

Developing the United States Government's Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization: A Work in Progress

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March 2007

In the summer of 2004, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) came into existence under the Secretary of State and received authorization from the United States Congress. Experience in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated the need for better coordination of civilian and military activities across the entire spectrum of U.S. Government engagement, and the need for greater civilian participation earlier in reconstruction. The broad mission of S/CRS is to “lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy.”

A Presidential Directive signed on December 7, 2005, further defined the Secretary of State's leadership role in coordinating and leading efforts, involving all U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct reconstruction and stabilization activities, including harmonization with any planned or ongoing military operations. On November 28, 2005, the Department of Defense issued its own Directive 3000.05 establishing a significant new policy – that stability operations are a core U.S. military mission to be given priority comparable to combat operations.

Speaking at Georgetown University on January 18, 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the critical role of post-conflict coordination in this way:

“... Over the past fifteen years, as violent state failure has become a greater global threat, our military has borne a disproportionate share of post-conflict responsibilities because we have not had the standing civilian capability to play our part fully. This was true in Somalia and Haiti, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and it is still partially true in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These experiences have shown us the need to enhance our ability to work more effectively at the critical intersections of diplomacy, democracy promotion, economic reconstruction and military security. That is why President Bush

created within the State Department the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization.”

In a little over two years, S/CRS has grown from a handful of people using borrowed desks to 75 full-time staff from a variety of agencies, including the first members of an Active Response Corps who can be deployed overseas on short notice. Over the past eight months, S/CRS has been working intensively with colleagues from thirty U.S. agencies and offices to develop an implementation plan for the Presidential Directive. Following the language of the Directive, the large working groups are named “Prepare”, “Plan”, and “Conduct”, with sub-groups working on specific technical issues such as training, budget development, and legal requirements.

A major product of these working groups is development of the concept for a government-wide management system for reconstruction and stabilization operations. While the working groups have studied and learned from post-disaster response mechanisms, including Disaster Assistance Response Teams that have been used very successfully by USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the mandate of S/CRS is specifically tied to conflict situations. The reconstruction and stabilization management system would not be employed for a natural disaster or humanitarian emergency. The working groups’ concept papers were developed and cleared by civilian agencies and the military’s geographic combatant commands in early 2007. Meanwhile, the work of the implementation groups continues, including designing exercises to test and refine the models and further develop the concepts.

This paper outlines the Interagency Management System for post-conflict response and how it links together U.S. civilian and military planning and actions. The goal of this system is to improve coordination and efficiency for U.S. Government interventions in post-conflict situations.

Integrated Response: A three-tiered approach

The concept for the **Interagency Management System** addresses strategic, operational and tactical levels of engagement for highly complex crises that are national security priorities, where multiple U.S. Government agencies are involved, and that might require military operations. The system is specifically designed to integrate civilian and military planning and operations at all levels. It will assist policymakers, chiefs of mission and military commanders as they manage highly complex reconstruction and stabilization engagements by ensuring coordination among all U.S. stakeholders, both at headquarters and in the field. The models are intended to be flexible so that they can be adapted to each specific situation. They are designed to

support and augment, not to replace, existing structures in Washington, at military combatant commands, and in the field.

At the strategic level, among headquarters offices in Washington, the new system calls for a **Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group** to coordinate policy and planning. Based on the traditional Policy Coordinating Committees that include senior officials from all relevant departments and agencies that are engaged on a given country, this group will have enhanced authority and additional staff to carry out its responsibilities in a crisis. The Washington-based Reconstruction and Stabilization Group unifies the government-wide effort, channels interagency input, and provides options and recommendations for senior policymakers' decisions. It identifies and mobilizes resources, and resolves disputes. Its secretariat staff supports the policymakers by developing an integrated plan for all U.S. Government efforts, monitoring progress and ensuring application of best practices. The secretariat is also the focal point for the U.S. Government to facilitate partnerships with other governments, international organizations and partners to coordinate mutual efforts.

At the operational level, the Interagency Management System projects an **Integration Planning Cell** that could deploy to the U.S. geographic combatant commands or to an equivalent multinational headquarters. Washington policy-makers would establish such a planning cell as needed to assist in harmonizing the civilian and military planning processes. The cell is a team of specialists chosen from relevant agencies; its size and composition would be adjusted to the specific situation. Operations that do not involve significant military engagement may not require a cell at the combatant command level. The planning cell provides country expertise and analysis, and functional expertise for reconstruction and stabilization in areas such as transitional security, rule of law, governance, economic stabilization, migration, urban planning, etc. Linked to the geographic combatant command, this team coordinates planning and serves as a liaison both with Washington agencies and civilian teams in the field. It may also assist with drafting relevant portions of a U.S. military plan. The planning cell reports to the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group in Washington and works closely with the military command to which it is sent. If deployed to a multinational mission, such a planning cell would provide advice and support as appropriate. Estimates of how long a planning team would be needed at the combatant command range from one to six months. Members of the team could then return to Washington or deploy to join field teams.

At the tactical level, the **Advance Civilian Team** is designed to coordinate and support the execution of U.S. plans for reconstruction and stabilization under the authority of the chief of mission in the crisis country. The team can operate with or without U.S. military involvement. If there is no existing U.S. Government civilian presence in the country, the civilian team will have the additional task of standing up a more permanent presence. The teams will be flexible in size and composition and

include interagency members with a range of functional experience. Each team would likely be no larger than 25 highly trained members with multiple skill sets, including sectoral expertise, planning and evaluation, public affairs, and the ability to manage security, logistics and contracting. Members of the team could be drawn from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, other civilian agencies, military personnel, and contractors, as well as international and host nation personnel when appropriate. The teams deploy rapidly and set up quickly to coordinate and conduct field operations. They provide implementation planning and operations expertise to chiefs of mission and military commanders. The teams may also be sent to support multinational operations.

If additional field units are needed, the Advance Civilian Team can deploy a number of field teams at the provincial or local level. These field teams provide direct information about conditions on the ground and support local operations. They can conduct assessments, provide first-response, and coordinate the field execution of projects with other actors including the United Nations, international or non-governmental organizations, or the host nation. They monitor existing U.S. plans and programs, and, if authorized, negotiate with local leaders to support programs or to develop local governance capacities. Field teams may have to work in insecure environments and may need to integrate with U.S. or other military forces.

As a system, these three constructs – the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group in Washington, the Integrated Planning Cell at the combatant commands, and the Advance Civilian Teams on the ground – ensure that all U.S. participants at all levels involved in the reconstruction and stabilization mission have a common operating picture, the chief of mission has a coherent framework for decision-making, and all agency activities are synchronized in time, space and purpose.

Integrated Planning

S/CRS has been developing and refining tools to support the Interagency Management System. U.S. agencies have independent budgets and have traditionally planned and carried out their activities separately from one another. An important first step for improved and integrated U.S. government planning for reconstruction and stabilization is a strategic analysis of the underlying conflict in the country or region. Without agencies' agreement on the causes of the conflict, it is difficult to set priorities for jointly addressing post-conflict needs. Using academic models as well as conflict assessments developed by USAID and others, S/CRS has drafted an **Interagency Methodology to Assess Instability and Conflict**. The draft includes a guide to conflict analysis and practical steps to conduct a conflict assessment, including sample questions. It is designed to assist planners in identifying risk factors for conflict, the means and motivations of key actors, possible triggering events, and the local capacity to address

conflict. The methodology will be tested in experiments, interagency planning and field assessments, and it will be reviewed with academic, official and non-governmental experts for revision before publication.

Since its inception, S/CRS has worked with offices throughout the U.S. Government and with experts from non-governmental organizations and academia to develop a **Draft Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation**. The framework provides guidance for strategic planning across the U.S. government. It guides planners from different organizations to agree on priority policy goals for U.S. intervention and to link all the major objectives and essential tasks to those goals. Another tool published by S/CRS after consulting widely with government agencies and non-governmental partners is the **Essential Tasks Matrix**, a listing of possible reconstruction and development activities to assist analysis, planning and program development. (Both the Draft Planning Framework and Essential Tasks Matrix are available on the S/CRS website www.crs.state.gov). Working across agencies, planners should ensure the alignment between goals, tasks, and available resources and create meaningful indicators to measure progress. The planning framework has already been used in U.S. interagency planning for Sudan, Haiti, and Cuba, and S/CRS has just begun facilitating interagency planning for Kosovo.

The interagency “Plan” working group drafted a paper on triggering mechanisms for whole-of-government planning that should receive final approval shortly. The paper addresses the need for both conflict prevention/contingency planning for crises that have not yet occurred and crisis response planning. This will set new precedents for both prevention and crisis planning across agencies. The paper identifies general criteria that would justify such an extraordinary level of joint planning, including national security interests, the regional or humanitarian impact of a conflict, imminent state failure, and the like. The “Plan” working group is currently engaged in revising the draft strategic planning framework to add coordination of implementation planning, a key step toward improving coordination of operations.

A Work in Progress

Much work has been done to develop the Interagency Management System, but more remains. S/CRS is using parts of the system and deploying small proto-type civilian teams in real country engagements. The “Prepare” and “Conduct” working groups continue their efforts to refine the models and work through necessary details and processes: chains of command, feedback mechanisms, relationships to existing structures and plans, training and equipment requirements, legislative and budget authorities needed. Experiments and exercises are under development to test the concepts and make them work. S/CRS is working with the U.S. Joint Forces Command to focus the Unified

Action series, and portions of the Multinational Experiment series, on the Interagency Management System.

The first Unified Action event, scheduled for mid-April, will be a facilitated discussion of the Interagency System's constructs – the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group at the Washington level, the Integrated Planning Cell at the geographic combatant commands, and the Advance Civilian Teams in the field. The event will have participants both from the interagency working groups who have been developing the constructs and senior officials from civilian agencies and military commands who may use it in the future. The discussion will walk through the system, setting priorities for standing it up, and identifying gaps and issues that need to be addressed either by the working groups or raised for senior policy decisions. Later this year and next, subsequent Unified Action events will test the conflict assessment tool, planning for conflict prevention, and strategic and implementation planning for a crisis.

A critical next step is exploring how these U.S.-based models will work in conjunction with the planning and operations of other donor governments, the United Nations, and regional, multinational, and non-governmental organizations.