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Forging Campaign Quality: Ensuring Adequate Stability Operations Capability within the Modular Army

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**Forging Campaign Quality:
Ensuring Adequate Stability Operations Capability within the Modular Army**

The United States Army is undeniably the world's predominant land combat force. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has been without a military peer competitor. Although there is concern regarding the increasing power and uncertain intentions of China, the U.S. is likely to remain militarily unmatched for at least the next two decades.

American preeminence has had consequences however. Unable to challenge U.S. power conventionally, America's adversaries have compensated by fighting asymmetrically. The ongoing Global War on Terror (GWOT) provides a reasonable prototype for the type of adversary the U.S. Army is most likely to engage in the coming years. This opponent will be weak and therefore will not attack directly. Rather, it will use irregular methods, such as terrorism and insurgency, to attack America and American interests. Most dangerously, these enemies will work to acquire weapons of mass destruction to counter American power.

Despite these strategic realities, current Army transformation efforts remain focused on improving capabilities for major combat operations rather than developing others equally vital in today's environment, such as stabilization and reconstruction operations. Although the U.S. Army is currently undergoing the largest comprehensive restructuring since World War II, this restructuring has not truly taken into consideration the implications of the new strategic environment or the requirements of the National Security Strategy or the National Defense Strategy.¹

The United States Army is seeking to be “A campaign quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities. According to General Schoomaker, the current Army Chief of Staff, the campaign quality of an Army ... is not only its ability to win decisive combat operations, but also its ability to sustain those operations for as long as necessary, adapting them as required to unpredictable and often profound changes in the context and character of the conflict.”²

To truly be a “Campaign Quality Army,” capable of accomplishing the missions the American people ask of it, the U.S. Army must increase the capabilities needed to successfully undertake stabilization and reconstruction operations. Further, these changes must be incorporated into the broader context of the Army’s ongoing modular transformation if they have any chance of being implemented at all.

Strategic Context

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States recognizes the nature of the current geo-strategic context. “The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states....”³ In order to combat these new threats, the United States has embarked on a strategy of preemption and of democratization. Operation Iraqi Freedom provides an example of this strategy. This strategy commits the United States military to undertake not only major combat operations, but also to create the conditions required to foster the success of newly formed democracies- stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Although one can argue the current NSS is a product of a single administration, there is reason to believe that its underpinning logic will survive into and possibly beyond the next administration. There is a strong and fundamental belief among Americans that

stable democracies do not threaten world order. This belief predates the Bush administration. In fact, it underpins Clinton administration's National Security Strategy of "Engagement and Enlargement."⁴ Americans believe in democracy, not only for themselves, but for the world at large.

The events of September 11 had a profound effect on the American psyche. As a result of the attacks, the belief in democracy took one step further. Today, it is the strategy of the U.S. to create and foster democracies out of states that fundamentally threaten American security and world order. Given the open ended nature of the GWOT, it is reasonable to assume that the strategy of intervening in hostile and weak states, particularly ones with intentions of developing WMD capability will remain largely intact regardless of the party affiliations of future Presidents over the next decade or more. For the United States Army, this means stabilization and reconstruction operations will be the norm rather than the exception.

Defining the Topic

The terminology regarding post-conflict operations is muddy. The most common term used to describe post-conflict or phase IV operations is "Stability Operations," although the term is not in the Department of Defense Dictionary. However, Army Field Manual 3-0 *Operations*, defines stability operations as those operations that "promote and protect US national interests by influencing the threat, political and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to a crisis."⁵ Additionally, many of recent key documents focus on the terms "stabilization" and "reconstruction" operations although neither of these terms is doctrinally enshrined.

Stabilization is defined as “the effort to create a secure and stable environment and to provide for the basic needs of the population, to include food, water, sanitation and shelter.” Reconstruction operations seek to create a “stable and self governing polity by establishing the rule of law, rehabilitating the economy, and otherwise improving the welfare of the people.”⁶ For the purpose of discussion, this paper will employ the terms stability operations and stabilization and reconstruction when discussing the broad spectrum of post conflict operations.

The Case for a robust Army Role in Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

Stabilization and reconstruction operations are not a new concept. The United States government as a whole and the United States military in particular has been wrestling with how best to conduct post-conflict operations since at least World War II. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has undertaken six major nation-building operations around the world.⁷

However, OEF and OIF are providing valuable insight into what is required to conduct successful post-conflict operations. First, it has become clear that stabilization and reconstruction operations are a complex undertaking and the responsibility for their successful conduct is tangled among a variety of agencies. Second, OIF and OEF have made it very clear that while the United States military is rapidly deployable world-wide, non-military government agencies are not. Similarly, the number of resources the U.S. military can quickly mobilize dwarfs those of civilian agencies. These conclusions are currently irrefutable.

Although there is considerable energy being spent on ways to make the interagency more responsive, post conflict stabilization and reconstruction will continue

to fall to the military by default for the foreseeable future. Finally, one must recognize that stabilization and reconstruction operations are predominantly a land force mission. Although the U.S. Marine Corps will no doubt participate, only the Army has the requisite depth in its support structure to undertake and conduct protracted stability operations. Like it or not, this mission will fall in large part on the United States Army.

Ongoing Army Transformation Efforts

In order to meet the challenges of the 21st century security environment, the Army is currently undergoing transformation to a modular force structure. This transformation will be ongoing for the better part of the next decade and will provide the blueprint for Army Force structure for at least the next two decades.

The foundational element of this transformation is the modular Brigade Combat Team (BCT). This new BCT will be a stand alone, tactical force that is leaner, more agile and more rapidly deployable than the old brigade structure.⁸ Modular Brigades will no longer be permanently associated with divisions, but will now be able to “plug-in” to a higher level headquarters. This will allow Joint Force Commanders to tailor forces to specific mission requirements. Although these new brigades will be smaller than their predecessors, the Army states that advances in networking capabilities, types of personnel assigned and rapid deployability will make these smaller units more capable than the “old style” brigades.⁹

The Army goal is to increase the number of available BCTs from 33 to 43 by the year 2010, with the potential of creating up to 48 BCTs by that time.¹⁰ In order to source the newly created combat power, the Army received congressional approval for a temporary increase of 30,000 soldiers in the Active Component. However, once the

modular conversion is complete, this increase will have to come out of headquarters or support structure.¹¹ In 2004, the Army began converting its ten active component divisions to the new BCT structure, with a plan for completion by 2006.¹² The second priority for conversion is the reserve component combat force structure.

In addition to the new brigade structure, the Army is also redesigning its combat support structure and its headquarters structure. However, unlike the combat brigades, none of the design for the support structure or command structure has yet been codified.¹³

This transformation does not come cheap. The current estimated cost of modular transformation is \$48 billion dollars, which represents a 70% increase from the 2004 projected cost. Further, this cost estimate is not complete, because it does not include any estimates for the conversion of support or headquarters structure. Given the growing federal budget deficits and the large amount of supplemental funding the Army has been receiving over the past several years, it would appear as though the Army has decided to transform its combat formations to the extent possible in the likely event that funding for transformation is slashed in the coming years.

This plan for modularizing the army is telling. Clearly the United States military requires lethal combat forces capable of defeating adversaries. However, over the past decade or more, the U.S. Army has not had a problem conducting combat operations. The difficulty the Army has faced has been in conducting post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction operations. Choosing to prioritize transformation of combat forces does little to create capabilities for stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Those who design the “Army Campaign Plan,” which is the plan for implementing Army transformation disagree with this conclusion. They argue that the force structure for the two types of operations, major combat operations and stability operations are interchangeable and that strengthening combat forces will inherently improve the capabilities to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations.¹⁴

Although combat forces are certainly capable of accomplishing many tasks required for the successful conduct of post-conflict reconstruction, there are certain critical tasks they are neither trained nor equipped to handle. Specifically, infantry and armored formations lack the capabilities found in civil affairs units, engineering units and medical units that are in high demand during stabilization and reconstruction operations. Although two psychological operations and one civil affairs soldier have been added to each modular BCT, these are hardly sufficient numbers to make any appreciable impact.¹⁵

This scope of the problem is brought into sharper relief when one considers that the Army has not yet designed the support structure or the headquarters structure to accompany the BCTs. By one estimate, in order to create the support structure needed for the modular forces, it would require an increase of 56,000 active duty soldiers and an additional \$13.5 billion above the current cost projections.¹⁶ Given that the Army has already promised Congress it will cut 30,000 active component soldiers currently in the support and headquarters structure, the deficit is actually 86,000 people. It would appear that the Army remains focused on defeating armies in the field, rather than ensuring it has the capabilities required to conduct post-conflict operations.

Stabilization Operations versus Rapid Decisive Operations

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States military has concentrated on improving its capabilities to perform Rapid Decisive Operations (RDO). RDO employs the military in concert with all other elements of national power to assault the adversary simultaneously from all directions, causing him to lose coherence and cease action.¹⁷ In effect, the United States and its allies seek to overwhelm an adversary and defeat it without committing large numbers of troops, causing significant casualties, or destroying large amounts of infrastructure.

The United States' success in employing this concept has had unanticipated consequences. RDO implies fewer troops are needed than in the past to defeat an enemy. It also leads to a shorter planning timeframe and fewer troops on the ground to begin stabilization and reconstruction operations. In his book *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, Dr. Hans Binnendijk argues that it has been America's success in creating a military capable of performing rapid decisive operations that has led to an even greater need for a force capable of promptly beginning to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations. Further, stabilization and reconstruction operations must begin before major combat operations end.¹⁸

If stabilization and reconstruction operations must commence while major combat operations are still ongoing, then there is no transition from Phase III- decisive operations to Phase IV-transition operations.¹⁹ The two phases occur simultaneously. This implies the need for two separate forces on the ground, one focused on RDO and another focused on post conflict operations.

Given this, the Army needs a new concept on how to simultaneously undertake stabilization and reconstruction operations and major combat operations. In his recently published paper, “Reshaping the Army to Win Decisively” Colonel Brian Watson argues for a concept he calls progressive stabilization. In it, two forces, one for major combat operations and one for stabilization operations operate in theater in tandem. These forces would function under separate higher level headquarters at the General Officer level.²⁰

To be successful, this concept requires a military command structure dedicated to stabilization reconstruction operations. Further, this command structure must have dedicated forces capable of conducting the mission associated with stabilization operations. There are four primary tasks that must be performed in order to successfully conduct stability and reconstruction operations. They are: Sustain the populace, repair critical infrastructure, provide internal and external security and synchronize transitions and turnovers.²¹

Army Capabilities Required for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

Given the concurrent timing and different focus of RDO and stabilization operations, two different forces, with somewhat different capabilities are required. Unlike RDO, stabilization and reconstruction operations are not “rapid” at all. The average timeframe required to conduct a successful transition to democracy has been between five and seven years.²² A five year commitment of U.S. military forces is substantial. It will limit the country’s ability to respond to additional contingencies that may arise during this timeframe. The Army and the United States government both have to understand that nation-building is a slow and resource intensive undertaking.

OIF and OEF have shown that the Army needs greater engineering, civil affairs, military intelligence and military police capabilities in order to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations. Additionally, they have shown the need for non-special forces units (SF) to assume the traditional SF mission of training foreign troops and police forces in order to build the necessary indigenous security capabilities.

These requirements will clearly stress an Army that is already pushing up against its congressionally mandated end-strength cap and prioritizing the transformation of combat forces over that of support forces. The Army has made a commitment to restructure 100,000 soldiers from lesser required specialties (such as field artillery) into the more needed spaces.²³ However, to date, no plan has been publicly presented which explains how this restructuring will occur and what spaces will be allocated to which needed specialties.

In recent GAO Congressional Testimony, the problem of restructuring and reallocating military intelligence specialties was highlighted. In order to meet current requirement in the modular BCTs, the Army needs to add 2800 military intelligence specialists by the end of 2005. By 2010, this number climbs to 6200. Given that each of these specialists requires several years to train, it is doubtful that this critical requirement will be filled anytime soon.²⁴

This problem of increasing the number of high demand low density (HD/LD) specialties is compounded by the fact that many of these soldiers and their units exist predominantly in the reserve component and are thus not as rapidly deployable and are also subject to mobilization constraints. For example, 96% of the Army's Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations soldiers are currently in the reserve component.²⁵

In conjunction with its modular transformation efforts, the Army has introduced a force generation model for the active and reserve components. When implemented, this model will provide a deployability cycle for all Army units, both active and reserve. Under this model, active component units will be available for deployment every third year and reserve component units will be available for deployment every sixth year.²⁶ If implemented, this initiative will alleviate a lot of the strain the reserve component has been under over the past four years. However, it will also shrink the pool of HD/LD units available for deployment at any given time. Currently, the United States Army has about 145,000 mobilized reservists serving in the active component.²⁷ Many of these activated soldiers are serving in billets critical to stabilization and reconstruction operations. At this point, many of these have far exceeded the one year in six deployment standard set forth in the Army Force Generation Model.

Scores of academics have been studying the “lessons of OIF” and many have recommended changes to the Army force structure based upon their findings. There has been a split between those who believe the Army needs special purpose “Stabilization Units” and those who believe the Army need only reorganize and retrain the forces already in existence. Both recommendations require a larger number of HD/LD forces available for deployment to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations. This means that the size of the active Army must grow or the number of combat forces must decrease.

There are indications that the Army understands the importance of successfully conducting stabilization and reconstruction operations in order to accomplish the missions the nation asks of it. The current Army Strategic Planning Guidance, which is

the Army's Capstone planning document, states "The Army recognizes the criticality of preserving the success of major combat operations and establishing conditions that will provide for an enduring peace. To achieve this imperative, the Army must improve its capability to perform stability operations as a member of the Joint Force."²⁸

Although this leads one to the conclusion that the Army is serious about improving its capacity to conduct stabilization and transformation operations, the "team" stood up to fulfill the Chief of Staff of the Army's mandate to make recommendations for improving Army capabilities for stability operations currently consists of one civilian contractor working the issue as an additional duty.²⁹ Given the resources placed against it, improving capabilities for stability operations does not seem to be a priority for the Army after all.

Why the Gap?

There is clearly a gap between the Army's ability to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations and the strategic requirement for creating stable, functioning democracies. OIF and OEF have made this gap quite apparent. Despite this however, the Army continues to prioritize the transformation of combat formations over those forces best trained and equipped to conduct critical post conflict tasks. Why?

Part of the answer is that stabilization and reconstruction operations are time consuming and resource intensive. In these types of operations, progress can be hard to measure and ultimate victory may only be visible in hindsight, rather than as a result of the decisive defeat of an Army in the field. As a result, commanders are not eager to undertake such missions. However, this is not the primary reason.

There is a mindset within the Army that stability operations constitute a diversion of effort and resources away from the Army's "real mission," which is to fight and win the nation's wars. Army leaders prefer the operational level of war. They are comfortable and proficient with planning for and conducting major combat operations. This is not true for stabilization and reconstruction operations.

There is a preference within the Army that the military realm remains separate from the political realm. Stabilization and reconstruction operations have an inherently political aspect to them. This destroys the ability to consider operations in wholly "military" terms. This distinction is mostly an illusion in any case. Although military leaders prefer to remain "apolitical," Clausewitz reminds us that war is an inherently political act, incapable of being compartmentalized into a purely military domain.

In order to succeed in conducting the stabilization and reconstruction operations demanded by the national strategy, the United States Army needs to embrace a more "strategic" view of its role and better balance its constrained resources to best achieve all of the tasks demanded of it by the American people and the National Strategy. This is not a simple task. To succeed, it requires that both military and civilian leadership at the highest levels understand that combat operations are only component of war and that ultimate victory will require the military to do more than simply execute RDO effectively.

Conclusion

This paper has criticized the Army's decision to prioritize transforming its combat formations over increasing its ability to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations. However, it is necessary to state that the ability conduct effectively conduct

rapid decisive operations remains critical. It is precisely America's combat power that has driven its enemy's to fight asymmetrically rather than conventionally. One should not discount the advantages of not having a military peer competitor.

In a resource constrained environment fighting the GWOT while transforming requires difficult choices. Although it would be optimal for the Army to build specialized units for stabilization and reconstruction operations, it is not realistic given the fiscal and manpower constraints placed upon the Army. Neither the money nor the manpower is available to resource this option. That said, the Army can not simply continue to rely upon its modular BCTs to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations.

The Army has stated that it will restructure 100,000 billets and rebalance the active and reserve components in order to provide a larger, more readily available pool of high demand, low density forces such as civil affairs, psychological operations, military police and certain types of engineers.³⁰ This is a critical step. The Army should publish the details of this restructuring and provide a timeline for its completion as part of its overall transformation campaign plan. Further, this effort must specifically target increasing capabilities for stability and reconstruction operations.

The military must also develop a concept for stabilization and reconstruction operations that complements RDO. Colonel Watson's "Progressive Stabilization" concept provides a good starting point. When designing this concept, the Army must recognize the full implications of the fact that stabilization and reconstruction operations and major combat operations can occur simultaneously and create a headquarters

structure that can focus exclusively on post conflict operations, rather than have to split its focus between combat and stability operations.

Army leaders at all levels must recognize that conducting successful combat operations is only one component of victory. To fight and win our nations wars will likely entail the successful conduct of post conflict operations, particularly given the current geo-political context and the national security strategy.

Finally, at the national level, it is critical to recognize that in order to succeed; a national security strategy must be adequately resourced. The current strategy of replacing weak and corrupt states with stable democracies is an ambitious, expensive and time consuming endeavor. In order to succeed, the U.S. government must be willing to fund the strategy and make the necessary increases in military end strength that will be required.

The challenges of the 21st Century security environment require the United States Army and the United States military as a whole to prepare to successfully conduct operations across the full spectrum of conflict. This absolutely requires the development of capabilities for conducting stabilization and reconstruction operations. If the Army Transformation Plan does not include this, the United States is in danger of winning the next battle but losing the next war.

Endnotes

¹ The National Defense Strategy of the United States breaks the challenges the United States will face over the next 20 years into four categories. These are traditional, irregular, catastrophic and disruptive. The National Defense Strategy posits that the U.S. will have to shepherd its ability to fight traditional adversaries while improving its ability to defend against irregular and catastrophic challenges. The National Defense Strategy can be accessed online at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/nds-usa_mar2005.htm

² Peter J. Schoemaker, "The Way Ahead—Our Army at War—Relevant and Ready" Nov 2004. Accessed online at <http://www.army.mil/references>

³ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, Page 15. Accessed online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>

⁴ William J Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February, 1996. Accessed online at <http://www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/national/1996stra.htm>

⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Army Field Manual 3-0, Operations*. Washington DC, 14 June 2001. Paragraph 1-48. Accessed online at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-0/>

⁶ Department of Defense, Directive 3000, "Defense Capabilities to Transition to and from hostilities" Washington DC, October 8, 2004. Page 8.

⁷ Samuel R. Berger and Brent Scowcroft, "*In the Wake of War: Improving U.S. Post Conflict Capabilities*" Council on Foreign Relations Press, July 2005, Page 3. Accessed online at http://www.cfr.org/publication/8438/in_the_wake_of_war.html

⁸ Association of the United States Army, "The U.S. Army: A Modular Force for the 21st Century" AUSA publications, March 2005. Page 3. Accessed online at <http://www.comw.org/rma/fulltext/ustrans.html>

⁹ Ibid. Page 3.

¹⁰ Ibid. Pages 3-5.

¹¹ Ibid, Page 4.

¹² Statement of Sharon Pickup, "Force Structure: Preliminary Observations on Army Plans to Implement and Fund Modular Forces" Testimony before the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives. March 16, 2005, Page 3.

¹³ Sharon Pickup. Page 1.

¹⁴ Interview with MAJ Stephen Sledge, Army G3 Transformation Office. September 16, 2005.

¹⁵ Interview with Mr. David Redding, Army G35, Nov 1, 2005. Mr. Redding is the Army Staff lead for improving Army capabilities for stability operations.

¹⁶ Brian G. Watson, "Reshaping the Expeditionary Army to Win Decisively: The Case for Greater Stabilization Capacity in the Modular Force," published by the United States Army Strategic Studies Institute, The United States Army War College. August 2005. Page 15.

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- ¹⁷ U.S. Joint Forces Command, *A Concept for Rapid Decisive Operations White Paper, version 2.0*. Washington DC 2002. Page ii. Accessed online at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2001/RDO.doc>
- ¹⁸ Hans Binnendijk, and Stuart Johnson, ed. *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, National Defense University Press, 2004. Page xiii.
- ¹⁹ Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* defines four distinct phases of an operation: Deter/Engage, Seize Initiative, Decisive Operations and Transition. JP 3-0 was accessed online at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf.
- ²⁰ Brian G. Watson. Pages 9 and 10.
- ²¹ Ibid. Page 15.
- ²² Binnendijk. Page 7.
- ²³ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *The 2005 Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, page 10. Accessed online at <http://www.army.mil/references/>.
- ²⁴ Sharon Pickup. Page 5.
- ²⁵ United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Homepage. Accessed online at <http://www.usacapoc.army.mil/Whatis.asp>.
- ²⁶ United States Government Accountability Office, "RESERVE FORCES: Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Transformation Initiatives." Washington D.C. October 2005, Page 1.
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- ²⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *The 2005 Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, page 12. Accessed online at <http://www.army.mil/references/>.
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