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Peacekeeping and Related Stability Operations: Proposals for Army Force Structure Changes

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Summary

The U.S. Army is in the midst of an extensive overhaul of the organization of its forces. Although designed to make the Army more efficient in combat operations, the change to a “modular force” and the reallocation of functions between active and reserve forces also meet some of the criteria that have long been argued as necessary to enable the Army to better perform peacekeeping and related post-conflict operations, now generally referred to as stabilization or stability operations. Over the years, a number of different proposals have been advanced, some of which involve creating specialized forces that are dedicated, at least part time, to preparing for and deploying to such missions. The Army has long rejected proposals for dedicated peacekeeping forces as they would divert funds from combat resources and undermine the concept of a general purpose, “full-spectrum” force. Alternate proposals for augmenting personnel for such missions involve non-military options.

In November 2005, the Department of Defense stated for the first time that the category of operations that has variously been referred to as stability operations, stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) operations, and peacekeeping operations is a “core mission” of the United States military.¹ This declaration, contained in DOD Directive 3000.05, signals that the United States military should develop appropriate doctrine, train

¹ Peacekeeping is a generic term that commonly encompasses a range of activities undertaken in post-conflict operations. It originally was a U.N. term that meant providing a “interpositional” force to supervise the keeping of a cease-fire or peace accord that parties in conflict had signed, but it continued to be used as the range of activities grew. Recently, such operations have been referred to by an Army doctrinal term “stability operations” that also encompasses the diverse missions of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Stability operations include not only the peace operations (i.e., peacekeeping and peace enforcement), but also related missions such as humanitarian and civic assistance, counterterrorism, counter-drug, and counter-insurgency (i.e., foreign internal defense) efforts.” Stability operations are sometimes referred to “Phase IV” or “post-conflict” operations, although reoccurrences of conflict are often possible. Another term is “stabilization and reconstruction” operations.

its troops, and structure and equip its forces to perform such operations. Since the early 1990s, when such missions became a staple of its operations, the U.S. military has developed a considerable body of doctrine² on such operations and has increasingly included related training in its regular training programs. Nevertheless, to many analysts, the military, particularly the Army,³ has a considerable distance to go before it is adequately prepared for stability operations. Some believe that force structure reform is an area that particularly needs to be addressed.

Although the Army is restructuring its force in ways that are conducive to stabilization operations, proposals to reconfigure the Army in order to dedicate forces specifically to such operations have been consistently rejected. This report provides context for understanding the force structure of the U.S. Army, the changes that commenced in 2003 as they relate to stability operations, and major proposals for further reform. This report will not be updated.

Traditional Army Force Structure and Recent Changes

Until mid-2003, the Army continued to organize its forces around warfighting divisions of 9,000 - 17,000 troops, as it had since World War II. (In the 1990s, however, the number of active duty Army divisions was cut from 18 to 10 as the number of active Army troops was decreased by 60,000.) Divisions were divided into three brigades of combat forces, with separate, permanent support units. Support personnel include “combat support” such as construction engineers, military police, signal corpsmen, and military intelligence, as well as “combat service support” such as supply, maintenance, transportation, and medical personnel. Most support forces were positioned “above” the division level in the Army’s four corps or elsewhere in the active and reserve forces and were assigned to deploying units as needed.

For the most part, proposals for reform in the 1990s and early 2000s centered on an increase in the number of personnel in “low-density, high-demand” units, i.e., those most heavily taxed by peacekeeping and related stability operations. These units have been concentrated until now in the reserve component. For several years, many military analysts suggested that the overall force might be restructured to include more of the specialties needed for peacekeeping (which some also regard as in short supply for warfighting or war termination periods), and in units sized for peace operations. Civil affairs, psychological operations (PSYOPS), and military police units were frequently mentioned as specialties that were particularly needed in peacekeeping and related

² Among current doctrinal publications are: *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, FM 3-07 (FM100-20), Headquarters, Department of the Army, February 2003; *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, Joint Publication 3-07, June 16, 1995, *Joint Task Force Commander’s Handbook for Peace Operations*, Joint Warfighting Center, June 16, 1997, and *Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Peace Operations*, Joint Publication 3-07.3, February 12, 1999.

³ The Army is the most affected by peacekeeping and related stability operations of the four U.S. services. The Marines have also borne a considerable part of the burden as their strength is the ability to deploy rapidly to conflicts. They do not, however, have the size or structure for extended operations. The Air Force and Navy usually participate to a much lesser extent and over the past decade have made some changes to accommodate these missions.

operations, but were in short supply in the active military. As the Army performed increasing numbers of these missions, analysts noticed that such operations were built around one or two maneuver brigades (i.e., armor or infantry units of 2,000+ to 3,000+ troops) with command and support elements drawn from divisional HQ and elsewhere in the Army. As a result, some analysts recommended the development of “maneuver brigades that are prepared for rapid deployment and autonomous operations.”⁴

Army Active Duty and Reserve Component Restructuring. In mid-2003, the Army began restructuring the Army’s active component into a “modular force”⁵ and “rebalancing” positions between the Army active and reserve forces. Officials have said these changes will involve some 100,000 positions by FY2011. The primary reason given for these changes is to improve the Army’s warfighting capacity. Nevertheless, they are also viewed as enhancing the Army’s ability to carry out a broad “full-spectrum” range of missions (including peacekeeping and stability operations, as well as homeland defense) with less stress on the active and reserve forces. (A 2005 Congressional Budget Office study notes reservations as to whether the modular force would actually reduce stress by substantially enhancing deployment times, however.⁶) One goal of rebalancing is to reduce reliance on the reserve component during the first 15 days of a “rapid response operation” and to limit reserve mobilization, especially for high demand units, to once every six years. Three changes have particular implications for S&R missions:

1. The internal restructuring of divisions to make the Army more mobile (i.e., rapidly deployable or “expeditionary”) and versatile. The Army is reconfiguring its ten divisions in order to make the brigade, instead of the division or corps, the Army’s primary unit of organization. The reconfiguration incorporates into combat brigades many or all of the support services necessary to make the brigade more self-sufficient on the battlefield. (The newly configured brigades are referred to as “brigade combat teams.”) Some divisions may maintain additional support personnel in separate brigades to be used for “stabilization” tasks in immediate post-conflict situations.

2. The increase in the active Army of low density/high demand support personnel in order to support this restructuring and to reduce reliance on and use of the reserve component (as discussed in the section on reserves, above). This increase involves the relocation of such positions from the reserves to the active force, as well as a reshuffling of positions within the active force. For instance, at the start of the restructuring, only one of the Army’s 25 civil affairs (CA) battalions was in the active force, while the others were in the Army Reserve. (Combat battalions range in size from 600 to 900 troops, while civil affairs units average 150-200 members.) Some CA battalions are now being moved to the active force, although the primary capability will still reside in the Army Reserve. Other specialties being increased in the active forces that are especially relevant to peacekeeping and related operations are military police, special operations forces, and certain engineer and transportation capabilities. The Army is attempting to increase these

⁴ RAND, *Assessing Requirements for Peacekeeping, Humanitarian Assistance, and Disaster Relief*, 1998, pp 133-134. (Access through [<http://www.rand.org>].)

⁵ For a full discussion of the modular force, see CRS Report RL32476, *U.S. Army’s Modular Redesign: Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted).

⁶ Congressional Budget Office. *Options for Restructuring the Army*. May 2005. p xii.

personnel without increasing force size by converting certain combat positions (such as heavy artillery) and other lower demand speciality positions into support positions.

3. Plans also call for the creation of a few thousand new reserve positions, including positions needed for peacekeeping and related operations, especially military police.

The effect of these changes on the Army's ability to perform functions from combat to peacekeeping and related operations is open to debate. While some criticize the reforms as short-term measures primarily geared to deal with the demands of several more years in Iraq rather than with the combat realities of future battlefields, others view them as insufficient if the Army is to possess the types of forces necessary to carry out peacekeeping and related stability operations effectively.

Proposals for Enhancing Army Capacity for S&R Operations

The following proposals that have been made over the past several years range from relatively simple refinements to significant restructuring. They all involve the dedication of at least a small number of forces primarily to S&R, even if only for a temporary period. They are listed in rough order of magnitude of the degree to which forces would be dedicated to peacekeeping, from less to more extensive. Critics object that the more extensive changes create unnecessary duplication and involve costly trade-offs.

Defense Science Board Study. The Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study, which recommended that stabilization be treated as an "explicit mission in DOD force planning" provided the justification for DOD Directive 3000.05 and provides guidance for continuing changes. The study recommends that S&R operations "should be given more weight in planning and programming the future force"⁷ Evaluating Army force structure changes, the Board judged the Army to be "moving in the right direction...[by] instituting modularity; restructuring the force to increase military police, civil affairs, psychological operations, and other capabilities needed for S&R operations; and rebalancing capabilities between the active and reserve components." It judged that S&R operations will further benefit "if the Army can define modules of S&R capabilities well below the brigade level" and recommended the Army experiment with "innovative concepts of task organization and solutions at the battalion and brigade level."

U.S. Army War College Study. A 2005 report prepared by Col. Brian G. Watson, while a student at the Army's premier command school, states that current modular force plans are designed for "rapid decisive operations" and lack necessary post-combat stabilization capacity. The study proposes that this perceived gap be filled in two ways: (1) increasing the force's stabilization capabilities by making a greater number of support services available to the brigades, as needed, and (2) creating a unique command brigade that can serve as a warfighting headquarters but would also be capable of

⁷ An unclassified version was released in December 2004: *Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities*. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. Washington, D.C. Quotes in this paragraph from pp 45-47. (Access through the Defense Science Board website [<http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb>].) The Board was tasked in August 2005 with a further study on the organizational changes needed within DOD to conduct, support, and manage stability operations. This has not been completed.

exercising command over stabilization activities in order to handle transitions from conflict. It also urges policymakers to reconsider the division of labor between the active and reserve components involved in the current “rebalancing,”⁸ and recommends increasing stabilization capability in both components.

Heritage Foundation Report. A 2004 Heritage Foundation report recommends that the United States not only reorganize and retrain existing combat forces to better equip them to perform occupational tasks and assist other nations in improving post-conflict capabilities, but also “build organizations and supporting programs [within the armed forces] specifically designed to conduct post-conflict duties.”⁹

National Defense University Proposal. In 2004, the National Defense University (NDU) proposed an extensive redesign of the U.S. government’s structures for planning, organizing, and carrying out S&R operations.¹⁰ A major focus is the greater integration of civilian and military capabilities. On the military side, this would require the creation of two new joint (i.e., with members from two or more services) S&R commands. One command would have two permanent headquarters (HQ) units located in the active-duty force. The other would be located in the reserves but with an active duty HQ unit. Battalion-sized units would be assigned on a rotating basis to the commands, and would be prepared for immediate deployment. The study also proposed consolidating specialized high demand personnel and transferring some from reserve to active duty status. Specifically mentioned were military police, civil affairs, construction engineering, medical, and psychological operations (psyops) personnel.

Trade-offs Inherent in Dedicating Forces

The U.S. military has long resisted the concept of sizable dedicated peacekeeping units, fearing that they might divert resources from the rest of the force and arguing that they would become substandard as good soldiers would not choose to make a career of secondary missions. Nevertheless, the idea of creating dedicated forces within the U.S. military continues to be advanced by some analysts who judge that peacekeeping and related stabilization missions will be a feature of future U.S. security policy and that the creation of dedicated units would enhance the United States’ ability to successfully conduct such missions by developing personnel experienced in such operations.

⁸ U.S. Army War College. Strategic Studies Institute. *Reshaping the Expeditionary Army to Win Decisively: The Case for Greater Stabilization Capacity in the Modular Force*. August 2005. (Access through [<http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil>].) According to the study, modular force plans allocate 3/4 of the Army’s “critical stabilization enablers (e.g., maneuver enhancement brigades and associated forces such as combat and construction engineers, military police, civil affairs, ordinance disposal, chemical, transportation, and supply units)” to the reserve component. p 20.

⁹ James Jay Carafano. *Post Conflict Operations from Europe to Iraq*. Heritage Foundation Lecture #844. July 13, 2004. p. 8. (Access through [<http://www.heritage.org>].)

¹⁰ National Defense University. Center for Technology and National Security Policy. *Transforming for Stabilization & Reconstruction Operations*. April 2004. (Access through [<http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/home.html>].) The study estimates the number of troops necessary for a small S&R contingency operation at 5,000; for a medium-sized operation at 15,000; and for a large operation at 30,000.

Two Congressional Budget Office (CBO) studies which examined proposals for dedicated peacekeeping units found significant trade-offs involved in creating such units.¹¹ Although the CBO examined such proposals largely in the context of the Army's divisional force structure, the findings on trade-offs still appear applicable. In general, the CBO found that there might well be qualitative advantages in providing greater capabilities with the needed specialties for stabilization operations. While disadvantages varied, in general those proposals to dedicate forces to peacekeeping that involved no change in the size of the force would decrease warfighting ability, while those that involved an increase in the number of troops would be more costly. The earlier of the two reports, issued in 1999, also examined an option to increase the Army's readiness for peace operations that did not involve dedicated forces, i.e., increasing the number of support personnel essential to peacekeeping operations by converting an active-duty division into support units. CBO judged that this option would also enhance the Army's ability to conduct conventional war and calculated that while it would be costly to implement, it would save money over the long run.

Non-Military Options

The Defense Science Board's 2004 Summer Study (above), views the effectiveness of changes within the military as dependent upon related S&R reforms elsewhere in government. If Members of Congress believe additional capabilities are needed for such operations and do not wish to incur the combat effectiveness and monetary costs associated with creating additional military capabilities for peacekeeping, they may wish to examine non-military personnel options.¹² Many analysts caution, however, that military personnel would still be needed for the early phases of stabilization operations. In general, civilian personnel cannot replace military troops in situations where combat is still in progress elsewhere in a theater of operations and where the potential for renewed conflict is high. Nevertheless, constabulary police (civilian police with military skills and organization) may be one civilian element highly useful in those early phases.

¹¹ Both CBO studies — *Making Peace While Staying Ready for War: The Challenges of U.S. Military Participation in Peace Operations* (December 1999) and *Options for Restructuring the Army* (May 2005) — look at dedicated peacekeeping units as part of larger studies evaluating advantages and disadvantages of a range of proposals to address military manpower and rapid deployment issues. (Accessible through [<http://www.cbo.gov>].) The 1999 study examined four hypothetical options for restructuring U.S. forces to perform peace operations with less stress, three of which involved dedicated brigades. The May 2005 study examined a hypothetical proposal to convert two Army divisions into five S&R divisions (four active and one reserve). The CBO judged that this latter option might provide a qualitative advantage as “the mix of soldiers in each S&R division [to include military police, engineers, medical, civil affairs, and psychological operations units] might be superior to the Army's current combat forces for peacekeeping...” It also judged that the Army “would be less capable of fighting multiple wars simultaneously” because it would have six fewer combat brigades. (p. 33)

¹² See CRS Report RL32862, *Peacekeeping and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on Civilian Capabilities*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted), for the current status of such options.

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