

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on S. 2127
By Hans Binnendijk*
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Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to testify this morning in support of S. 2127, the “Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act of 2004”. My comments are based primarily on a study entitled *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations* prepared by the Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the National Defense University, as well as my own experience in government. A copy of this study has been made available to the Committee.

Requirements for a new civilian stabilization and reconstruction capability

The September 11 tragedy reinforces the fact that conditions in otherwise obscure places can directly affect the security of our homeland. Our study considers at least a dozen places where US military forces might plausibly be deployed on stabilization and reconstruction missions. To avoid over-stretch, we will need to choose any intervention very carefully. But if a decision to get involved is taken, we must be able to put the full weight of all of America’s national security assets behind the effort. History shows that the level of sustained effort is a major if not deciding factor in determining the success of these operations.

The American ability to win wars quickly with relatively few troops in the combat zone has created some unintended consequences that require creative solutions. Enemy regimes tend to collapse quickly under our transformed military’s pressure without the more traditional war of attrition being fought. As we have seen in both Afghanistan and Iraq, remnants of the old regime can survive amidst the post-conflict anarchy. We may have inadequate forces in theater to deal with this challenging development.

Nation building cannot succeed without stabilizing this situation. Early progress is vital to long-term success; early mistakes are magnified. A “stabilization and reconstruction” gap has opened between the high intensity warfare phase of these operations where the military dominates and the nation-building phase where civilian agencies dominate. The gap must be closed if America is to win both the war and the peace.

It will take a mix of military and civilian skills to close this “stabilization and reconstruction” gap. The military can use infantry and military police to bring some order to society, and it can use its civil affairs, engineer, and medical units to provide immediate humanitarian relief. The Army rightly is developing more of these assets at the expense of some traditional skills like air defense and artillery. But as our study points out, more needs to be done to prepare the military for these future tasks. This is an effort that should be carried out in parallel with what the Foreign Relations Committee is proposing.

There are a number of skills that are insufficient in the military but are necessary for success. They include economic, developmental, legal, law enforcement, judicial, linguistic, cultural, political and diplomatic skills. They include ties to international humanitarian organizations, non-governmental organizations and large private sector construction contractors. These skills and ties exist in the civilian agencies, at the State Department, at USAID, and at several other agencies, but not in adequate numbers. And most importantly, they are not organized for this purpose and not quickly deployable to troubled regions. Properly organized and deployed, civilian agencies can be what the military calls “force multipliers”, that is they can have impact well beyond their numbers. The military recognizes that it needs these civilian skills during stabilization, reconstruction and nation building operations, and every military officer that I have talked to about the Committee’s initiative applauds it.

The State Department needs to develop these deployable capabilities so that it can participate fully in the entire process and maximize its leadership role. Post-conflict planning needs to take place in cooperation with war planning, and this will require a much higher degree of collaboration between State, Defense and other elements of the interagency process. The State Department is the logical agency to lead post-conflict activities in the field, but to do so effectively it must bring needed capabilities to the table early in the process. And deploying State Department assets early in the stabilization and reconstruction phase will allow it to smooth the transition to the final longer-term nation building effort.

Recommendation in the National Defense University Study

While the National Defense University’s study focused primarily on military requirements, it does cover several issues included in S. 2127. Our study recommends:

- Developing new strategic concepts for “post-conflict” operations.
- Creating two new joint stabilization and reconstruction military commands (at about the division level), one in the active component and one in the reserve component.
- Rebalancing the existing total military force to create new skills in this area, especially in the Active Component.
- Modifying professional military education to focus more on new missions.
- Harnessing technologies that enhance stabilization and reconstruction capabilities.
- Strengthening interagency mechanisms by creating a National Interagency Contingency Coordinating Group that would prepare for and plan such missions.
- Organizing a standing interagency team that could deploy to the field promptly with skills needed to prepare for nation-building.

- Creating a State Department led reserve civilian crisis management corps that could be called up to supplement the standing interagency team and accelerate the transfer of command from the military to civilians.
- Encouraging NATO to create similar structures, such as a NATO Stabilization and Reconstruction Force.

Comments on provisions of S. 2127

The Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act of 2004 is a bold piece of legislation, but boldness is needed in light of the new nature of conflict and the uncertain strategic environment that we face. I fully support the bill as introduced. I do have some comments on the need for specific provisions of the bill and have some modest suggestions for improvements.

The sense of the Congress provision in Section 4 that suggests establishment of a new directorate at the National Security Council and a new standing committee to oversee policy will help with what the military calls “unity of effort”. This provision is needed. Plans for war and peace must be coordinated throughout government. As a nation moves towards war, however, there is a natural tendency to centralize these functions in one department, undermining unity of effort. The NSC should not be operational, but it needs to be a strong coordinator to maximize all agency contributions and set common policy directions. The Committee might consider mandating these provisions rather than limiting them to “sense of the Senate.”

Section 4 also highlights the importance of the international community in post-conflict operations. The core of this international support on the military side must be NATO, but NATO is not organized to deal quickly and routinely with these missions. As the United States builds these new capabilities, NATO must too. An additional subsection highlighting this would be useful.

Section 5 provides a broad waiver and special contingency funding. This is generally required to give deployed civilians the ability to have an immediate impact. An analogy is a first aid kit to provide emergency treatment without which the patient might die. The Committee might want to consider, however, whether the waiver authority is too broad. It appears open-ended and the Committee might want to limit it in some way, for example with a dollar ceiling.

Section 6 creates a new State Department Office of International Stabilization and Reconstruction that will become the focal point for civilian operations overseas. This office indeed belongs at State, rather than at USAID, because these operations take place in the context of political crisis and State’s leadership in the overall political context is crucial. This Office should be populated with civilian and military personnel from all interested agencies, and the exchange programs and detail authorities included in the bill will support that requirement. A suggestion to strengthen this section further is to add a

new subsection 3(F) under “functions” which would make it clear that this Office would “support and oversee the operations of the Response Readiness Corps/Reserve when its members are deployed”.

Civilian operations in these missions need to be rapidly deployable and they need depth. Section 7 of the bill does both. The Response Readiness Corps is to be rapidly deployable and the Response Readiness Reserve will provide the depth. The incentives provided for those who join these groups are useful, but given the potential physical danger inherent in these jobs, the Committee might consider even bolder incentives. For example, recruitment bonuses might be paid, additional danger pay could be provided, and time towards retirement could be doubled during the deployment.

Section 8 provides for vital training and education for the members of the Response Readiness Corps/Reserve. As the bill suggests, the foundation for this already resides at the National Defense University, in conjunction with the Foreign Service Institute and the Army War College. The expansion of this educational effort appears to be properly funded. My only suggestion here is that civilians should participate in this special curriculum together with military officers, perhaps in equal proportions.

Mr. Chairman, let me end by commending you and the Committee for the process that led to this legislation and for inviting me to participate. I believe the legislation that you have produced will be vital to America’s ability to better deal with failed states and post-conflict situations.

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