



January 2001

Issues Paper 1-01

Post-Conflict Strategic Requirements Workshop

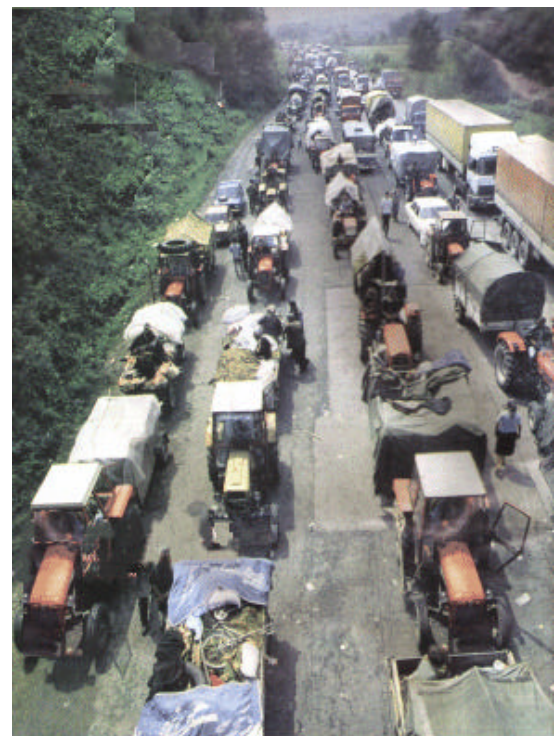
By Colonel Peter D. Menk

Post-Conflict, the Role of the Military in the Transition Phase

This Issue Paper summarizes the factual discussions and issues raised during the Center for Strategic Leadership, United States Army War College and the Foreign Service Institute, Department of State hosted Post-Conflict Strategic Requirements Workshop, conducted at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania November 28 to November 30, 2000. Participants included United States Ambassadors and United States military commanders experienced in affected regions, distinguished subject matter experts from the interagency arena, NGOs, allied nations, and the United Nations.

The purpose of the Post-Conflict Strategic Requirements Workshop was to examine the United States military ground forces role in the post-conflict phase of operations. The workshop participants determined it was unnecessary to precisely define the meaning of the term “post-conflict” phase. It is the phase of an operation characterized as following the imposition of “order” within the disrupted society and is the phase that achieves the “transition” to self-sustaining peace, the prerequisite for the redeployment of United States forces. It is the phase that began some 120 days into the operations in Bosnia that has yet to conclude. The post-conflict phase is perhaps the most challenging, complex, and frustrating phase for the United States.

The participants examined missions for the United States military in the post-conflict phase of operations using scenarios in two disparate geographic regions. This workshop did not focus on what “should” the United States military ground forces be doing, but rather on what the United States military ground forces are “in fact” now doing to achieve self-sustaining peace, the prerequisite for redeployment. This Issue Paper summarizes the deliberations of both groups.



Ethnic Albanians fleeing Kosovo in 1999.

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE JAN 2001		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Post-Conflict Strategic Requirements Workshop				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Center for Strategic Leadership 650 Wright Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013-5049				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The original document contains color images.					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 4	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

Military Ground Forces Essential for Establishing Rule of Law

A disrupted society cannot achieve self-sustaining peace in the absence of rule of law. An objective measure of success is progress toward viable private enterprise. Prerequisite to progress toward viable private enterprise is a stable, predictable, transparent society. There can be no just system, no stability necessary for economic development, and no transparency within a society without rule of law. Establishment of rule of law is also a necessary enabler to achieve success in all other areas including humanitarian assistance, civil administration, political reconstruction, and economic reconstruction. In the post-conflict phase of peacekeeping military ground combat forces are essential to setting the conditions that will establish rule of law.

Combat Ready Ground Forces Vital for Nation Building

Even after military ground combat forces achieve a degree of order, control of patent violence in a society, the continued presence of dominant ground combat ready forces remain absolutely vital. Civilian administrators deem essential a readily available compelling ground combat force, even if not actually utilized. The intimidation factor of a compelling ground combat force is a necessity to achieve agreements within a disrupted society.

Civilian administrators state they must have the continued presence of dominant ground combat ground forces with strike capability to establish rule of law. International police forces, even well trained, simply are insufficient to achieve and maintain stabilization in ethnic or racially divided societies. Police forces deal with individual criminal activity. Police forces cannot successfully suppress widespread systemic racial/ethnic violence in a disrupted state. Constabulary military forces to be effective in a disrupted society still require the presence of dominant ground combat ready forces.

The role of the military evolves over time as the area becomes more secure. Military personnel with other skills should replace some of the combat soldiers. Civil assistance specialists, engineers, administrative managers and military police with skills similar to their civilian counterparts are needed throughout the post-conflict transition phase. A representative from the Department of Justice opined that from his experience setting up a functioning police force takes at least nine months, even with international police officers, and even if everything goes as planned. Others suggested nine months was overly optimistic. Whatever its length the military must fill this gap during the transition to an effective civilian police force.



An Indian UN peacekeeper on duty in Sierra Leone in 1998.

Present Military Doctrine Should be Reviewed

United States military policy currently provides for order operations, not law operations. Despite protestations, doctrine and structure to the contrary, United States military personnel on the ground in current operations in Bosnia and Kosovo are daily engaged in law operations supporting nation-building-related activities to achieve a sustainable peace.

The civilian agencies chronically are unable to recruit sufficient numbers of qualified civilians to adequately staff their prerequisite positions engaged in nation-building activities. There are gaps for which only the military is positioned to respond and the military does in fact respond. The military activities are much more than the local commander assisting a local community for critical humanitarian necessities. The United States military is de facto supplying large numbers of administrative personnel through liaison and by outright attaching military personnel who engage in governance activities necessary to establish a rule of law in the society. The military is the “default” provider of nation building type services and personnel wherever the international agencies and participating governments either fail or are unable to provide the necessary resources. Examples are multiple and at all levels. There exists systemic military involvement reaching from the highest to the lowest level of military units. NGOs tend to provide services in urban areas, not in the more rural, hard to access areas. One civilian workshop participant described the situation using a familiar analogy. He said the civilian interagency and NGOs operating in the affected region are like FedEx, serving only the higher profile

easy access areas. The military is the United States Post Office serving the out-of-the-way locations. Small unit military commanders daily assist in providing economic services to small communities; e.g., obtain wood for fuel and potable water. United States military at all levels use contracts for goods and services to reward and enhance the power of cooperative citizens.

The results of this reality are mixed. Good intentions do not necessarily equate to good results. In the opinion of some workshop participants, the failure of the military to address the reality and plan and structure its forces appropriately can be detrimental to the goal of achieving viable economic development necessary for a sustained peace. When a small unit military commander assists a village such “well-intended” acts can create the unintended consequences of dependency where none existed. Consequences that experienced professionals in economic reconstruction and humanitarian assistance could avoid.

The military, being the dominant organized ground force within the disrupted society, has a paramount role in the economic, diplomatic, and informational aspects of nation building, and this role is not appropriately addressed in current military doctrine. The effectiveness of the United States military ground forces is substantially reduced because doctrine necessary for implementing a coordinated systemic interagency organization does not exist.

Review Existing Military Structure

While maintaining its capability to fight and win major conflicts, the United States military should consider adapting to respond to the evolving requirements for the post-conflict transition phase. The post-conflict transition phase requires long term sustained interagency nation-building operations. Workshop participants uniformly suggested that at present, “there is too much ‘ad hocery’ in the way the United States military is doing business.”

Military ground forces are involved in all phases of post conflict, disorder to order, incapacity to capacity, and shaping environment to achieve a sustainable peace. While maintaining a dominant ground combat ready military force is essential, the military is also the predominant organization to fill initial shortfalls in all other areas. The post-conflict phase requires personnel capable of operating in the civilian interagency environment separated from the combat military units. Military personnel will be engaged in the systematic coordinating mechanisms in all areas. Information sharing in all areas and integrated execution of tasks is necessary. The military will be involved in establishing responsible public information systems. Planning with all before and during all phases of the nation-building operation is essential.



Aid being distributed to Albanian Kosovos refugees in 1999 in Macedonia.



An ethnic Albanian being treated in Macedonia in 1999.

Workshop participants described how challenging and complex it is to coordinate in peacekeeping operations. In Mogadishu there were more than 580 NGO's, all needing protection, many of whom were resistant to any suggestions to consolidate their locations for the security effort. These NGO's were joined by a proliferation of international and participating governmental agencies. This pattern occurs in every similar operation. Despite some innovative limited successes at the tactical level, there still remains a decade later insufficient systematic organization and coordination.

It must be recognized that NGO's are of every ilk, some few even pursuing agendas detrimental to establishing a rule of law. Some NGO personnel lose sight of their mission and fall into destructive competition with other NGOs for publicity for fundraising. NGOs frequently are on-site before the military arrives. During the early phases of a crisis, prior to the post-conflict phase, any and all help is usually welcomed although uncoordinated. However, without a systematic central point of contact, sharing appropriate intelligence, and coordinating logistical support for the combined efforts, the operation cannot succeed.

United States military doctrine currently precludes the military from taking the lead in organizing and staffing such a structure at the operational and strategic levels. As of now there is no other entity capable and present at the essential time to do this organizing in crisis response. Workshop participants opined that participation by the military is essential to organizing in peacekeeping operations.



Destroyed buildings in Bosnia in 1996.

Conclusion

Political, diplomatic, economic, and military lines of engagement are blurred in operations in disrupted states. Participation by ground military forces in all aspects of the post-conflict phase of peacekeeping is essential to achieving success. Dominant ground combat forces are essential until a self-sustaining peace is achieved within the society. All, including the military, working those efforts should no longer operate from totally disparate agendas. Coordination and cooperation are essential. The military forces after the establishment of order remain the predominant organization to fill initial shortfalls in all areas. The United States should reconsider its policy and structure so as to reflect the fact that once the United States commits ground combat forces to a peacekeeping mission ground combat forces will remain deployed until there is established a self-sustaining peaceful society.

The views expressed in this report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect official policy or position of the United States Army War College, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or any other Department or Agency within the U.S. Government. Further, these views do not reflect uniform agreement among the exercise participants. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

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