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The Marine Corps: America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness**

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Panelist, Session 2, "Meeting the Demand: Promoting Partnerships for Engagement"

AMBASSADOR JOHN HERBST: The importance of civil operations has been recognized periodically in American history. The need for whole of government operations, or better yet, whole of society operations or better still, whole of international society operations, is widely recognized today. And that's essentially for two reasons: Iraq and Afghanistan. But if you look back on it, you might say the United States has established a pattern of learning on the fly how to conduct what we call in my current job complex operations, what we called in my old job stability operations, and what some people call irregular warfare or counterinsurgencies.

We built up a substantial knowledge for dealing with such operations in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. We conducted a successful counterinsurgency operation in the Philippines right after the Spanish American War. And the wisdom we acquired was distilled in the Marine 'Small Wars Manual,' which was last edited in 1940. And to show you how much Washington has changed since then, I want to read to you a couple of quotes from the manual. It says, "In small wars, diplomacy has not ceased to function and State Department exercises a constant and controlling interest over military operations." Imagine that. "The military leader in such operations thus finds himself limited to certain lines of actions as to the strategy and even as to the tactics of the campaign. This feature's been so marked in past operations that Marines have been referred to as State Department troops."

So, some things certainly have changed. But others, importantly, have not. Listen to this. "One of the principle obstacles with which the naval forces are confronted in small wars is the one that has to do with the absence of clean cut line of demarcation between State Department authority and military authority. There are no defined principles of joint action between the State

Department and the Navy Department, but which the latter is to be restricted or guided when its representatives become involved in situations calling for such cooperation.”

We learned in those small wars how to conduct joint operations. This was evident in how civilians were used in the Philippines’ operation. We conducted a major conventional military operation right after the rebellion was declared and the general in charge, thought that he had dispersed the rebels out and won the war. But he had not. The rebels simply regrouped in remote locations and began a guerilla war, and we began to face substantial casualties. Only when we recognized that this had to be dealt with politically, not simply militarily, and we brought out someone who was going to become a U.S. President, Taft, to help set up civil governments in areas that were cleaned of rebel forces, did we begin to win. This pattern was subsequently repeated in Vietnam

And then Afghanistan.

But after that successful operation, we fought two world wars, and, by and large, the way to approach small wars was lost. President Kennedy, to his praise, came into office understanding we were in a new world at that time facing communist insurgencies. So he focused on the problem. And that focus included establishing joint training, civil/mil. training. It included having courses, courses which lasted six weeks, for senior officials including assistant secretaries of states and ambassadors. Of course when Kennedy died, some of these things were lost.

But since the problem of Vietnam was very much at the forefront, not all was lost. President Johnson sent a special assistant, Robert Komer, sometimes known as Blow Torch Bob, to Vietnam, where he rearranged the way U.S. government agencies reported to Washington. They used to report in stovepipes. Have you heard that word before? He insisted that all agencies of the U.S. government, all civilian agencies, report to the Deputy Chief of mission at the Embassy in Saigon. So he established the concept of jointness then; and Komer went on to create CORDS. While our intervention in Vietnam failed, the CORDS program for providing assistance in a way that would buck up the government of South Vietnam and mesh civilian and military operations, was tactically successful.

But then what happened? The political response in Washington to failure in Vietnam led to funding cuts at the Defense Department, the CIA and USAID. And AID, which ran the CORDS program under Komer's direction, lost the capacity and the authorities to run such operations going forward. We then win the Cold War and in the new world of the 1990s, we discover failed states. We discover failed states, not necessarily to our advantage, in Somalia. And only towards the end of the Clinton Administration did we begin to once again reinvent our knowledge of how to conduct irregular warfare. That reinvention came in the form of Presidential Directive (PD) 56, which called for managing complex contingency operations. It called for establishing a unified strategy and training utilizing military and civilian resources. But that was in 1997. When President Clinton left office in 2001, it had not been fully implemented.

When President Bush came in, he wanted none of this nation building stuff. PD 56 went down the memory hole. But, of course, you had Iraq and Afghanistan. I don't need to go through the errors we made there in the beginning. But it became clear by at least the fall of 2003 that the United States did not know how to deal with the insurgent situation we had in Iraq; and at that time we weren't paying enough attention to Afghanistan.

Towards the end of George W. Bush's first term, we began to do some things to organize better for future stability operations. The Defense Department issued Directives 3000.05 in 2005. It called for "coordination between military and civilians and it raised stability operations to the level of a core military capability that shall be given priority comparable to other military operations." This was developed in coordination with National Security Presidential Directive 44, which gave the State Department authority to organize the civilian side of the U.S. government for such operations.

The Obama Administration came in understanding the importance of these sorts of problems, DOD 3000.05 was updated and reissued in 2009. But NSPD 44 was essentially left to wither and die, although its bureaucratic product, my old office, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, remained on in a capacity designed to deal with this problem. SCRS's goal was to do two things, only two things; 1) to create a civilian surge capacity for dealing with irregular warfare or stability operations or conflict prevention or peace building, and

2) to coordinate the U.S. government across the board, especially on the civilian side, but also with the military, to effectively run such operations.

To this day, we have not gotten the civ/mil. thing right. We have the Pentagon with all the resources and the people that it needs to handle military requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. But nearly ten years after 9/11, we still do not have the civilian resources and authorities for this job. And our efforts to coordinate civ/mil. operations remain ad hoc. We have a pretty good idea of what we need to do. We need to build a civilian surge capacity that can go into places on the verge of a crisis, or in a crisis, and alongside our troops. We need a surge capacity with the full range of skills that are required where a government is not functioning. We need lawyers and judges and policemen and engineers and economists. We need public administrators and health officials. We need area experts who understand what the problem is in those countries, people who speak the language. From this gaggle of experts, we can form teams who could devise a correct operation to manage the manifestly political problem.

We need doctrine for civ/mil. operations and training that reflects that doctrine. We need a civilian capacity to plan such operations, whether they be entirely civilian or civ/mil. We need a single command and control structure for such operations even, or especially, if they're civ/mil. We need the capacity to partner with NGOs and the private sector in specific operations, and we need working relationships with other governments, international organizations and regional organizations as required by the crisis in question.

In my old office, we took some serious, but obviously inadequate steps to meet these needs. We created a civilian response corps. As of a week or two ago, it has 1,200 people. It's supposed to grow to 2,200 people. With 2,200 people, it would be able to deploy continuously if necessary about 550. That's a nice start, but it's only a start. We need a corps that would be able to consistently deploy up to two or three thousand people to meet our national security needs.

S/CSRS set up a doctrine shop that working with the Army Staff College at Leavenworth, with PKSOI at Carlisle, with USIP and other think tanks around town, produce manuals for different aspects of stability operations. S/CRS created a training program and established the planning

capacity that is able to link up civilian and military sides of complex operations. S/CRS created a partnership with all governments that are involved in complex operations and with international organizations and regional organizations like the EU, NATO, the U.N., the AU and the OAS.

S/CRS it also devised a system of a unified command and control structure for stability operations. The system was called the Interagency Management System. It was approved at high levels in the Bush Administration but never actually deployed. The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review replaces this with the International Operational Response Framework, which is to be devised by NSC staff. It is not clear that the current NSC has an interest in doing this. The point is that we have, to this day, no system for organizing ourselves across the interagency when the crisis hits. This is a serious national security deficit, and one that will only be solved if the President of the United States, through his or her National Security Advisor, decides it's important.

Again, interagency is the rage today in Washington. We talk about it every day. But many people do not really understand what it means. They use that phrase, because of Iraq and Afghanistan. From my perspective, the danger is opposite the one that Robert Kaplan mentioned this morning. He was concerned that because we have become so proficient at "nation building," that we would use this capacity too often. For me, the fear is once we leave Iraq and Afghanistan -- especially if these operations are perceived to be a failure -- we will once again say we're not going to do further state building, and we will lose the nascent capacity we have developed.

That would be a mistake. You heard this morning that we live in a new world, so I'm not going to go over what that new world is. But that new world means that for the next generation, or maybe two, the problem of ungoverned spaces going to represent a major national security challenge for the United States. We may decide we don't want to do this sort of thing six or seven thousand miles away. But I can tell you, there are at least two places within 100 miles, 200 miles of our borders where this problem is not going away. Haiti periodically has crises which turns a quasi failed state into a failed state, and refugees wash up on our shores. The mean streets

of northern Mexico are the another ungoverned space. And that's a place where the capacity we're developing might be of value.

What does all this mean for the Marines? Well, ungoverned spaces are the natural terrain of special forces, and if you need a larger capacity, the Marines, which are our only expeditionary military service. Marine missions in unstable areas could include the evacuation of American citizens., as we saw in Liberia, or as we've seen more recently in the Middle East. Other possibilities are the suppression of pirate bases; the overseeing of delivery of supplies in humanitarian crises; the interdiction of narco trafficking on land and at sea; and the training of local military for stability operations as was mentioned earlier today by Professor Schultz.

To increase their readiness for such missions, the Marines will need civilian partners and capacities. This is well understood. When I was running S/CRS, the Marines were always asking the State Department to provide staff for exercises and training missions. We often said no as we just did not have the numbers. With a CRC of 2,200 we'll be able to say yes more often but that number is manifestly inadequate. The lesson here is the Marines have to beef up their civilian affairs units, that simple.

SCRS has created courses to train the civilian response corps. These include an introductory course, a planning course and a course for operating in complex environments. While designed for the CRC, there are plenty of spaces for the military. We need to do more of that. By doing that, they'll be closer latched up with the civilians who are doing the stuff.

SCRS understands the importance of planning and coordination. When Marines are looking for specific complex operation mission, it should be able to ask for civilian support from SCRS and the CRC to insure they have the right civilian skill sets.

Finally, of all the branches of the military, the Marines are the ones suited for small wars. Whatever the political reaction in Washington is after we leave Iraq and Afghanistan, it is essential that the corps retain the lessons that they've learned at cost in Fallujah and other places over the past decade. Thank you very much.

