

On November 28, 2005, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon R. England signed Department of Defense Directive (DODD)

3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations." Although it was released with little fanfare, the directive's elevation of stability operations to the same priority as combat operations is having a sweeping effect on the Department of Defense—and the U.S. Air Force (USAF). This transformation does not deemphasize major combat operations; airpower will remain a critical asymmetric hedge against potential adversaries on land, at sea, and in the air. However, the USAF must balance the low-frequency, high-intensity demands of major combat against the fact that Airmen are invariably called upon *whenever* our nation commits military force. In today's strategic environment, the United States is far more likely to commit its forces to stability operations than to major combat operations.

The good news is that Airmen have gained valuable stability operations experience in recent years. However, the Air Force has a long way to go before stability operations are fully integrated throughout the institution. This article examines the implications of DODD 3000.05 on the present and future USAF. First, we define stability operations and provide a strategic context for their conduct. We then use Air Force Title 10 responsibilities as a framework to evaluate how well the Service is aligning its organization, training, and equipment with the demands of stability operations. Overall, we find much progress being made toward a stability operations transformation. At the same time, we identify many areas where further improvements can be made.

Stability Operations Since the Cold War

Stability operations encompass "various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief."¹ They range from humanitarian assistance and disaster response on the nonviolent end of the operational spectrum to counterinsurgency at the

Airman from Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team aids local man

982nd Combat Camera Company (Michael Bracken)

The U.S. Air Force and Stability Operations Transformation

By OLIVER FRITZ and GREGORY A. HERMSMEYER

opposite end. Significantly, stability operations tend to be population-centric, while combat operations are enemy-focused. Success against even the most violent insurgency—witness Iraq today—ultimately depends more on a political settlement between warring factions and the support of the host population than on the defeat of enemy forces in traditional battle.

The USAF record since 1991 consists of continuous stability operations occasionally interrupted by major combat. In fact, since the Cold War ended, the United States has entered one *new* stability operation every 2 years.² Intrastate conflicts today far outnumber great power and interstate conflicts, and the likelihood of instability, insurgency, and civil war

exceeds that of conventional, set-piece warfare. Moreover, contemporary conflict mainly affects civilians, who comprise 90 percent of the victims.³

The violent insurgencies arising after successful major combat operations in Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* have only highlighted the demand for improved stability operations capacity across the entire U.S. Government, and our experience is shaping new thinking about the relationship between stability operations and combat operations. Previously, stability operations were conceived as a distinct Phase IV of a military campaign that followed the decisive conclusion of major combat operations. In practice, however, the postconflict phase in Afghanistan and Iraq remained violent as insurgencies developed and intensified after the fall of Kabul and the march to Baghdad.

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A better model—newly released in Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, and illustrated in figure 1—now offers a six-phase campaign model showing how stability operations activities occur in all phases.⁴ Stability operations provide the primary focus in Phase IV and Phase V as military forces attempt to “stabilize” the situation and “enable civil authority.” However, stability operations activities form a key consideration from a campaign’s beginning in Phase I to securing territory and populations seized during major combat operations in Phase III—the “dominate” phase. Stability operations also encompass the full range of “shaping” activities—from Phase 0 security assistance, humanitarian relief, and disaster response functions during times of peace to all shaping activities during each phase of a conflict scenario. DODD 3000.05 presaged this dramatic shift in joint doctrine by characterizing stability operations as those “activities conducted *across the spectrum from peace to conflict* [emphasis added] to establish or maintain order in States and regions.”⁵

The new six-phase model reflects real-world operational experience and represents a genuine transformation in Department of Defense (DOD) thinking. New thinking combined with additional capacity and capability for stability operations would improve military effectiveness across all six phases of a campaign. U.S. forces can use more robust security assistance to train and equip partner militaries and bolster partner capacity. Likewise, military combat capabilities can help shape the international environment by enabling and supporting disaster response and humanitarian assistance efforts. Effective stability operations also underpin irregular warfare. As potential great power rivals recognize that the American military cannot be defeated on the traditional battlefield, these states—or non-state actors—have witnessed how asymmetric strategies can neutralize many of America’s conventional military advantages. Even future major combat scenarios will likely require postconflict stability operations of some kind—from no-fly zones to peacekeeping to reconstruction activities. These contemporary realities provide the strategic context for DODD 3000.05.

Organize, Train, Equip

DODD 3000.05 tasks the Services with several measures to institutionalize stability operations. Some are discrete tasks, such as

appointing a senior officer to lead stability operations initiatives—the USAF checked this block by appointing the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, Space, and Information Operations, Plans and Requirements (A3/5), to serve in this capacity. Other measures are much broader and more subjective. For instance, the directive tasks the Services to:

- develop stability operations capabilities
- ensure curricula . . . prepare personnel for stability operations
- ensure that research, development, and acquisition programs address stability operations capabilities.⁶

These responsibilities imply numerous tasks, many of which are identified in the following section.

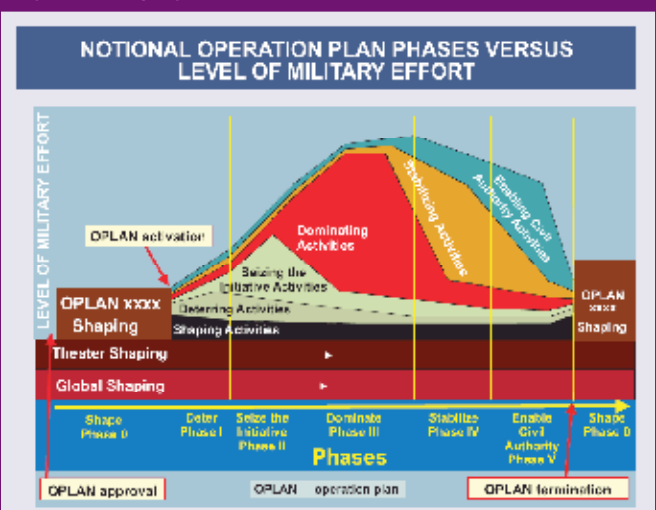
Organize. The USAF is tasked with properly organizing for stability operations and capturing experience and lessons learned in doctrine. After the Cold War, DOD used two (nearly simultaneous) major theater wars as its organizing construct. However, a different set of demands placed greater stress on the force and prompted a new organizational framework. In response to the stability operations-driven tempo of the 1990s, the USAF developed and implemented the Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) in 1999. As a result, the Air Force has made an impressive transition from a garrison to an expeditionary force. Some high-demand capabilities such as tankers, surveillance, and security forces do not fit well within the AEF construct—especially with the increased demand for airpower after 9/11—but this innovation has enhanced overall USAF flexibility and instilled an expeditionary mindset essential to stability operations.⁷

Expeditionary civil engineering, security forces, medical, and combat convoy units are heavily engaged outside the wire of air bases in Iraq and elsewhere to defend joint logistics nodes, build roads, conduct security patrols, and offer medical services in the joint effort to stabilize and reconstruct war-torn countries.⁸

Many new roles—especially combat convoy duty—are considered *in lieu of* taskings, which are defined as taskings intended to fill temporary capacity gaps in certain specialties “in lieu” of overstretched Army and Marine Corps personnel. Some of these nontraditional missions may last only as long as the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq while others could become part of the permanent USAF mission set, depending on a future assessment of joint roles and missions.

Besides the sweeping AEF transformation, the Air Force has also developed Contingency Response Groups (CRG) to rapidly set up expeditionary bases and serve as USAF “first responders” in crises ranging from humanitarian relief to major combat operations. Beginning with the Germany-based 86 CRG, activated in February 1999, the USAF has added three CRGs in New Jersey, three in California, and one in Guam. In December 2006, the Kentucky-based 123 CRG became the first such unit in the Air National Guard.⁹ Integrating over 100 personnel from security forces, communications, intelligence, aerial port, and other specialties into one organization, CRGs enable the application of airpower to stability as well as combat operations. For instance, the 86 CRG deployed to Albania in 1999 and began controlling humanitarian flights within 4 hours for hundreds of thousands of Kosovo refugees.¹⁰ CRGs also opened Indonesian airfields for tsunami relief in 2004 and enabled earthquake relief in Pakistan in 2005. These massive relief efforts significantly improved the U.S. image among Indonesians and Pakistanis.¹¹ Given the population-centered focus

Figure 1. Shaping Activities Critical Across All Phases of Conflict



Source: Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, September 17, 2006, IV-26, available at <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf>.

of stability operations and the high probability that they will take place in austere environments, CRGs are a powerful tool for achieving American objectives.

The Air Force is also increasing its Battlefield Airmen—USAF personnel who work alongside land forces on the ground—by 1,000 personnel.¹² These new personnel will include additional tactical air control party cadre to enhance Air Force close air support (CAS) capabilities, which are in great demand over Iraq and Afghanistan.¹³ To improve its readiness for Phase 0 activities, the USAF has established a Coalition and Irregular Warfare Center at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, which will enhance its security cooperation programs and “ensure our future coalition partners understand how to leverage our full range of capabilities.”¹⁴ It also should facilitate Air Force integration with other Service and interagency training, education, and research programs through the planned Center for Complex Operations, which will be formed during fiscal year 2008.¹⁵

Finally, the Air Force also is expanding its security assistance programs. Until now, the 105-person 6th Special Operations Squadron (6th SOS) was largely responsible for shouldering the entire combat aviation advisory burden.¹⁶ Recently, the USAF announced that the 6th SOS would be expanded into a group-level organization amid recommendations for an even larger wing-level unit.¹⁷ The aviation advisory mission is an indispensable role played by the USAF special operations community. However, Airmen must avoid the temptation to view stability operations as a task primarily for special operators. The demands placed by peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and counterinsurgency on the USAF far exceed the capacity of the Air Force Special Operations Command alone. Vigilance, reach, and power are all crucial to stability operations, and these are found in sufficient quantity only in the Big Air Force.

While these organizational innovations will all improve USAF capacity for stability operations, additional steps are still needed. One priority should be to institutionalize stability operations at the headquarters level. The Department of the Army offers one model in its establishment of an entire Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Division in Headquarters G3/5/7. Formed in September 2006, the new Army headquarters division will have between 12 and 20 personnel responsible for integrating stability operations through

every echelon and mission of the Army.¹⁸ The Air Force would benefit from a branch-sized element on the A3/5 staff dedicated to institutionalizing stability operations throughout the Service.

The USAF should also consider emulating the Navy, which is forming a Maritime Civil Affairs Group. This 400-person body will provide civil-military operations capabilities in coastal and riverine environments, and it will augment but not duplicate existing civil affairs capabilities in the Army and Marine Corps. A small USAF civil affairs cadre could be established within CRGs to offer improved civil-military coordination between expeditionary bases and local populations. Some civil affairs capacity already exists in the Air Force International Health Specialist (IHS) Program. Consisting of medical personnel with training and experience in civil-military operations, regional languages and cultures, and the interagency process, this program could serve as a model for other disciplines.

Perhaps the most significant gap in how the USAF organizes for stability operations is in the lack of relevant Service doctrine. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2–3, *Military Operations Other Than War*—a term superseded by *stability operations*—has been rescinded with the inclusion of a short section on “smaller-scale contingencies” in the June 27, 2006, version of AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization*.¹⁹ AFDD 2–3.1, *Foreign Internal Defense* (FID), is the sole remaining doctrine document focused on a stability operations mission.²⁰ FID, which entails training partner militaries to conduct counterinsurgency, is an important element of stability operations but represents just one mission set among many. A new capstone AFDD 2–3, *Stability Operations*, is urgently needed to translate the latest operational experience into the airpower lexicon. New subpublications on counterinsurgency,

humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and stabilization and reconstruction activities could help capture the lessons learned in operations since 1991, when the USAF helped protect Iraq’s Kurdish population in Operation *Provide Comfort*.

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The Air Force also has much more to offer in the development of joint doctrine and procedures. To update classic counterinsurgency theory and capture lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army and Marine Corps have recently published a new counterinsurgency manual stretching over 200 pages.²¹ Unfortunately, the contributions of air, space, and cyberspace power are relegated to a four-page annex. Assisted by a single integrating headquarters staff element, the USAF needs to ensure that the Airman’s perspective is better presented and advocated in joint and inter-Service doctrine development. For example, Joint Publication 3–09.3, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Close Air Support* (September 3, 2003), has not kept up with the new ways airpower has been employed to support ground forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, including airborne alert CAS, convoy support, and unmanned aerial system (UAS) surveillance.²² The USAF should seize the opportunity to capture, distill, and articulate airpower’s unique contributions to stability operations in joint doctrine.

Train. The Air Force is changing the way it trains and educates Airmen. From basic military training and professional military education (PME) to large-scale exercises, the

Airmen deliver medical supplies to Iraqi doctors at Diwaniyah municipal jail



9821 Combat Camera Company (Rob Summitt)

USAF is adapting to the demands of stability operations. New recruits now enter a longer basic military training course that includes the self-defense and small arms training needed to operate on a battlefield with fewer secure rear areas. A new Basic Combat Convoy Course (BC³) at Camp Bullis, Texas, prepares Airmen for *in lieu* of convoy duties in Iraq. For other selected career fields, the USAF is expanding common Battlefield Airmen training to better hone skill sets for both combat and stability operations, including counterinsurgency and CAS in an urban environment.²³

The Air Force is also expanding the language and cultural training Airmen need to succeed in a fluid, complex environment. In February 2006, General Michael Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff, announced that Airmen would receive expanded language training. While the language requirement is still being developed, the initial program, already in place at the Air Command and Staff College, will stress cultural awareness and introductory

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language skills.²⁴ A broader PME program will eventually include basic language proficiency for new officers, a supplementary track for already serving officers, and similar courses at the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy.²⁵ Officers with requisite language and cultural skills will now be tracked as international affairs specialists and deliberately assigned to diffuse this expertise across a broad spectrum of billets and to enhance USAF effectiveness in population-focused operations.

The Air Force is adapting operational training to reflect the new realities of stability operations as well. Among these initiatives, Exercise Eagle Flag, run by the Air Mobility Warfare Center, has become the primary exercise training Airmen to open and operate expeditionary bases. Using a disaster response script, one recent Eagle Flag scenario included intense interaction with local populations hit by a tsunami.²⁶ Green Flag, a defunct electronic warfare exercise, has been brought back as the "Air Force's premier pre-deployment exercise for . . . close-air support and precision-guided munitions delivery."²⁷ Green Flag will replace the Air Warrior exercise series and provide a

training environment complete with additional urban operations scenarios and the coordination challenges inherent to air support for ground forces.²⁸ Realistic training in urban environments will instill the importance of minimizing risk to affected populations and damage to civilian infrastructure. With this crucial change, the USAF has taken another major step toward institutionalizing stability operations in the AEF rotational training regime.

Building on this momentum, the Air Force should consider additional training and education enhancements. For instance, it should target core stability operations cadre, including CRG, medical, and security forces personnel, with more tailored language and culture training as well as formal education in stability operations and civil-military coordination. The USAF also needs to expand the stability operations content of its PME programs. While a growing number of electives in counterinsurgency and stability operations have been added to Air University programs, additional coursework should be fully integrated into the core PME curriculum so all Airmen receive a baseline of instruction in these areas.

The USAF should also consider revamping the internal lessons learned process and improve connectivity among Service, joint, and interagency centers for lessons learned. The Army in particular has a well-honed process for embedding observers across exercises and contingencies, rapidly compiling and evaluating lessons from the field, and then distributing these findings to units in the field or preparing to deploy. Beyond a more robust internal lessons learned process, the USAF also should leverage the experience of the ground components to improve the effectiveness and utility of air- and space power in joint stability operations.

Likewise, Silver Flag combat logistics exercises should expand participation by U.S. Government agencies, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) often present overseas. With critical expertise in disaster response, stabilization and reconstruction, and other population-oriented operations, NGOs typically play a leading role in these contingencies while the military plays a supporting role. During the 1999 floods in Mozambique, an effective USAF-led Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) served as a clearinghouse for information on relief flights for civilian and military actors and allowed

the military to "fill in the gaps" and work in concert rather than in competition with NGOs. The expeditionary nature of airpower means that Airmen will often play a leading role in dealing with the scores of international organizations, NGOs, and other actors that share the stability operations stage. Exercise scenarios featuring CMOC operations would help the Air Force leverage its inherent command, control, and logistics capabilities more effectively in future stability operations.

Finally, the USAF should leverage its flagship Red Flag exercise to better prepare Airmen for combat and stability operations simultaneously. Operations *Allied Force* and *Iraqi Freedom* provide recent examples of concurrent major combat and stability operations. During the march to Baghdad, the Air Force simultaneously confronted armored units of Republican Guard and loosely organized Fedayeen insurgents. In Kosovo, it waged a major air campaign over Serbia while providing relief for nearly one million Kosovo Albanian refugees. New Red Flag scenarios should integrate combat and stability operations into a single script testing the full combat and stability operations capabilities of the USAF.²⁹ Expanding these scenarios to include CMOCs along with civilian actors from the U.S. Government, international organizations, and NGOs would go even further toward capturing a realistic, modern operating environment. To add jointness and increase realism, the Air Force could also integrate Red Flag and other training exercises more closely with land component training conducted at Combat Training Centers, including the National Training Center and Marine Air Ground Combat Center in California and the Joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana.

Equip. An assessment of USAF equipment marks our final point of evaluation. Stability operations rely on many of the same platforms and capabilities that provide global vigilance, reach, and power in major combat. Every day, hundreds of Airmen—joined by aviators from other Services and partner nations—occupy the skies over Iraq and Afghanistan to guarantee that coalition ground forces will never face an airborne threat. Air superiority underpins stability operations just as it does major combat, and a new generation of fighter aircraft will ensure that ground forces need never fear threats from the sky. Freedom from air attack has significance far beyond CAS and extends to freedom of maneuver by mobility and surveillance assets from every

Service. Airpower capabilities are inherently flexible, and many systems and platforms, along with materiel designed for major combat operations, are also highly adaptable to new stability operations roles. Accordingly, many changes under way plus several of our recommendations are based on high-payoff adaptations of current equipment rather than on completely new programs.

Air Force bomber and fighter forces are at the vanguard in adapting current capabilities to new missions. After most preplanned targets were destroyed in the opening days of the Afghan air campaign, Air Force bombers played a dramatically new role by providing precise firepower on-call for small, integrated teams of Special Operations Forces—including USAF Terminal Attack Controllers. Likewise, Air Force fighters are being employed in ways much different than Airmen expected. By early 2004, nontraditional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) sorties—using the surveillance capability of fighter targeting pods to report suspicious activities—became a standard mission over Iraq and resourcefully increased sensor coverage all across Iraq.³⁰ Lieutenant General Walter Buchanan, USAF, then Combined Forces Air Campaign Commander in U.S. Central Command, subsequently pressed for A-10s operating over Afghanistan to be equipped with targeting pods—not to provide precision weapons capability but to “[coordinate] with the ground force” while “looking for activity [and] ambushes.”³¹ Such an ingenious adaptation of existing capabilities boosted this vital USAF contribution to counterinsurgency operations in both countries.

Air Force intelligence and surveillance capabilities are also adapting to the demands of stability operations. For instance, the small addition of the Remotely Operated Video Enhanced Receiver (ROVER) streams video of targeting pod and UAS imagery directly to forces operating on the ground and allows pilots to “look exactly where we need them to look,” in the words of one USAF terminal attack controller.³² Combined with a receiver and “wi-fi” transmitter on a Humvee, imagery can even be retransmitted to personal data assistants in the hands of Army and Marine platoon and squad leaders. Airmen at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Qatar now integrate data from the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, targeting pods, and UASs, and then “play the tapes” backward to identify the locations and transit

routes used by insurgents to plant improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These creative innovations dramatically expand the reach and utility of information derived from airpower.

Beyond the counterinsurgency-driven innovations in Iraq and Afghanistan, USAF capabilities have been adapted to other kinds

humanitarian crisis and locate isolated pockets of people affected by a natural disaster.

The Small Diameter Bomb is another investment that will improve the utility of Air Force capabilities in urbanized environments lacking discrete, isolated military targets. Major General Allen Peck, USAF, observed

the USAF needs to expand the stability operations content of its professional military education programs

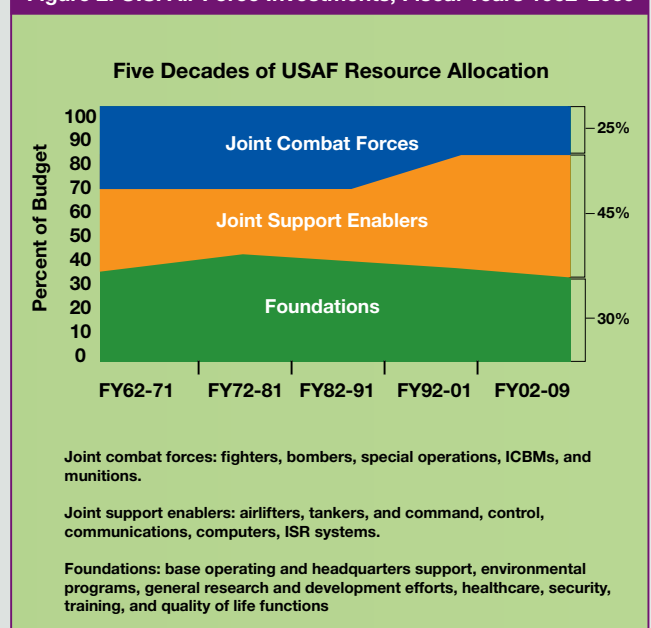
of stability operations. During the 1990s, the precision navigation capabilities of the global positioning system (GPS) were used to defuse border disputes in the Balkans, and U-2s originally designed for identifying military targets helped document Serbian atrocities and mass graves at Srebrenica. Designed for Open Skies arms control flights over Europe, the Keen Sage surveillance package on C-130s provided post-hurricane assessments of environmental damage to NGOs in Central America and surveyed flood damage in Mozambique to focus NGO relief efforts and identify high-priority reconstruction opportunities.³³ Finally, the C-17 Globemaster III airdropped over 2.4 million humanitarian daily rations plus 73,000 blankets and 700 tons of clothes in an effort to win support from the Afghan population during the fall 2001 campaign to overthrow the Taliban.³⁴

The Air Force is also committing substantial new resources to programs that will boost its capacity to conduct stability operations. Predator UASs are—in the words of the USAF Chief of Staff—attacking targets in Iraq and Afghanistan “almost every day.”³⁵ Based on this demand, the Air Force is spending an additional \$2.3 billion for 150 more Predators, including a dedicated Air Force Special Operations Command squadron.³⁶ Coupled with the ROVER system, Predator represents a quantum leap in the ability to bring awareness to Battlefield Airmen, Soldiers, and Marines. These systems could also be used to track refugee movements in a

that if “you are trying to preserve the support of the people . . . you can’t do that if you are destroying their houses and neighborhoods.”³⁷ Following the development of successively smaller GPS-guided munitions, the Small Diameter Bomb entered service in 2006 and uses a smaller warhead and GPS guidance to close the gap between intended target and unintended consequence.³⁸ The USAF is also exploring the use of carbon-fiber composite casings instead of metal plus special explosives to limit the blast effects of the Small Diameter Bomb even further. With a casing that dissolves into innocuous fibers and denser explosive material that travels shorter distances, the result is a powerful but confined blast.³⁹ This investment demonstrates an awareness of the central role played by populations in all stability operations.

In another new investment, the USAF is looking toward the Joint Cargo Aircraft for niche intratheater airlift capability. Prompted

Figure 2. U.S. Air Force Investments, Fiscal Years 1962–2009



Source: Peter Grier, “Follow the Money,” *Air Force Magazine* (August 2004), 76, available at <<http://www.afa.org/magazine/aug2004/0804money.pdf>>.

by its limited capability to carry small loads into austere airfields and the Army's requirement to replace the C-23 Sherpa, the Air Force voiced commitments to buy 75 to 100 Joint Cargo Aircraft as part of an overall strategy to maintain an intratheater airlift fleet of 400 C-130 equivalents.⁴⁰ Rough airfields, small loads, IED threats to ground transport, and geographic dispersal all pushed the Air Force toward an investment required to transit the last tactical mile needed to reinforce U.S. or coalition forces, shore up friendly governments, and deliver disaster relief closer to those in need.

These specific changes in equipment illustrate a broader shift in USAF capabilities to a smaller yet more effective strike capability accompanied by enhanced sensor and mobility capabilities. The publicly available data on historical and projected Air Force investments noted in figure 2 demonstrate how the Service is dedicating increasing resources to capabilities critical to stability operations. Advances in stealth technology and precision weapons, accelerated by the Small Diameter Bomb, permit a reduced fleet of fighters and bombers and allow investment dollars to be shifted toward the airlift, command and control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that enable stability operations as well as combat operations.

Additional investments to enhance stability operations capabilities can also be made in the short term. First, the USAF should consider further purchases of Predator and Global Hawk UASs. Taken as a whole, unmanned systems cost much less and offer far greater loiter capacity than their manned counterparts, making them ideal for many of the ISR tasks that characterize stability operations. Lieutenant General Buchanan noted "tremendous pushback from fighter pilots who resisted the notion of becoming 'manned Predators'" while conducting nontraditional ISR missions.⁴¹ Over the long run, perhaps there *should* be pushback. Nontraditional ISR conducted by manned fighters is a costly stopgap, and the Air Force should consider procuring additional UASs to accomplish these missions with lower opportunity costs.

The Air Force should also continue the trend toward smaller munitions and increased capability per aircraft. The F-15E can already carry 12 Small Diameter Bombs, but expanded use of bombers with Small Diameter Bombs or even smaller munitions could increase the return on investment in strike capabilities while preserving fighter airframe life. While

this adaptation would increase strains on the aging bomber fleet, the advantages of having a single B-1 or B-52 provide a CAS capability equivalent to several fighters are compelling and need further examination.

New investments should be considered as well. For example, a dedicated counterinsurgency aircraft reflects a potential option for building the capacity of friendly governments to defeat internal threats.⁴² The USAF should consider expanding the 6th Special Operations Squadron combat aviation advisory mission by training and equipping partner militaries with dedicated counterinsurgency utility platforms capable of light airlift, close air support, and surveillance. Expanding security assistance activities with a specific, low-cost, and easy-to-maintain aircraft could bolster weakened states and serve as an important USAF contribution to stability operations and building partner capacity.

Over the long run, the Air Force needs to determine the overall force mix required for an operational environment characterized by constant stability operations punctuated occasionally by major combat. Demanding operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are wearing out the highly capable but expensive C-17 as well as F-15Es, F-16s, and other aircraft faster than expected. This will result in earlier airframe retirements and additional risk for the Nation in preparing for future major combat operations. Today's strategic planning imperative is to build and sustain a force fully prepared for major combat but continuously ready for the far more likely demands of stability operations.

The time to start making tough decisions is now. While adaptations in training and organization may take months or years, the procurement of platforms and systems takes years and even decades. The historical record suggests that the USAF has been, is, and will remain heavily engaged in stability operations while playing a decisive role in larger conventional campaigns. The question is how to optimize the force to meet both requirements within growing resource constraints. This overview suggests that elements of a solution—more UASs, a high-low fighter mix, and the Joint Cargo Aircraft—may be in sight and that many airpower capabilities are dual use. Nevertheless, the dilemma of striking the right balance between combat and stability operations capacity and capabilities will challenge strategic planners for many years to come.

Transformation

Despite the significant progress described above, much work remains for the Air Force and the Nation to organize, train, and equip for stability operations. This article has suggested a number of additional steps the Service should take to improve capabilities and capacity for these missions. But much more could and should be done that a brief article cannot address. Substantial improvements to USAF capabilities can be made now, however, without committing significant new resources. Above all else, the stability operations transformation requires new ways of thinking about organizing and employing the assets and skill sets that the USAF already brings to the table.

Air Force intelligence and surveillance capabilities are adapting to the demands of stability operations

Improving USAF stability operations capabilities does not require substantial investment in new platforms or capabilities, but finding the right balance between stability and combat operations will be difficult. Because this challenge confronts DOD, not just the USAF, our final recommendation is for a thorough reexamination of the roles and missions assigned to the military Services and other U.S. Government agencies for stability operations. The traditional roles and missions markers focus primarily on the broad outlines of *warfare* on land, at sea, and in the air, while stability operations often place strains on many of the *noncombat* capabilities of the Services.⁴³ One only need consider the "outside the wire" engineering, medical, services, security forces, and transportation tasks taken on by Airmen to augment Soldiers and Marines to understand the confusion over who should do what.

A new assessment of roles and missions should address task distribution across the Services, executive agency for associated schoolhouses and training pipelines, and operational assignments of each task. While the USAF can and should develop capabilities for stability operations, it must work in concert with the other Services. Service responsibilities must also be assessed in the context of the roles and missions of other U.S. Government departments and agencies. A government-wide roles and missions review would identify how each element of national power should work together during stability operations. A new review would

ultimately eliminate the burden that *in lieu* of taskings place on the USAF by identifying some ingenious adaptations that should become permanent and programmed and others that should revert to another Service.

Regardless of recommendations on specific roles and missions, the Air Force will do well to remember that stability operations are not just another *in lieu* of tasking. Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 reminds us that stability operations—like combat operations—belong to all Services and must be an institutional priority for each. No matter what the future holds for the United States in Iraq or Afghanistan, stability operations will define tomorrow's international security challenges and place frequent and heavy demands on the Air Force. Airmen need to be ready for both combat and stability operations in order to win the war and secure the peace. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Department of Defense (DOD), Joint Publication (JP) 3–0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), GL–28.

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