

House Committee on Armed Services  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
US House of Representatives

Prospects for  
Effectiveness of Interagency Collaboration on National Security,  
Including Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

Tuesday, 29 January 2008; 10:00 a.m.

Getting Back to Basics, and Getting It Right

Ambassador (ret.) Barbara K. Bodine  
Diplomat-in-Residence and  
Lecturer in Public and International Affairs  
Woodrow Wilson School  
Princeton University

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the greatest threats to the United States, to our security and prosperity at home and our security interests and national values abroad, will come not from standing armed forces of strong competitor states such as the former Soviet Union or China but from instability within and between weakest. The new violence we will face is not from powerful adversaries so much as failed and failing states imploding from a perverse lack of legitimacy, an inability or unwillingness to provide basic services, basic structures and a basic social compact for their own citizens. These imploding states will be marked by domestic violence and humanitarian misery at a level unacceptable, sometimes unimaginable to the international community, will constitute a threat to the peace and stability of their neighbors, and will spawn non-state actors who, in opposition to the misery or as a root cause of the failure, can exploit the vacuum for pernicious transnational purposes, spreading the violence and the threat further outward. These will be civil wars, secessionist movements, insurgencies.

This is not a prediction of the future but an assessment of current realities. There is not yet a consensus within this country or within the international community on whether, at what stage or how to respond, whether it is a pre-crisis or early crisis “responsibility to protect” or a mid-crisis “right to defend,” but there is a recognition that the threat from imploding states cannot safely be ignored. If the threats to the United States and our interests and values come from and within the weakest and reflect political, economic and social dislocation then the tools at our disposal must address the roots of these threats.

Two corollaries to this threat from weakness rather than strength, is that, first, the continuum of threat and violence, intra-state and external, will be longer and more ambiguous than with

conventional threats and conventional inter-state violence, which allows for greater opportunities for conflict and crisis prevention and mitigation prior to the requirement for military intervention, and, second, that the concept of a clear “post-conflict” break point for a shift from military to civilian will be equally ambiguous.

The response, whether unilateral or multilateral to intra-state violence, at one end of the continuum may require military force – stability creation, peace-making, peace-enforcing or peace-maintenance. What for too long in the military considered unconventional warfare will become, has become the new conventional.

The US Army and Marine Corps have recognized this shift in the recent Counterinsurgency Manual. Yet despite the acknowledgement of the primacy of the political and the need for civilian agency partners during the stabilization phase, especially in Chapter Two, the net conclusion remained one of a military lead.

Some of this is understandable and appropriate. The Army and the Marine Corps cannot - should not - write the manual, set the doctrine for the civilian agencies. The default to military lead is also a reflection of a perception that civilian agencies cannot or will not be full partners. It is a reflection of the imbalances, particularly resourcing, that have grown over the past few years and the need to prudently plan for a future of enduring and compounding imbalances.

The question becomes whether the imbalances, the lack of coordination, collaboration is inevitable and irreversible, whether the shift in lead, implicit if not explicit, is necessary in the current context and foreseeable future, and whether the fundamental interagency process is either so broken or so antiquated as to be irrelevant.

My answer to these questions would be that the imbalance was not inevitable, is not appropriate, and is reversible. The fundamental structure and process is neither irredeemably broken nor antiquated, but has been sufficiently subverted that pro-active corrective action is needed. I would also say at the outset that while Step One is one of political will and policy direction – within both the executive and legislative branches – there is a price tag. In the broad scheme of things, not a large one, but it isn't going to be free.

### It Wasn't Always So

Legislative and Executive branch efforts at creating, fixing or overhauling interagency effectiveness in collaboration on national security date, at minimum, to the very creation of the modern interagency structure – the 1947 legislation proposed by President Truman and passed by Congress that established, inter alia, the Department of Defense (DOD), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and, critical to today's discussion, the National Security Council (NSC). The fundamental function of the NSC was to provide coordination and collaboration between these new agencies and existing structures, most notably the Department of State. Ironically, an objective of the framers was to provide a forum and structure, a level playing field, for the new DOD up against the established and then pre-eminent State Department. The State Department and the Secretary were the President's senior advisors and principle agents on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy writ large. One function of the NSC was to ensure that the DOD voice was heard.

The tension between the oldest federal department and the newest was virtually hardwired into the new system. In many respects, this tension served successive presidents well, as did successive National Security Advisors and their staffs, each a reflection of style and priorities of

the president they served. While debates and disagreements could be intense, and not without their personal dimensions, on the whole and over time, the system worked, sometimes well.

I spent the majority of my more than 30 years in the Foreign Service working interagency, primarily with DOD and the uniform military. My second tour was as a political-military officer in Bangkok during the last days of the Vietnam War. My last assignment was as Senior Advisor in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. In the intervening years, I was involved in the drafting of the Lower Gulf Arms Policy and the first sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia in the late 70s; served as number two at our mission in Baghdad during the open years of the Iran-Iraq War; coordinated the Tanker Protection Regime in the last years of that conflict; Associate Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the Department of State, charged with oversight and management of counterterrorism operations, primarily a Special Operations function; subsequently acting overall Coordinator for Counterterrorism; as well as the interagency oversight and coordination that comes from a directorship for East Africa and as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chief of Mission at several posts in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at State. In many of those assignments, my work was as much interagency as traditional bilateral work.

While the organizational cultures, bureaucratic dynamics and resources were always issues, there was a fundamental understanding of shared goals and missions, of support for the President's national security strategy, and of division of labor. As I explained to the Special Ops guys I worked with on counterterrorism – I don't do guns; you don't do policy. I will figure out when and why; you figure out how. We were all comfortable with that division.

Coordination and collaboration was never ideal. In the late 1990s, as the number of humanitarian interventions increased, there was at least one major effort between DOD, State and Central Command to better work complex contingencies. Ms. Flournoy and I, in fact, participated in one such effort in the mid-90s, along with US Marine Corps General Tony Zinni, following our intervention in Somalia but prior to his assuming command of Central Command.

While the machinery did not always work as desired, while there could be major bureaucratic battles with the outcome determined as much by the force of personalities at the top as the merits of the arguments, there was an agreed, understood and largely adhered to process. Most disputes were resolved at the working level. As needed, disputes would be sent up the chain and, often refereed by the NSC, at some level resolved. Once a decision was made, you saluted smartly and carried on. If the disagreement was fundamental, you had the option to resign, as Secretary Vance chose to do over Desert One and a few career officers have felt compelled to do over time.

That was the system, the process, the principles I came to understand and, even in frustration and exasperation, respect.

### The Year 2003 – Presages and Practices – A Systemic Failure?

I was not prepared for what I found in Washington in early 2003 when called back by the Department of State for secondment to DOD's reconstruction efforts in Iraq. I had, of course, read about the interagency struggles in the media, but wrote them off as the settling in process of any new administration, the sorting out of strong personalities at the top, and a press looking for a good story. I figured it was no worse than the legendary relationship between Defense Secretary Weinberger and Secretary of State George Shultz during President Reagan's administration. Having been intimately involved in State-DOD joint efforts throughout that administration, I assumed that at the working level, and even at the level of principals, it continued to function.

The reality in 2003 was that it did not function, at any level. The decision to vest the reconstruction at DOD was not as a mandate to coordinate a broad interagency effort, not simply to subordinate the Department of State and others, but as license to exclude them. The extensive interagency work done on the Future of Iraq Project, along with many of its key participants, was dismissed. A decision from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to bar uniformed military from participation in the work of the project presaged the dismissal of the project and its drafters that was to come. Prior to NSPD 24, there was an explicit OSD decision to bar direct State, and interagency, collaboration with the uniformed military elements directly concerned with its work.

This subversion of the longstanding collaboration predated Iraq. A very senior officer within Central Command visited Sana'a in my last month at post, in August 2001. The senior leadership at DOD was now in place. This senior officer recounted that a directive had come down severing the direct coordination – collaboration – between Central Command and its counterpart bureaus at State. This senior officer fumed that he and his command simply could not do their job if everything – everything – had to be filtered through OSD. It was unnecessary, impractical and, if I read his tone correctly, insulting.

This extended beyond Iraq. In my last assignment, as Senior Advisor in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, I headed a negotiating team with one of our key NATO allies, a close and supportive friend, on a key national security issue. The outcome of the negotiations would not only affect a major defense initiative, but the interests of one of the services and a functional, rather than regional, command. At one stage of the negotiations, often more difficult between State and OSD than bilaterally, a position was staked out by OSD that seemed at odds with what I understood to be the long term planning assumptions of this service and this command. Greatly at odds. By agreement with DOD, State has Political Advisors (POLADs) assigned to service headquarters and a number of commands. I did a reality check. I called the POLAD. Had they been consulted and was this an agreed position? I was more than surprised to learn they had not been consulted by OSD, were adamantly opposed and gravely concerned. I left it to them to sort it out and get back to me with an agreed position. I was even more surprised by the reaction within and from OSD. The service, the command and we were told in no uncertain terms that the conversation itself was unauthorized. The fact that OSD had not only misrepresented the position of the service and the command but had not either coordinated or informed them of their decision was incomprehensible to me.

What I observed as Senior Advisor mirrored what I had seen in Iraq in 2003 – a consistent pattern of ignoring, overriding the judgments and interests of the professional services and of decisions taken interagency. Minutes of NSC Principal and Deputy Principal meetings were rewritten to accord not with the discussions and decisions taken, but with the preferred position going in, or those decisions were simply ignored.

In looking at the policy-making process on Iraq, one former senior administration official is quoted in David Rothkopf's Running the World as saying "I have never seen more high-level insubordination in the U.S. Government in almost thirty years."

My point in recounting this history is that what happened in Iraq, and is at the heart of the Subcommittee's interest here today, was not isolated or accidental. It was not so much a systemic failure of an antiquated mechanism as a subversion of the system that cascaded down and rippled out.

Going Forward

This is an important distinction. If we are faced with a fundamental systemic failure, with an apparatus that simply cannot deal with 21<sup>st</sup> century national security issues, then we need to fundamentally reform the system. If we are dealing with insubordination, as one administration official chose to characterize it, or subversion.....or simply one agency's consistent, deft and, short-term at least, ability to bend the system to its policy preferences, then we have another set of problems, and entirely different set of remedies.

As the nature of the threat has shifted from the powerful to the weakest, the root causes have shifted to political, economic and social failures and the nature of the response has shifted from traditional kinetic force to a more complex continuum of civilian and non-kinetic tools, there has over the recent past a counterintuitive reorientation of our foreign policy approach toward leading with force. Other national security tools have subordinated or absorbed. In military parlance, the military has become the supported command; all other agencies supporting commands. Much has been written and discussed about righting the balance between "hard power" and "soft power" to what some now prefer to call "smart power" and I will not repeat that here. The need for a realignment, for swing back to a new middle norm is already underway, but will remain frustrated by the third reality.

This manipulation of the policy-making process and reorientation of the nature of our foreign policy approach has been compounded by a crippling and chronic imbalance in resourcing – people and money. As it has evolved, it has, as has been said elsewhere, resulted in one agency on steroids, and the rest of the national security structure on life support. We have now reached the stage where missions follow resources rather than resources following missions. As this has spiraled over recent years, many of these agencies increasingly simply don't have the wherewithal to play their role effectively, with their roles being taken up, by default if not by design, by the military. A vacuum was created and the military has been obliged to fill it. The "Washington Post" on January 24, 2008, reported an initiative by DOD to hire 1,000 language specialists, with a DOD spokesperson graciously noting that this talent pool would be available to other agencies on an as-needed basis. This will, as has become the pattern, be outsourced to a private contractor.

The recent US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency (CI) Field Manual, especially Chapter Two, makes clear an understanding that a civilian partner is needed, but that the military will take on the roles and missions of the civilian partners if they are unable to do so, in too many cases reinventing wheels others have already invented, field-tested and used.

Let me state clearly that I do not believe it is the intent or in the interest of the military to become a one-stop shop for all national security missions – language, development, governance, intelligence etc. This committee understands better than most in Washington the strain on the military. The US military is under strength for its missions. One result, and a most unfortunate and potentially dangerous one, is to outsource these expanding non-kinetic missions, as seen in the language specialist contract noted above, DIA's \$1 billion intelligence support contract as another. It makes no sense to me, and to many friends within the military and in other agencies to privatize a number of non-war-fighting functions, and then to add responsibility for post-conflict operations at an unprecedented scale and duration. It is difficult enough to maintain unity of command, a 'whole government' approach or interagency coordination and collaboration if you all working for the same government. Add contractors at this level and for this duration – for these needs will not go away soon – and we lose control, accountability, flexibility.....and money.

PRTs as Laboratory

This leads directly to the question of the Provincial Reconstructions Teams (PRTs) as both a legacy of the issues outlined above, and as a possible guide for correction, with some caveats. The establishment of the PRTs reflects many of the concepts and lessons learned reflected in the CI Manual. As we build experience with PRTs, along with our allies and friends in Iraq and Afghanistan, new questions arise.

- Should they be COIN-centric, i.e., are they in support of military operations and objectives, or is the primary mission governance and development?
- Are we looking for quick fixes to further security, or long term solutions to build stability?
- Should their field of vision be local, provincial or should the aperture be widened to a broader country-level strategy?
- To what degree can and should local stakeholders, local and international NGOs, multilateral partners and/or international organizations be part of the strategy, the planning and/or the implementation? Does primary mission and de jure or de facto leadership affect the degree to which others can or will want to be part of the effort? If it does, to what degree should that inform our decisions on how we structure ourselves?
- Which agency should have de jure lead? Which agency has de facto lead? What determines the difference?
- Can there be effective interagency coordination and collaboration in the field absent similar coordination and collaboration at home?

#### What Can We Learn from the PRTs?

Drawing from our experience to date with the PRTs, recognizing the dynamics behind the revolutionary recasting of the Army and the Marine Corps approach to CI, and in light of the reality of the nature of the new threats and the new violence we confront,

- PRTs are a useful and appropriate response to the realities of Iraq and Afghanistan, a transitional response mechanism that bears close monitoring and examination for use in other contexts. This would include not only the experiences and lessons learned from U.S. PRTs, as structured and managed differently in Iraq and Afghanistan, but lessons to be learned from our allies' efforts as well.
- PRTs should support COIN operations but not be an extension of them. The primary mission should be building local/provincial capacity in governance, support of the national level *political* strategy, as well as the local/provincial long-term sustainable development, as opposed to quick impact projects of questionable value as either a security tool or a development tool.
  - *Building schools has limited value if there are no teachers, no curriculum development, and no education system. Doing too much ourselves, especially if military-led, can delegitimize fragile local and national political and social leaderships. It devalues the civilization of emerging power structures, and reinforces in local minds the ineffectiveness of local and national political structures.*

- A civilian-focused as well as led PRT program has a greater chance of building local/provincial political networks, and coordinating if not directing, supervising and managing the work of NGOs and IOs.
  - *NGOs are going to have to come to terms with working with if not within these structures, but their sense of humanitarian space, and of perceived non-combatant status will be enhanced if the structure is not perceived by them, and by the locals, as military. Some allied agencies as well as international organizations and NGOs cannot, by law, work with military-led entities, but can and will work alongside military efforts.*
- This is not a recommendation that there be a division between security on the one hand and diplomacy/governance/development on the other, but of the balance of missions, with security the supporting function and diplomacy (governance) and development the supported mission.
- PRTs must reflect a comparable level of interagency coordination at home, including clearly defined lead agency.

#### Fixing the Interagency – Getting Back to Basics

PRTs or some other comparable mechanism in the field – pre or post conflict - cannot be successful without functioning interagency guidance and back-up. This does not require a fundamental restructuring of the national security apparatus, a Goldwater-Nickels for the national security agencies or the civilian agencies, any more than repair of what Norm Ornstein called “The Broken Branch” demands a rewriting of the constitution on separation of powers, checks and balances and oversight.

While the Counterinsurgency Manual has rightly been called radical and revolutionary, and if adopted would be a tectonic shift in military doctrine, it draws heavily on lessons from the past, lessons that were ignored not simply forgotten. The manual is a call to go back to basics, but getting it right for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For the interagency, this will mean:

- (a) Reaffirm the basic decision-making and policy making process as mandated and created in 1947, taking into account evolutions and adjustments the accrued over successive administrations. This would include clarity on supported vs. supporting agencies in policy-making, agenda setting and implementation; reaffirmation of Chief of Mission authorities; a National Security Council that serves the President by serving the interagency; and effective Congressional oversight.
- (b) Formalize civilian-military coordination in anticipation of crisis, not just in response to crisis, through legislation that endorses the mandates of State and S/CRS outlined in NSPD 44.
- (c) Provide sufficient, regular and predictable funding to all national security civilian agencies. Parity with the military is not the goal; equity is. A State/USAID apparatus the size of even the Marine Corps is not called for. A diplomacy and development apparatus that is commensurate with the new challenges and threats is.

The State Department has fewer than 10,000 FSOs. It is grotesquely understaffed, underfunded and under resourced. USAID is perhaps in worse shape on staffing and funding, and hamstrung by an accretion of procedural regulations that severely impair its response capacity.

It will take time to build the diplomacy and development structure we must have but it is unconscionable that we face cuts at a time when the challenges and threats we face demand that we do more with more, not less with less. (We are well beyond the “doing more with less” stage).

- We need sufficient staff and resources for a “training cushion” – for languages, for area studies commensurate with a rigorous academic institution, for the host of new skill sets and expertise we expect of an evolving service dedicated to protecting and advancing our interests and values abroad, for advanced education opportunities such as I have seen the military take full advantage of at some of our finest universities. While I was at the Kennedy School of Government and subsequently at MIT’s Center for International Studies, I was impressed with the high number of mid-level uniformed officers on one-year advanced degree programs, and dismayed by the paucity of FSOs, and this during major military operations in two theaters.
- We need sufficient funds, resources and mandate to turn the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) into an institution as capable in mission and academic integrity as service war college. A Marine major who worked for me in Baghdad in 2003 spent a year at the Naval Post-graduate School in Monterey, CA, working with some of the most notable scholars today on questions of Iran, Islam, democratization, nation-building. Those opportunities must be made available to our foreign service and related civilian agency personnel.
- Studies on PRTs, and personal experience, teach that interagency coordination and collaboration cannot simply be mandated from above – although “command culture” and political will are critical – but must be built from the bottom up. Long-term interagency training is critical and FSI should be given the tools to do this.
- We need sufficient staff for embassies, to reopen consulates, to reinvigorate our public diplomacy at the grass roots level, to be able to reach beyond the ministries and the mandated reports which can tie our best officers to their desks, the last place they should be. We need the staff, resources and training to be able to respond to crises such as Iraq without stripping our embassies and offices whose work in those embassies and in those offices is often in direct support of the crisis.

One army officer asked me why State did not send *all* of the Foreign Service to Iraq, conveniently forgetting that not *all* of the Army was in Iraq. We need fully staffed embassies in each of our coalition partner’s capitals, and those who do not support the coalition, in all regional capitals, and in countries that may become the next imploding failed state. We cannot be in a “rob Peter to pay Paul” staffing dilemma.

- We need sufficient staff to expand our outreach to other agencies, to work interagency not just talk interagency. We and the military need political advisors at every command, to take on positions such as Deputy at the new AFRICOM. s.



- With the formalization of NSPD 44, S/CRS, which my colleague Carlos Pasqual here today did such a magnificent job establishing, must be given the resources to go with the mandate.

If an Administration, Republican or Democratic, does not request sufficient funding, Congress has the authority and the prerogative to set its own levels, as it has done in the past on military spending.

### Conclusion

Interagency coordination and collaboration is not an alien concept within professional cadre in the executive branch, or one that the players are inherently hostile to, or incapable of. There are bureaucratic cultures, as there are among the four uniformed services (and the Coast Guard) still despite Goldwater-Nickels. The differences can be healthy and ensure that the President, and Congress, gets open debate on a range of options, and the variety of talents, skill sets and experience to implement policies as made. The ability to “play well together” between civilian and military, between State and DOD has been evident in the most recent past, and Secretary Gates’ support for a revitalized civilian partner, and the establishment of the PRTs are evidence that challenges that have confronted us are not inevitable or irreversible. Political will is important, but not sufficient.

It is prudent and wise to ask the question whether we have the structure, processes and people to meet our immediate needs, and our longer term challenges. Do we want to be able to respond quickly, effectively and well? Yes. Do we also need to be able to anticipate, respond early, wisely, with *all* of the tools available and well....and then be able to see it through? Yes, we do.

I served this country for over 30 years. My entire adult life was spent in the Foreign Service. I had days where I wished I was someplace else. I never had a day when I wished I had done something else. I have seen the tremendous good that can be accomplished through the effective coming together of all of the players – when the “whole government” or “unity of command” approach is not just followed to the letter, but in spirit. I have seen the creativity and innovation that comes from bringing together a range of players. And, I have seen the waste, frustration and, yes, anger, and yes, the damage to our security and our interests, immediate and long term, when the whole thing just breaks down.

I applaud and am grateful to this Subcommittee for its interest and its time to explore thoroughly, critically and constructively what can realistically be done by the interagency, with the full support and oversight of Congress, to support, encourage, repair and rebuild the interagency, its processes and its players so we can all more effectively and consistently support and defend the interests and security of this country.

Thank you,

(end)

Thank you.