

## Stimson Brief: The Future of S/CRS

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As the long-awaited Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) proceeds through its summer schedule, there has been a lot of speculation about the future of one particular part of the State Department: the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). This office was created six years ago in the wake of Iraq to coordinate all parts of the government in planning for and responding to complex crises overseas and to provide additional personnel who could deploy quickly.

This briefing assesses the debate and makes recommendations on the mandate and organization. Key observations include:

- The mandate for the office remains valid. The current model was not sufficiently supported to be successful.
- A centrally managed, separate organization reporting to the Secretary of State is needed to manage planning and operations and must get additional leadership support.
- The Civilian Response Corps has been successful, but only to a point. It should be completely integrated into existing structures at State to ensure it is utilized as part of any crisis response.

Before 2004, the United States pursued stabilization and reconstruction operations in an *ad hoc* fashion, recreating the tools, organizations, and personnel each time a crisis arose. These deficiencies led to post-war chaos in Iraq and prompted the Bush Administration to create the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), a new organization tasked with future stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Six years later, S/CRS has not planned, managed, or staffed a significant operation. As a result, many assessments have concluded that the model has failed. But we didn't try and fail; we failed to try. Lack of resources and lack of leadership prevented the initial concept from being appropriately tested, ensuring its limited success.

This has not stopped official - and shadow - Washington from proposing radical changes to the organization and mandate of S/CRS. Think tanks and pundits have developed new

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org charts to remake the entire Executive Branch. Congress is making noises about legislating solutions. Everyone inside State and USAID has their own charts, whether official or doodled in meetings or hatched at happy hours. While the instinct to redesign is typical, rarely are such dramatic changes for the betterment of the organization.

Continuing speculation about the future of S/CRS is rampant. The fact that there has not been an appointment of a new Coordinator suggests there is not sufficient vision to attract the next champion.<sup>1</sup> The lack of clarity about the future and confusion on roles and responsibilities of USAID and other government departments continues to sap energy that should be devoted to better planning and response. Administration decisions remain hostage to the ongoing Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) and Presidential Study Directive on development (PSD) processes.<sup>2</sup>

In an effort to explore appropriate concepts and strategies about this subject, this briefing paper analyzes options for the QDDR. The QDDR process will, by definition, require a decision and provide some of the critical focus that has been missing. But if leadership and focus is not consistently applied, the organization will still fail to achieve the vision of greater integration of efforts and better strategy for success in building peace after conflict.

### **Defining Requirements**

S/CRS was created to perform three main functions as the focal point organization for future stabilization and reconstruction missions. These are still needed functions which appear in nearly every report or study on peace operations capabilities. Remarkably, all the new proposals being floated also include these basic functions, suggesting a continuity of mandate.

The three main functions are:

#### *Coordination of Planning and Response*

- Coordinate and manage planning and operations that include participation of a range of government departments/agencies;

Managing complex operations requires identifying clear responsibilities for integration of efforts (civ-mil, interagency, and international), providing support to decision-making processes, and coordinating planning and execution of operations, including resources and personnel. These are not typical functions. They require a new capacity to start immediately supporting Regional bureau and Embassy decision makers in planning

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador John Herbst has served ably since mid-2006, a longer tour than typical in positions at this level. The position has since been designated a Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed position.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that the QDDR has an entire task force working on developing proposals indicates the level of interest among the career and political staffs and the seriousness with which State and USAID officials treat the responsibility to provide leadership on the challenge of failed, failing, and post-conflict states.

processes and setting up staffing. This coordination function requires something more than meetings to de-conflict efforts and it cannot be done in an *ad hoc* manner.<sup>3</sup>

### *Developing a Knowledge Base*

- Collect lessons learned and ensure they are applied by developing a core body of knowledge and being a center of excellence;

Complex operations require a common “doctrine” that guides the process so that the many moving parts know how to work together. To develop real capabilities that go beyond relying on *ad hoc* personnel and their personal capabilities, doctrine provides a shared frame of reference and reserve of knowledge. This “how to” of post-conflict response must be promulgated, trained, and evaluated. Doctrine development based on the collection of lessons-learned requires a “center of excellence” much like there is responsibility in functional bureaus for security assistance policy, arms control, and trade.

### *Response Capabilities*

- Provide a ready, trained, and deployable response corps of technical advisors, planners, conflict experts, and managers.

Responding quickly and effectively to post-conflict environments requires expeditionary capabilities that are trained, ready, and able to deploy quickly. There is a need for more than just additional numbers of personnel – so that they are not being taken away from “day jobs” – but for different skills, particularly in conflict assessment, planning, and civil operations.

### **Form Follows Function**

Determining what type of organization is needed should be based on several basic management considerations.

- A clear sense of future post-conflict missions: to the extent there are continuing security interests in responding and these missions remain outside the mainstream of diplomatic and development responsibilities, the organization should be separate.
- A differentiation between steady-state and surge responsibilities: steady state requirements should drive the overall organization of the departments with surge responsibilities delineated in separate units and processes.

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<sup>3</sup> Even a special envoy, which can be useful in many circumstances, needs a staff and eventually must develop standardized processes.

- A rational alignment of organization, resources and authorities around mission: organizations must have resources and authorities - formal and informal - that support their mandates.
- Clear management processes for the inevitable coordination required across the interagency: nothing will fall neatly into one structure so the authorities must include those to enforce integration of efforts.

### *Central Responsibilities*

Assessing the required functions for managing post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction against these considerations suggests there is still a need for a separate entity. Early proponents of S/CRS argued that a new office had to be established in order to incubate ideas and to grow new capabilities that did not otherwise exist. If you want to institutionalize something, you need an institution. Therefore, the most obvious approach is to resource and provide serious leadership to the existing organization and give it a fighting chance, rather than reorganize to provide the appearance of action.

The organization responsible for the first two functions (developing doctrine, managing planning and operations) should remain a separate, distinct organization. It needs to sit apart from line operational bureaus because motives for intervention overseas are rarely either for strictly security or for development purposes. It also needs to be separate from Regional Bureaus because there is more in common between post-conflict countries than between peaceful and conflicted countries in the same region and we will never know into which region a surge of effort will be needed. A nucleus of planners and staffers with experience in conflicts would be available to support any regional bureau or post.

While the mandate is consistent with the original intention behind S/CRS, to be successful, the organization needs additional connections and support.

- This organization should have the support of the Secretary's Policy Planning office in tasking contingency planning efforts for likely crises.
- It should be given clear guidance from the Under Secretary for Political Affairs and the National Security Council on convening response planning for specific events.
- The organization must be tied to the Department's overall strategic planning and budgeting processes and to the use of contingency funding as well as the deployment of CRC personnel.

- Providing a framework for planning and operations management, skilled personnel to staff it, and additional funding is a powerful capability.<sup>4</sup> It must be matched with a process for supporting decision makers in providing guidance.
- Using the existing NSC-led system is reasonable and senior leadership at State and NSC need to enforce Regional Bureau cooperation and merging of political/diplomatic leadership with operations capabilities provided by S/CRS.

Determining where to situate such an organization should be consistent with broader decisions on the responsibilities of State, USAID, and other departments and agencies. This organization should continue – as in current law – to report to the Secretary of State in order to maintain the Secretary’s responsibility for coordination of all foreign policy activities.

A decision on the role of USAID should be made cleanly and dual reporting should be avoided (in this and in other areas). As the QDDR and PSD conclude, it is possible to imagine a range of options to assign policy oversight and management responsibilities and implementation and response capabilities. For example, the official responsible for post-conflict response could also manage response capabilities for humanitarian crises if they are consolidated within State or USAID.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Full Integration: The Civilian Response Corps*

While there is a need for a central management and planning capability with senior leadership support, one part of the S/CRS effort has grown strong enough to become the leading edge for management reforms and should be integrated into the Department.

S/CRS has received the most resources, attention, and success with the Civilian Response Corps (CRC), which includes “expeditionary diplomats” as well as development and governance experts from seven other departments and agencies. This is the most visible and tangible capability around which there is universal consensus. However, the CRC has not been utilized fully. The Department of State failed to turn to the CRC as the primary mechanism to staff Haiti and Afghanistan or to ask S/CRS to lead the staffing process, has allowed separate expert deployments by other Departments outside negotiated CRC agreements, and has not institutionalized the “standby” concept of calling on existing staff for deployments.<sup>6</sup>

The reality is that a range of response capabilities from existing staff in place to the CRC are utilized to meet emerging staffing needs and that the primary responsibility of

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<sup>4</sup> The staff of this organization would include dedicated headquarters staff, the State Department members of the Civilian Response Corps, and detailees from other Departments. To bolster planning capabilities, trained staff members should spend time assigned to regional bureaus’ planning offices and supporting planning efforts in regular budget cycles for fragile states.

<sup>5</sup> The capabilities currently housed in State’s PRM, DRL, INL bureaus or in USAID’s DCHA bureau.

<sup>6</sup> The CRC has been utilized in key positions, particularly in Afghanistan, and has staffed many smaller deployments.

responding to those needs falls to bureaus/embassies supported by central personnel offices. To address this reality, there is a need to increase the sense that the CRC capability belongs to the Departments and is an integral part of the toolkit, rather than a competing arrangement.

The future management of the CRC should be fully integrated into the management bureaus of the Department of State with separate offices/officials in each bureau assigned to address the challenges of rapid deployments in austere and dangerous environments.

- The CRC requires central management by the Department of State. A new Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Human Resources bureau would exercise responsibility for interagency hiring standards, training requirements, and call-up procedures for deployment. Other rapid-response teams – for consular, security, terrorism, and other emergencies – and other temporary hiring capabilities for meeting unexpected needs would be managed together with the CRC and provide a full range of options to the regional bureaus and embassies.

It is also important to have individual experts embedded within their home departments/agencies.<sup>7</sup> This State Department official would coordinate with other departments/agencies' Chief Human Capital Officers on their CRC.

- The responsibility for deployments, logistics, and sustainment for the CRC and others in difficult locations would be given to the Bureau of Administration, which is already responsible for overseas operations for all USG personnel.
- The training development responsibility would be housed at the Foreign Service Institute which conducts existing CRC training.
- Security responsibilities would remain in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.
- Information technology and knowledge management requirements for connecting remote teams and interagency offices would be the responsibility of the Bureau of Information Management.

This integration would allow sharing of experiences across a range of areas and would reinforce existing relationships. This would put all of the management issues within the purview of the Under Secretary for Management who is already dealing with a world that is considerably more complicated and dangerous in many different areas.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The PSD and QDDR need to address the relationship between USAID and domestic agencies for implementation of development assistance; the distribution of CRC positions should follow from that decision. At a minimum, USAID should consider consolidation of its CRC, OTI, and OFDA personnel; other departments/agencies may also need to reassess the appropriate management and locations of their CRC members as they relate to other rapid-response capabilities they maintain for other purposes.

<sup>8</sup> A strong senior advisor function to the Under Secretary would also be needed to provide policy guidance and visibility across the bureaus.

***Just Because It's New to You, Doesn't Mean It's New***

The complexity of the mandate and the bureaucratic requirements to respond more effectively to conflict and fragile and failed states makes it difficult to conceive of a simple solution. There are many perspectives and many experiences from the last six years. It would be a mistake for those newly wrestling with this challenge to assume that only a new organization can be successful and that it would magically avoid bureaucratic difficulties and be able to quickly build new structures and new staffs. It would also be a mistake for those who have championed S/CRS to ignore the fact that the challenges of crisis response are not completely new and to resist greater integration.

If there is a need for something new to show change and commitment, the Administration should use a time-honored strategy with a relatively low cost: a new name.