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STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Needed to Improve Governmentwide Planning and Capabilities for Future Operations

Statement of Joseph A. Christoff, Director
International Affairs and Trade, and

Janet A. St. Laurent, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management





Highlights of [GAO-08-228T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has become increasingly involved in stabilization and reconstruction operations as evidenced in the Balkans, Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In December 2005, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 44, establishing governmentwide policy for coordinating, planning, and implementing U.S. stabilization and reconstruction assistance to affected foreign entities. This testimony addresses stabilization and reconstruction issues related to (1) State Department (State) efforts to improve interagency planning and coordination, (2) Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to enhance its capabilities and planning, and (3) State efforts to develop civilian capabilities. GAO's statement is based on its May 2007 report on DOD stability operations and preliminary observations related to State's interagency planning framework and civilian response capabilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommended that DOD take several actions to improve its capabilities and interagency planning. DOD partially agreed but did not specify actions it would take to address them. Therefore GAO suggests Congress require DOD to do so. GAO has prepared a draft report with recommendations to State to address the issues cited in this testimony and is reviewing State's comments on the draft.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-228T](#). For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov, and Joseph Christoff, (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov.

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Needed to Improve Governmentwide Planning and Capabilities for Future Operations

What GAO Found

State and DOD have begun to take steps to better coordinate stabilization and reconstruction activities, but several significant challenges may hinder their ability to integrate planning for potential operations and strengthen military and civilian capabilities to conduct them. State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization is developing a framework for U.S. agencies to use when planning stabilization and reconstruction operations, but the framework has yet to be fully applied to any operation. The National Security Council has not approved the entire framework, guidance related to the framework is unclear, and some interagency partners have not accepted it. For example, some interagency partners stated that the framework's planning process is cumbersome and too time consuming for the results it produces. While steps have been taken to address concerns and strengthen the framework's effectiveness, differences in planning capacities and procedures among U.S. government agencies may pose obstacles to effective coordination.

DOD has taken several positive steps to improve its ability to conduct stability operations but faces challenges in developing capabilities and measures of effectiveness, integrating the contributions of non-DOD agencies into military contingency plans, and incorporating lessons learned from past operations into future plans. These challenges, if not addressed, may hinder DOD's ability to fully coordinate and integrate stabilization and reconstruction activities with other agencies or to develop the full range of capabilities those operations may require. Among its many efforts, DOD has developed a new policy, planning construct and joint operating concept with a greater focus on stability operations, and each service is pursuing efforts to improve capabilities. However, inadequate guidance, practices that inhibit sharing of planning information with non-DOD organizations, and differences in the planning capabilities and capacities of DOD and non-DOD organizations hinder the effectiveness of these improvement efforts.

Since 2005, State has been developing three civilian corps to deploy rapidly to international crises, but significant challenges must be addressed before they will be fully capable. State and other agencies face challenges in establishing two of these units—the Active Response Corps and Standby Response Corps—because of staffing and resource constraints and concerns that stabilization and reconstruction operations are not core missions for each parent organization. Congress has not yet enacted legislation necessary for State to obligate funds for the third unit, the Civilian Reserve Corps, staffed solely with non-federal volunteers. Further, State has not fully defined the types of missions these personnel would be deployed to support.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss the goals, opportunities, and challenges to improving an integrated government approach to stability and reconstruction operations, which is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our national security. Stabilization and reconstruction operations may include efforts to reestablish security, strengthen governance, rebuild infrastructure, and improve social and economic well-being in foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife. These operations have increasingly become a central operational mission for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of State (State), highlighted by experiences in the Balkans, Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The Defense Science Board's 2004 *Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities* noted that since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been involved in either a stability or reconstruction operation every 18 to 24 months, these operations typically last 5 to 8 years, and they are costly in terms of human lives and dollars.

In December 2005, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), which established the overall governmentwide policy related to interagency efforts for stabilization and reconstruction efforts. The purpose of NSPD-44 is to promote the security of the United States through improved coordination, planning, and implementation for stabilization and reconstruction assistance to foreign states and regions. NSPD-44 assigned the responsibility for coordinating and leading integrated federal efforts to plan for and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities to the Secretary of State. It further stated that the Secretary of State shall coordinate such efforts with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmony with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations across the spectrum of conflict. State and DOD have emphasized that success in stabilization and reconstruction efforts will depend heavily upon the ability to develop an integrated, interagency approach, and they have initiated steps to facilitate this shift in focus.

Our testimony today will address (1) Department of State efforts to improve interagency planning and coordination for stabilization and reconstruction operations, (2) Department of Defense efforts to enhance stability operations capabilities and plans, and (3) State efforts to develop a civilian response capability.

Our testimony is based on recently completed or ongoing work that addresses DOD and State efforts to enhance and better integrate stability and reconstruction capabilities. In May 2007, we issued a report to Representative Christopher Shays, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, on the DOD's approach to stability operations and interagency planning and made several recommendations for executive action.¹ We are also completing work for Representative Shays and this subcommittee on State's interagency planning framework and civilian response capacities, and we have prepared a draft report summarizing our results. We are reviewing State's comments on our draft report and are developing recommendations to address the problems cited in this statement. For both our prior report and ongoing work, we obtained and analyzed National Security Presidential Directives; DOD, State, and other relevant agencies' internal policies; planning guidance; operational plans; budget requests and funding allocations for stability and reconstruction efforts. We met with cognizant officials from the Departments of Defense, State, Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, Justice and the Treasury, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); and private research centers. We also met with various officials and military planners from the U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Pacific Command and, collectively, 14 component commands. While NSPD-44 also charges State with coordinating U.S. stabilization and reconstruction efforts with foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental organizations, these areas lie outside the scope of our review. Our work was conducted from October 2005 through September 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Summary

State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is developing a framework for U.S. agencies to use when planning and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations for countries at risk of, in, or emerging from conflict. The National Security Council (NSC) has adopted two of three elements of the framework—an Interagency Management System and procedures for initiating the

¹GAO *Military Operations: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning*, GAO-07-549 (Washington, D.C.: May 31, 2007).

framework's use.² However, the third element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—has not been approved or completed. While S/CRS has tested parts of the framework, it has not fully applied it to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. In completing the framework, State must address three unresolved issues. First, NSPD-44, the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, and the framework provide unclear and inconsistent guidance on the roles and responsibilities of S/CRS and State's other bureaus and offices. Second, the lack of a common definition for stability and reconstruction operations may pose an obstacle to interagency collaboration. Third, some interagency partners expressed concerns over the importance and utility of the framework, stating that the framework is cumbersome and time-consuming for the results it has produced.

DOD has taken several positive steps to improve its ability to conduct stability operations but faces challenges in identifying needed capabilities and measures of effectiveness, integrating the contributions of non-DOD agencies into military contingency plans, and incorporating lessons learned from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other operations into future plans. These challenges, if not addressed, may hinder DOD's ability to fully coordinate and integrate stabilization and reconstruction activities with other elements of national power, or to develop the full range of capabilities those operations may require. Since November 2005, the department issued a new directive focused on stability operations, expanded its military planning guidance, and developed a joint operating concept to help guide DOD planning for stability operations. Notwithstanding these positive and important steps, however, DOD has encountered challenges in identifying stability operations capabilities and developing measures of effectiveness—both of which are key tasks required by DOD's recent directive and important steps in performance-based management. In addition, DOD is taking steps to develop more comprehensive military plans related to stability operations, but it has not established adequate mechanisms at the combatant commands to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in its planning efforts. This shortcoming has occurred due to inadequate guidance, DOD practices that limit the sharing of planning information without the specific consent of

²In this testimony, we use the term "framework" to refer to the key elements developed to plan and coordinate stabilization and reconstruction operations under NSPD-44. The first section of our testimony discusses three elements for planning these operations, while civilian response mechanisms, which S/CRS considers a fourth element, are discussed later in this testimony.

the Secretary of Defense, and differences in the planning capabilities and capacities of all organizations involved. Also, although DOD collects lessons learned from past and ongoing operations, DOD planners are not consistently using these lessons learned as they develop future contingency plans. We have recommended that DOD take several actions, such as providing more comprehensive guidance to combatant commanders and the services on how to identify and prioritize stability operations capabilities and the mechanisms needed to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans. We have also suggested that Congress require DOD to develop an action plan and report annually on its efforts to address our recommendations.

Since 2005, State has been developing three civilian corps to deploy rapidly to international crises but has not addressed key details for establishing and maintaining these units. State created two units within the department—an Active Response Corps (ARC) and Standby Response Corps (SRC) to serve as early responders to an international crisis. State also has collaborated with other U.S. government agencies to create similar units. In May 2007, State received funding, subject to further congressional authorization, to establish a third corps—the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC)—which would deploy a cadre of civilian volunteers such as police officers, judges, public administrators, and civil engineers. However, State and other agencies face challenges in establishing their response corps, including difficulties in (1) achieving planned staffing levels and required training, (2) securing resources for international operations that some agencies do not view as part of their domestic missions, and (3) ensuring that home units are not understaffed as a result of overseas deployments. State faces additional challenges in creating the Civilian Reserve Corps. State does not yet have congressional authority to establish the corps and offer personnel an attractive benefits package. Further, State is moving the civilian reserve concept forward without a common interagency definition of what constitutes a stabilization and reconstruction operation. We are reviewing State Department’s comments on our draft report and developing recommendations to address the problems cited in this statement.

Background

Both State and DOD recognize the need to improve stability and reconstruction capabilities of the United States, and the importance of coordinating military activities with those of other U.S. government agencies and international partners. Following the problems with reconstruction efforts in Iraq in the Fall of 2003, State noted that the U.S. government had no standing civilian capacity to plan, implement, or

manage stabilization and reconstruction operations and had relied on ad hoc processes for planning and executing these efforts. State recommended that a new office be established to provide a centralized and permanent structure for planning and coordinating the civilian response to stabilization and reconstruction operations.

In August 2004, the Secretary of State announced the creation of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to coordinate U.S. efforts to prepare, plan, and resource responses to complex emergencies, failing and failed states, and post conflict environments. Such efforts could involve establishing security, building basic public services, and economic development. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 granted statutory authorization for S/CRS within the Office of the Secretary of State.³

In November 2005, DOD issued DOD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, which established the Department's policy for stability operations. In its directive, DOD recognizes that stability operations is a core U.S. military mission, but that many stability operations are best performed by indigenous, foreign, or U.S. civilian professionals and that DOD's participation may be in a supporting role. However, it also states that U.S. military forces shall be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so.

In December 2005, President Bush issued NSPD-44 to promote the security of the United States through improved coordination, planning, and implementation of stabilization and reconstruction assistance. NSPD-44 assigned the Secretary of State the responsibility to coordinate and lead U.S. government efforts to plan for, prepare and conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations in countries and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife. The Secretary, in turn, delegated implementation of the directive to S/CRS. NSPD-44 identifies roles, responsibilities, and coordination requirements of U.S. government agencies that would likely participate in stabilization and reconstruction operations. It also requires that State lead the development of civilian response capability, including the capacity to ensure that the United States can respond quickly and effectively to overseas crises. Finally, NSPD-44 established the NSC Policy Coordination Committee for Reconstruction

³Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-447, § 408 (2004).

and Stabilization Operations to manage the development, implementation, and coordination of stabilization and reconstruction national security policies.

State's Planning Framework Lacks Full NSC Approval, Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities, and Interagency Support

S/CRS has led an interagency effort to develop a framework for planning and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations. The NSC has adopted two of three elements of the framework—the Interagency Management System (IMS) and procedures for initiating the framework's use. One element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—has not been completed. As of October 2007, the framework has not been fully applied to any operation. In addition, NSPD-44, the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, and the framework provide unclear and inconsistent guidance on roles and responsibilities for S/CRS and other State bureaus and offices; the lack of a common definition for stability and reconstruction operations may pose an obstacle to interagency collaboration; and some partners have shown limited support for the framework and S/CRS.

S/CRS Is Leading the Development of an Interagency Framework for Planning and Coordinating U.S. Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

S/CRS is leading an NSC interagency group of 16 agencies to create a framework for developing specific stabilization and reconstruction plans under NSPD-44. The framework is intended to guide the development of U.S. planning for stabilization and reconstruction operations by facilitating coordination across federal agencies and aligning interagency efforts at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Key elements of the framework include an IMS, a guide for planning specific stabilization and reconstruction operations, and procedures for initiating governmentwide planning.

The IMS, the first element of the framework, was created to manage high-priority and highly complex crises and operations. In March 2007, the NSC approved the IMS, which would guide coordination between Washington, D.C. policymakers, Chiefs of Mission, and civilian and military planners. If used, IMS would include three new interagency groups for responding to specific crises: a Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group, an Integration Planning Cell, and an Advance Civilian Team. The Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group would be responsible for developing U.S. government policies that integrate civilian and military plans and for mobilizing civilian responses to stabilization and reconstruction operations. The Integration Planning Cell would integrate U.S. civilian agencies' plans with military operations. The Advance Civilian Team would be deployed to U.S. embassies to set up, coordinate, and

conduct field operations and provide expertise on implementing civilian operations to the Chief of Mission and military field commanders. These teams would be supported by Field Advance Civilian Teams to assist reconstruction efforts at the local level.

The second element of the framework, which the NSC approved in March 2007, establishes procedures for initiating the use of the framework for planning a U.S. response to an actual crisis or in longer-term scenario-based planning. Factors that may trigger the use of the framework include the potential for military action, actual or imminent state failure, the potential for regional instability, displacement of large numbers of people, and grave human rights violations. The use of the framework for planning crisis responses may be initiated by the NSC or by a direct request from the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense. The NSC, Chiefs of Mission, and Regional Assistant Secretaries of State may request the framework's initiation for longer-term scenario planning for crises that may occur within 2 to 3 years.

The third element, the planning guide, has not been approved by the NSC because State is rewriting the draft planning guide to address interagency concerns.⁴ Although NSC approval of the draft planning guide is not required, S/CRS officials stated that NSC approval would lend authority to the framework and strengthen its standing among interagency partners. The draft planning guide divides planning for stabilization and reconstruction operations into three levels: policy formulation, strategy development, and implementation planning. The guide states that the goals and objectives at each level should be achievable, be linked to planned activities, and include well-defined measures for determining progress.

As of October 2007, the administration had not fully applied the framework to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. While IMS was approved by the NSC, the administration has not yet applied it to a current or potential crisis. The administration also applied earlier versions of one component of the framework—the planning guide—for efforts in

⁴United States Joint Forces Command J7 and Department of State, Pamphlet Version 1.0, *U.S. Government Draft Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (December 2005) and State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, *Update to Draft USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (Washington, D.C.: August 2006). When S/CRS and U.S. Joint Forces Command issued the first draft in December 2005, they distributed it to stakeholder agencies and requested their feedback.

Haiti, Sudan, and Kosovo. According to State officials, the administration has been using NSPD-1 processes to manage and plan U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the absence of an approved framework.⁵

Framework Lacks Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities, Common Definitions, and Interagency Support

In completing the framework, State must resolve three key problems.

First, NSPD-44, the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, and the framework provide unclear and inconsistent guidance on the roles and responsibilities of S/CRS and State's bureaus and offices, resulting in confusion and disputes about who should lead policy development and control resources for stabilization and reconstruction operations. The *Foreign Affairs Manual* does not define S/CRS's roles and responsibilities, but it does define responsibilities for State's regional bureaus and Chiefs of Mission. Each regional bureau is responsible for providing direction, coordination, and supervision of U.S. activities in countries within the region,⁶ while each Chief of Mission has authority over all U.S. government staff and activities in the country.⁷ However, according to S/CRS's initial interpretation of NSPD-44, it was responsible for leading, planning, and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations. Staff from one of State's regional bureaus said that S/CRS had enlarged its role in a way that conflicted with the Regional Assistant Secretary's responsibility for leading an operation and coordinating with interagency partners. More recently, according to S/CRS officials, S/CRS has taken a more facilitative role in implementing NSPD-44.

Second, the lack of a common definition for stability and reconstruction operations may pose an obstacle to effective interagency collaboration under the framework. The framework does not define what constitutes stabilization or reconstruction operations, including what specific missions and activities would be involved. In addition, the framework does not explain how these operations differ from other types of military and civilian operations, such as counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and development assistance. As a result, it is not clear when, where, or how the administration would apply the framework. In our October 2005 report, we found that collaborative efforts require agency staff to define

⁵NSPD-1 organized the NSC and its committees for the current administration.

⁶*Foreign Affairs Manual*, 1 FAM 112 (a).

⁷22 U.S.C. 3927.

and articulate a common outcome or purpose.⁸ Prior GAO work shows that the lack of a clear definition can pose an obstacle to improved planning and coordination of stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Third, some interagency partners and State staff expressed concern over the framework's importance and utility. For example, some interagency partners and staffs from various State offices said that senior officials did not communicate strong support for S/CRS or the expectation that State and interagency partners should use the framework. S/CRS has not been given key roles for operations that emerged after its creation, such as the ongoing efforts in Lebanon and Somalia, which several officials and experts stated are the types of operations S/CRS was created to address. In addition, USAID staff noted that some aspects of the planning framework were unrealistic, ineffective, and redundant because interagency teams had already devised planning processes for ongoing operations in accordance with NSPD-1. Further, some interagency partners believe the planning process, as outlined in the draft planning guide, is too cumbersome and time consuming for the results it produces. Although officials who participated in planning for Haiti stated that the process provided more systematic planning, some involved in the operations for Haiti and Sudan said that the framework was too focused on process. Staff also said that in some cases, the planning process did not improve outcomes or increase resources, particularly since S/CRS has few resources to offer. As a result, officials from some offices and agencies have expressed reluctance to work with S/CRS on future stabilization and reconstruction plans.

⁸GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies* [GAO-06-15](#), (Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2005)

DOD Is Developing a New Approach to Stability Operations, But Faces Significant Challenges to Improve Capabilities and Planning

DOD has taken several positive steps toward developing a new approach to stability operations but has encountered challenges in several areas. As discussed in our May 2007 report, since November 2005, the department issued a new policy, expanded its military planning guidance, and developed a joint operating concept to help guide DOD planning for stability operations.⁹ However, because DOD has not yet fully identified and prioritized stability operations capabilities as required by DOD's new policy, the services are pursuing initiatives that may not provide the comprehensive set of capabilities that combatant commanders need to accomplish stability operations in the future. Also, DOD has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness as required by DOD Directive 3000.05, which may hinder the department's ability to determine if its efforts to improve stability operations capabilities are achieving the desired results. Similarly, the combatant commanders are establishing working groups and other outreach efforts to include non-DOD organizations in the development of a wide range of military plans that combatant commanders routinely develop, but these efforts have had a limited effect because of inadequate guidance, practices that inhibit sharing of planning information, and differences in the planning capabilities and capacities of all organizations involved. Finally, although DOD collects lessons learned from past operations, DOD does not have a process to ensure that lessons learned are considered when plans are reviewed. As a result, DOD heightens its risk of either repeating past mistakes or being unable to build on its experiences from past operations as it plans for future operations.

DOD Is Developing a New Approach to Stability Operations

Among the many improvement efforts under way, DOD has taken three key steps that frame its approach to stability operations. First, in November 2005, DOD published DOD Directive 3000.05, which formalized a stability operations policy that elevated stability operations to a core mission, gave such operations priority comparable to combat operations, and stated that stability operations will be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DOD activities, including doctrine, training, education, exercises, and planning. The directive also states that many stability operations are best performed by indigenous, foreign, or U.S.

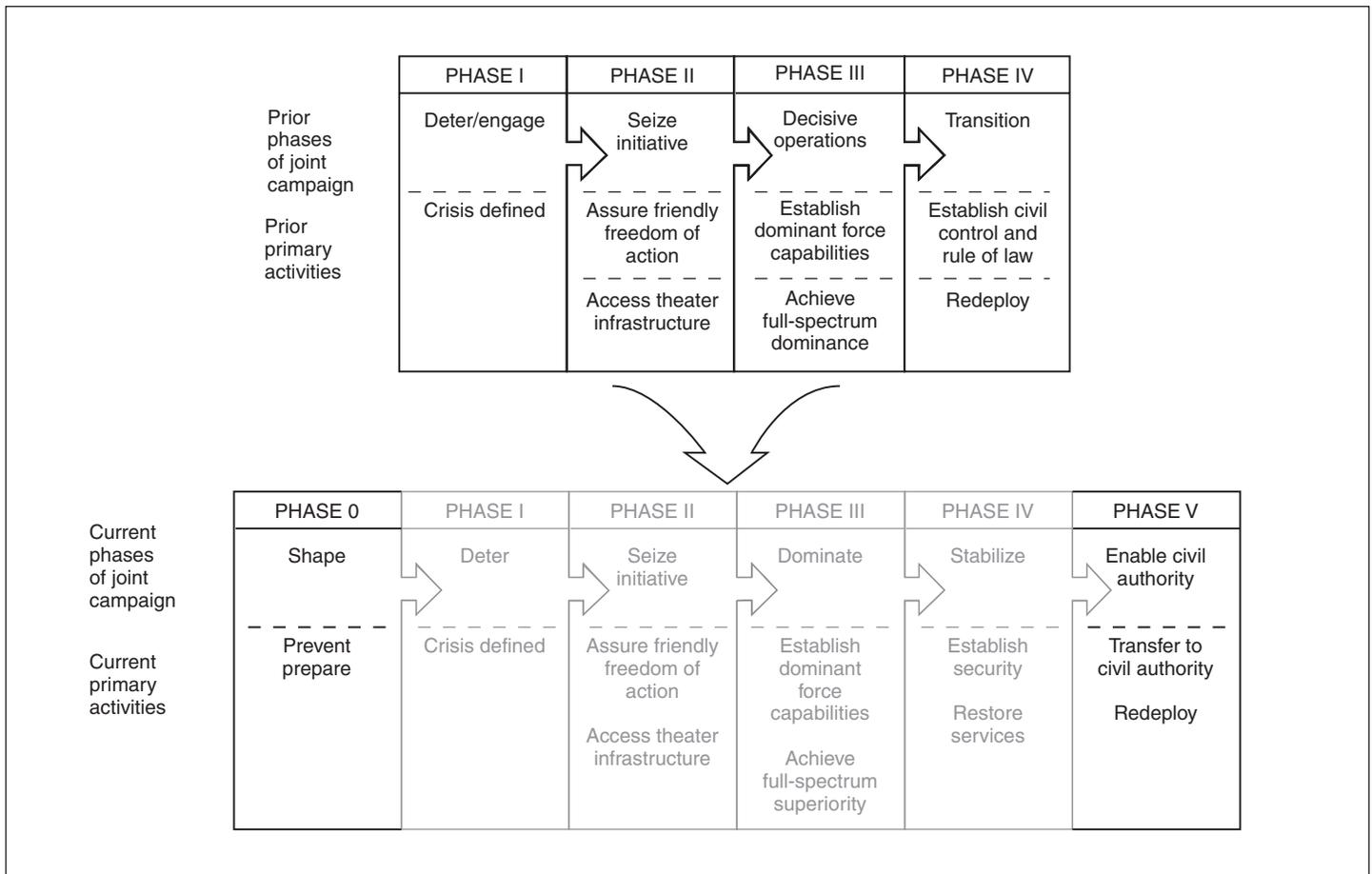
⁹Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 28, 2005); Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: September 2006); and Department of Defense, *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations, Joint Operating Concept* (Washington, D.C., December 2006).

civilian personnel, but that U.S. military forces shall be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to maintain order when civilians cannot do so. The directive assigned approximately 115 specific responsibilities to 18 DOD organizations. For example, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is responsible for, among other things, identifying DOD-wide stability operations capabilities, and recommending priorities to the Secretary of Defense, and submitting a semiannual stability operations report to the Secretary of Defense.

A second step taken by DOD to improve stability operations was to broaden its military planning guidance beyond DOD's traditional emphasis on combat operations for joint operations to include noncombat activities to stabilize countries or regions and prevent hostilities and postcombat activities that emphasize stabilization, reconstruction, and transition governance to civil authorities.¹⁰ Figure 1 illustrates the change in DOD planning guidance.

¹⁰Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0.

Figure 1: Prior and Current Phases of Military Operations



Source: GAO analysis of DOD information.

As shown in figure 1, military planners in DOD’s combatant commands will now be required to plan for six phases of an operation, which include new phases focused on (1) shaping efforts to stabilize regions so that conflicts do not develop and (2) enabling civil authorities. These are also the phases of an operation that will require significant unity of effort and close coordination between DOD and other federal agencies.

A third step taken by DOD that frames the approach to stability operations was the publication, by Joint Forces Command, of the *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept*. This publication will serve as a basis for how

the military will support stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations in foreign countries in the next 15 to 20 years.

The military services also have taken complementary actions to improve stability operations capabilities. For example, the Marine Corps has established a program to improve cultural awareness training, increased civil affairs planning in its operational headquarters, and established a Security Cooperation Training Center. Navy officials highlighted service efforts to (1) align its strategic plan and operations concept to support stability operations, (2) establish the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, and (3) dedicate Foreign Area Officers to specific countries as their key efforts to improve stability operations capabilities.

Specific Challenges Hinder DOD's Ability to Develop Capabilities and Encourage Interagency Participation in Combatant Command Planning Efforts

We have identified four specific challenges that if not addressed, may hinder DOD's ability to develop the full range of capabilities needed for stability operations, or to facilitate interagency participation in the routine planning activities at the combatant commands.

- *DOD has not identified and prioritized the full range of capabilities needed for stability operations.* At the time of our review, DOD had made limited progress in fully identifying and prioritizing capabilities needed for stability operations, which was required by DOD Directive 3000.05. In the absence of DOD-wide guidance, a variety of approaches were being used by the combatant commands to identify stability operations capabilities and requirements.

We identified two factors that limited DOD's progress in carrying out the capability gap assessment process.¹¹ First, at the time of our review, DOD had not issued its 2007 planning guidance to the combatant commanders that reflect the new 6-phase approach to planning previously discussed in this testimony. This planning guidance forms the basis on which combatant commanders develop operational plans and identify needed capabilities. Second, there was significant confusion over how to define stability operations. For example, Air Force officials stated in their

¹¹Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) officials stated they intended to identify capabilities through an iterative process known as capability gap assessments. They envisioned that geographic combatant commands would conduct theater-specific, scenario-driven assessments of forces and capabilities required for contingencies through routine DOD planning processes, compare planned requirements for stability operations with current available forces and military capabilities, and propose remedies for eliminating any gaps in capability that they identify.

May 22, 2006, Stability Operations Self-Assessment that the absence of a common lexicon for stability operations functions, tasks, and actions results in unnecessary confusion and uncertainty when addressing stability operations. This lack of a clear and consistent definition of stability operations has caused confusion across DOD about how to identify stability operations activities and the end state for which commanders need to plan.

Because of the fragmented efforts being taken by combatant commands to identify requirements, and the different approaches taken by the services to develop capabilities, the potential exists that the department may not be identifying and prioritizing the most critical capabilities needed by the combatant commanders, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy has not been able to recommend capability priorities to the Secretary of Defense. The department recognizes the importance of successfully completing these capability assessments, and in the August 2006 report on stability operations to the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary stated that the department has not yet defined the magnitude of DOD's stability operations capability deficiencies, and that clarifying the scope of these capability gaps continues to be a priority within the department.

- *DOD has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness.* DOD Directive 3000.05 required numerous organizations within DOD to develop measures of effectiveness that could be used to evaluate progress in meeting their respective goals outlined in the directive. Our past work on DOD transformation reported the advantages of using management tools, such as performance measures, to gauge performance in helping organizations successfully manage major transformation efforts.¹² Performance measures are an important results-oriented management tool that can enable managers to determine the extent to which desired outcomes are being achieved. Performance measures should include a baseline and target; be objective, measurable, and quantifiable; and include specific time frames. Results-oriented measures further ensure that it is not the task itself being evaluated, but progress in achieving the intended outcome.

¹²GAO, *Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities*, [GAO-05-70](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 17, 2004).

Despite this emphasis on developing performance measures, however, as of March 2007, we found that DOD achieved limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness because of significant confusion over how this task should be accomplished and minimal guidance provided by the Office of Policy. For example, each of the services described to us alternative approaches it was taking to develop measures of effectiveness, and three services initially placed this task on hold pending guidance from DOD. Officials in the combatant commands we visited were either waiting for additional guidance or stated that there were no actions taken to develop measures of effectiveness. Without clear departmentwide guidance on how to develop measures of effectiveness and milestones for completing them, confusion may continue to exist within the department, and progress on this important management tool may be significantly hindered.

- *DOD has not fully established mechanisms that would help it achieve consistent interagency participation in the military planning process.* The combatant commanders routinely develop a wide range of military plans for potential contingencies for which DOD may need to seek input from other agencies or organizations. Within the combatant commands where contingency plans are developed, the department is either beginning to establish working groups or is reaching out to U.S. embassies on an ad hoc basis to obtain interagency perspectives. But this approach to coordinate with embassies on an ad-hoc basis can be cumbersome, does not facilitate interagency participation in the actual planning process, and does not include all organizations that may be able to contribute to the operation being planned.

Three factors hinder interagency participation in DOD's routine planning activities at the combatant commands. First, DOD has not provided specific guidance to the commands on how to integrate planning with non-DOD organizations. Second, DOD does not have a process in place to facilitate the sharing of planning information with non-DOD agencies because department policy is to not share DOD contingency plans with agencies or offices outside of DOD unless directed by the Secretary of Defense. Third, DOD and non-DOD organizations, such as State and USAID, lack an understanding of each other's planning processes and capabilities and have different planning cultures and capacities.

- *DOD collects lessons learned from past operations, but planners are not consistently using this information as they develop future contingency plans.* Lessons learned from current and past operations are being captured and incorporated into various databases, but our analysis shows

that DOD planners are not using this information on a consistent basis as plans are revised or developed. Three factors contribute to this inconsistent use of lessons learned in planning: (1) DOD's guidance for incorporating lessons learned into plans is outdated and does not specifically require planners to include lessons learned in the planning process, (2) accessing and searching lessons-learned databases is cumbersome, and (3) the planning review process does not evaluate the extent to which lessons learned are incorporated into specific plans. As a result, DOD is not fully utilizing the results of the lessons-learned systems and may repeat past mistakes.

In our May 2007 report,¹³ we recommended that DOD provide comprehensive guidance to enhance their efforts to (1) identify and address capability gaps, (2) develop measures of effectiveness, and (3) facilitate interagency participation in the development of military plans. We also recommended that the Secretary of Defense in coordination with the Secretary of State develop a process to share planning information with interagency representatives early in the development of military contingency plans, and more fully incorporate stability operations-related lessons learned into the planning process. DOD partially agreed with our recommendations but did not state what specific steps, if any, it plans to take to implement them. Therefore, we included a matter for congressional consideration suggesting that Congress consider requiring the Secretary of Defense to develop an action plan and report annually on the specific steps being taken to address our recommendations and the current status of its efforts.

State Is Establishing Three Civilian Corps but Must Address Staffing Issues and Seek Additional Congressional Approvals

Since 2005, State has been developing three civilian corps to deploy rapidly to international crises. State has established two internal units made up of State employees—the Active Response Corps (ARC) and the Standby Response Corps (SRC). In May 2007, State began an effort to establish the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC), which would be made up of nonfederal civilians who would become full-time term federal employees. State and other agencies face difficulties in establishing positions and recruiting personnel for the ARC and training SRC volunteers; securing resources for international operations not viewed as part of the agencies' domestic missions; and addressing the possibility that deployed volunteers could result in staff shortages for the home unit. For the CRC, State needs

¹³ [GAO-07-549](#).

further congressional authorization to establish the Corps and provide compensation packages. Further, State is moving the civilian reserve concept forward without a common interagency definition of stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Agencies Have Partially Staffed Active and Standby Response Corps; Civilian Reserve Corps Still a Concept

To meet NSPD-44 requirements for establishing a strong civilian response capability, State and other U.S. agencies are developing three corps of civilians to support stabilization and reconstruction operations. Table 1 summarizes the three civilian corps.

Table 1: Three Civilian Corps under Development

Unit	Composition of volunteers	Deployment	Responsibilities	Personnel, as of 2007	Government-wide personnel goal, for FY 2009
Active Response Corps (ARC)	Current State employees serving 1-year rotations as first responders	Within 24-48 hours for 3-6 months	Deploy to unstable environments to support a U.S. mission, engage with a host country government, and conduct assessments in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 filled positions; • 15 approved temporary positions 	265
Standby Response Corps (SRC)	Current and retired State employees available as second responders	Within 30-60 days for up to 6 months	Deploy to unstable environments to assist ARC when additional or specialized personnel are needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91 current State employees ready to deploy; • 209 retirees on roster 	2,000
Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC)	Non-U.S. government employees with expertise in critical areas serving 4-year terms	Within 30-60 days for up to 1 year	Rapidly deploy to a country in crisis to conduct assessments; design, implement and evaluate programs; manage contractors, etc.	None	2,000

Source: GAO analysis of State Department information.

In 2006, State established the ARC within S/CRS, whose members would deploy during the initial stage of a U.S. stabilization and reconstruction operation. These first responders would deploy to unstable environments to assess countries' or regions' needs and help plan, coordinate, and monitor a U.S. government response. Since 2006, S/CRS has deployed ARC staff to Sudan, Eastern Chad, Lebanon, Kosovo, Liberia, Iraq, and Haiti. When not deployed, ARC members engage in training and other planning exercises and work with other S/CRS offices and State bureaus on related issues to gain relevant expertise.

Members of the SRC would deploy during the second stage of a stabilization and reconstruction operation and would supplement ARC staff or provide specialized skills needed for the stabilization and reconstruction operation. When not deployed, SRC employees serve in other capacities throughout State. Through October 2007, S/CRS has deployed SRC members to Sudan in support of the Darfur Peace Agreement and to Chad to support Darfur refugees who had migrated into the country.

S/CRS has worked to establish Active and Standby Response Corps in other U.S. agencies that could be drawn upon during the initial stage of a stabilization and reconstruction operation. Currently, only USAID and the Department of the Treasury have established units to respond rapidly to stability and reconstruction missions and have identified staff available for immediate deployment to a crisis. In July 2007, the NSC approved S/CRS plans to establish a governmentwide SRC with 500 volunteers by fiscal year 2008 and 2,000 volunteers by fiscal year 2009.

In 2007, State received authority to make available funds to establish a CRC. This corps' staff would be deployed to support stabilization and reconstruction operations for periods of time longer than the Active and Standby Response Corps. The CRC would be comprised of U.S. civilians from the private sector, state and local governments, and nongovernmental organizations who have skills not readily available within the U.S. government. These reservists would remain in their nonfederal jobs until called upon for service and, when deployed, would be classified as full-time term federal employees. They would have the authority to speak for the U.S. government and manage U.S. government contracts and employees. These personnel would receive training upon joining CRC and would be required to complete annual training. In addition, they would receive training specific and relevant to an operation immediately before deployment.

The Administration Faces Several Challenges in Establishing the Three Civilian Corps

Based on our work to date, State and other agencies face the following challenges in establishing and expanding their Active and Standby Response Corps.

- *S/CRS has had difficulty establishing positions and recruiting personnel for ARC and training SRC volunteers. S/CRS plans to increase the number of authorized staff positions for ARC from 15 temporary positions to 33 permanent positions, which State included in its 2008 budget request. However, according to S/CRS staff, it is unlikely that State will receive*

authority to establish all 33 positions. Further, S/CRS has had trouble recruiting ARC personnel, and as shown in Table 1, S/CRS has only been able to recruit 11 of the 15 approved ARC positions. State also does not presently have the capacity to train the 1,500 new SRC volunteers that S/CRS plans to recruit in 2009. S/CRS is studying ways to correct the situation.

- *Many agencies that operate overseas have limited numbers of staff available for rapid responses to overseas crises because their missions are domestic in nature.* Officials from the Departments of Commerce, Homeland Security, and Justice said that their agencies or their appropriators do not view international programs as central to their missions. As a result, it is difficult for these agencies to secure funding for deployments to active stabilization and reconstruction operations, whether as part of a cadre of on-call first and second responders or for longer-term assistance programs.
- *State and other agencies said that deploying volunteers can result in staff shortages in their home units; thus, they must weigh the value of deploying volunteers against the needs of these units.* For example, according to State's Office of the Inspector General, S/CRS has had difficulty getting State's other units to release the SRC volunteers it wants to deploy in support of stabilization and reconstruction operations.¹⁴ Other agencies also reported a reluctance to deploy staff overseas or to establish on-call units because doing so would leave fewer workers available to complete the offices' work requirements.¹⁵

State also faces several challenges in establishing the CRC. In 2007, Congress granted State the authority to make available up to \$50 million of Diplomatic and Consular Programs funds in the fiscal year 2007 supplemental to support and maintain the CRC.¹⁶ However, the legislation specified that no money may be obligated without specific authorization

¹⁴Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, *Report of Inspection: Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization*, ISP-I-07-26 (Washington, D.C., May 2007).

¹⁵Some civilian agencies recently agreed to identify, train, and deploy employees to stabilization and reconstruction operations if State funds the efforts. According to S/CRS staff, however, the training and deployment of non-State ARC and SRC would not begin until at least fiscal year 2009.

¹⁶See U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-28, § 3810 (2006).

for the CRC's establishment in a subsequent act of Congress. Legislation that would authorize the CRC is pending in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, but as of October 2007, neither chamber had taken action on the bills.¹⁷

In addition, State needs congressional authority to provide key elements of a planned compensation package for CRC personnel.¹⁸ Proposed legislation would allow State to provide the same compensation and benefits to deployed CRC personnel as it does to members of the Foreign Service, including health, life, and death benefits; mission-specific awards and incentive pay; and overtime pay and compensatory time. However, the proposed legislation does not address whether deployed CRC personnel would have competitive hiring status for other positions within State or whether the time deployed would count toward government retirement benefits. In addition, deployed CRC personnel would not have reemployment rights similar to those for military reservists. Currently, military reservists who are voluntarily or involuntarily called into service have the right to return to their previous places of employment upon completion of their military service requirements.¹⁹

Further, S/CRS is moving the CRC concept forward without a common interagency definition of stabilization and reconstruction operations. According to S/CRS staff and pending legislation that would authorize CRC, reservists would deploy to nonhumanitarian stabilization and reconstruction missions. However, S/CRS has not defined what these missions would be and how they would differ from other foreign assistance operations. A common interagency definition of what constitutes a stabilization and reconstruction operation is needed to determine the corps' structure, the missions it would support, and the skills and training its volunteers would need.

¹⁷See 110th Congress, S. 613 and H.R. 1084.

¹⁸These benefits would include, among other things, salary commensurate with experience; danger, hardship, and other mission-specific pays, benefits, and allowances; recruitment bonuses for hard-to-fill positions; overtime pay and compensatory time; competitive hiring status; federal health, life, and death benefits, and medical treatment while deployed; and dual compensation for retired federal workers.

¹⁹See Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act, 38 U.S.C §§ 4301-4333.

Conclusions

State and DOD have begun to take steps to enhance and better coordinate stability and reconstruction activities, but several significant challenges may hinder their ability to successfully integrate planning for potential future operations and strengthen military and civilian capabilities to conduct them. Specifically, without an interagency planning framework and clearly defined roles and responsibilities, achieving unity of effort in stabilization and reconstruction operations, as envisioned by NSPD-44, may continue to be difficult to achieve. Also, unless DOD develops a better approach for including other agencies in the development of combatant commander military contingency plans, DOD's plans may continue to reflect a DOD-centric view of how potential conflicts may unfold. Moreover, better guidance on how DOD should identify and prioritize capability gaps, measure progress, and incorporate lessons learned into future planning is needed to ensure that DOD is using its available resources to address the highest priority gaps in its stability operations capabilities. Finally, unless State develops and implements a sound plan to bolster civilian capabilities to support stability and reconstruction operations and establish a capable civilian reserve corps, DOD may continue to be heavily relied upon to provide needed stability and reconstruction capabilities, rather than leveraging expertise that resides more appropriately in civilian agencies.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes our prepared remarks. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

For questions regarding this testimony, please call Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov or Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Other key contributors to this statement were Robert L. Repasky, Assistant Director; Judith McCloskey, Assistant Director; Sam Bernet; Tim Burke; Leigh Caraher; Grace Coleman; Lynn Cothorn; Marissa Jones; Sona Kalapura; Kate Lenane; and Amber Simco.

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