

THE MISSING DEBATE

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While the surge of 21,500 additional troops to Iraq is consuming national headlines, another important debate is being marginalized. With little public attention, Congress recently authorized an increase of 92,000 uniformed personnel for the Army and Marines. Although significant operationally, the Iraq augmentation is temporary; the larger increase will be permanent, with long-term strategic implications for national security capabilities. Without a thoughtful debate on how to structure the permanent plus-up, the additional 92,000 Soldiers and Marines may have only limited utility.

The apparent basis for the increase is reduction of the high operational tempo the Army and Marines are enduring. High tempo, though, is not the cause of the current problems in Iraq and Afghanistan. Reducing the tempo is important, but it is more important to address the deficiencies that led to today's challenges in Iraq and to obtain the capabilities required to avoid similar problems in the future.

The crucial deficiency was inadequate efforts to deal with the foreseeable future's most likely threat: the failed state. Ungoverned areas – the detritus of failed states, such as Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq – provide discontent and chaos that fuel violence. Having *more* forces to address failed states could be worthwhile, but allowing the military to expand into roles and missions normally reserved for other parts of the interagency might produce *better* forces, prepared for the tasks at hand and part of an improved national security apparatus that could avoid future post-hostilities challenges.

Judged by standards of both timeliness and effectiveness, the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq has been unable to reconstruct infrastructure, to reform and rebuild domestic law enforcement, and to develop progressive governance. In the United States, these tasks are all allocated to nonmilitary agencies, none of which are prepared for extended operations in hostile environments . . . precisely the environment in which the need for such tasks is most likely to be found.

Expecting these civilian organizations to develop such capabilities is unrealistic. Nor is it realistic to expect military personnel – untrained for these specific tasks – to be able to step into the breach and succeed. Yet that is precisely what the Department of State must expect, as evidenced by the recent request for more than 100 military officers to fill State Department positions for provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Iraq. If the State Department and other agencies cannot meet their requirements and military officers will have to assume them, it makes sense to structure at least part of the permanent force increase to address those needs. Although the program would have a

preponderance of senior officers in it, perhaps a plan could be developed to educate and train military personnel on progressive governance; they could then man the PRTs by design, not in an ineffective ad hoc manner.

Other changes could address other operational deficiencies. A robust military engineer organization might take on infrastructure reconstruction in environments where contractors lack freedom of movement. Perhaps a significant Military Police (MP) formation could focus on training of domestic police forces. The Army and Marines may argue that more MPs and engineers are included in the support organizations for the projected combat formations, that these units could address police training and reconstruction, respectively, and that the Civil Affairs component has been enlarged and could perform the PRT roles. The planned increases, though, are modest and are not designed specifically for the roles and missions suggested here. If military formations are to be used for these tasks, they should be designed for them.

The services will not easily develop force structure to take on what they consider nonmilitary interagency tasks. The Army and Marine leadership—because of its customary focus on conventional warfighting and its desire to ease operational tempo—is naturally inclined to add traditional forces, perhaps as Congress intends. The Army is already quietly planning to increase the number of brigade combat teams; the Marines plan to add infantry battalions and attack helicopter squadrons. Significant service support and training components will be included, but that combination will not produce a force better able to deal with the problem of rebuilding failed states. At best, it will provide only limited capacity and depth for other agency tasks.

The nation needs a vigorous debate on how the military is to expand, and that debate cannot be limited to military working groups. It should include those authorities and pundits presently expending so much energy debating the current surge of forces for Iraq. The last substantial increase in military forces came during the Reagan administration; the current authorized increase may not be replicated for some time. Additionally, once military force structure is established, it is difficult to alter. Now—as the force is expanded—is the time to alter the services' roles and missions to enhance future success.