



Highlights of [GAO-08-39](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2004, the Department of State created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization to coordinate U.S. planning and implementation of stabilization and reconstruction operations. In December 2005, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), charging State with improving coordination, planning, and implementation of such operations and ensuring that the United States can respond quickly and effectively to overseas crises. GAO was asked to report on State's efforts to improve (1) interagency planning and coordination for stabilization and reconstruction operations, and (2) deployment of civilians to these operations. To address these objectives, we conducted interviews with officials and reviewed documents from U.S. agencies and government and private research centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State clarify and communicate roles and responsibilities within State for stabilization and reconstruction operations and complete development and apply all elements of the framework to an actual operation. GAO also recommends that when considering authorizing the Civilian Reserve Corps, Congress require State to report on its development, annual, and deployment costs; types of missions; and obstacles that could affect its operations. In comments on a draft of this report, State said it partially concurs with the recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-39](#). For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov.

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps

What GAO Found

The office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is developing a framework for planning and coordinating U.S. reconstruction and stabilization operations. The National Security Council (NSC) has adopted two of three primary elements of the framework—the Interagency Management System and procedures for initiating the framework's use. However, the third element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—is still in progress. We cannot determine how effective the framework will be because it has not been fully applied to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. In addition, guidance on agencies' roles and responsibilities is unclear and inconsistent, and the lack of an agreed-upon definition for stabilization and reconstruction operations poses an obstacle to interagency collaboration. Moreover, some interagency partners stated that senior officials have shown limited support for the framework and S/CRS. Some partners described the new planning process, as presented in early versions of the planning guide, as cumbersome and too time consuming for the results it has produced. S/CRS has taken steps to strengthen the framework by addressing some interagency concerns and providing training to interagency partners. However, differences in the planning capacities and procedures of civilian agencies and the military pose obstacles to effective coordination.

State has begun developing three civilian corps that can deploy rapidly to international crises, but key details for establishing and maintaining these units remain unresolved. First, State created the Active Response Corps (ARC) and the Standby Response Corps (SRC) comprised of U.S. government employees to act as first responders to international crises and has worked with several agencies to create similar units. However, these efforts are limited due to State's difficulty in achieving planned staffing levels for ARC, a lack of training available to SRC volunteers, other agencies' inability to secure resources for operations unrelated to their core domestic missions, and the possibility that deploying employees to such operations can leave units without sufficient staff. Second, in 2004, State began developing the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC). CRC would be comprised of U.S. civilians who have skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations, such as police officers, civil engineers, public administrators, and judges that are not readily available within the U.S. government. If deployed, volunteers would become federal workers. S/CRS developed a plan to recruit the first 500 volunteers, and NSC has approved a plan to increase the roster to 2,000 volunteers in 2009. In May 2007, State received the authority to reallocate up to \$50 million to support and maintain CRC, but it does not yet have the authority to obligate these funds. In addition, issues related to volunteers' compensation and benefits that could affect CRC recruitment and management would require congressional action. Furthermore, State has not clearly defined the types of missions for which CRC would be deployed. State has estimated the costs to establish and sustain CRC at home, but these costs do not include costs for deploying and sustaining volunteers overseas.