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***PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED – SMALLER-SCALE
CONTINGENCIES (SSC)***

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PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED – SMALLER-SCALE CONTINGENCIES (SSC)

“We must prepare for an uncertain future even as we address today’s security problems.” – A National Security Strategy for a New Century, The White House, December 1999¹

Introduction

“In our vision of the world, the United States ... has the ability to shape the policies and actions of those who can affect our national well-being.” – NSS²

CONTEXT: The geo-strategic context of our global environment is an unprecedented and historically unique era of relative cooperation among the five great powers of the world -- the United States, the European Union, Japan, China, and Russia. These major powers do not envision each other as an immediate or direct threat and are not building military power to either attack or defend against each other.³ The United States enjoys a secure and promising position in the world. Like Britain in the 19th century, the United States today has power to spare. Our nation’s economic, technological, and military strengths are unmatched by any other nation state.⁴ In this post-cold war era, U.S. vital national interests are essentially secure, yet great uncertainties continue to exist in the area of important, humanitarian and other national interests. **PROBLEM:** U.S. forces are well trained and equipped to respond to major theater warfare (MTW), but the post cold war threats require military operations short of major theater warfare. Smaller-scale

¹ National Security Strategy for the New Century, , p 20

² NNS , p

³ America’s Military Priorities, p 1.

⁴ 1998 Strategic Assessment – Key Findings, p.1

contingencies⁵ (SSC) encompass the full range of operations short of MTW. In the absence of a traditional great power rival, the U.S. will focus more on global stability and will employ military forces in SSC operations to challenge threats to this stability. SSC are, therefore, the major military engagements of the immediate and perceived future. For the purposes of this paper, *smaller-scale contingencies are defined as the deployment of military forces in support of peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations with the capability to respond to defined and perceived threats within the deployed region.* This paper will examine each of the categories and subcategories of SSC, explore opposition to the military's execution of SSC, and detail some of the changes necessary to executed effectively national security strategy.

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest that the United States has engaged in its last MTW. It was Napoleon who said, "*Uncertainty is the essence of war; surprise its rule.*" I am a believer that it is best to attack when the would-be adversary is least prepared. Military history is rich with surprise attacks and preserving the United States' conventional military superiority is vital if for no other reason than deterrence. My argument is that today's geo-strategic landscape is producing less interstate war and more intrastate conflicts that pose potential threats to regional stability and require U.S. involvement in executing SSC. In this new geo-strategic context, we may, therefore, need to revisit our national military strategy of *two* nearly simultaneous MTWs. The probability of our engagement in SSC far exceeds the likelihood of MTW.

⁵ The author has adopted the term "smaller-scale contingencies" as defined in the National Security Strategy for the New Century as opposed to the term "small-scale contingencies" as referred to in other documents.

Background

“There are a great number of peoples who need more than just works of sympathy from the international community. They need a real and sustained commitment to help end their cycles of violence, and launch them on a safe passage to prosperity.”
-United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan⁶

Various phrases and acronyms have been used to describe the employment of United States military in stability operations. They have been called counterinsurgencies (COIN), stability and support operations (SASO), internal defense and development (IDAD), other military operations (OMO), operations other than war (OOTW), military operations other than war (MOOTW), peacekeeping operations (PKO), civil support, peace enforcement, collective security, and small-scale contingencies. By any name, the basic mission has remained the same and the U.S. has a long history of participation in operations that project stability on a global scale. U.S. Navy and Army actions in Mexico, Cuba, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and China in the latter part of the 19th century and between the two World Wars then had no particular designation. During the Cold War, support for anti-Communist governments in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and the Lebanese Multi-National Force (MNF) in 1982-83 would come under the heading of today’s definition of SSC.⁷

⁶ From U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan’s Speech to the United Nations General Assembly on the day that Australian-led multinational forces touched down in East Timor, 21 Sep 99.

The rigid nature of the Cold War limited the number of SSC and ensured that they were relatively simple operations with limited objectives. In the 40-year period from 1948 to 1988, thirteen peacekeeping operations were launched. Since 1988, the United Nations has taken on 36 peacekeeping missions. At the peak in 1993, there were more than 80,000 civilian and military peacekeepers from 77 nations deployed around the world on every continent. As of 31 March 1999, the number was slightly more than 12,000 involved in 14 ongoing U.N. peacekeeping missions.⁸ Since the 1991 Gulf War, the United States has intervened militarily in six SSC – Kurdistan, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Smaller-Scale Contingencies

“America’s future will be marked by rapid change, diverse contingencies, limited budgets, and a broad range of missions to support evolving national security policies.”⁹

In the view of the United States, SSC plans have helped shape the international security environment, as well as the U.S. response to crises. Employment of the military, along with political and diplomatic activity, can yield positive results, whereas alone, all activities are liable to fail. Failure allows a crisis to continue, risking the danger of expansion and further threatening regional stability, which in turn, may damage the U.S. ability to influence those countries directly concerned.¹⁰

⁷ INSS paper

⁸ Is the UN peacekeeping role eclipse? - Parameter, page 96/

⁹ US Congress, Directions for Defense, Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces (Washington, DC:GPO, 24 May 1995), p. 26.

¹⁰ SSC, inss, p5.

With the devastation of the bombings at Oklahoma City and the attack on the World Trade Center on U. S. soil and the attacks on the U.S. embassies on the continent of Africa, security of American citizens at home and abroad has taken on a whole new meaning. Published after the aforementioned events, our December 1999 *National Security Strategy (NSS) for a New Century* outlines transnational threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, uncontrolled refugee migration and the impact that such threats pose to U.S. national security. The NSS also addresses the threats presented by failed and other states. Such threats include the inability to provide governance, safety, security and opportunities for their populations, internal conflict, mass migration, famine, epidemic diseases, environmental disasters, human rights abuses, mass killing (ethnic cleansing or acts of genocide) and aggression against neighboring states or ethnic groups. All of these events can threaten regional stability and compromise U.S. interests.¹¹ The Department of Defense is tasked with developing and executing, when ordered, SSC plans that protect American citizens and interests, support political initiatives, facilitate diplomacy, promote fundamental ideals, or disrupt specified illegal activities.¹²

SSC differ from MTW in terms of political-military environment, operational objectives and the tasks assigned to conventional forces in the field. There are two major categories of SSC – peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

¹¹ NSS, p 1-2

¹² (INSS/SA p.1)

Peacekeeping Operations

Today, the United States leads the world in employing multinational peacekeeping as a foreign policy tool. Besides organizing peacekeeping operations mandated by the United Nations and other international organizations, the United States has also led three multinational missions that did not fall under the umbrella of an international organization. In Lebanon, the United States organized the Multination Forces I and II (MNF I and II) and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai. The contingents in the MFO deploy under the umbrella of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, indirectly funded by the United States.¹³

The Department of Defense's October 1993 *Report of the Bottom-Up Review* defined peacekeeping as "military operations, undertaken with the consent of all major belligerents, that are designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an existing truce agreement in support of diplomatic efforts to reach a political settlement to a dispute." DOD has also subdivided the term into "traditional peacekeeping" and "aggravated peacekeeping." DOD recognizes that acceptance of peacekeeping operations by the belligerents does not always mean that the disputing parties will allow the peacekeepers to conduct their operations without being subject of harassment or violence. The term "aggravated peacekeeping" is defined as "military operations undertaken with the nominal consent of all major belligerent parties, but which are complicated by

subsequent intransigence of one or more of the belligerents, poor command and control of belligerent forces, or conditions of outlawry, banditry, or anarchy.”¹⁴

The three subcategories of peacekeeping operations are traditional peacekeeping, multidimensional peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention.

Traditional Peacekeeping

A traditional peacekeeping force is a neutral military force positioned between former belligerents. This force monitors a cease-fire and creates the political space for negotiation of the dispute in question. Traditional peacekeeping missions are conducted with the full consent of all parties involved in the conflict and most often are put into place after a cease-fire has been successfully negotiated. Use of force is authorized only for self-defense or defense of the mission. The rules of engagement will usually authorize force largely to deter small-scale threats, not to halt the general resumption of fighting between belligerents.¹⁵

An example of a traditional peacekeeping operation is the mission that the United States and Canada arranged in the Sinai after the Suez Conflict in 1956. Before the Suez Conflict of 1956, Egypt used the location to prevent Israeli shipping from entering or leaving the Strait of Tiran. After the war, United Nations Emergency Force I (UNEF I)

¹³ (Dictionary, xxiv)

¹⁴ (Dictionary, p. 2)

stationed a small group of peacekeepers on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. The peacekeeping detachment consisted of 43 Swedish and 9 Canadian soldiers. The detachment was withdrawn from the Sinai in 1967.¹⁶

Multidimensional Peacekeeping

Multidimensional peacekeeping often has mandates that not only facilitate the reduction of tensions between former foes, but also help implement a peace accord addressing the causes of the underlying conflict. Unlike traditional peacekeeping, multidimensional peacekeeping operations have an implementation schedule and a timeline. When the tasks on the schedule are complete, victory is declared and the peacekeeping force is extracted. In order to establish such an exit strategy, the general political environment must be such that the worst consequences of compliance are still preferable to the former belligerents than returning to armed conflict.¹⁷

These type of operations emerged near the end of the Cold War as a number of former communist nations made the transition to democracy. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations will have mandates that address the causes of the underlying conflict. NATO and U.S. involvement in Bosnia and Croatia and execution of the Dayton Peace Accord are examples of a multidimensional peacekeeping operation.

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¹⁶ (Dictionary, p. 18)

Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention is conducted to relieve suffering in the midst of an ongoing conflict or situation of anarchy. Humanitarian intervention is a temporary measure to help citizens survive until a cease-fire can be reached and, possibly, multidimensional peacekeeping can begin. Intervention of this type may also be an effort to protect the sources of a state's sovereignty, namely, its populace from the ravages of civil war or a renegade government. The lack of a pre-existing cease-fire makes humanitarian intervention qualitatively different from peacekeeping. This type of intervention may not involve the consent of all parties in the conflict and may appear to violate local sovereignty.

Humanitarian intervention is a rather new type of peace operation. Intervention implies the operation may be opposed violently by one or more parties to the ongoing conflict. The intervening force is partial to the civilian, noncombatant population of the country and to administering relief, using the minimum amount of force authorized and necessary to achieve its objectives.

The presence of humanitarian relief organizations can present a challenge to military operations. Multiple relief groups whose presence may precede military presence and whose protection may have been the proximate cause of the military intervention complicate humanitarian interventions. The majority of these organizations march to the beat of their own drum. Relief organizations may need the military for security, but

cooperate only reluctantly and may have previously established security arrangements with local nationals who may now be reluctant to give up this source of income.¹⁸

Peace Enforcement

“All commanders must believe they are always only a heartbeat away from a gunfight.”
- Major General Carl F. Ernst, USA¹⁹

DOD defines peace enforcement as “military intervention to compel compliance with international sanctions or resolutions designed to maintain or restore international peace and security.” The *Report of the Bottom-Up Review* states that this type of operation would be allowed to go beyond the normal neutral stance of other peacekeepers and have permission to use force to restore a cease-fire or end a breach of the peace.

Peace enforcement operations use coercive force to suppress conflict in an area, creating a *de facto* cease-fire to protect noncombatant populations and facilitate the opening of negotiations among local factions. Peace enforcement is distinguished from conventional combat (MTW) by its objective of general conflict suppression, as contrasted to battlefield victory against a defined enemy. Peace enforcement places much greater reliance on non-lethal weaponry and strict and limiting rules of engagement. This type of SSC may also attempt to maintain impartiality, using

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¹⁹ Major General Carl F. Ernst, Joint Task Force Somalia After Review (undated slide briefing).

necessary force against any faction violating an imposed ceasefire. Operations being executed in Kosovo fall into the category of peace enforcement.

Any of the three subcategories of peacekeeping operations may evolve into a peace enforcement operation. Herein lies the requirement for military forces engaged in SSC to be capable to respond to potential threats in the region.

Opposing Forces: Opposition to Military Involvement in SSC

“It is quite possible that war in the sense of major, organized conflict between highly developed societies may not recur...Nevertheless violence will continue to erupt within developed societies as well as underdeveloped, creating situations of local armed conflict often indistinguishable from traditional war.” – Michael Howard²⁰

Those that argue against U.S. military involvement in smaller-scale contingencies contend that these types of operations detract from the deployed unit’s warfighting abilities. Victory in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 convinced US military leaders that force structure and AirLand Battle doctrine were sound. Military commanders participating in operations in Somalia and Haiti concluded, “well-trained, combat-ready, disciplined soldiers can easily adapt to peacekeeping or peace-enforcement missions.”²¹ The Armed Forces’ reluctance to restructure to accommodate SSC stems largely from readiness concerns in an era of declining budgets and reduced force structure. The argument is that any specialization for operations other than major war detracts from true

²⁰ Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 176.

²¹

military readiness.²² Despite repeated deployment to peace operations abroad, adequate funding has not been given for these missions. To offset these operations, the services have had to draw from operations and maintenance accounts of units that are not deployed on SSC. It is important, therefore, to examine some of the myths associated with this reasoning:

Myth: Deployment of military forces on SSC has resulted in problems in retention and morale.

Fact: Regardless of the stresses and dangers of SSC, deployed units are more likely to be at high levels of morale, cohesion and discipline when executing a real world mission than when they are training in garrison. Many deployed units' reenlistment and retention rates actually increase during deployments to peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations.

Myth: Operations are operations. Whether those operations occur in a strategic environment of war or an operation short of war is not significant to the force; therefore, there is no need to structure, train or equip specifically for SSC.

Fact: Strategic verses operational are vital distinctions for the political and diplomatic leadership. Even the most minor tactical engagement in SSC can have strategic implications. America's military is a capabilities-based force that does not pick its missions and must, therefore, remain capable across the full spectrum of requirements. Existing "Cold War" force structure and supporting systems are designed for a different

²² Warriors without a war: Defending OOTW – p. 5

era and enemy. Military force structure lacks the capability to operate optimally across the full range of operations that our nation is calling on the force to perform.²³

Myth: Without great power competition, the five great powers can afford to ignore the turbulence on the periphery.

Fact: Over the next two decades, states will continue to fail. Some failures may create circumstances that topple other surrounding states. To cope, the United States will need a robust tailored force capable of conducting peace and relief operations.

Myth: Engagement in SSC presents a threat to the two MTW Theory.

Fact: The ability of the force to fight and win two regional conflicts nearly simultaneously, is already suspect without consideration for involvement in SSC. It is not clear that requirements for SSC are counter to readiness for major combat. Small-unit skills are definitely reinforced during SSC.

Americans, impatient with geopolitical nuances, are uncomfortable with SSC because the missions are often ambiguous, do not include victory or even identify a specified enemy, an objective as in traditional major war. This lack of democratic enthusiasm contributes to resistance on the part of senior military leaders to accept SSC as legitimate missions for U.S. forces.²⁴

²³ Army Transformation Overview Brief (Power Point Presentation), ICAF Brown Bag Luncheon, 18 April 2000.

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Change for Small Scale Contingencies

“Soldiers on point for the nation transforming the most respected Army in the world into a strategically responsive force that is dominant across the spectrum of operations.” – General Eric Shinseki, CofS, US Army

Doctrine, training and force structure to engage the entire spectrum of conflict – SSC to MTW – must be embraced by the Department of Defense if the armed services is to succeed in executing the national security strategy for a new century. The Army and the Marines must focus on forward projection – the ability to get to the region of instability rapidly. The U.S. Navy and Air Force must tailor their focus on lift – the capability to get them there fast. As SSC become the norm, some functions assigned to reserve units have to be shifted to active duty units. The frequent use of civil affair units and certain logistical elements currently assigned to the reserve force come to mind.

VISION: In late 1999, the Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki unveiled his vision for a “major transformation” of the Army. This vision entails designing a rapid deployment force to meet the requirements of the 21st Century national security strategy. To make the Army’s Divisions more capable across the entire spectrum of operations – from high-intensity conflict to missions short of major war – Shinseki detailed the need to reduce the logistical requirement traditionally associated with a heavy warfighting force designed to fight and win in a major theater of war.²⁵ Other service chiefs must address the same challenges of the new century in developing and articulating their vision for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

FORCE STRUCTURE: Every CINC cannot be simultaneously manned and equipped to fight and win a MTW within his geographical area of responsibility. I submit that force structure must be redesigned to support forward deployed permanent party servicemembers capable of engaging in one SSC posed by instability in the region of responsibility. For example, SOUTHCOM is equipped with a permanently assigned force structure to handle drug trafficking in Latin America. CENTCOM will be assigned forces and manned with equipment for dual containment of Iraq and Iran in the Middle East. EUCOM will have forward deployed assets to employ on possibly two SSC operations – one in Europe and one in Africa. Forces assigned to Forces Command (FORSCOM) that are based in the continental United States (CONUS), will be trained and equipped to deploy to either region in the event of escalation and the threat of major theater warfare. Servicemembers will continue to rotate between CONUS and OCONUS assignments, keeping them totally trained across the total spectrum of conflict.

TRAINING: The training currently conducted for MTW is insufficient to successfully execute SSC. Training for SSC must embrace an entirely different set of skills. This skill-set includes cultural awareness training, rules of engagement training, training in negotiations, use of non-lethal weapons, human intelligence training, cordon and search, small arms disarmament, media relations and interagency operability. Because SSS is defined as *the deployment of military forces in support of peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations with the capability to respond to defined and perceived threats within the deployed region*, servicemembers' will be trained, equipped and ready to engage in combat operations on order.

²⁵ Shinseki Vision, Daily Defense, p 1-2.

Conclusion

“The ultimate goal of intervention is peace. Am I a warfighter or a peacekeeper? I am a warfighter, trained, equipped and capable of keeping and enforcing peace – anywhere and at any time.” – The author²⁶

Swift intervention by military forces is the best way to contain, resolve, or mitigate the consequences of a SSC that could otherwise become far more costly and deadly. The United States must be prepared to conduct successfully multiple concurrent SSC worldwide, and must be able to do so in any environment including one in which an adversary uses asymmetric means. The armed services must address the intellectual, budgetary, and force structure to address SSC. Based on the geo-strategic landscape of the new world order and our national strategy of global engagement, the American military will frequently be committed to smaller-scale contingencies. To this end, policymakers, military commanders and service members must prepare for peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

Does the U.S. need the armed services in the post cold war period? It does. Should DOD retain its heavy forces? It should. Does the military need an Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy lighter and tailored to specialize in smaller-scale contingencies? I believe that it does.

²⁶ This is the answer that the author, a soldier in the 21st Century Armed Forces, and all fellow servicemembers shall ultimately be able to give.