Conference Brief Strategic Studies Institute

U.S. Army War College,
Centre d'Etudes en Sciences Sociales de la Défense,
Royal United Services Institute,
the Association of the United States Army,
the Förderkreis Deutsches Heer,
the Heritage Foundation, and
the United States Embassy, Paris

THE TEST OF TERRAIN: THE IMPACT OF STABILITY OPERATIONS UPON THE ARMED FORCES

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Key Insights:

- Peace operations and stability operations both press the decisionmaking locus to much lower levels than normally experienced in major combat operations.
- These operations allow junior leaders greater latitude and usually end up empowering them in the exercise of initiative and imagination, a fact not always welcomed by the establishment after operations cease.
- Despite general European public "shyness" toward casualties, soldiers appear to be seeking service in these operations as adventure or escape from otherwise routine duties at home.
- The media world has changed, and truth must be sought from multiple sources as CNN seldom has much to offer.

Discussion.

On June 16-18, 2005, the Strategic Studies Institute co-hosted a conference on "The Impact of Stability Operations Upon the Armed Forces" in cooperation with the Centre d'Etudes en Sciences Sociales de la Défense, Royal United Services Institute, the Association of the United States Army, the Förderkreis Deutsches Heer, the Heritage Foundation, and the United States Embassy, Paris. The audience, by design and invitation, was small, not exceeding 30 people, to permit extended discussions.

Peace operations and their associated stability undertakings have a very long history, but relatively little attention has been paid to the impact these have had on military organizations. Obviously the more such operations a military force is engaged in, the greater effectiveness one would expect, but that effect seems to run from institutional ad hocery to formalization in doctrine and established policies. Further, as the conditions under examination generally follow conflict operations of one sort or another, a period of transition always occurs. In some national security establishments, mechanisms exist to make the

transition relatively easy; in others they do not, and the transition becomes more difficult.

The conference focused on two objectives: First, to stimulate research along interdisciplinary lines concerning the impact of developing trends in peacekeeping and stability operations over the long term; and, second, to illuminate the work of policymakers in the near term as they wrestle with issues associated with "boots on the ground" transitioning to low-quarters or even flip-flops.

Rear Admiral Richard Cobbold, Director, Royal United Services Institute, presented the opening remarks, noting that not-war operations vary widely. He cited casualty figures versus days of operations in recent undertakings that proved that Stability Operations often are deadly. He noted the centrality of continued civil and governmental support to the deployed forces, but questioned the longer-term impact of repetitive use of Reservists and their relations with their regular employers. In a Stability Operations environment, "lessons" need to be "learned" and implanted in the deployed force rapidly; "an agile enemy requires an agile response." Because of the prevalence of rapid change, training can never be up-to-date, and everything ultimately will have to rest on values.

The first panel focused on the "Historical Context of Western Military Interventions" with former USAWC Visiting Professor Brian Linn, Texas A&M University, reviewing the first major American overseas episode—administering the Philippines following the Spanish-American War of 1898. He identified major similarities in general form between that past and the current situations, including the unpreparedness of the U.S. Army to conduct these less-than-normal combat operations. In both cases, junior officers became responsible for civil matters well outside their range of normal training or even authority, and in both cases, junior leaders were the ones who figured out how to deal with the most pressing issues. Atrocities were experienced early in both operations, and in both cases, the media was the precipitating vehicle of exposure, but likewise in both cases, internal remediation was quick and effective.

The second panel addressed that most timely hot topic "The Clash of Cultures," in this case, particularly from a sociological perspective. Dr. Leonard Wong, Strategic Studies Institute, addressed the impact of current stability operations on U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq from which he just recently returned. His presentation dealt with issues of recruiting, retention, the military family, the psychological impact of repeated tours in a combat theater, and associated issues of uncertainty and danger in the midst of a strange culture. This contrasted in some measure with a yet-to-be-released German Army survey, two essentials of which suggested a strong public bias against German military involvement in casualty-producing situations, while on the other hand, exhibiting a strong bias toward German military involvement in "doing good." Dr. Christopher Coker, London School of Economics, addressed the psychological effects (PTSD, etc.) of casualties in a "not-war" condition and the effects on recruiting. He focused his remarks on the belated recognition that what was first seen as cowardice in World War I, later came to be described as shell-shock and neurasthenia—weakened heart. Today we are familiar with PTSD, but we also see armies keeping track of this casualty category and taking positive actions to ameliorate its effects, such as mandatory transition counseling. Even the SAS has a counseling center now, partly in response to a lawsuit in the UK in which a soldier sued and won on the basis that he had been traumatized by action in Bosnia. Coker argued that the concept of sacrifice is gradually mutating into issues of "dignity," which is all about self. This, he indicated, was just another step down the road of excusing people from any sense of responsibility by arguing there is a medical "cause" for what should better be viewed as normal activity in stressful conditions.

The third panel was "Operations on 'Complex Terrain': The Law and the Media." Among the major changes in the legal landscape is the prevalence of "terrorists," who technically operate outside the law but are currently the major active adversaries. Mr. Laurent Boussié, Correspondent for France 2 in the United Kingdom, reflected on his experiences in Somalia as a reporter. He noted that during that entire operation, Somalia

was exporting meat and fruit to South Africa. He observed further that 80km south of Mogadishu, in the supposed heart of the famine area, he found fully productive banana plantations. In short, he noted that media typically focus on "sympathy" and "emotional" issues without much regard for the whole truth—news through a soda straw. Many reporters are shy about asking hard questions and will not do so without strong editorial encouragement. Dr. James Carafano, Heritage Foundation, took up the issue of the conduct of operations in the glare of what is now a multinational, global media operating under widely varying editorial guidelines. He challenged several characterizations of media influence including the time-worn canard that the media directly influence operations, citing William Hammond's work as principal evidence. Leadership credibility was the single most important factor in how the general population responds to news. He argued that anyone can get whatever media coverage they want, but that freedom of the press does not mean truth in presentation. Several participants had suggested that al Jezerrah was more accurate in its reporting than CNN, an issue left largely unaddressed by others. Some discussion was generated by the comment that truth might be better portrayed if soldiers were to become reporters. (This would be a reversion of our Civil War experience, but like the case of embedded reporters during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, all they would see was what they saw—through a soda straw. Nevertheless, the truth of action on the ground might be better received and result in more sympathetic support for the troops.)

"Boots on the Ground: Perspectives in Military and Political Science," the last panel, pursued some of the earlier surfaced historical roots, asking how the several represented national militaries had adapted to the experiences of engagement in peacekeeping and stability operations. Intra-coalition difficulties are a natural consequence of the different evolutionary paths and, in one sense, returned the conferees to the legal issues noted in the previous panel. In the American case, the period of Reconstruction, 1865-77, has a direct and continuing constraining influence. Dr. Douglas Johnson, Strategic Studies Institute, reviewed the history of U.S. Army experiences beginning with General Winfield Scott's occupation and subsequent administration of Mexico City following the 1846 Mexican War, and particularly emphasized the U.S. Army's experience during Reconstruction, which resulted in the exclusion of serving military from the *Posse Comitatus Act*. This was one of the most influential effects of an historical Stability Operation upon the U.S. Army, and it continues in evidence with the military's reluctance to become engaged in police activities of any kind despite increasing evidence that it must. He described the present condition surrounding the issue of Stability Operations as revolving around the evolution of *Department of Defense Directive 3000: Department of Defense Capabilities for Stability Operations* which, in its early iterations, posited conditions that would have the U.S. Army deployed to the present in Nicaragua, Haiti, Somalia, Grenada, Lebanon, and dozens of other places around the world. He concluded by noting the inclusion of Stability Operations as a new feature in Joint Doctrine, thus cementing experience into formal practice.

Major General Carlo Gabigiosu, Italian Army, recounted his services with multinational forces in Kosovo and Iraq. His principal point was that NATO forces worked very well together because they had become habituated over years of doing so and had internalized standard operating procedures and practices. This was obviously not the case with other coalition members. Since there had been little in the way of major combat actions with these groups, interoperability issues were much simplified—sharing transportation assets is nowhere as difficult as integrating major weapons platforms. He also noted the omnipresence of the media and the shift in attitude and practice from avoidance at almost any cost, to training—training on two key principals—tell the truth, or remain silent. The Stability Operations environment is not a uniform condition, he noted further, and may often require overwhelming force at first, generally moving toward conditions in which small teams suffice, but high performing staffs are always crucial.

The conference surfaced numerous issues

not noted here, but all demanding continuing investigation and collaboration .

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