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Conflict Transformation: The Nexus Between State Weakness and the Global War on Terror

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My thanks to the National Defense Industrial Association and SO/LIC for inviting me to participate today. And I'm pleased to join my colleagues from the State Department to discuss how we as a government are supporting the Global War on Terrorism.

I would like to focus my remarks on how the U.S. Government is enhancing its ability to address state weakness and transform conflict because the issues surrounding state failure are directly relevant to the focus of this conference – and affect not only the conceptual basis for my office, the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization or S/CRS, but the tools we are developing and in our approach to interagency integration.

Global Environment/Strategic Rationale

Today's *National Security Strategy of the United States* concludes that we are threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones. It calls on the U.S. Government to transform in order to address our national security challenges.

Where there is a failure of governance, and the state is too weak to control its territory and provide for its people, it can become a haven for terrorism. Look at Afghanistan. One of the poorest countries in the world became the base of operations for a horrific attack against the United States. A vacuum of good governance and rule of law can lead to a host of dangers –organized crime, drug trade, human trafficking, weapons proliferation, terrorist safe havens.

Here's a sobering piece of information: The Fund for Peace estimates that about 2 billion people live in countries that have a significant to critical level of risk of collapse. So, this is not a small problem in far-flung places. State collapse has wide repercussions – creating a ripple effect through a region, and affecting the international community.

This focus on state weakness is not new. We have long been concerned about the toll state failure can take on vulnerable populations – violent conflict, refugee flows, food shortages, disease, genocide, ethnic cleansing. What is different today is that we understand better the interaction between state failure, humanitarian crises, and our own security. It's not enough to focus only on strong states, when our security is so closely tied to the success or failure of societies in weak ones. Addressing state weakness is consistent with our national values. And as we have come to understand, it is also in our national interest.

USG is Meeting the Challenge

Weak and failing states present the international community with complex and multifaceted problems that demand a new kind of response. We need more than a reactive response to crisis. We need a strategic shift in our whole thought process, and the right mechanisms and resources to take advantage of our responsibilities in this new strategic environment.

Fortunately, although we are facing new challenges, the converging recognition of the threat presents us with new opportunities. Secretary Rice has spoken quite a bit about the shifting international terrain and the need to adapt our approach to one of Transformational Diplomacy. A primary focus of Transformational Diplomacy is the need to engage the international community in new ways and address the broader challenge of state weakness.

A number of important initiatives are already underway in the U.S. Government to confront the spectrum of state weakness, including the work of S/CRS. The work of S/CT, the Millennium Challenge Account, USAID's Fragile State Strategy, DOD's Ungoverned Spaces, Foreign Assistance Reform and other efforts are all working to address vulnerable states.

Last December the President issued a directive that gives the Secretary of State the mandate to improve coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization assistance for countries and regions that are at risk of conflict, are in a conflict situation, or making the difficult transition from it. This Presidential Directive is the umbrella document for other U.S. Government efforts to transform, such as DOD Directive 3000.05 for Security, Stabilization, Transition and Reconstruction, and is complementary to the *Quadrennial Defense Review*. We recognize the importance of whole-of-government solutions rather than agency-specific solutions.

S/CRS' Role – A new way of doing business

Where does S/CRS fit in all this? S/CRS is very much a reaction to the changing environment. It was created in 2004 as an interagency office in the State Department to help integrate and institutionalize conflict response. It emerged from recommendations by the Executive Branch, Congress and the think tank community to create an institutional focal point for conflict prevention and response.

Many parts of our government focus on different aspects of conflict, but no one office had been responsible for looking at it comprehensively. This lack imposed burdens and constraints on our agencies, and has kept us in a cycle of ad hoc approaches to conflict response. So, we working to bring together individual agency capabilities to create a unified effort and approach to conflict transformation.

What do we mean by Conflict Transformation?

We define conflict transformation as the process of identifying and diminishing the means and motivations for conflict. At the same time, we must work at developing and strengthening local institutions so they can take the lead in their own

governance, economic development, and security. Local ownership is essential.

In a recent speech at Georgetown University, Secretary Rice stated that S/CRS must work at the critical intersections of diplomacy, democracy promotion, economic reconstruction and military security. Our job is not to duplicate the work of other agencies nor take their place. Our job is to serve as a force multiplier so that all agencies involved can do their jobs better. In other words, we aim to improve the way our government organizes itself to address the full spectrum of conflict – from prevention to response.

Global Capacity

State weakness is a global threat, but luckily, we are not fighting these challenges alone, nor are we alone in our thinking. There is momentum out there – a *global* push to build conflict response capacity, building on what we and our partners have learned. By improving our ability to coordinate internally, we are better able to coordinate with international partners, NGOs and local host governments.

We share the same goal with our international partners: to move from a collection of individual agency responses, to national responses that can be integrated into an interlocking multilateral effort. The UK, Canada, France, and Germany have all created offices similar to S/CRS or identified coordinators for reconstruction and stabilization. Australia, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have been active leaders on these issues, as well. We have been working closely with all of them.

We are sharing information and exchanging ideas with the UN, EU, and NATO in order to find where we can join efforts and reinforce each others' work – or as Admiral Giambastiani said to us early on, so that we are all purple from the start. We hope to strengthen regional organizations, like the African Union, since the neighbors of weak or conflict-ridden states bear the brunt of refugees, disrupted trade, and humanitarian assistance flows.

A Holistic Approach to Conflict Response

I talked about how we are trying to bring about a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and response. We have two overarching functions: (1) help our government more effectively prevent or respond to conflict and (2) address the structural issues and gaps that we encounter. To do this, we must get better and more systematic at identifying countries at risk, bringing a whole-of-government approach to planning, preparing our resources, responding on the ground, and then constantly measuring our progress so that we make appropriate adjustments along the way.

Since its creation, S/CRS has worked hard to create tools to improve conflict prevention and response. I want to briefly highlight a few.

First, a framework for early warning and conflict prevention. Conflict prevention and conflict response are linked. Conflict is generally a cycle, not a discrete event. To that end, we are focused on closing the gap between early warning and early response. Moving from warning to action is an enormous challenge. We are utilizing tools like the NIC early warning watchlist. We are beginning to test a conflict assessment tool. It builds on the tremendous work done by USAID, and aims to expand this assessment tool for interagency use. We are engaged in extensive outreach to NGOs, academics and think tanks, including through an on-going joint dialogue with our U.S. Government working group on prevention and mitigation. We are developing strategies to address spoiler issues. We have also engaged in prevention policy exercises and roundtables for Haiti , Cuba , Bangladesh , Nepal , the DRC to name a few. If we can identify crisis warning signs earlier, and respond with integrated policies, we stand a far better chance of averting or mitigating a crisis.

Another critical tool is a framework in which to do government-wide strategic planning. Plans are essential. They help us define a

vision or goal, and map out the strategy for how to achieve it. Conflict transformation requires that we: (1) identify and shrink drivers of conflict and (2) build local capacity. The crux of our planning process is to apply a conflict transformation lens to strategic planning so that we consistently focus on identifying which tasks will tip the balance towards viable peace. Our planning process is being currently reviewed and tested in our combatant commands; it's under discussion with the civilian agencies; and has been shared with outside experts to seek their feedback.

We are also using our planning tool to improve coordination with international partners so that we aren't just improving U.S. capacity but global capacity. For instance, this week at JFCOM, we are testing the planning framework with our military and international partners in Multinational Experiment 4. MNE4 aims to create a transformational capability to plan for integrated, multinational interagency efforts. Eight countries and NATO are participating, with the UN and EU observing.

Who exactly is implementing these plans, providing assessments, reporting on metrics? That brings me to the issue of deployments. Many people when they hear about S/CRS want to know: How many people can you put on the ground right now? But deployments are the culmination of rigorous training and preparation. Not the starting point. Take the U.S. military. They have the people but would never dream of sending off troops to a conflict zone without training and resources.

Troops will train together intensively for 3 months before deploying for a year. They are not allowed to deploy until they have demonstrated unit readiness as a whole. We must apply the same rules and give similar attention to civilians going into insecure environments.

Why? We must do it, in order for them to be more effective, to share the same vocabulary among agencies, to enhance communication and transparency and to integrate better with the military if it is such a situation. Civilian experts are working to grapple with the root causes of conflict that often drive the use of terror, and are often in areas where terrorist activity is occurring. This makes their preparation even more important.

We are testing and refining operational models for managing civilian deployments to aid in conflict prevention and response. They could be integrated with the U.S. military or with an international peacekeeping mission. This slide here shows the civilian lash-up with a U.S. military presence.

- CRSG is an interagency senior-level group providing guidance to the field and recommendations to our Principals.
- HRST is a civilian interagency group, which would be embedded in the combatant command *early* – and I stress the word 'early' – to work on integrated planning when the military is called upon to develop a crisis action plan.
- ACTs are teams of civilian experts drawn from throughout the U.S. Government deployed to the field, either with or without the military.

Let me acknowledge here the outstanding support we have received from the Department of Defense. We have established a formal exercise agenda with the U.S. military, which provides critical venues for us to test these operational concepts, and for civilians and the military to practice together, so that we're better able to integrate in an actual crisis.

Surge Capacity

If we've learned anything from past experiences, it's that you can't start preparing resources while in a crisis. We need to have, at the ready, resources and a cadre of people with specialized skills who can respond rapidly. Here are a few steps we are taking to

build our surge capacity.

At the State Department, our first Active Response Corps team is beginning training right now. We have an initial roster of over 400 State Department employees—active duty and retirees—who have volunteered to be on “standby” status and available for training and deployment. We are also looking to expand the surge capacity throughout the U.S. Government, as well as tap into the vast experiences and skills outside of the federal government.

Civilian Reserve – The President is requesting funding to begin development of a reserve of personnel that would be deployed overseas and would fill key immediate roles from police to judges to city planners. We just contracted a company to conduct a management review and help us determine the best way to build this cadre. As part of the '07 budget request, we are also working with the Congress to establish a Conflict Response Fund, which will provide flexibility to jump-start programs and help meet unforeseen gaps.

To provide rapid program delivery, we are creating a Global Skills Network and operational database to track existing contracts and programs for reconstruction and stabilization so they can be identified and augmented faster and more effectively.

And as part of preparing our technical experts and diplomats better, we have developed five courses on conflict transformation, and plan to develop five more by the end of FY 2007. These courses are being held at the Foreign Service Institute. So far, 150 people from different agencies have gone through the first core courses.

At the same time, we are working on real-time crises, such as strategic planning for Haiti and Sudan. We are also supporting the Secretary's Transition Coordinator for Cuba and the Western Hemisphere Affairs bureau in their work, developing policies to address the challenges of a post-Castro Cuba.

And we are putting people on the ground. A team just returned from Africa where they were assessing sources of instability to help one of our Embassies in future conflict prevention planning. Staff members were in Haiti, training election observers and monitoring elections. We were in Afghanistan as part of an interagency assessment of the PRT structure. We're sending people to support the Sudan peace talks in Abuja and to Khartoum to help our Mission respond to growing responsibilities. As we continue to put in place various tools, we will be able to shift more and more of our resources to specific country engagements.

Research and Development / Science and Technology (RD/ST)

Before I conclude, I wanted to touch very quickly on one area that I thought would be of particular interest to this audience – the need for more research and development in the field of reconstruction and stabilization. Recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq have highlighted areas that would benefit from R&D attention – for instance, helping to build or rebuild indigenous technological and economic capacity.

We could be applying better R&D capabilities to the social, political, economic and behavioral sciences in the reconstruction and stabilization context. From an S/CRS perspective, we are part of the “user” community. We need to be more systematic in incorporating and leveraging the research capabilities in academia and the private sector. We just established a working group for R&D related to reconstruction and stabilization, co-chaired with DOD's Army Corps of Engineers and State's Science and Technology Advisor.

Conclusion

I opened my remarks telling you how challenging conflict prevention and conflict response are. What I want to leave you with is an understanding that we have no choice but to tackle that challenge. The stakes are too high to not better address state failure – indeed the entire spectrum of state weakness. It will be a difficult endeavor, but the solutions will come through a genuine and dynamic consultation and policy-making process.

Every part of our government – both in the Executive Branch and in Congress; our international partners; and the non-governmental and academic community must be part of the effort. The U.S. Government is actively developing new concepts and models to meet the challenges of failing states. We have to seize the opportunity today to actually invest the resources that protect our security and make an investment in the transformation of societies that will make them more stable and peaceful. That would in the end be better for them and a better investment for all of us, as well.

Thank you for your attention. I am happy to take your questions.



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