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JMO Research Paper:

Post-Conflict Operations and the Combatant Commander – Lessons Learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Maritime Operations Department.

The contents of this essay reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the U. S. NAVY.

/S/
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Introduction

On May 1, 2003, before a live television audience onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, President George W. Bush declared victory for the United States and the end of major combat operations in Iraq (www.cnn.com). Preceding the president's speech was perhaps the most stunning display of technological superiority and joint conventional fire power in military history. In just 26 days, the United States and its "coalition of the willing" had invaded Iraq; decisively defeated Iraqi conventional forces; ousted President Saddam Hussein from power; and terminated the Ba'ath party's thirty-five year hold on Iraq (www.wikipedia.com). Even the harshest critics of the war were claiming that there had never been combat operations as successful as Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Omitted from the President's jubilant speech, however, was that the United States' campaign in Iraq was far from over. The defeat of Iraqi conventional forces and subsequent regime change were in fact trigger points for the coalition's transition to the final phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom – post-conflict operations.

Post-conflict or post-hostility operations are activities taken to stabilize, secure, and reconstruct an area of operations (AO) in order to transition the AO back to peace and civilian government control (Crane, pg. 27). The term "post-conflict", in fact, is really a misnomer because efforts to set the stage for transition from combat operations back to peace should begin before the conclusion of conventional combat. Post-hostility activities are the most difficult stage of a military operation because of the level of commitment in terms of time and resources needed to successfully complete it. Iraq serves as true testimony to this fact. Almost three years after President Bush's

declaration of the end of major combat operations the United States is still heavily engaged in stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations in this part of the world.

The current situation within Iraq points to a problem that has plagued the United States throughout its history. US Combatant Commanders are adept at planning and executing major conventional operations but struggle to transition to and execute post-conflict activities. My thesis is that US Combatant Commanders' struggled to transition to and execute post-conflict operations in Iraq for three main reasons:

- Failure of theater-strategic and operational staffs to plan for post-conflict operations in detail prior/simultaneous to the onset of hostilities exacerbated by the speed with which US forces achieved a conventional victory.
- Failure to include interagency, nongovernmental, and host-nation organizations at the beginning of the planning process for post-hostility operations in Iraq.
- Lack of operational intelligence and cultural awareness of the ethnic-political situation within Iraq at the end of the conventional war.

In order to support my thesis I will examine the shortfalls in the formulation of the plan for post-conflict operations in Iraq. I will analyze the lack of interagency coordination and communication and how it affected the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) and its subsequent successor, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Finally, I will examine how lack operational intelligence and cultural awareness raised its ugly head during the violence that immediately followed the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Post-hostility operations and its inherent dilemmas are not new to the American experience. Despite this fact, the United States continues to make the same mistakes over and over again in post-combat operations. In order to remedy this situation, Combatant

Commanders need to put training for these types of operations on par with training for conventional combat. In addition, joint interagency coordinating groups need to be stood up and resourced within each of the geographical combatant commands to deal with post-conflict planning at the onset of a contingency. History has shown that a war tactically and operationally won can still lead to strategic defeat if post-conflict operations are poorly planned and executed. In today's national security environment it is more important now than ever to not only win the war but to also win the peace through post-conflict operations.

The Plan

Some pundits within the media and academia claim that the current challenges faced by the United States in Iraq can be attributed to a failure to recognize that the campaign would require post-combat operations. This is simply not the case. The reality is that the failures in Iraq are much more complex than a simple oversight.

From its initial planning stages, CENTCOM planners did realize that Operation Iraqi Freedom would require post-combat operations. Furthermore, they understood that this phase could possibly measure in years in terms of its duration (Franks, pg. 351). Unfortunately, aside from identifying the phase's objectives, planners failed to map out and properly resource post-combat operations with the level of detail of the first three phases of the campaign. By the time conventional combat had ended, planners were behind the power curve. This combined with lack of interagency participation in the planning process and inaccurate intelligence was a recipe for disaster.

For the CENTCOM Commander, General Tommy Franks, and his staff the objectives for post-conflict operations in Iraq were clear. They would be similar to the recent intervention operation in Afghanistan: assist Iraqis in setting up a new government representative of the people; establish internal security; establish a new military capable of securing the country's external defense; rebuild the infrastructure; gainfully employ the populace through reconstruction and humanitarian assistance projects; and finally, find and properly dispose of caches of weapons of mass destruction (Franks, pg 393). The end state for this phase of the operation would be a broad-based, representative Iraqi government built on democratic institutions, capable of defending its territorial borders and maintaining internal security, without any weapons of mass destruction (Franks, pg 352).

Although the objectives were clear, the task of planning how to reach the desired end state was not so resolute. Securing the peace and forming a legitimate government would not be easy in a country that had been raped and massacred for more than three decades under Saddam Hussein (Post-Conflict Stabilization and Reconstruction, pg 2). The deep divisions among Iraq's multiethnic community and traditional tribal rivalries served only to further complicate the situation.

In the summer of 2002, planning for post-hostility operations began in earnest (Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Operation, pg 2). Initial guidance indicated that the Department of State would spearhead the planning for this phase of the operation. In short time it was realized, however, that State lacked the resources to lead such deliberate operational planning. Rather than augment the Department of State with resources, the Pentagon started its own efforts for planning post-hostility operations. Due

to interagency rivalries, fears that planning might leak to the public, and a desire to ensure unity of command under the Secretary of Defense, Pentagon officials made little to no coordination with the Department of State (Packer, pg 7). Planning was directed in an atmosphere of near-total secrecy. Efforts to keep post-conflict planning internal to the Department of Defense resulted in a lack of insight on the civil-political situation within Iraq. Pentagon planners also missed out on invaluable experience from recent post-hostility operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo which other agencies could have brought to the table. This lack of interagency coordination and communication laid the foundation for the erroneous assumptions that were made during post-conflict planning.

In June 2002, planning for post-conflict operations was delegated to CENTCOM (Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Operation, pg 2). CENTCOM planners, however, were already overwhelmed with planning Phases I thru III (Preparation thru Decisive Combat Operations) of Operation Iraqi Freedom. They had little time to devote to post-hostility preparation. Planners did succeed in creating a task list of what would be needed for post-conflict operations. No head way was made, however, on prioritizing/sequencing actions, determining who would control the post-conflict operational effort, and identifying how tasks would be delegated. Staff estimates envisioned Phases I thru III of Operation Iraqi Freedom taking approximately 225 days (Franks, pg 370). Planners, therefore, falsely assumed that there would be a little over 7 months to hammer out the details of post-conflict operations once major combat operations had begun. The coalition's superior conventional power over the Iraqis compressed this 225 day window into just 26 days. Because of their failure to plan in detail and synchronize post-hostility actions prior to the start of combat operations

CENTCOM planners found themselves way behind as they entered the post-hostility phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In addition to the operational timeline other erroneous assumptions were made during the planning process. The CENTCOM staff made a false assumption that Iraqis would welcome U.S. troops as liberators and join coalition forces in quickly neutralizing the Ba'ath Party, Saddam's security services, and other opponents of U.S. occupation and regime change within Iraq (Perito, pg 3). Based upon this false assumption planners further erroneously assumed that there would be a distinct division between major combat and post-conflict operations. During this operational pause planners believed that the lead for post-conflict operations could be transitioned to a civilian U.S. government organization. The belief that coalition forces would be received as friends also caused planners to focus mainly on humanitarian relief assets. As a result of these false assumptions, plans for establishing security and stability within Iraq were not properly vented. Coalition forces scrambled to take control when widespread looting and criminal activity occurred after the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Finally, CENTCOM planners assumed "the Iraqi government and infrastructure would continue to function without Saddam and his fellow Ba'ath Party members" (Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Operation, pg 5). Planners advocated a policy of de-Ba'athification. Under this policy anyone associated with the Ba'ath party would be removed from public office or civil service. Intelligence failed to identify how important the Ba'ath Party bureaucracy was to maintaining internal security and keeping the country's public services running. Lack of cultural awareness caused planners to fail to realize that not all members of the Ba'ath Party were diehard supporters of the Hussein

regime. These gaps in intelligence and cultural awareness could have been averted had CENTCOM planners consulted in detail with other U.S. agencies.

Thus, as planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom came to a head, the requirement for a post-hostility operation had been identified but the details were unresolved. Lack of interagency involvement and false assumptions made about the timeline for planning and conditions within a post-combat Iraq only exacerbated the issue. The challenges that coalition forces would face during post-conflict were born out of false assumptions and a lack of detail not out of a simple oversight.

ORHA

In the final months leading up to the war, the question of how to conduct transition operations was debated among CENTCOM planners and officials within the Department of Defense. CENTCOM reasoned that four options were hypothetically available in post-war Iraq: “direct military rule, coalition-run civil administration, Iraqi-run civil administration, or an Iraqi interim government” (Jaabar, pg 3). Department of Defense officials had initially identified Ahmad Chalbai, an Iraqi exile and leader of the Iraqi National Congress, to lead a new Iraqi regime. Further scrutiny of Chalbai revealed that years of exile had put him out of touch with the realities of Iraq and its people.

Unlike Afghanistan, in Iraq there was no “Karzai” waiting in the wings to seize control of the Iraqi government. As America drew closer to war, CENTCOM planners realized that Iraq’s new leadership would have to be identified after the conclusion of combat operations. As a result, an interim civilian-led provisional authority would have to be created to fill the gap between the transitions from martial law to Iraqi self-rule.

Inundated with planning Phases I thru III, CENTCOM let Department of Defense officials know that they had neither the staff nor experience to lead this interim effort.

This would have proved a perfect time to promote interagency cooperation to solve this dilemma. Any hopes of significant interagency cooperation on planning post-conflict operations in Iraq were killed, however, on January 20, 2003. On this date President Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive Number 24 which gave control of post-war Iraq to the Department of Defense (Packer, pg. 9). The President's order endorsed the overt and covert efforts of Department of Defense officials to keep post-conflict planning within the Pentagon. With post-conflict planning officially under the control of the Department of Defense there was no incentive for interagency coordination.

Under Executive Directive 24 the President directed the creation of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) within the Department of Defense (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003>). According to the directive, the immediate responsibility for administering post-war Iraq would fall upon the CENTCOM Commander, as the commander of U.S. and coalition forces in the field. The purpose of ORHA would be to act as CENTCOM's proponent to develop detailed plans and provide oversight of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and civil administration in post-conflict Iraq (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003>). Once major combat operations had concluded in Iraq, ORHA would deploy forward to act as the provisional authority until governance could be transitioned to a representative Iraqi government.

The overall leadership of ORHA was given to Jay Garner, a retired US Army Lieutenant General, who had experience in handling humanitarian assistance programs

during Operation Provide Comfort in 1991 (Franks, pg 423). The start of major combat operations in Iraq was just two months away. During this two month period Garner was given the near-impossible task of putting his ORHA team together, incorporating his team with the CENTCOM staff, and planning in detail post-hostility operations in Iraq.

Based upon his experiences during Provide Comfort, Garner knew that post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq would require a multiple U.S. agency effort. In an attempt to promote more interagency communication, Garner tried to recruit members of ORHA from across all the major governmental agencies (Department of State, Justice, Treasury, Energy, Agriculture, and Office of Management and Budget). Garner canvassed Washington to get the people and resources that he needed. His requests, however, were met with hypothetical resources and vague promises (Franks, pg. 525). Agencies were reluctant to commit personnel and resources to a plan that was perceived to be conceived without their input and controlled in total by CENTCOM. In March of 2003, when the ground war begun, ORHA was at fifty percent of its authorized strength (Packer, pg 10). Garner's team was considerably understaffed for the huge task that was set before them.

Efforts to integrate ORHA with the CENTCOM staff also failed miserably. When the CENTCOM staff deployed forward to Camp Doha, Kuwait no accommodations were made for the ORHA staff. Garner and his team stayed in Washington during the pre-war build up and didn't arrive in Kuwait until March 16th - three days before the first bombs fell on Baghdad (Packer, pg. 11). ORHA members were placed and set up operations in a beach front hotel in Kuwait City instead of being co-located with the CENTCOM staff at Camp Doha upon arrival in theater. The commute between Kuwait City and Camp Doha is approximately 60 miles but for the

ORHA team it might as well have been one thousand. “They (ORHA) were getting more information about the fighting and conditions in Iraq from CNN” than from their CENTCOM counterparts (Packer, pg. 12).

Believing that ORHA had post-conflict operations wrapped tight, General Franks and his staff focused almost exclusively on prosecuting the war. Once phases I thru III had been successfully accomplished General Franks and his planners expected to hand the ball off to Garner’s team and have them run with it. CENTCOM planners failed to understand the importance of post-hostility operations and no priority was given to assist ORHA in their mission. A prime example of this is the list that ORHA put together of the infrastructure that needed to be protected by coalition forces after the fall of the Hussein regime. On March 26th, this list went to CENTCOM planners at Camp Doha (Packer, pg. 12). Two weeks later as Baghdad fell and intense looting began ORHA members watched CNN in horror as key infrastructure on their list such as the Iraqi Museum and ministries were burned and looted. Enraged ORHA officials went to CENTCOM to ask what happened to their list only to find out that it remained on someone’s desk and was never read by the staff.

Garner and his team made some false assumptions of their own. Using UN estimates ORHA estimated a half million deaths and an equal number of indigenous displaced people due to the war (Packer, pg. 9). Garner’s previous experience during Provide Comfort caused him to focus almost exclusively on the humanitarian assistance aspect of ORHA’s mission. Plans to respond to displaced populations, starvation, disease outbreaks, and chemical weapon attacks were worked in detail. In focusing on humanitarian assistance ORHA failed to prepare for the most important part of their

mission – civil administration and the transfer of governance back to the Iraqi people. No plans for this were vetted in detail by ORHA. As the Phase III came to an end, military commanders had full expectations for ORHA to step in and emplace a plan for post-conflict but its most important aspect had not been developed to the level of detail necessary for success.

The creation of ORHA had come too late in the planning process. In April 2003 – just after the conclusion of major combat operations- General Franks sent his Director of Planning, COL Rookie Rob, to confer with Garner about ORHA's progress (Franks, pg. 524). No explanation is given as to why CENTCOM planners waited so late to get an update from Garner nor is any explanation given as to why Garner and his staff never alerted CENTCOM to the issues that they were facing. Clearly this was oversight on both the CENTCOM Commander and ORHA Director's part. The fact that the CENTCOM Commander and his primary staff officer for planning were unaware of ORHA's challenges shows an inadequate focus on post-conflict and a failure to create the military-civilian crosstalk that ORHA was supposed to generate. Much to General Franks chagrin, ORHA walked into Iraq badly handicapped and behind the power curve.

On April 21, 2003, citing UN Security Council Resolution 1483 and the laws of war, ORHA transformed into the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (www.wikipedia.com). The CPA maintained executive, legislative, and judicial authority over the Iraqi government and like the ORHA was charged with providing oversight of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and civil administration in Iraq. Although the new title gave Garner's group the legitimacy it desired it could not make up for the shortfalls. On May 11, 2003 approximately four weeks after his arrival in Iraq,

LTG (Ret) Garner was removed from his post as the Director of the CPA
(www.wikipedia.com).

The Creation of the Insurgency

Transition operations in Iraq were based on four basic assumptions: coalition forces would be greeted as liberators by the indigenous population not as occupiers; Iraqi internal security and infrastructure would continue to function without the Ba'ath Party; the Iraqi Republican Army would be available to be recalled to assist coalition forces in securing Iraq; and ground commanders would be able to hand governance issues over to the CPA and local Iraqi officials (Perito, pg 3). These assumptions point to a fundamental breakdown in operational intelligence and a lack of cultural awareness. All were best case scenario yet they survived the deliberate planning process and were accepted as gospel by subordinate commanders. Time would show that none of them were correct. When these suppositions proved false a political vacuum occurred which fostered the environment for an insurgency to grow in Iraq.

A major miscalculation made by CENTCOM and ORHA planners that prevented these assumptions from coming to fruition was the policy of "de-Ba'athification" (Franks, pg. 526). As discussed earlier, under this policy all Iraqis from the highest to lowest levels of government found to have an association with Saddam's Ba'ath Party were removed from their position. The problem with this policy was that it did not differentiate Saddam loyalists from those that were Ba'ath Party members out of necessity to maintain a living. Planners failed to realize that the Ba'ath Party permeated Iraqi civil administration and public service institutions such as the police force, utilities,

oil production, public health, education, and telecommunications. When these people were removed Iraq's infrastructure collapsed and chaos ensued.

Another prewar miscalculation concerned security. Planners banked on using members of the Iraqi Republican Guard that had surrendered and local police to assist in providing security in post-conflict Iraq. An unexpected phenomenon occurred, however, which dashed this plan to pieces. Members of the Iraqi Republican Guard and local security forces feared reprisal from coalition forces and the Iraqi people for crimes and corruption that occurred under Saddam's rule. Rather than face possible punishment these forces simply took off their uniforms, secured their weapons, and blended in with the indigenous population as soon as the political void appeared (Jaabar, pg. 4).

At first, military commanders on the ground tried to bring these groups out of hiding. This effort officially ended, however, on May 23, 2003. On this date, Garner's successor as the U.S. civilian administrator for Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, disbanded the Iraqi Army and declared them illegal (www.globalsecurity.org). The move was purely political in nature and aimed at ridding Ba'athist influences in the military and security institutions. Bremer's declaration highlights a fundamental breakdown in communication between military commanders on the ground and their civilian counterparts in the CPA. No thought was made as to how it would affect the security environment in Iraq. Any hopes that military commanders on the ground had of using Iraqi forces to provide immediate assistance to the coalition in securing Iraq were shattered. More than two hundred fifty thousand former soldiers and police officers were now armed and unemployed (Franks, pg. 525). Making matters worse, in the months leading up to the war, Saddam Hussein had emptied his jails of an estimated fifty-

thousand criminals (Franks, pg. 525). “Lawlessness, especially criminal and political violence, shook the daily lives of Iraqis and overshadowed the transitional phase from day one” (Jaabar, pg 4).

The description given by Dr. Faleh A. Jaabar best illustrates the unraveling of law and order within post-combat Iraq:

“Essential services, run centrally by the government, came to a standstill. Looting spared no bank, hospital government office, or power station. Other forms of violence were also rampant, paralyzing economic and social activities. Street politics soon erupted, involving unpredictable and formable forces such as movement led by the fiery young Shi’i cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.....In the predominantly Sunni areas, there was much antagonism toward the occupation. It grew worse yet when the so-called loyalists and other forces commenced their guerilla attacks on coalition forces first sporadically but later in a more systematic fashion” (Jaabar, pg 4).

The hopefulness felt by Iraqis, especially the Shi’i majority, after the fall of Saddam Hussein was short lived. This optimism was soon replaced by mistrust, resentment, and hatred toward the CPA and coalition forces for the violence and state of lawlessness that ensued with them taking power.

Ground commanders were ill-prepared for the disorder within Iraq. All plans had been based upon a smooth transition between major combat and post-conflict operations. Commanders had insufficient guidance and rules of engagement from CENTCOM to deal with the lawlessness that ensued. In order to prevent Iraqi dependence upon coalition forces to provide internal security, military leaders initially chose to do nothing. It became readily apparent that this option was not suitable when Iraqi police forces did nothing in return to quell the violence.

Army and Marine units waited for the CPA to take the lead in governance in the absence of local governments. When the CPA proved unable to initially take this mission, military commanders slowly accrued responsibility for governance and

reconstruction. In the absence of a detailed plan, ground commanders had to decide how to handle their individual situations in Iraq. These units were not resourced for such missions but great leadership and innovative thinking allowed military commanders to overcome many obstacles. This did create a problem, however, when the CPA finally was able to take action, because of the implementation of different policies in different areas (US Military Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Operation, pg 5).

As direct result of insufficient and inaccurate operational intelligence CENTCOM and ORHA planners made series of erroneous assumptions about the conditions in which post-conflict operations would occur in Iraq. When the policy of “de-Ba’athification” was adopted no detailed analysis was done to examine its second and third order effects. As a result of this lack of operational intelligence and under appreciation of Iraqi cultural attitudes and norms the security environment within the country quickly disintegrated. Iraq’s unstable environment prevented the CPA from being able to fill the power vacuum left when the Hussein regime was deposed. As a result, resentment toward coalition occupational forces grew and the seeds for insurgency that followed were ripe for harvest.

Conclusion and Operation Lessons Learned

Several important conclusions and overarching operational lessons learned can be drawn from post-conflict operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom. First, is that detailed planning for post-hostility operations in Iraq started too late. Major combat operations were over before CENTCOM and ORHA planners had successfully coordinated and synchronized the post-hostility effort. As a result, coalition efforts were

initially a step behind the evolving post-conflict environment in Iraq. Post-conflict operations need to be flushed out to the greatest extent possible prior to the onset of combat operations. Time is one of the most crucial operational factors but is something planners have increasingly less of due to advancements in information and military technology. The United States' superior joint war fighting capabilities and technological edge allow it to decisively defeat enemy conventional forces faster than ever. Since the duration of major combat operations have become shorter it makes it all that more important to synchronize post-conflict operations as early as possible. Would a detailed plan for post-conflict operations have stopped an insurgency from rising up in Iraq? I contend that it probably would not. I do believe, however, that a meticulously planned and coordinated effort would have minimized post-conflict violence and convinced the majority of Iraqis to pursue a peaceful transition to a new Iraqi regime.

Second, is that a coordinated interagency effort was lacking in post-conflict operations in Iraq. Department of Defense officials let interagency rivalries and operational security fears prevent them from bringing other agencies to assist in post-conflict planning from its genesis. This crucial mistake prevented CENTCOM and ORHA from obtaining the personnel and resources needed to successfully conduct post-hostility operations. A myriad of issues are faced during post-conflict (i.e. humanitarian assistance, security, civil administration, governance, reconstruction, etc...). All of the instruments of national power (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic) are needed to prosecute these issues. Agencies such as the Department of State, United States Agency for International Development, Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Justice each bring different skill sets and levels of expertise to the table. These

agencies need to be brought into the planning process as early as possible to contribute to the post-conflict effort.

Finally, CENTCOM planners lacked sufficient operational intelligence and cultural awareness of the civil-political situation in Iraq. This deficiency caused planners to make a series of false assumptions about the post-conflict environment. As a direct result of these false suppositions planners focused on humanitarian assistance instead of the long term issues of security and civil administration in Iraq. Military units were ill-prepared for the violence and civil unrest that followed the fall of the Hussein regime. Operational intelligence is one of the most critical operational functions that a commander must have to execute a major operation. Post-conflict operations in Iraq clearly illustrate how important this is to prioritizing and synchronizing the operational effort. Erroneous intelligence leads to erroneous assumptions which in turn lead to ill-informed and bad decision making. Planners need to collect, analyze, and evaluate information as it relates to current and future operations so sound decisions can be made.

Recommendations for Future Operations

As stated earlier, post-conflict operations are not new to the American experience. Unfortunately, many of the mistakes made in Iraq were repetitions of errors made in recent past operations in Panama, Somalia, and Haiti. In order to break the cycle and keep history from repeating itself again combatant commanders must treat post –conflict operations with the same priority as major combat operations. This means not only training but also resourcing subordinate units to execute stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations. Major joint training exercises and combined theater security

exercises should not only focus on major combat tasks but also on post-conflict tasks as well. Ground component forces need to be infused with linguists, civil engineers, contingency contractors, and civil military types so they can take on these tasks immediately after a conflict. Only these forces may be able to do it in a conflicts immediate aftermath because of security concerns. The recent Department of Defense Directive on military support for stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations, DoD Directive 3000.05, is a step in the right direction. For it to mean anything, however, Combatant Commanders need to vigilantly enforce its guidance.

Finally, a standing mechanism needs to be emplaced to institutionalize integrated planning and interagency coordination for post-conflict operations. An idea that is currently being evaluated is creating Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs) at each of the combatant commands (Bogdanos, pg 11). A JIACG is a standing coordination cell whose primary purpose is to facilitate national agency communication and cooperation on contingencies that fall within a combatant commander's purview. Representatives from all of the major national agencies would be represented in these JIACGs and they would assist in orchestrating and synchronizing the instruments of national power to plan post-conflict operations and objectives. A JIACG was created and successfully used by CENTCOM during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The experience in Afghanistan demonstrated that, if properly used, JIACGs can enhance decision making speed, increase plan breadth, and create rapid solutions for the combatant commander.

Today the United States possesses unprecedented strength and influence in the world. Our nation's current security strategy has committed the United States to

espousing the principles of liberty and political and economic freedom throughout the international community. Part of this obligation entails the use of military force when these principles are threatened (by global terrorism, regional conflicts, or conventional attacks against the United States and our Allies). In order to successfully accomplish these strategic goals, our military at the theater-strategic and operational levels must gain proficiency in the conduct of post-combat operations. Failure to do this may ultimately lead to our country's strategic defeat.

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