the projects might actually have the opposite effect as it will make the government look ineffective and undermine its legitimacy -- and the government's legitimacy is the ultimate objective to create lasting stability. As T.E. Lawrence said of his partners: “ **Better** the Arabs **do** it tolerably **than** you **do** it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help **them**, not to win it for **them**.” This applies at the strategic and operational level as well.

...in sum: “Do No Harm...”

In a way, we need to incorporate the adage of the medical community and “first, do no harm.” By “do no harm” I do not mean that you stop doing what you do so well; but that you begin by understanding that actions can have repercussions that we may not intend, and those actions fit together within the larger context of U.S. foreign policy interests. In some cases it might just, as with the USAID example, it might be that doing nothing rather than doing your part well is the better course of action.

With that in mind, let me finish by talking about how I think planning fits into this:

TCP's as a start point –

One way to improve our ability to synchronize efforts for prevention is to focus on steady state, whole of government planning.

One of the things that the Secretary has required of the combatant commands, and a key area of my portfolio, is the

theater campaign plan, or TCP. These plans are meant to operationalize COCOM strategies and link regional near term and mid-range goals to their contingency plan requirements and their country engagement plans. Further, these plans require annual assessment to inform us whether we are expending resources in a way that is helpful. So, if done right, the TCP's can provide the backbone for this interagency/WoG approach.

We are making some progress here. As part of the State Department's QDDR, State and USAID are committed to participating in this theater campaign planning process to synchronize efforts across the interagency. We have stood up a 3D working group focused on planning, and taken on this steady state issue as our first task. We are looking at best practices in the current operations – where IA coordination has had some success – to see what might work at the strategic and operational levels for prevention planning.

Many of the contributing factors in TCP development, such as economic development and rule of law, are beyond DoD's scope and require interagency involvement. Linking the TCPs to State and USAID steady state processes and the country level and up is a grand undertaking, requiring significant 'brain power.' It will link in SOF at the strategic and operational levels as these plans are fully fleshed out and put into motion. We are on the right track here, but it will be an evolving process to get this right, and I think it will take constant fine-tuning with our interagency partners.

Within these plans SOF could be asked to play in a variety of traditional Security Force Assistance Roles, with the added task of developing goals that track with those of development experts

who operate in the same environment, and who may have greater depth of knowledge than the military.

This means we will all be placing increased reliance on the country team—an emphasis already highlighted by the Secretary of State in the QDDR. Our interagency counterparts –specifically State and USAID --do not plan in the same manner as we do in Defense, but they do have their own planning mechanisms and resource allocation processes focused on the country level, which is an area where the defense community should seek to better educate themselves so we can synch objectives at the start.

“So... What’s Next...”

As ADM Olson commented at the opening of this symposium, we also need to take the time to understand the potential future environment -- this includes giving serious thought to what SOF might be called upon to do, and how SOF can help our nation to prevent conflict as well as prevail against whatever national security challenges lie ahead.

The essence of what has made SOF such a valuable asset to our military over the past twenty years remains valid to this very day and is known to you all as the “five Special Operations Forces Truths”:

1. Humans are more important than hardware.
2. Quality is better than quantity.
3. Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.
4. Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.
5. Most special operations require non-SOF assistance.

This first and last of these truths – “humans are more important than hardware” and “..special operations require non-SOF assistance” -- will be more important as the 3Ds work toward a whole-of-government approach.

Conclusion

The clarity and the perspective of State and USAID will be particularly important in the area of transition from U.S. military to civilian-led activities abroad (such as Iraq). The differences in the understanding of roles and responsibilities that serve as the foundation for terms of art such as “military support to diplomacy” and “support to development” will be thoroughly examined – and tested. This experience will provide indicators of where the future may be taking SOF and how the defense community will have to adapt in years to come. Some may have expectations of what it means to ‘transition’ certain missions to “civilian lead” which we know realistically does not mean the military exits altogether or is absent – they will continue in a supporting role.

As we move into planning for prevention activities, SOF can help shape this discourse by giving careful thought as to where they are value-added in the 3D environment given their specialized skills sets and talent for bridging gaps among certain populations and communities. I ask that you start by asking **yourselves “what don’t we know about the art of diplomacy and development?”** What unintended outcomes might we be overlooking? Only through this heavy thinking is where SOF - and indeed the USG – will succeed.

Thank you again for having me here to address you today. I’d be happy to take a few questions as time allows.