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THESIS

U.S. NAVY SEABEES AS A STABILITY ASSET

by

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September 2009

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U.S. NAVY SEABEES AS A STABILITY ASSET

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ABSTRACT

Since World War II, the Seabees have both supported the Navy's combat mission and promoted good will through construction projects. Given the counter-insurgency and state building challenges of the 21st century, the Seabees need to be integrated into the pursuit of all elements of U.S. national power projection, to include economic development, governance, and establishing the rule of law in developing and/or war-torn countries.

This thesis proposes that the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) integrate a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to create a Seabee Stability Team (SST). This highly mobile and self-sufficient organization designed for a SSTR environment will better meet future challenges of irregular warfare and provide a capacity building organization in developing countries and conflict environments.

The proposed SST would be scalable and deployable within 48 hours to any global emergent contingency mission. It can conduct military missions in an insecure environment. It would avoid contractor or contractual delays that at present often limit the effectiveness of PRT-led construction projects. An SST would reduce these delays and allow reconstruction to proceed in a timely manner. In an SST, emergent missions could be executed without contractor delays because the construction trades are inherent to the organization.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Agricultural Advisor
Air Det	Air Detachment
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BBA	Bilingual bicultural advisor
CA	Civil Affairs Team
CAT	Civic Action Team
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
COCOM	Combatant Command
COIN	Counter-insurgency
CSE	Convoy Security Element
DO	Development Officer
DoD	Department of Defense
ENGR	Engineer
FM	Field Manual
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GOV	Governance Team
IDC	Independent Duty Corpsman
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MNF	Multinational Force
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMCB	Naval Mobile Construction Battalion
OIF/OEF	Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom
PAO	Provincial Action Officer
PDO	Public Diplomacy Officer
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
ROL	Rule of Law Coordinator
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SMTT	Seabee Military Training Team
SST	Seabee Stability Team
SSTR	Stability Security Transition Reconstruction
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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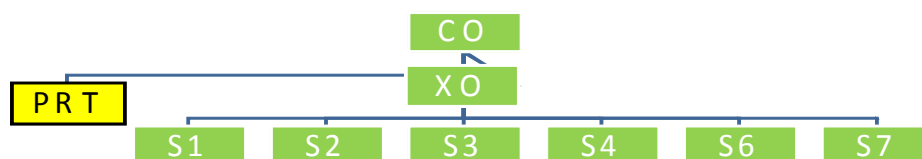
I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful wife, Ami J. Park. This master's program required plenty of nights studying and generally keeping me busy. During this time, she kept up with the demanding schedule of raising identical twin daughters (Linka and Wynn), who are under two-years old. Her dedication to our daughters and stamina is truly amazing; she has my deepest respect. Thank you for being my best friend and an outstanding wife!

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* has challenged the military services to rethink aspects of military capabilities and operational mandates. The JCS has specifically produced their publication to “guide development and experimentation by motivating and guiding the study, experimentation and evaluation of joint concepts and capabilities.”¹ This project will attempt to do just that by proposing the creation of a Seabee Stability Team. This will be accomplished by integrating a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) with elements of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). This concept has three distinct advantages over the current PRT doctrine and team composition: it is able to execute military operations; construction contracting delays are reduced; finally, it would be deployable within 48 hours of notification. The following wire diagram illustrates the proposed Seabee Stability Team (SST) concept:



Green: Existing NMCB Organization
Yellow: PRT Integration

Figure 1. Proposed Seabee Stability Team (SST)

¹ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, (January 15, 2009), iii.

B. HISTORY OF THE SEABEES

The Naval Construction Battalions (CB) or Seabees were born on March 5, 1942, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.² It was recognized that using contractors in war zones put civilians directly in harm's way. If civilians defended themselves, they were not protected under the Geneva Convention, which meant they could be executed as guerrillas.³ The answer was to create a Naval Construction Force that could defend itself using modern military tactics and complete construction missions in combat conditions, inspiring the Seabee motto "Construimus, Batuimus" or "We Build, We Fight."⁴

The Seabees have a relatively short, sixty-six year history, given the fact that the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps date from 1775. But, the Seabees are unique in that no other military unit of the five services (including the Coast Guard) can provide the full complement of construction and combat capabilities.⁵ The Seabees are more than a combat support force, however. Their capabilities are utilized in peace-time missions such as disaster relief, construction apprenticeship programs for indigenous populations, reconstruction of core infrastructure, a modest medical outreach component, well drilling, and other dimensions of stability operations that are being conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Seabees' unique complement of capabilities puts them in a position, with some organizational readjustments, to fulfill the DoD Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations.⁶ If the Seabees are to play a core role in SSTR missions, what reorganization and additional capabilities will be required? This thesis will argue that the majority of the more difficult elements, such as the training of the construction trades, are already inherent to the Seabee mission. It will demonstrate how, with some joint modifications based on the

² Although 5 March is the official date of the adoption of the "Seabee" name, the organization was created in January 1942, Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, NAVEDTRA 14234 ed. NETPTDC, 1993), 1-1.

³ Vincent Transano, "History of the Seabees," Naval Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq67-1.htm>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Army Corps of Engineers have the engineering expertise but not the construction trades. Their enlisted are Combat Engineers trained in demolitions, etc.

⁶ Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive, 3000.05*, (November 28, 2005), 1.

Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) model already operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Seabees can launch a Seabee Stability Team within 48 hours of mission notification.

C. IMPORTANCE

DoD Directive 3000.05 states:

Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.⁷

The Secretary of Defense has challenged the military services to adapt existing capabilities to meet this mission planning criteria to advance “U.S. interests and values.”⁸ In response to this challenge, the U.S. Navy’s Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) through *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, has directed the Navy to deter war and encourage international stability by nonconventional methods.⁹ Although the U.S. Navy does not have official stability operations doctrine, the intent is the same as the other services. The CNO has recognized that stability operations are important to reduce conflict and using non-conventional methods is preferable to fighting wars. This project proposes that a Seabee Stability Team is one possible non-conventional option.

The U.S. Army’s Field Manual (FM) 3–07 defines the purpose of stability operations as:

Stability operations leverage the coercive and constructive capabilities of the military force to establish a safe and secure environment; facilitate reconciliation among local or regional adversaries; establish political, legal, social, and economic institutions; and facilitate the transition of responsibility to a legitimate civil authority. Through stability operations, military forces help to set the conditions that enable the actions of the other instruments of national power to succeed in achieving the broad goals of conflict transformation. Providing security and control stabilizes

⁷ Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive, 3000.05*, 4.1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.2.

⁹ Chief of Naval Operations, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, D.C.: USN CNO, [October 2007]), 10.

the area of operations. These efforts then provide a foundation for transitioning to civilian control and, eventually, to the host nation. Stability operations are usually conducted to support a host-nation government. However, stability operations may also support the efforts of a transitional civil or military authority when no legitimate government exists.¹⁰

Stability operations include conflict prevention measures: as the Army Field Manual states, “Successful stability operations are predicated on identifying and reducing the causes of instability.”¹¹ The capabilities and skills of the Seabees are well suited to supporting such a combination of missions. As an integral part of SSTR strategy, the proposed Seabee Stability Operations Team can operate in a dual environment, to stabilize a region before conflict begins or contribute to governance capacity in a post-conflict environment to prevent the reoccurrence of conflict. Paul Collier, Professor of Economics at Oxford University, argues that in “the first decade of post-conflict peace, societies face roughly double the risk of conflict that the pre-conflict” societies face.¹² Collier further asserts that the presence of a stability mission in the post-conflict early years may substantially lower the risk of the conflict reigniting and has a good chance of promoting lasting peace.¹³ A Seabee battalion fitted with additional stability elements is a highly mobile conflict deterrent and post-conflict stability team that can fulfill the mission goals of the Secretary of Defense and the CNO.

D. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

This thesis will argue that a Seabee Stability Team centered on a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) will facilitate and enhance the contribution that the Seabees in particular, and the USN in general, can make to SSTR, thus realizing the purpose of DoD Directive 3000.05. This proposed organization, incorporating elements

¹⁰ Headquarters Department of the Army, ed., *FM 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, October 2008), 2–2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, D-1.

¹² Paul Collier, *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, [2000]), 17.

¹³ Paul Collier, *Policy for Post-Conflict Societies: Reducing the Risks of Renewed Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, [March 17, 2000]), 8.

of a NMCB, will be deployable as a standalone force that is highly mobile and self-sustaining. This thesis will propose using the Army's PRT organization and the guidance of the U.S. Joint Forces Command as a foundation for a Seabee Stability Team. The Army has created a very large organization that is neither nimble nor deployable within 48 hours. This proposal aims to integrate parts of the Army's PRT model into a NMCB to give it the ability to operate in a joint stability environment as a scalable force and keep the mobile in NMCB.

There are three significant advantages of integrating a PRT within a NMCB to create the proposed Seabee Stability Team. These advantages are considerable when compared to the U.S. Army's doctrine of Provincial Reconstruction Teams as stated in the FM3-07. The first advantage of a Seabee Stability Team is the inherent capabilities of a NMCB to conduct military operations. This is a decided advantage over the Army's PRT model, because it is not doctrinally allowed to conduct military operations. Second, construction-contracting delays are reduced because the construction trades are inherent in a SST. The third advantage is scalable; rapid 48 hour deployable forces that can task organize itself into a 125-person Air Detachment (Air Det) and begin security and construction operations immediately. This immediacy of executing a construction project is not realized when having to go through the U.S. government's construction contract procurement process. In addition, Army PRTs do not have a security element inherent in the organization, therefore, relying on other units for security and military operations. This is an additional planning and unit coordination element that detracts from the immediacy of a mission by delaying mission launch. For example, the ability to launch construction and security operations within 48 hours would give a decided advantage in a counterinsurgency environment where winning over the populace is key to stability in the region. Such a rapid deployable force would be a critical force multiplier unmatched in the other military services. These three advantages provide a very useful tool for combatant commanders to meet the challenges of the "future operating environment [that] will be characterized by uncertainty, complexity, rapid change, and persistent conflict".¹⁴

¹⁴ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, 2.

E. PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

The JCS has identified four broad categories of military activity: combat, security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction activities.¹⁵ These categories summarize the likely future missions that a military commander will be required to conduct. The JCS has further stated that military commanders will conduct at least two of the four broad categories for any military operation.¹⁶ If one rapidly deployable unit could tackle several of these functions simultaneously, this would be a force multiplier while allowing a combatant commander to economize military assets.

The U.S. Joint Forces Command has identified six operational capabilities essential to effective SSTR operations. These six capabilities—“creating a safe, secure environment; delivering humanitarian assistance/disaster relief; reconstituting critical infrastructure and essential services; supporting economic development; establishing representative, effective government and the rule of law; conduct[ing] strategic communication”—can be incorporated into a rapidly deployable, multi-agency force.¹⁷ With this guidance and the experience of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan that forms the basis for the Army’s PRT doctrine, a NMCB can be fitted for the full range of stability operations and remain a highly deployable unit.

The U.S. Army in FM 3–07 explains the structure and the personnel of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The PRT contains the following personnel:¹⁸

- PRT team leader.
- Deputy team leader.
- Multinational force liaison officer (MNF).
- Rule of law coordinator (ROL).
- Provincial action officer (PAO).
- Public diplomacy officer (PDO).

¹⁵ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷ *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept*, Public Law Version 2.0, (December 2006), viii.

¹⁸ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-4.

- Agricultural advisor (AA).
- Engineer (ENGR).
- Development officer (DO).
- Governance team (GOV).
- Civil affairs team (CA).
- Bilingual bicultural advisor (BBA).

The structure of the PRT described in the FM 3–07 follows:¹⁹

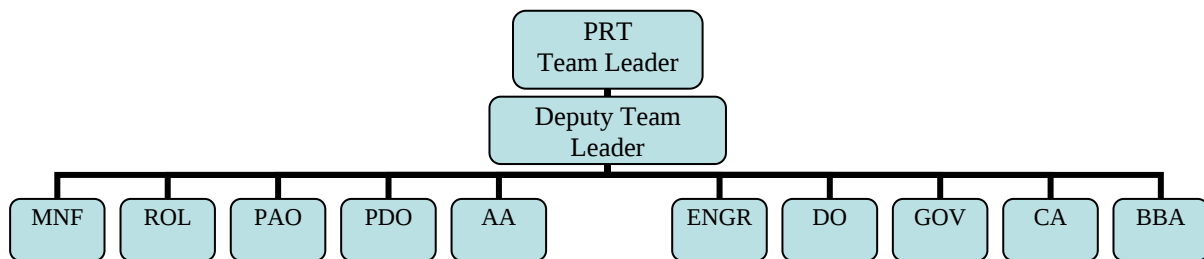


Figure 2. FM3–07, PRT Structure

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has replicated the same organizational structure and personnel mix as laid out in FM 3–07.²⁰ Both of these sources report that there are approximately 60–90 personnel staffing the PRT.²¹

Several organizations within the DoD have identified a scalable force within the joint operating environment as a key concept to conducting operations. The Joint Chiefs of Staff has stated that units are to “address each situation on its own terms, in its unique political and strategic context, rather than attempting to fit the situation to a preferred template.”²² Templates are great because they offer clear guidelines, but they may not

¹⁹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-3.

²⁰ Office of the Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: [October 29, 2006]), 22.

²¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-4.

²² Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations Version 3.0*, 13.

support the use of military assets in the most judicious manner. With the proper planning and understanding of mission expectations, a military asset can be right sized to the mission. The FM 3-07 suggests that the PRT's are mission oriented—or scalable—to fit the host nation's requirements.²³ For example, if it is determined that a host nation is strong on the rule of law, then the Rule of Law coordinator would not be assigned to the team. The Commander of the First Naval Construction Division (1NCD) understands the JCS's vision and has directed that all NMCB's will train and functionally organize as a scalable unit.²⁴ Scalability is a core Seabee function and the battalion commanders have done this for years in both peace-time deployments and in times of war.

The key component in any stabilization mission is the reconstruction projects. The Engineer in the FM 3-07 is only a coordinator of construction projects, who eventually manages the construction contractor. This management process causes delays in immediate or emergent construction missions because of the necessary procurement of the construction contract. In a Seabee battalion, with an inherent construction crew within the organization, emergent requirements are addressed in quicker time because there is no need to go through a protracted construction contract procurement process.

The Army's PRT "does not conduct military operations."²⁵ In the Seabees, following the motto "We Build, We Fight," military operations are inherent to the mission and are a key element to ensuring self-sufficiency. Seabees can provide defense in hostile territory and/or a Convoy Security Element (CSE). This is a Seabee core mission that has greatly evolved in the Iraq and Afghanistan area of operations.

²³ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-4.

²⁴ First Naval Construction Division, *U.S. Navy Seabees Strategic Plan* (Washington, D.C.: 1NCD, [2008]), 1.

²⁵ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-1.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

The second section is a historical overview of the Seabees to establish their capabilities. The next section discusses the security challenges of the future to express the need for a Seabee Stability Team. The fourth section covers what the new Seabee organization will look like with the PRT-type organization attached to it and its overall capabilities. The fifth section covers the personnel changes needed to accommodate the new Seabee organization. The final section summarizes the positive and negative aspects of a Seabee Stability Team.

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II. CAPABILITIES OF THE SEABEES

A brief history of the Seabees will serve to illustrate the capabilities they bring to the fight, and how they are uniquely positioned to expand their role to become a Seabee Stability Team.

In addition to the combat training, all Seabees are rated in one of the following construction trades: construction electrician; engineering aid; heavy equipment mechanic; plumber; builder (carpenter); steelworker; and heavy equipment operator. Seabees replicate the civilian labor trades, so that a battalion can build, operate and repair the heavy equipment required in the construction effort.

A. WORLD WAR II TO THE WAR ON TERROR

The Seabees have a dual mission of construction and military operations. This mission is unique in the U.S. armed forces, which since their inception and all conflicts that have followed, they have executed exceptionally well. The humanitarian construction mission in a dangerous conflict environment requiring security and defense is inherent in the Seabees' training and makes them extremely adaptable in a SSTR environment where stabilization and reconstruction operations happen while armed conflict rages.

The first Seabee units were created in January 1942, and one month later, they were in Bora Bora constructing airfields, pontoon systems, and landing strips.²⁶ From Bora Bora, they were deployed all over the Pacific and the Atlantic theaters of operations, to include Attu, Guadalcanal, Munda, Los Negros, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima, Samar, Guam, Okinawa, Sicily, Salerno, and Normandy.²⁷ Within two years of the U.S. entry into World War II, the Seabees had built more than 300 advanced bases and served on the assault forces of each battle.²⁸

²⁶ Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, 1–2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1–3.

During World War II, there were 151 construction battalions and other smaller units and command elements. During the D-Day invasion, Seabee units went ashore ahead of the invasion to destroy the steel landing craft barriers for the amphibious assault.²⁹ Seabees built the ferries that transported Patton's tanks across the Rhine River at Oppenheim.³⁰ "On the island of Trinidad, Naval Construction Battalion 80 paved runways and built a giant blimp hangar. Naval Construction Battalion 83 helped cut an eight-mile, S-curved highway up Trinidad's jungle mountain slopes. Beginning at the sea level town of Port of Spain and climbing to a height of 1,300 feet, the construction of this road required that the Seabees move one million cubic yards of earth and rock."³¹ In construction and fighting operations, the Pacific Seabees served on more than 300 islands, suffered more than 200 combat deaths and "built 111 major airstrips, 441 piers, 2,558 ammunition magazines, 700 square blocks of warehouses, hospitals to serve 70,000 patients, tanks for the storage of 100,000,000 gallons of gasoline, and housing for 1,500,000 men."³²

During the Second World War, the Seabees performed now legendary deeds in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters of Operation. At a cost of nearly \$11 billion and many casualties, they constructed over 400 advanced bases along five figurative roads to victory which all had their beginnings in the continental United States. The South Atlantic road wound through the Caribbean Sea to Africa, Sicily, and up the Italian peninsula. The North Atlantic road passed through Newfoundland to Iceland, Great Britain, France, and Germany. The North Pacific road passed through Alaska and along the Aleutian island chain. The Central Pacific road passed through the Hawaiian, Marshall, Gilbert, Mariana, and Ryukyu Islands. The South Pacific road went through the South Sea islands to Samoa, the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Philippine's.³³

The Seabees were again called to duty during the Korean conflict. In September 1950, the Seabees landed at Inchon under heavy enemy fire and battled high seas and strong currents to construct pontoon causeways to facilitate the landing of military

²⁹ Transano, *History of the Seabees*, Atlantic Theater of Operations.

³⁰ Ibid., World War II.

³¹ Ibid., Atlantic Theater of Operations.

³² Ibid., Pacific Theater of Operations.

³³ Ibid., Roads to Victory in the Second World War.

assets.³⁴ “They positioned pontoon causeways within hours of the first beach assault. Following the landing, the incident known as the “Great Seabee Train Robbery” took place. The need to break the equipment bottleneck at the harbor inspired a group of Seabees to steal behind enemy lines and capture some abandoned locomotives. Despite enemy mortar fire, they brought the engines back intact and turned them over to the Army Transportation Corps.”³⁵ In addition to pontoon causeways, the Seabees constructed numerous airfields, many under constant mortar fire, and they worked tirelessly to repair any damaged bridge within six hours, greatly facilitating military operations.³⁶

The United States entered the Vietnam War with 21 Naval Mobile Construction Battalions and several other Seabee units.³⁷ Their primary mission was to support Marines, Army, and Special Forces forward operating bases (FOB) in the rough and rugged terrain of Vietnam’s jungles. In addition to constructing the FOB facilities such as berthing, bunkers, and camp defensive facilities, they built access roads and tactical airstrips, often under enemy fire, to provide needed logistics to these remote outposts.³⁸ In the cantonment areas, they built the “strong back tents, mess halls, shops, sheds, bathroom facilities, and water distribution systems.”³⁹

Among the numerous construction projects completed in 1967 was an alternate airfield at Dong Ha and the famed Liberty Bridge, 80 miles southwest of Danang. Even though the northeast monsoon season had already begun, the airstrip was completed in only 38 days. The Liberty Bridge, which spanned the Thu Bon River, was one of the most impressive undertakings of the war. Built to withstand the incredible expansion of the river during the monsoon season, the completed bridge was 2,040 feet long and towered 32 feet above the low water level. While construction of such a bridge would have been difficult under normal circumstances, the

³⁴ Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, 1-3.

³⁵ Transano, *History of the Seabees*, Seabees in the Korean War.

³⁶ Ibid., Seabees in the Korean War.

³⁷ Ibid., Southeast Asia.

³⁸ Ibid., Southeast Asia.

³⁹ Ibid., Southeast Asia.

Seabees were required to work in a remote area of Vietnam known to contain large concentrations of enemy forces. Despite tremendous difficulties, the bridge was finished in only five months.⁴⁰

Seabees in Vietnam built coastal strongholds, airfields, warehouses, aircraft hangars, cantonment areas and numerous other facilities in support of the build-up of United States forces in the country, often in record time and in harsh terrain.⁴¹ In Vietnam, the Seabees begin the first war-time apprenticeship program to teach the construction trades to the local populace.⁴² These types of programs are extremely effective in training vocational skills and have the potential to be an effective counterinsurgency tool.

The Seabees continued wartime operations, the first since Vietnam, in Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the early 1990s. They kicked off operations during Desert Shield constructing Fleet Hospital 5 (a 500-bed facility), a headquarters facility for the First Marine Expeditionary Force, and a 15,000 personnel tent camp for the Second Marine Expeditionary Force complete with shower facilities, galley, berthing, office spaces, and roads.⁴³ In the two weeks before Desert Storm started in January 1991, Seabees quickly built a 200-mile road system to support General Schwarzkopf's "End Run" strategy, which required the road network to support the logistics equipment necessary for the attack strategy.⁴⁴ Once Desert Storm launched Seabee elements went ahead of allied military units opening airfields, roads, and providing battle-damage repair estimates to the combat operations center.⁴⁵

In Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, two on-going theaters of operations, the Seabees have proved their value on the battlefield. Instead of recounting the entire history since 2001, this project will discuss the combat and construction activities of Naval Mobile Construction Four (NMCB) during their 2007 deployment to both theaters of the War on Terror. As an example, to highlight the

⁴⁰ Transano, *History of the Seabees*, Southeast Asia.

⁴¹ Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, 1–4.

⁴² Transano, *History of the Seabees*, Southeast Asia.

⁴³ Ibid., Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

flexibility of a 650-person battalion, NMCB 4 during this deployment, in addition to the War on Terror detachments, had a 170-person detachment in Guam, a 15-person detachment at San Nicholas, CA, a 13-person detachment on the Pacific Island of Palau, a 56-person deployment for training to Australia building two expeditionary airstrips for C-17 aircraft, and six personnel in Metlakatla Alaska constructing a 15 mile road for the Island Indian tribe.

The remaining 391 personnel deployed to various parts of Afghanistan and Iraq in support of Marine and SOF missions. In their six month deployment, the convoy security element (CSE) completed 237 tactical convoy missions transporting logistics and personnel across 23,859 miles of the most dangerous roads in the Second Marine Expeditionary Force's area of operations.⁴⁶ They reacted to numerous ambushes and several IED attacks while supporting vital mission requirements.

During the "We Build" side of operations, NMCB 4 placed over \$25 million dollars in construction materials and completed over 200 projects. One of the largest projects was forward operating base (FOB) Sedgwick, which consisted of 43 Southwest Asia (SWA) huts, a 200-person dining facility, plumbing, electrical, and force protection.⁴⁷ NMCB 4 also completed several other FOBs, small arms ranges, thousands of HESCO barriers (force protection), berm protection, prisoner holding facilities, over 80 crows nests, combat out-posts, aircraft runway repairs, 100's of SWA huts, and rock quarry and crushing operations for concrete batch plants.⁴⁸ In addition, as a carry-over from the Vietnam conflict, NMCB 4 supported a Seabee Military Training Team (SMTT) instructing Iraqi citizens in heavy equipment operation, mechanic training, and construction trades.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Four, *NMCB Four: Deployment Completion Report*, (April–October 2007), 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

B. PEACE TIME DEPLOYMENTS

There are thousands of peace-time construction deployments executed by the Seabees around the globe. This project provides details on two of the classic large scale projects completed requiring full battalion strength over a number of years and two contemporary humanitarian missions to show the full range of capabilities and the ability to task organize into small teams.

In the interwar years between Korea and Vietnam, the Seabees moved half a mountain, for the construction of Cubi Point Naval Air Station, Philippines.⁵⁰ This project, completed in five years, included a 10,500-foot aircraft runway and a pier for an aircraft carrier. The amount of crushed coral and fill operations is similar in scope to Panama Canal project earlier in the century.⁵¹ This impressive project was only topped in size and scope by the Diego Garcia Atoll.

The largest single peace-time construction project, completed in 1982 after 11 years of work, was the Diego Garcia Atoll located in the Indian Ocean. This Naval Support Activity started in 1971 and is currently home to naval ships and aircraft in support of OIF/OEF. At a cost of \$200 million dollars, the Seabees cleared over 200 acres of dense jungle, placed 300,000 cubic yards of crushed coral, built air operations buildings, constructed a 12,000 foot runway, communications facilities, harbor facilities, a port infrastructure with petroleum, oil, and lubricating facilities, utility systems, five enlisted berthing, and three officer berthing facilities.⁵²

Water-well missions are a core Seabee capability that is extremely useful and needed in developing countries for the indigenous population to access clean water and reduce water borne disease outbreaks and for livestock. Seabees have recently deployed to Micronesia and Ethiopia with 15 to 19-person teams drilling fresh water wells throughout the region.

The most comprehensive humanitarian mission the Seabees do today is Civic Action Team (CAT) Palau. This mission on the Pacific island has a community medical

⁵⁰ Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, 1–4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1–4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1–5.

outreach, community relations, apprenticeship program, and of course construction projects. The idea, through successive six-month deployments of 13-person detachments, is to build social capital, a strong relationship to the United States, and provide this poor island nation humanitarian direct assistance.

From April to October 2007, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Four deployed a 13-person detachment to Palau. The team has a mix of builder rates, steelworkers, electricians, plumbers, equipment operators, mechanics, the leadership element, and an independent duty corpsman (IDC). The IDC is critical to the medical outreach program to the community. An IDC has advanced medical training to perform a multitude of minor procedures independent of a medical doctor. During the deployment, this single person autonomous medical mission treated 2,400 Palauan patients at the Seabee camp medical clinic.⁵³ In addition, the IDC trains several indigenous people to perform minor medical procedures and the administrative functions of the clinic.

The CAT Palau apprenticeship program trains 14 Palauans in construction, administrative skills, and medical.⁵⁴ The apprentices assist the Seabee team in assigned tasks in an on-the-job training environment. Each applicant to the program is trained for one year with a new group following in a continuous rotation.

The community relations program coordinates three to five events each week, such as movie night at the Seabee camp, soccer matches, 3-on-3 basketball tournaments, 5K/10K races, Frisbee tournaments, Fourth of July celebrations, local Constitution Day events, elementary school events, alcohol and tobacco awareness events, and many other community events between the host nation and Seabees.

The CAT mission is a contemporary example of a coordinated program that builds trust between nations and a program that can be adapted to a SSTR environment.

C. DISASTER RELIEF

From Typhoon Karen, 1962 Guam; Mt. Pinatubo eruption, 1991 Philippines; Super Typhoon Paka, 1997 Guam; Tsunami and earthquake, 2004 Indian Ocean; 2005

⁵³ Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Four, *NMCB Four: Deployment Completion Report*, 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

Pakistan earthquake; and Hurricane Katrina, for these events and many others not listed the Seabees have an impressive record in humanitarian relief and recovery operations following a natural disaster. This project will discuss Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Four's recovery efforts in 2005 for Hurricane Katrina.

Within 48 hours of notification, NMCB 4 launched a 125-person Air Detachment to the Gulf Coast region from the West coast, where this author served as Officer-in-Charge. Operations were based out of Stennis Space Center in Southern Mississippi. In the four weeks of operations, the Air Detachment working in Mississippi removed over 400 tons of tree and construction debris to clear roads and other critical infrastructure, repaired storm damage to 19 schools and one community hospital, placed utilities for two large 45 and 87 unit FEMA temporary living trailer parks, coordinated and dispensed dry goods and water distribution points, and made minor repairs to other community buildings. The 19 damaged schools were repaired and operational eight weeks ahead of FEMA estimates.

In total, over 3,000 Seabees from multiple units were deployed over the entire Gulf region. These Seabees cleared 750 miles of roads, removed 20,000 tons of debris, repaired 100 schools serving 40,000 students, repaired over 30 public buildings, delivered 237,000 gallons of fuel and water, distributed food to 1,600 families per day, and completed 455 utility projects.⁵⁵

D. CONCLUSION

From \$200 million dollars to simple water-well projects in the poorest countries, the Seabees have demonstrated throughout their history the ability to task organize and complete a variety of "We Build, We Fight" missions. The immediate impact a small 125-person Air Detachment, which is only 19% of the personnel in a typical 650-person battalion, can have in a region is illustrated in the Hurricane Katrina operations. The detachment was in the region within 48 hours, and within 72 hours, they were coordinating with civilian federal, state, and local authorities to execute the recovery mission.

⁵⁵ John Curtis, "Making A Difference," *United States Navy Seabee Magazine*, (Winter 2006): 4.

III. SECURITY AND STABILITY CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

A. A MILITARY OPERATIONS FORECAST

Since its founding, the United States has been involved in many irregular wars, a few conventional ones, and some, like Vietnam, that were both.

The U.S. military defines conventional war as a confrontation between nation-states or coalitions and alliances of nation-states, “[it]...typically involves small-scale to large-scale, force-on-force military operations in which adversaries employ a variety of conventional military capabilities against each other.”⁵⁶ On the other hand, the U.S. military describes irregular warfare as:

A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population. Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will. The weaker opponent will seek to avoid large-scale combat and will focus on small, stealthy, hit-and-run engagements and possibly suicide attacks. The weaker opponent also could avoid engaging the superior military forces entirely and instead attack nonmilitary targets in order to influence or control the local populace.⁵⁷

The principal goal of the insurgent is to win over a significant part of the population by threat and/or propaganda and to break the will of the stronger adversary through attrition as a prelude to taking control of the state. Irregular forces combine multiple forms of violence to include armed insurgency, information operations (disinformation, propaganda, etc.), terrorism, criminal activity (drug trafficking), and strikes.⁵⁸

The United States has a long history of engagement in irregular wars. In the early part of the last century, the United States Marine Corps defined "small wars," a term lifted from the British for whom it usually meant a colonial expedition, as “the ordinary expedition of the Marine Corps, which does not involve a major effort in regular warfare

⁵⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: May 14, 2007), x.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I-6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I-7.

against a first-rate power.”⁵⁹ The 1940 manual recognized that “during...85 of the last 100 years, the Marine Corps...engaged in small wars in different parts of the world. The Marine Corps has landed troops 180 times in 37 countries from 1800 to 1934 [in support of small wars].”⁶⁰ However, the USMC *Small Wars Manual* appeared in 1940 on the eve of the U.S. entry into World War II, at the very moment that the USMC shifted its focus to amphibious operations. World War II witnessed lots of "irregular warfare" behind the lines in Europe, in China, and in Burma. But, few U.S. forces were involved, except the Office of Strategic Services and specialized units like Merrill's Marauders, whose tasks were more akin to raiding than insurgency. At that time, there was a growing recognition that small wars were quite prevalent, which challenged the U.S. military's mindset of preparing for classic conventional war, and consequently they wanted to establish doctrine for engaging in small wars. Unfortunately, the United States' involvement in World War II was a year away, which was a classic conventional war, and that preempted any further discussion of small wars.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Joint Publication 1 recognize that “irregular warfare has emerged as a major and pervasive form of warfare.”⁶¹ However, U.S. forces have generally preferred to prepare for conventional war, even though the involvement of citizens in irregular warfare on the North American continent goes as far back as the colonists in Virginia battling the Native Americans from 1607.⁶² The American Revolution was largely an irregular war against a much superior British adversary. "Small wars" punctuated the advance across the North American continent. The wars against the Native Americans continued until 1890, by which time the militia had evolved into the U.S. Army waging war against Native American irregular forces on the plains. The American Civil war was a conventional war interlude with irregular warfare around the margins. Reconstruction saw the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist

⁵⁹ United States Marine Corps, ed., *Small Wars Manual: United States Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁶¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, I-6.

⁶² John T. Fishel, "Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, the Gap, and Things that Go Bump in the Night," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, no. 3 (Winter 1995): 373.

groups of die-hard ex-confederates. The guerrilla war fought against the Philippine nationalists from 1899 to 1901 was the beginning of many irregular wars fought in the 20th century.⁶³ U.S. forces pursued Pancho Villa into Mexico in 1916 and intervened in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua between 1912 and 1934, the Philippines between the years 1950 to 1954 and 1960 to 1993, and in Vietnam between 1954 and 1975.⁶⁴ Except for the conventional wars previously listed and World War I, Desert Storm, and the first few weeks of OIF, the majority of U.S. involvement in conflict has been against irregular forces. If the past is a prologue, "small wars" are in the future of U.S. forces, especially as few potential adversaries have the capacity to challenge us on a conventional battlefield.

The preferred strategy of adversaries will undoubtedly be an irregular war and terrorist's acts. Just think how history would have changed if George Washington insisted on standing toe-to-toe with the British, and if the Southern Confederates would have adopted an irregular warfare strategy against the industrially developed North? Consequentially, the adoption of asymmetrical strategies and low technology weapons can be very effective in prolonging conflict through slow attrition of forces and turning the wave of popular sentiment of the stronger adversary against continued war effort, thereby handing the victory to a weaker opponent.⁶⁵ The Vietnam conflict is an excellent example: U.S. forces won most of the battles but lost the war because time and the attrition of U.S. forces turned the tide of popular sentiment in the United States after the Tet Offensive.

B. FOUR PILLARS OF STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

If, as this thesis contends, irregular warfare is our future, what force posture should the United States adopt to deal with it? Based on recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, we must definitely evolve a capability to carry out stabilization and reconstruction operations, which USN Seabee Stability Teams will play a central role. A

⁶³ Fishel, *Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, the Gap, and Things that Go Bump in the Night*, 373.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 373.

⁶⁵ Phillip S. Meilinger, "American Military Culture and Strategy," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 46 (Third Quarter 2007): 79.

Seabee Stability Team can play an important role in shoring up the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction: the security environment, governance and participation, justice and the rule of law, and social and economic well being.

C. INTEGRATION OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY; FUTURE CHALLENGES

In the last several years, multiple investigative reports done by oversight committees and military doctrinal manuals recognize the need for unity of effort across governmental agencies.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 reorganized the United States military to pursue joint operations. In the same way, there is another growing recognition that the military services, civilian agencies, and NGOs need to cooperate effectively to pursue COIN strategies. To be successfully applied, the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction require a mix of skill sets from across the military, agencies of the federal government, civilian contractors and NGOs, as highlighted by the failures in OIF/OEF. The Department of Defense in 2005 directed that stability operations are a core mission and will be given the same priority as combat missions.⁶⁶ The recognition of the importance of stability operations requires the armed services to reach out to other agencies. According to DoD, “Integrated civilian and military efforts are key to successful stability operations,...[and]...shall be prepared to work closely with...U.S. Departments and Agencies.”⁶⁷

The final recommendation from the House Armed Services Committee of April 2008, reporting on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Iraq and Afghanistan, was the “Departments of Defense and State should...ensure unity of effort” and coordinate the interagency relationships.⁶⁸ The U.S. Army has also recognized that to achieve the desired strategic end state in stability and reconstruction operations requires “coordination, cooperation, integration, and synchronization among military and

⁶⁶ Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Directive, 3000.05*, 4.1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.4.

⁶⁸ House Armed Services Committee, *Agency Stovepipes Vs Strategic Agility: Lessons we Need to Learn from Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, [April 2008]), 35.

nonmilitary organizations.”⁶⁹ COIN strategies and stability and reconstruction operations complement each other by both reaching down into and collaborating with society to shore up legitimate authority. In this counterinsurgency effort, the Army and the Marine Corps jointly distributed the FM 3–24 Counterinsurgency manual. This publication recognizes that “military efforts are necessary and important to counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts, but they are only effective when integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power.”⁷⁰

This interagency approach is being put to practice in the new Unified Combatant Command (COCOM), AFRICOM. AFRICOM is a geographic combatant command with an area of responsibility for the African continent, except for the country of Egypt (which remains with CENTCOM). The AFRICOM command was operational on October 1, 2008 and the commander is a four-star general officer, as is the case with other COCOMs. What makes this command structure different is the incorporation of a U.S. diplomat, an Ambassador, from the Department of the Secretary of State. This Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities directs civil-military programs and security initiatives and has military and civilian personnel reporting in directorate.⁷¹

The objective of these coordinated and interagency efforts is to achieve the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction in various degrees and combinations as dictated by the conditions on the ground.

D. WHAT IS COIN?

The U.S. military joint doctrine defines counterinsurgency (COIN) as: “those political, economic, military, paramilitary, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency.”⁷² To simplify this definition even further, the Army and the Marine Corps state that “COIN is a combination of offensive, defensive,

⁶⁹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, 1–16.

⁷⁰ Headquarters Department of the Army, ed., *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, December 2006), 2–1.

⁷¹ Lauren Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, [August 22, 2008]), CRS–8.

⁷² Joint Chiefs of Staff, ed., *Joint Publication 1-02: Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, October 2008), 130.

and stability operations,” (see Figure 3).⁷³ Consequently, COIN amalgamates the four pillars of stability within military offensive and defensive operations. These military operations may not occur immediately against the insurgent forces. They happen over time and may culminate with a conventional action as the insurgent grows in strength. Mao Zedong identifies this as phase three operations with the culmination of a conventional action.⁷⁴ David Galula identified this slow build up of the insurgent:

The insurgent operates largely on the legal side, and only partly on the fringe of legality, through his subversive tactics. He may or may not have been recognized as an insurgent; if he has been identified as such, only the police and a few people in the government generally realize what is looming...The insurgent...is banking on precisely this situation, and will see to it that the transition from peace to war is very gradual indeed.⁷⁵

During the preparations and slow build up to overthrow the government, insurgent actions may be expedited due to a large dislocating event. One condition necessary to consolidate social control may be a rapid and universal dislocation of the established social, political, and economic order, as happened in many areas during WWII.⁷⁶ Universal dislocations may be caused by wars, famines, or natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. An insurgent can use this opportunity to mobilize the population against the incumbent government to win support. For example, an insurgent would proclaim that unlike the current government, they supply the needs of the people and fight for their interests; take up arms, follow me, and overthrow the government. The population will lose confidence in the government and the government will lose legitimacy if this is not quickly counteracted. The goals of counterinsurgency (COIN) are to establish and maintain the legitimacy of the government.⁷⁷

⁷³ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, 1–19.

⁷⁴ John Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspective*. (Potomac Books Inc., 2001), 172.

⁷⁵ David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 43.

⁷⁶ Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 173.

⁷⁷ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, 1–21.

As far back as 1940, it was recognized that irregular warfare and counterinsurgencies are often integral to nation-building efforts.⁷⁸ Essentially, stabilization is done on the fly, while the insurgency is on-going, using a clear and hold strategy to thwart the insurgents. This requires the “proportion of effort” among the stability, offensive, and defensive operations to be adjusted continually by on-the-ground leaders depending on the local situation.⁷⁹

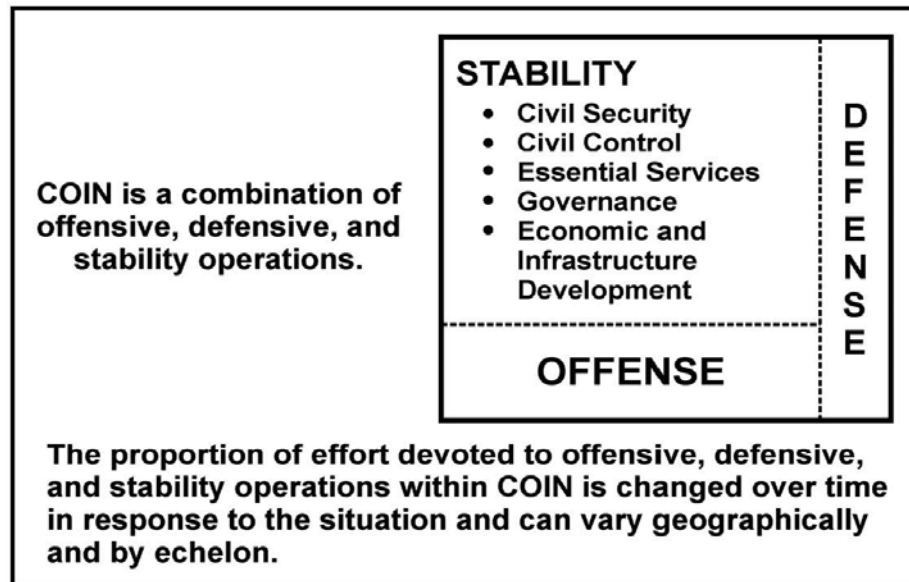


Figure 3. Aspects of Counterinsurgency Operations.⁸⁰

E. CONCLUSION

With the possibility of fighting counterinsurgencies well into the future, it is essential to integrate the roles and processes of civilian and military organizations. A successful counterinsurgency strategy must combine offensive and defensive military operations with the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction. A nation with a brewing insurgency must orchestrate a concise and unified effort on both the military and non-military levels.

⁷⁸ United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual: United States Marine Corps*, 6.

⁷⁹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, 1–19.

⁸⁰ From Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency*, 1–19.

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IV. PROPOSED SEABEE STABILITY TEAM

A. THE U.S. ARMY'S PRT DOCTRINE, FM 3-07

The wider role of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) is to execute the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction in the host nation. The long-term aim is "capacity building," to create indigenous capabilities that reduce the need for outside expertise. In other words, the PRTs are successful, if they work themselves out of a job. "A PRT," according to the U.S. Army, "is an interim civil-military organization designed to operate in an area with unstable or limited security."⁸¹

The PRT functions within the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction is to emphasize the construction of schools and other government buildings; develop the local citizens through training programs; finance microcredit programs; review and comment on the technical aspects of construction projects; coordinate provincial and state level development programs; encourage "popular participation by working with citizens and community organizations;" promote transparency; provide training and assistance to ministries and provincial governors/councils/representatives; develop budgets; develop the judicial and rule of law; and oversee elections.⁸² The functions and tasks of a PRT are as extensive as they are varied requiring a variety of interdependent experts. The civilians are recruited for the PRTs from the Departments of State, Justice, Agriculture, Defense, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

A typical PRT organization is composed of three military staff officers; six Department of State staff; one Department of Agriculture person tasked to develop agriculture programs; twenty U.S. Army civil affairs personnel; two USAID staff; one Department of Justice rule of law coordinator "responsible for monitoring and reporting the local government judicial system activities;" three international contractors for construction projects; and contract security force or military depending on availability.⁸³ Military security forces, if available for convoy security, are attached from a supporting

⁸¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, F-2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, F-3.

brigade combat team from the forward operating base where the PRT is located. The PRT by doctrine and in practice (i.e., Iraq and Afghanistan) does not have assets to conduct military operations. The civil affairs advisors perform a variety of tasks, such as assisting the USAID governance team with “training and technical advice to members of provincial councils and administrators.”⁸⁴ The engineer representative is part of the military staff that monitors the three contractors and advises on construction assessments and scope-of-work documents for the construction contracts. The PRT does not have capabilities that could be needed in the case of an insurgent attack or natural disaster. The PRT team leader is the senior Department of State Foreign Service officer, who has a lieutenant colonel deputy team leader, who in practice is an Executive Officer whose job is to approve convoy movements and coordinate with the commander of the forward operating base (FOB) for transportation, sustainment, and security.⁸⁵ In Afghanistan, the PRT team leader is a military officer.⁸⁶ All civilian personnel serve one-year tours, while military serve six to nine months. When the Army’s PRT doctrine is compared to the proposed Seabee Stability Team, the differences will become clear.

B. EXISTING PRT’S IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

There are two differences between PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan—command structure and the security component. In Iraq, the command structure is led by a Foreign Service Officer (see Figure 4), while in Afghanistan the PRT commander is an Air Force LTCOL or Navy CDR (see Figure 5).⁸⁷ Afghanistan PRTs are typically limited to three to five civilians, while the Iraq PRTs are predominately civilian. The Iraq PRTs do not have a security element, while in Afghanistan a security element is part of the team.⁸⁸

The Army’s PRT doctrine, outlined in Section A, differs from practice because the PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan were operating before the doctrine was published in 2008.

⁸⁴ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, F-5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, F-4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, F-6.

⁸⁷ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the SIGAR, [January 30, 2009]), 57.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

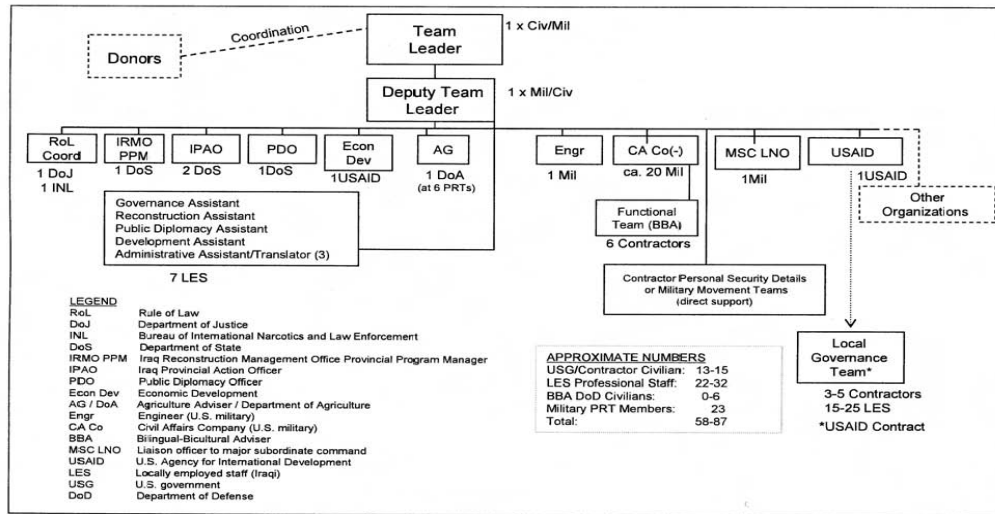


Figure 4. Iraq PRT Organization⁸⁹

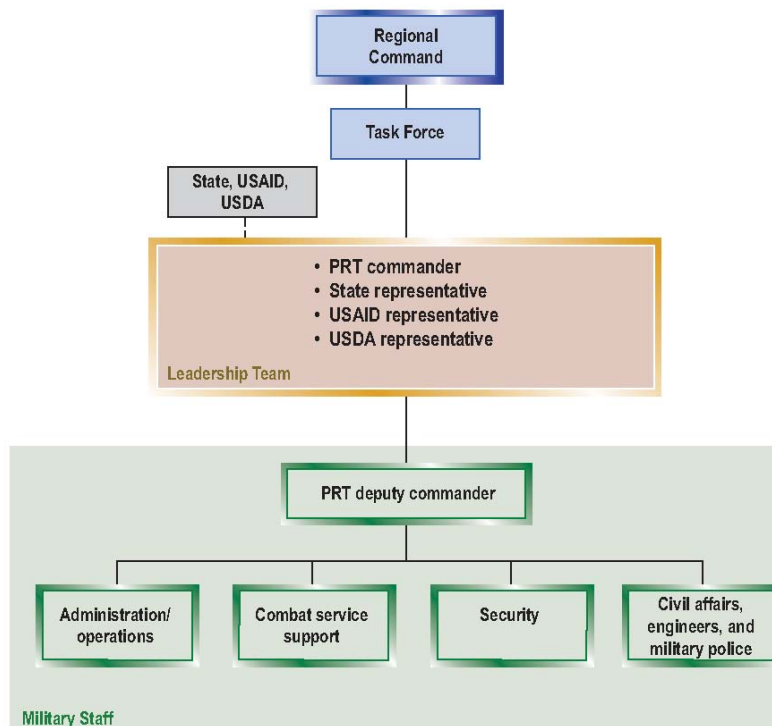


Figure 5. Afghanistan PRT Organization⁹⁰

⁸⁹ From Office of the Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Status of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Program in Iraq*, 22.

⁹⁰ From Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Report to Congress*, 53.

1. Lessons Learned

The stability doctrine (FM 3–07) that governs PRTs was introduced in 2008; five years after PRTs had begun operations. The PRTs were first established in 2003 in Afghanistan, and eventually, they were transferred to Iraq.⁹¹ The following are among the lessons learned that are now incorporated into the doctrine:

- PRTs must adapt their mission and organization to the environment.⁹²
- Quality and continuity of civilian and military personnel are essential.⁹³
- Success requires host nation buy-in.⁹⁴
- Civil-military integration, enhanced by pre-deployment training, is essential for success.⁹⁵

2. Proposed Seabee Stability Team (SST) Advantages Over PRTs

The argument of this thesis is that SSTs are more flexible and adaptable than PRTs for at least three reasons: a SST is deployable in 48 hours; military mission capabilities are inherent within a SST; construction contracting delays are reduced because the construction trades are inherent in a SST.

a. Deploy in 48 Hours

The counterinsurgent needs to be as mobile as the adversary. The PRTs are designed for a war of attrition, not as a quick reaction force. But, speed and adaptability may be critical for both counterinsurgency and natural disaster relief operations. As much as the U.S. government would like to have PRTs in every region to thwart an insurgency, the reality is that resources are constrained.⁹⁶ To overcome the

⁹¹ Michael J. McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?" *Parameters* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2005), 32.

⁹² Robert M. Perito, "The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified," *United States Institute of Peace: Special Report 152* (October 2005), 11.

⁹³ McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 37.

⁹⁴ McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 37.

⁹⁵ McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 40.

⁹⁶ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Report to Congress*, 10.

resource constraints and the requirement for rapid response, a mobile element with military capabilities that can quickly create a self-supporting base of operations offers a force multiplier.

b. Military Mission

A PRT does not conduct military operations, but they may or may not (it depends on the organization) have a small convoy security element to transport the civilians in the PRT organization. (A Naval Mobile Construction Battalion [NMCB] typically has two convoy security teams to conduct movement operations.) Because SSTR missions are often conducted in hostile environments, a unit with organic military capabilities would provide more options on the ground using a single unit and would be a force multiplier for the combatant commander.

c. Contracting Delays

The PRTs have no inherent construction trades or skill sets but rather rely on contractors for planned or emergent construction. Third-party delays are common in construction due to the cumbersome, and for foreigners, incomprehensible U.S. Government contracting regulations. The Seabees cut through the bureaucracy because they are outside the U.S. contracting structure.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has identified multiple contracting delays across all four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Most of these pertain to difficulties in the contracting construction projects realm. These delays stall the progress of the PRT mission and can ultimately delay larger construction projects for several years. The following are some of the reasons for contractual delays on construction, which are quoted from the report followed by an explanation of what the Seabees "Can Do" based on the author's experience:⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Report to Congress*, 43.

- “Afghan holidays”—Seabees do not take holidays on deployment.
- “Afghan National Army commanders demanding contractor perform work outside the scope of the original contract”—This is common in the construction industry. Extensive meetings are held before the contract is awarded to coordinate the wishes of the client, but things and ideas change often after the contract is let. In other words, the contractor has been told what to build and price has been agreed to and after the contract is let the client wants to change the design and the new request usually costs more because the client invariably wants more work done.
- “End user or customer making changes after contract award but prior to contractor starting work”—Same as above.
- “Contractor delays in filling out the Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker, a DoD program for tracking contractors”—This paperwork doesn’t pertain to the Seabees.
- “Contractor delays in getting Defense Base Act Insurance”—Seabees are insured by the U.S. government.
- “Delays due to field engineer inexperience”—Seabees are trained and experienced.
- “Mobilization efforts not being executed in a timely manner”—Seabees “Can-Do”.
- “Re-solicitations due to high bids over programmed amounts”—Seabees do not bid.
- “Security issues”—Seabees have their own security.
- “Unreliable subcontractor”—The Seabees are both the prime and subcontractor.

These delays include construction skills available locally and contractual delays. Using the Seabees requires no construction contracts, therefore, reducing delays and they bring their own construction skills. In stability operations, there is usually a need to get the local populace back to work and for the short term, hiring local contractors and labor stimulates the economy. Chapter II outlines multiple instances where the Seabees have

incorporated local labor into apprenticeship programs on construction projects. An on-site Seabee project manager to assist and direct local labor during construction would allow the multiplication of simultaneous security enhanced projects while stimulating the local economy.

As experienced in Iraq, local contractors seen cooperating with U.S. government representatives have been intimidated, murdered, forced to abandon the construction project site, or are splitting funding for construction with insurgents. The SST can secure the project site and provide daily on-site representation and oversight to eliminate the problems of coercion and corruption.

In sum, a Seabee Stability Team is a nonbureaucratic, incorruptible mobile construction team. A conventional PRT requires multiple interagency assets to sustain and secure it in-country. If a PRT is attached to a Seabee Battalion, the combatant commander would have more assets available to execute multiple objectives. If the U.S. government is to “leverage the coercive and constructive capabilities” in stability operations, a Seabee Stability Team offers both flexibility and stamina.⁹⁸

C. EXISTING CAPABILITIES OF A NMCB

The typical NMCB (see Figure 6) has additional functions beyond war fighting and construction skills that give it advantages over the PRT, which require support from other units. The NMCB organic functions are the training, operations, logistics, and medical and dental departments. Since the Vietnam era, the training department is organized to provide construction apprenticeship training to the local populace as has been done by the Seabees since the Vietnam era. The operations department is more than a single engineer reviewing contracts and scopes-of-work for construction projects. It also directs and coordinates the military operations and construction projects in its area of responsibility, assigns personnel to projects, assures quality control, and coordinates the design and timely management of construction. The logistics department ensures the construction materials are available for the projects, as well as other basic necessities,

⁹⁸ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations*, 2–2.

such as food, water, ammunition, and fuel. The Seabees' medical and dental services can be used for a medical outreach program to the local population (see Chapter II).

Those functions that are organic to the NMCB offer vital components in building a successful counter-insurgency strategy.

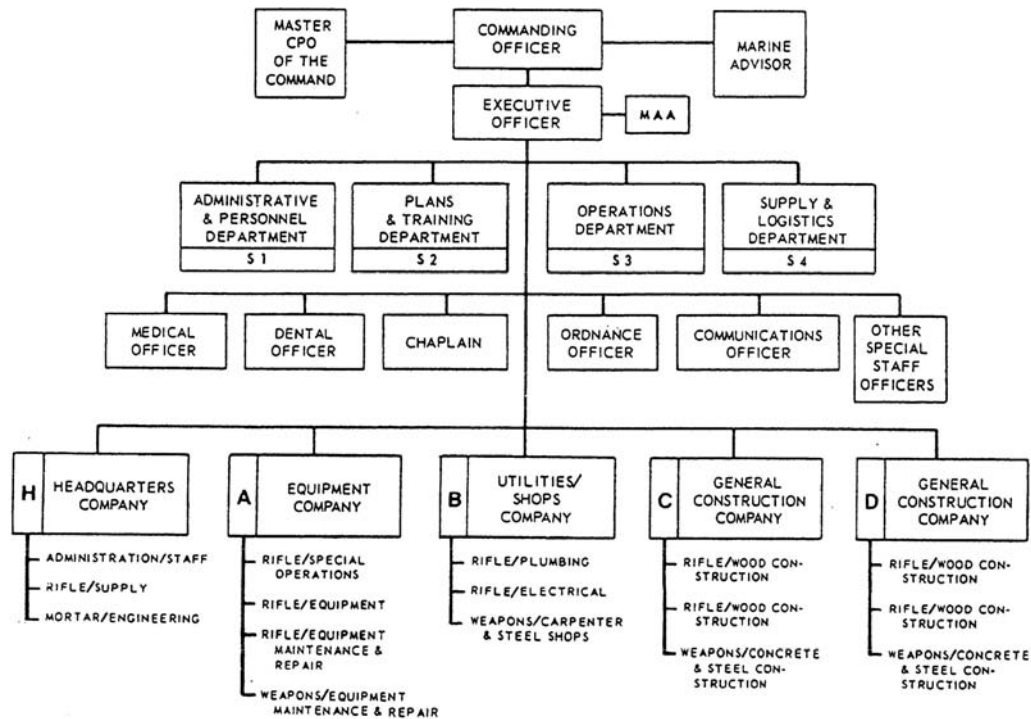


Figure 6. NMCB Organization.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ From Naval Education and Training Center, *Seabee Combat Handbook, Volume I*, 1–10.

D. THE PROPOSED SEABEE STABILITY TEAM (SST) ORGANIZATION

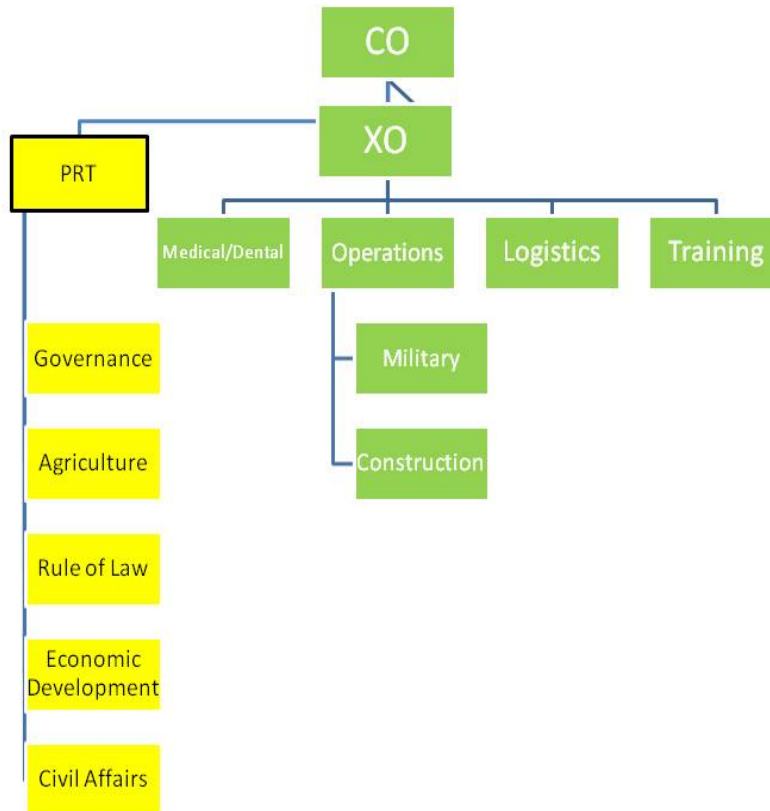


Figure 7. Proposed SST Organization

Craig Cohen of the United States Institute of Peace has grouped the tasks for each of the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction as follows:¹⁰⁰

1. Governance and Participation
 - Integrating recalcitrant faction leaders into peaceful political processes
 - Addressing festering group grievances
 - Nurturing development of peaceful dispute resolution processes
 - Protecting human rights and freedoms
 - Establishing transparency and accountability
 - Establishing an electoral process and conducting elections
 - Protecting and developing civic participation, civil society, and the media
2. Security
 - Dislodging or demobilizing obstructionist forces
 - Protecting civilians, as well as key individuals, infrastructure, and institutions
 - Developing a local security capacity that is responsive to legitimate political authority
 - Ensuring freedom of movement
 - Establishing a framework for regional security
3. Justice and Rule of Law
 - Confronting impunity of political and criminal elites
 - Resolving disputes peacefully
 - Providing equality before the law, including justice for past grievances
 - Protecting fundamental human, civil, and political rights, especially for women and minorities
 - Creating effective accountability procedures
4. Social and Economic Well-being
 - Depriving obstructionists of illicit revenue streams
 - Meeting basic needs, including access to education, communication, power, and transportation
 - Creating jobs
 - Developing the macro-level framework for expanding and opening the economy and diminishing underground activity
 - Ensuring the integrity and adequacy of the revenue stream for essential government activities
 - Reintegrating and resettling displaced persons
 - Rebuilding a sense of community
 - Addressing structural inequalities that drive conflict

¹⁰⁰ Craig Cohen, "Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction," *United States Institute of Peace: Stabilization and Reconstruction Series*, no. 1 (March 2006): 9.

The proposed SST organization (see Figure 7) addresses each of the tasks of the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction listed above. The responsible U.S. Government agency assigns personnel to the SST according to the needs of the host nation.

E. SCALABLE FORCE

A typical NMCB has approximately 650 personnel, although depending on the mission requirements, as few as a handful to hundreds of Seabees may be at a deployment site. The same concept can be applied to an SST. For example, the 13-person peacetime Palau detachment discussed in Chapter II had the officer-in-charge, his assistant, an independent duty corpsman (medical person), two mechanics, and a mix of builders, electricians, and plumbers. Had it been determined that the island needed to build governance capacity, a USAID governance expert might be deployed with the Seabees.

This scaling concept is applicable to all sizes of detachments and, in a peacetime environment, is a conflict prevention asset. Two of the more typical arrangements are the 125-person Air Detachment and the 89-person Air Detachment (see Figure 8). The term “air” is denoting the transport mechanism for the deploying force. These Air Detachment sizes would be adjusted to add the PRT portion to the typical NMCB Air Detachments.

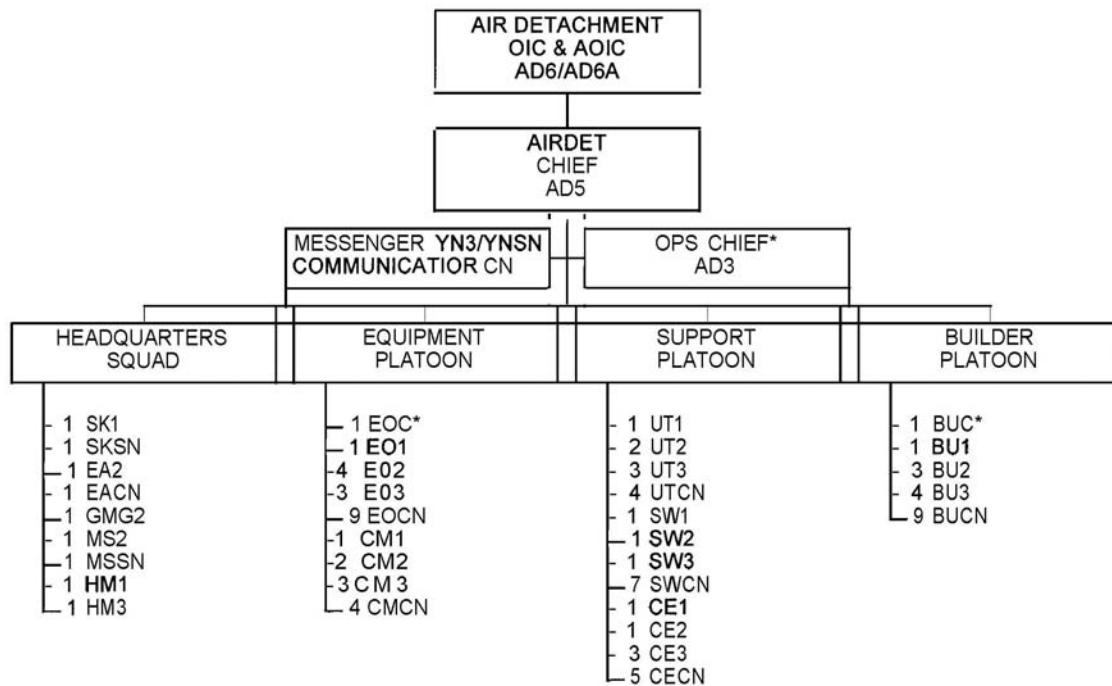


Figure 8. NMCB, 89-Person Air Detachment Organization¹⁰¹

F. CONCEPTUAL DEPLOYMENT OF A SST TO AN AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR)

The Main Body, meaning the location of the command flag, would be deployed to a base of operations designated by the host nation, preferably where the bulk of the construction and stability operations are. For example, the location could be a capital city where the SST has up to 300 security, construction, and logistics personnel supporting outlying detachments (DET) on intermediate bases located throughout the AOR (see Figure 9).

¹⁰¹ From COMSECONDCNB/COMTHIRDCNBINST 5200.2B: *NMCB Operations Officer Handbook*, (Nov 24, 1999), I-14. The 125-person Air Det has the same basic organization. The 36 additional people are dispersed among the platoons to execute a larger mission.

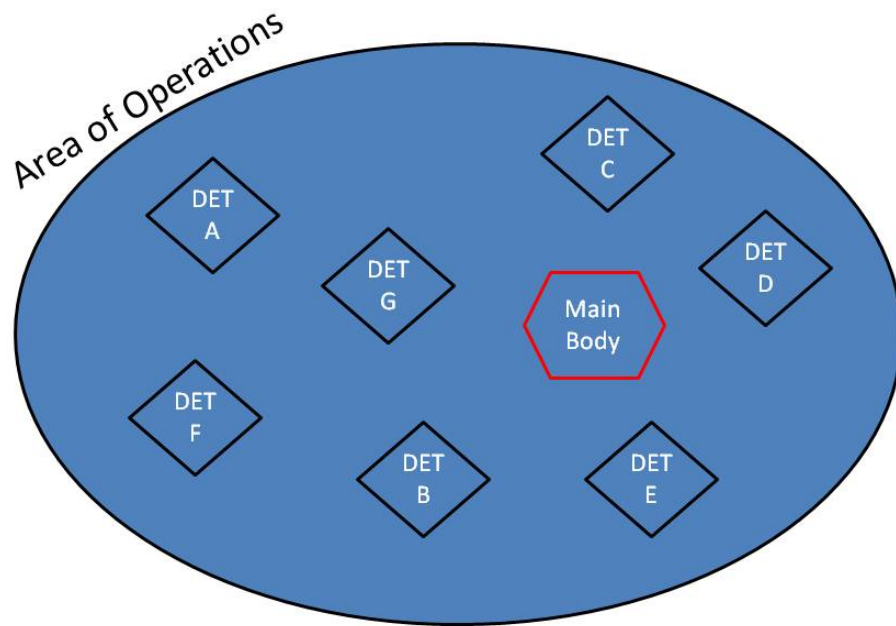


Figure 9. Conceptual Deployment

G. CONCLUSION

The SST has three advantages over the PRT: a 48-hour deployment capability; the ability to conduct a range of military operations; a specialized labor force that can complete projects without going through the federal contracting system.

There are many inherent functions in a NMCB that, when combined with a PRT, will allow it to accomplish all the tasks grouped under the four pillars of stabilization and reconstruction.

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V. PERSONNEL

The thesis has laid out a proposed structure for the SST organization. However, structure takes second place in this proposed organization to the quality of personnel who perform the daily work in an SSTR environment. To make maximum use of personnel, the current six-month NMCB rotation cycle should be extended to a year in-country. Additional training will be required to integrate interagency personnel into the organization and incorporate language and cultural training throughout the SST organization.

A. LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

If all our soldiers spoke Arabic we could have resolved Iraq in two years. My point is that language is obviously an obstacle to our success, much more so than culture. Even a fundamental understanding of the language would have had a significant impact on our ability to operate.¹⁰²

Language and cultural competency are two elements key to building trust with the local governments and populace in a SSTR environment. As the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Plans told the House Armed Services Committee in 2008:

Today's operations increasingly require our forces to operate with coalition and alliance partners and interact with foreign populations, in a variety of regions, with diverse languages and cultures. Our enemies blend in with the local population, making identification and achieving victory more difficult. To be effective in stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations, as well as other counterinsurgency measures and to prevail in the long war, we must be able to understand different cultures and communicate effectively in order to gain the support of the local people.¹⁰³

SSTR success requires that the populace believe in the mission of the SST and actively participate in the stabilization of the environment. SST personnel require social skills and empathy to build trust with the population, transparency, and collaborative

¹⁰² Major Kenneth Carey quoted in, House Armed Services Committee, *Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, [November 2008]), 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 25.

problem solving.¹⁰⁴ These intangible elements are both vital for success and highly personalized. Leadership needs to understand the capabilities of their subordinates to appreciate those most likely to succeed in developing relationships with the populace. Language and cultural training are the building blocks of that success. The Department of Defense has recognized the language and cultural training deficiency in the armed services and created a roadmap for language transformation to “create foundational language and cultural expertise in the officer, civilian, and enlisted ranks for both Active and Reserve Components.”¹⁰⁵ The DoD is to implement this transformation for the general purpose forces and move beyond the specialty careers with the language training.

Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea* illustrates the value of building trust through cultural assimilation. In this book, the hero comes to be seen by the populace to be “the same as a Pakistan man.”¹⁰⁶ He did this by dressing as they do, speaking the language, and adopting the customs and culture of this Muslim society.

A T.E. Lawrence policy of "going native" may be asking too much of the Seabees. At a minimum, language and cultural competency training should be required at all levels, from the most junior Seabees to the leadership in the SST organization.

The difficulty, especially for language, is having a broad selection of language-coded billets in the personnel inventory. Since global assignments are fluid and Seabees are mobile, it is important to have a selection of language-trained personnel at the disposal of the commanding officer. However, while desirable, this may not be practical given the multitude of languages spoken around the globe.

¹⁰⁴ Anne Holohan, *Networks of Democracy: Lessons from Kosovo for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2005), 73.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Defense, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, [January 2005]), 1.

¹⁰⁶ Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 73.

B. BOOTS-ON-GROUND—MINIMUM DEPLOYMENT TIME

Trust is established through personal relationships in every culture.¹⁰⁷ For an outsider gate-crashing a foreign culture, this is especially vital. Once trust is established, business can be conducted. “In relationship-focused cultures, deals arise from already developed relationships” writes business consultant James Sebenius.¹⁰⁸ What is true in business also holds true in an SSTR environment.

"Boots-on-ground" as a component of effectiveness is a lesson constantly relearned since World War II and most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. A 90-day deployment, as has been common for many civil federal personnel, is worse than useless, and may be counterproductive. This lesson, learned in post-World War II Germany, seems to be forgotten with each deployment.¹⁰⁹ The high turnover of American military governing personnel in the city of Marburg, Germany was high and rendered the detachment ineffective towards accomplishing reconstruction goals. John Gimbel, a historian of post-war Germany, describes the effects of the turnover rate:

[There was a] succession of military governors in the city from April 1945 to October 1949. [The governors] had remained in Marburg an average of three and one-half months each. Thirty-seven other Americans...stayed an average of six months each between 1945 and 1952. The average length of time that an American stayed in Marburg permitted little more than a cursory study of the conditions there before he was demobilized or rotated to another assignment. The military officers and enlisted men...found it difficult to become thoroughly acquainted with their jobs and communities.¹¹⁰

The current six-month deployment of a NMCB is too short to be effective in a SSTR environment. Currently, there are nine active NMCBs supporting the operational requirements of the combatant commanders. Each of these battalions deploys for six months and is home-ported for training for twelve months. All nine battalions are

¹⁰⁷ James K. Sebenius, "The Hidden Challenge of Cross-Border Negotiations," *Harvard Business Review* 80, no. 3 (March 2002): 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 37.

¹¹⁰ John Gimbel, *A German Community Under American Occupation: Marburg, 194–52* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), 39–40.

deployed once in any eighteen-month period (see Figure 10). This thesis recognizes there are many planning factors that need to be coordinated among many departments within the Navy and interagency, and so does not recommend the augmentation of additional battalions. However, the initial recommendation would be to create two SSTs (in addition to the nine existing battalions) to focus on a particular region. The reason for two SSTs, in simplest terms, is that one is needed in the field, while one prepares as the relief.

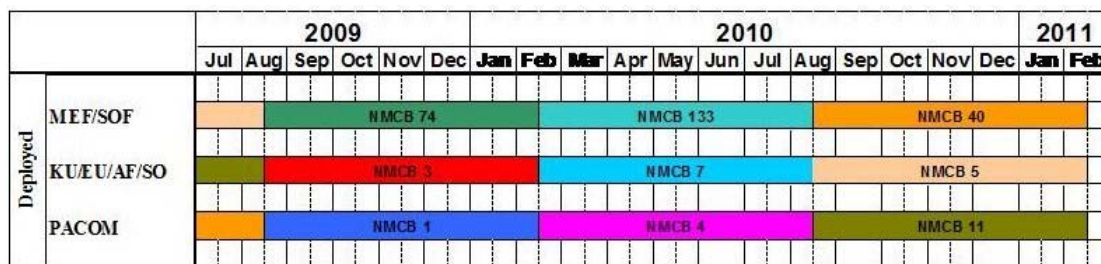


Figure 10. NMCB Deployment Cycle

C. INTERAGENCY

It is more effective to “combine...capabilities to maximize complementary rather than merely additive effects.”¹¹¹ "Economy of force" requires the assistance of agencies that already have the experts rather than develop the personnel within your organization. The downside of "outsourcing" is that one does not control the personnel. If they are external to the organization, interagency agreements and coordination are required.

Interagency cooperation is required in both the predeployment training and deployment phase. Joint training provides a chance to understand civilian and military chain of commands, establish team goals—both military and civilian, build the deployment plan and assign individual team members, practice and prepare to deploy within 48 hours (this is not achieved without practice), and develop personal relationships within the organization. For example, the importance of predeployment training is illustrated by the UK-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan. Their predeployment

¹¹¹ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, 24.

training emphasized mission training, and they were more effective than other PRTs in their first several months in-country. In contrast, their U.S.-led PRT counterparts spent the early months of their deployment coordinating their activities and losing valuable relationship building time.¹¹² The U.S.-led PRT used their deployment for mission training that should have been done before the deployment.

1. SST Rank of the Commanding Officer

Like the PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, the current NMCBs are led by a Commander/O-5, USN. However, unlike the PRTs that report to an overall governing authority (Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)) in Afghanistan, a SST will not have the same type of reporting structure. The SST may be the governing structure in the target country with each detachment from the SST being similar to the provincial team. Since SSTs can operate at a higher level than a PRT, it follows that the SST will be coordinating with higher-level civilians among the agencies. This thesis recommends that a Captain/O-6, USN is the commanding officer of the proposed SST.

2. Civilian and Military Command and Control

The SST is led by a USN Captain who commands all military and DoD civilian personnel, both operationally and administratively. Non-DoD civilians would be under the operational control of the commanding officer, while administratively these personnel would report to their parent organization. This is a change from the PRTs in Afghanistan, where the non-DoD civilians are independent of the commanding officer. In Afghanistan, the military work and coordinate with the interagency team in conduct of operations. However, if operational control is not under a single command element, it will not be coordinated and interagency operations will be ineffective. This thesis recommends interagency command and control to begin during homeport and be conducted through the end of deployment.

¹¹² McNerney, *Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model Or a Muddle?*, 40.

D. CONCLUSION

People are the most critical element of any organization. If the structure of the organization is properly planned and effective mission training is conducted, then these personnel, with the proper cultural and language training, will be given the best opportunity to be effective in a SSTR environment.

VI. CONCLUSION

The thesis has proposed the organization and structure of the Seabee Stability Team (SST) organization, which is basically a military organization, and how it may complement and supplement a standard PRT.

A. SUMMARY OF THE POSITIVES

The proposed SST is scalable and deployable within 48 hours to any global emergent contingency mission. It can conduct military missions in an insecure environment. Chapter IV lists ten contractor or contractual delays that limit the effectiveness of PRT led construction projects. Establishing an SST eliminates these common delays and allows the work to proceed in a timely manner. Using a contractor also carries over to delays in executing emergent missions. In an SST, emergent missions are executed without the delay of coordinating with a contractor because the construction trades are inherent to the organization.

B. SUMMARY OF THE NEGATIVES

The increased responsibilities of an SST require a Captain in command, which has implications for funding, retention, and officer inventory within a very small Civil Engineer Corps Community. To be effective in a SSTR environment, the existing deployment cycles of six months should be changed to one year. This is a considerable quality of life concern for families. One-year deployments are not common in the Seabees, although the PRTs typically have one-year deployments. The scale of deployments is also an issue. A PRT typically has 90 personnel forward deployed while an SST will forward deploy 740 personnel for one year. This is a significant commitment of personnel; the difference between the two organizations is the inherent military mission and construction force that the SST brings with it. Also, if the objective is worth the investment, then an SST is barely a blip in the defense budget.

During World War II, there were 151 active Seabee battalions and in Vietnam there were 21 active duty battalions. Today there are only nine active duty battalions.

This thesis recommends two battalions/SSTs be added to the current inventory of nine to create the SST organization. This is recommended because the current operational environment shows no signs of slowing down as forecasted in Chapter III. This is no small task—there is a tremendous training pipeline behind each battalion supplying personnel, purchasing and maintaining equipment, facilities in home port (i.e., admin space, etc.), and funding to startup and maintain these organizations.

The most difficult aspect the SST organization must overcome is the interagency narrative. To be effective and not create redundancy the federal agencies, both the civilians and military, who are both experts in their respective fields, are required to cooperate and make the SST functional and effective. Part of being effective in an interagency environment is having a single command and control structure to coordinate the operations of the SST, where both the civilians and military report to the same commanding officer.

C. THE PROPOSED SOLUTION: ATTACH THE PRT TO THE SEABEES

This thesis proposes to attach a PRT organization to a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) to produce a highly mobile, self-sufficient organization designed for an SSTR environment. One may object that this is the tail wagging the dog; a solution that stands the primacy of civilian control on its head. Nothing could be further from the truth. First, from a purely organizational perspective, were the Seabees to be attached to a PRT, the command and control concept would be upended making the NMCB part of an organization and not the organization. This change to the concept reduces control over the critical training to optimize mandatory integration for this concept to work. This critical training was discussed in Chapter V, pertaining to the mandatory requirement to train in an interagency environment for launching within 48 hours of mission notification. The force structure will no longer have a rapidly deployable edge the proposed Seabee Stability Team has over the standard Army PRT model. The standard PRT model is not doctrinally required to be deployed within 48 hours. For this reason, neither the training nor the logistics are capable of a 48-hour deployment as are the SSTs.

Second, an SST is not geared to seize control from the civilian authorities. Rather, it seeks to give the civilian leadership a more effective tool, cut through bureaucratic red tape, and improve the SSTR environment to win civilian compliance. It calls for the inculcation of "civilian" skills, such as language and cultural training in SST personnel. Finally, it calls for the integration of civilian and PRT-SST interfacing.

D. CONCLUSION

This thesis provides a conceptual framework to devise an organization that will meet the future challenges of continued irregular warfare and provide an organization that builds capacity in developing countries to prevent costly conflict.

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