



U.S. Marines and Liberian soldiers deliver humanitarian supplies to schools and medical facilities in Logan Town, Liberia

Stabilization and Reconstruction

A Long Beginning

BY RICHARD G. LUGAR

International crises are inevitable, and in most cases, U.S. national security interests will be threatened by sustained instability. The war on terror necessitates that we not leave nations crumbling and ungoverned. We have seen how terrorists can exploit nations afflicted by lawlessness and desperate circumstances. They seek out such places to establish training camps, recruit new members, and tap into the global black market in weapons.

In this atmosphere, the United States must have the right structures, personnel, and resources in place when an emergency occurs. A delay in response of a few weeks, or even days, can mean the difference between success and failure. Clearly, we need a full range of tools to prevail. My own focus has been on boosting the civilian side of our stabilization and reconstruction capabilities, while encouraging improved mechanisms for civilian and military agencies to work together on these missions. Lessons taken from civil-military interaction in contingencies both large and small, such as Afghanistan or Liberia, should be studied and valuable tools incorporated in our government institutions and response capacity.

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Over the years, our government has cobbled together plans, people, and projects to respond to postconflict situations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, and elsewhere. The efforts of those engaged have been valiant, but these crises have been complex and time sensitive. In my judgment, our ad hoc approach has been inadequate to deal quickly and efficiently with complicated emergencies. As former Ambassador James Dobbins testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee several years ago:

Successive administrations have treated each new mission as if it were the first and, more importantly, as if it were the last. Each time we have sent out new people to face old problems, and seen them make old mistakes. Each time we have dissipated accumulated expertise after an operation has been concluded, failing to study the lessons and integrate the results in our doctrine, training and future planning, or to retain and make use of the experienced personnel in ways that ensure their availability for the next mission when it arrives.

In turn, our lack of preparation for immediate stabilization contingencies has made our subsequent reconstruction efforts more difficult and expensive.

In the fall of 2003, I began to explore the possibility of legislation that would bolster U.S. postconflict stabilization and reconstruction capabilities. My own perceptions of shortcomings were reinforced when I discovered a State Department report on goals and activities that barely mentioned the mission of stabilization and reconstruction. My thinking was also stimulated by the work being done on the issue at a number of important organizations and think tanks, including the RAND Corporation,

Center for Strategic and International Studies, U.S. Institute of Peace, and National Defense University. Thoughtful scholarship and analysis were being devoted to the problem, and much of it supported the objective of improving the capacity of U.S. civilian agencies to deal with overseas emergencies.

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In late 2003, I organized a Policy Advisory Group made up of government officials and outside experts to give members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee advice on how to strengthen U.S. capabilities for implementing these postconflict missions. After several meetings and much study, members came to the conclusion that we needed a well-organized and strongly led civilian counterpart to the military in postconflict zones. The civilian side needed both operational capability and a significant surge capacity. It was our judgment that only a Cabinet-level Secretary could provide the necessary interagency clout and leadership to create and sustain the organization. In our judgment, the Secretary of State, working with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), was best positioned to lead this effort.

Building on our deliberations, I introduced S. 2127, the Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act of 2004, with Senators Joe Biden and Chuck Hagel. The committee passed the bill unanimously in March 2004. The legislation envisioned a new office at the State Department with a joint State-USAID readiness

response corps comprised of both reserve and active duty components. To maximize flexibility in a crisis, our legislation also authorized funding and provided important personnel authorities to the new office. In addition, it provided for the establishment of two key capacities sorely lacking within our civilian agencies that would provide for more timely and less costly responses—crisis and contingency planning, and a forum for lessons learned in contingencies past.

Without waiting for passage of the bill, the State Department responded by establishing the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in July 2004. This was an important breakthrough that demonstrated the State Department’s recognition of the role it could and should be playing. Together with other members of the Foreign Relations Committee, I have endeavored to provide support and encouragement to this new office. Like many initiatives, it has had its share of teething pains.

Under the initial leadership of Carlos Pascual, the office conducted a government-wide inventory of the civilian assets that might be available for stabilization and reconstruction tasks in postconflict zones. It undertook the planning necessary to recruit, train, and organize a reserve corps of civilians for rapid deployment. It also formulated interagency contingency plans—informed by our past experiences—for countries and regions of the world where the next crisis could suddenly arise.

In December 2005, President George W. Bush signed a directive putting the Secretary of State in charge of interagency stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Secretary Condoleezza Rice promised to dedicate 15 of the 100 new positions requested for fiscal year 2007 to augment the small Reconstruction and Stabilization Office. In those days, the office

heroically stretched dollars by recruiting personnel on detail from other agencies, taking advantage of Department of Defense (DOD)–funded training, and getting the State Department to pay for the overhead of new office space from other sources such as general administrative accounts. But such a hand-to-mouth existence has obvious disadvantages. Detailed personnel rarely stay long, circumstances do not inspire confidence in the concept as they return to their home agencies, and institutional memory becomes short. Relying on DOD funds put the office in the passenger seat when it should have had the resources to pursue uniquely civilian-oriented goals.

Despite good progress, significant gaps in capabilities remained as the bureaucratic bottlenecks limited the impact of the civilian agency coordinator. The effort received

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new impetus in the January 2007 State of the Union speech, when President Bush gave his personal endorsement to the concept by emphasizing the value of a “civilian reserve corps . . . with critical skills to serve on missions abroad.” Soon after, in February 2007, I introduced S. 613, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2007, along with Senator Biden, and we were later joined by a bipartisan group of seven cosponsors. It was ultimately passed as an amendment to DOD authorization and signed into law by President Bush in October 2008. The bill, a follow-on to



USAID programs help educate young girls in Afghanistan

the 2004 legislation that was never enacted, established into law the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. It also:

- ❖ supports the President's 2009 budget request for \$248 million for the purpose of enabling U.S. civilian stabilization capabilities through the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization
- ❖ authorizes assistance for stabilization and reconstruction in a country or region that the President determines is at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife
- ❖ establishes and maintains a Response Readiness Corps of government civilians with an active and standby component, trained and ready to deploy on short notice in support of U.S. crisis response
- ❖ establishes a Civilian Reserve Corps to deepen the pool of civilian experts trained and ready to deploy expeditiously in support of U.S. crisis response
- ❖ directs the development of an interagency strategy to rapidly and effectively respond when stabilization and reconstruction operations are required.

While many of the measures called for in our legislation have been implemented, some are still works in progress. We envisioned a 250-person *active duty* corps made up of men and women specifically hired and trained for the duty. Such a corps could be rapidly deployed with the military or independently, for both initial assessments and operational purposes. They would be the first civilian team on the ground in postconflict situations, for example, arriving well in advance of the establishment of an Embassy. This active duty corps would be able to do a wide range of civilian jobs from assessment to initial implementation needed in a postconflict or otherwise hostile environment, or in permissive environments without military support.

Such a corps would be no larger than the typical Army company. But with training for these situations and the capability to deploy anywhere in the world, it would be a force multiplier. It would be equipped with the authority and training to take broad operational responsibility for stabilization missions. Establishment of such a corps is a modest investment when seen as part of the overall national security budget. Even in peacetime, we maintain Active duty military forces of almost 1.4 million men and women who train and plan for the possibility of war, not to mention the nearly 1 million Reserve and National Guard forces. A civilian capability to respond is a needed complement as well.

Our legislation also calls on the heads of other executive branch agencies to establish personnel exchange programs designed to enhance stabilization and reconstruction capacity with a standby reserve of 2,000, drawn from State, USAID, and other agencies. The Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, and Justice,

among others, can make important contributions. In addition, the legislation calls for creation of a “civilian reserve” of 500 volunteers from outside the government with the requisite training and skills.

The main roadblock to enhancing the State Department’s stabilization and reconstruction capacity has been resources. The expressions of support from top officials did not translate into a robust budget request to achieve such purposes until 2009. In the final budget submitted by the Bush administration, the President requested \$248 million for the Civilian Stabilization Initiative. The administration of Barack Obama has likewise sustained its support for such capabilities by providing significant additional resources in the 2009 Emergency Supplemental Appropriation of \$45 million, and more so in the fiscal year 2010 budget request at nearly \$324 million.

One stopgap measure that Congress did pass in fiscal year 2006, overcoming historical congressional skepticism of such pools of funding, was the authority to transfer up to \$100 million from the Pentagon to the State Department for boosting the civilian response

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to particular trouble spots. I had sought to have such a fund established at the State Department for some years, and this artful legislative relocation overcame the persistent congressional tightfistedness toward foreign assistance relative to DOD programs. Still, this

is a 1-year authority, and the money does not provide the long-term perspective to improve the State Department's capacity to respond to complex emergencies. It has been renewed each year since in lieu of a direct authorization through the foreign affairs budget. In practice, money from the fund has been used, legally, by the Pentagon for its own purposes.

This brief history of our efforts to improve civilian capability in foreign conflict zones must be seen in the larger context of Federal spending priorities. The foreign affairs budget (150 Account) is always a tougher sell to Congress than the military budget (050 Account). To President Bush's credit, he attempted to reverse the downward spiral in overall foreign affairs spending that took place in the 1990s. In that decade, both the executive and legislative branches rushed to cash in on the peace dividend. But President Bush consistently requested increases for the 150 Account in his budgets—although amounts appropriated by Congress typically fell short of the requests. President Obama has indicated that he sees a larger foreign assistance budget as in our national security interest, but appropriators have already trimmed his initial request.

Today, in the midst of a global struggle of information and ideas, when anti-Western riots can be set off by the publication of a cartoon; in the midst of a crisis with Iran that will decide whether the nonproliferation regime of the last half century will be abandoned; when we are in our sixth year of attempting to stabilize Iraq; when the stability of nuclear-armed Pakistan is at risk; and when the Arab-Israeli peace process remains fraught with uncertainty, the reservoir of support for foreign affairs spending in Congress is still shallow. Members of Congress may recognize the value of the work done by the State Department, and some selected programs may be popular, but at the end of the day, the

150 Account is seldom defended against competing priorities.

As all this suggests, we have a long way to go on the civilian side of stability and reconstruction efforts. DOD is keenly aware of the importance of having a capable civilian partner in such operations. We should consider setting up a multiagency fund specifically for addressing stabilization and reconstruction planning and operations and providing sufficient consultation and oversight for Congress. Dispensing with the competitive interagency scramble for resources would not be easy, but the need for more coordination is clear.

If the problems on the civilian side of crisis management cannot be solved, I think we will begin to see a realignment of authorities between the Departments of Defense and State. Some would argue that this realignment has already begun. For example, the Department of Defense was granted money and authority to operate a worldwide train and equip program despite the fact that foreign assistance has long been under the purview of the Secretary of State. Foreign Relations Committee staff conducted a field study of this program in 2006, and I initiated another broader followup study for fall 2009. If we cannot think this through as a government, the United States may come to depend even more on the military for tasks and functions far beyond its current role.

The good news is that under the Obama administration, we have a Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Vice President, National Security Advisor, and, I believe, President who all appreciate the importance of building a strong civilian arm to perform vital civilian tasks. That is why I am optimistic that we can build on the progress already made to create a robust civilian component to our stabilization and reconstruction capabilities. [PRISM](#)