United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

November 2007

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps

GAO-08-39

November 2007

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps

GAO Accountability · Integrity · Reliability

Highlights

Highlights of GAO-08-39, a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2004, the Department of State created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization to coordinate U.S. planning and implementation of stabilization and reconstruction operations. In December 2005, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), charging State with improving coordination, planning, and implementation of such operations and ensuring that the United States can respond quickly and effectively to overseas crises. GAO was asked to report on State's efforts to improve (1) interagency planning and coordination for stabilization and reconstruction operations, and (2) deployment of civilians to these operations. To address these objectives, we conducted interviews with officials and reviewed documents from U.S. agencies and government and private research centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State clarify and communicate roles and responsibilities within State for stabilization and reconstruction operations and complete development and apply all elements of the framework to an actual operation. GAO also recommends that when considering authorizing the Civilian Reserve Corps, Congress require State to report on its development, annual, and deployment costs; types of missions; and obstacles that could affect its operations. In comments on a draft of this report, State said it partially concurs with the recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-39. For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is developing a framework for planning and coordinating U.S. reconstruction and stabilization operations. The National Security Council (NSC) has adopted two of three primary elements of the framework—the Interagency Management System and procedures for initiating the framework's use. However, the third element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—is still in progress. We cannot determine how effective the framework will be because it has not been fully applied to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. In addition, guidance on agencies' roles and responsibilities is unclear and inconsistent, and the lack of an agreed-upon definition for stabilization and reconstruction operations poses an obstacle to interagency collaboration. Moreover, some interagency partners stated that senior officials have shown limited support for the framework and S/CRS. Some partners described the new planning process, as presented in early versions of the planning guide, as cumbersome and too time consuming for the results it has produced. S/CRS has taken steps to strengthen the framework by addressing some interagency concerns and providing training to interagency partners. However, differences in the planning capacities and procedures of civilian agencies and the military pose obstacles to effective coordination.

State has begun developing three civilian corps that can deploy rapidly to international crises, but key details for establishing and maintaining these units remain unresolved. First, State created the Active Response Corps (ARC) and the Standby Response Corps (SRC) comprised of U.S. government employees to act as first responders to international crises and has worked with several agencies to create similar units. However, these efforts are limited due to State's difficulty in achieving planned staffing levels for ARC, a lack of training available to SRC volunteers, other agencies' inability to secure resources for operations unrelated to their core domestic missions, and the possibility that deploying employees to such operations can leave units without sufficient staff. Second, in 2004, State began developing the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC). CRC would be comprised of U.S. civilians who have skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations, such as police officers, civil engineers, public administrators, and judges that are not readily available within the U.S. government. If deployed, volunteers would become federal workers. S/CRS developed a plan to recruit the first 500 volunteers, and NSC has approved a plan to increase the roster to 2,000 volunteers in 2009. In May 2007, State received the authority to reallocate up to $50 million to support and maintain CRC, but it does not yet have the authority to obligate these funds. In addition, issues related to volunteers' compensation and benefits that could affect CRC recruitment and management would require congressional action. Furthermore, State has not clearly defined the types of missions for which CRC would be deployed. State has estimated the costs to establish and sustain CRC at home, but these costs do not include costs for deploying and sustaining volunteers overseas.

Contents

Letter 1

Results in Brief 3
Background 5
State's Interagency Planning Framework Lacks Full NSC Approval, Clear Guidance, and Interagency Support 6
State Has Not Addressed Key Details for Establishing and Maintaining Rapid Deployment Corps 21
Conclusions 30
Recommendations for Executive Action 31
Matter for Congressional Consideration 31
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 31

Appendix I **Scope and Methodology** 34

Appendix II **Comments from the Department of Commerce** 37

Appendix III **Comments from the Department of State** 39

GAO Response to State's Comments 52

Appendix IV **GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments** 55

Tables

Table 1: State's Estimated Startup Costs for CRC for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009 29
Table 2: Agencies and Research Centers Contacted for GAO Review 34

Figures

Figure 1: Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations 9
Figure 2: Draft Planning Guide for Integrated U.S. Government Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations 11

Abbreviations

ACT	Advance Civilian Team
ARC	Active Response Corps
CRC	Civilian Reserve Corps
CRSG	Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group
DFA	Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance
DOD	Department of Defense
FACT	Field Advance Civilian Team
IMS	Interagency Management System
IPC	Integration Planning Cell
NSC	National Security Council
NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
S/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization
SRC	Standby Response Corps
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. It may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.

GAO
Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

November 6, 2007

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Vic Snyder
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable W. Todd Akin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The United States has determined that weak and failing states pose significant threats to its national security and is committed to helping countries prevent or emerge from conflict. According to the Defense Science Board, since the end of the Cold War the United States has begun stabilization and reconstruction operations every 18 to 24 months, with each operation typically lasting 5 to 8 years.[1] Following problems with reconstruction efforts in Iraq in 2003, an internal Department of State (State) report noted that the U.S. government had no standing civilian capacity to plan, implement, or manage stabilization and reconstruction operations. Stabilization and reconstruction operations include efforts to re-establish security, strengthen governance, rebuild infrastructure, and improve social and economic well-being.

In December 2005, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), which recognized that the United States has a significant stake in enhancing its capacity to stabilize and reconstruct

[1]The Defense Science Board defines stabilization and reconstruction as the period following the cessation of high-intensity conflict. See DOD, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, *2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities* (Washington, D.C.: December 2004).

countries or regions. NSPD-44 directed the Secretary of State to coordinate and lead U.S. government stabilization and reconstruction operations. The Secretary of State delegated the implementation of this directive to the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS).[2] In addition, the directive established a National Security Council (NSC) committee to lead interagency efforts to improve planning and coordination for reconstruction and stabilization operations and to develop a strong civilian response capability. The committee is co-chaired by the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and NSC.

In this report, we review S/CRS's efforts to improve (1) interagency planning and coordination for stabilization and reconstruction operations, and (2) the deployment of civilians to these operations.[3]

To complete our work, we reviewed the legislation that created S/CRS, National Security Presidential Directives, the National Security Strategy of the United States, the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, S/CRS planning guidance, plans for several ongoing stabilization and reconstruction operations, budget requests, and funding allocations. In addition, we interviewed officials from eight executive agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense (DOD), Homeland Security, Justice, State, and the Treasury, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); former senior S/CRS officials; and experts from U.S. government and private research centers. We asked agency officials about their agencies' roles and responsibilities for planning and executing stabilization and reconstruction operations, the development of a proposed framework for planning and executing such operations, and the development of new capabilities for deploying U.S. federal government

[2]In August 2004, State created S/CRS under the Secretary of State's authority. Congress subsequently authorized the office in section 408 of the Fiscal Year 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. L. 108-447, Div. B, Title IV, sec. 408).

[3]We provided preliminary observations on our findings in testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, House Armed Services Committee. See GAO, *Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions Needed to Improve Governmentwide Planning and Capabilities for Future Operations*, GAO-08-228T (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 30, 2007).

personnel to overseas crises. Finally, we reviewed related GAO reports.[4] We conducted our review from July 2006 to October 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. A detailed description of our scope and methodology is included in appendix I.

Results in Brief

S/CRS is developing a framework for U.S. agencies to use when planning and coordinating reconstruction and stabilization operations for countries at risk of, in, or emerging from conflict. The framework includes procedures and guidance to plan and coordinate reconstruction and stabilization operations under NSPD-44. NSC has adopted two of three elements of the framework—the Interagency Management System (IMS), and procedures for initiating the framework's use.[5] However, the third element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—is still in progress. We cannot determine how effective the framework will be since it has not been fully applied to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. In addition, guidance on the roles and responsibilities of State's bureaus and offices is unclear and inconsistent, and the lack of an agreed-upon definition for what constitutes a stabilization and reconstruction operation poses an obstacle to interagency collaboration. Moreover, some interagency partners said senior officials have shown limited support for the framework and for S/CRS, and some described the proposed interagency planning process, as outlined in early versions of the planning guide, as cumbersome and too time consuming for the results it has produced. S/CRS has taken steps to strengthen the framework by addressing agencies' concerns and providing training to interagency participants. However, differences between the planning capacities and procedures of U.S. government civilian agencies and the military pose obstacles to effective coordination.

[4]In May 2007, we reported on DOD's efforts to elevate stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations to the same level as combat operations. GAO, *Military Operations: Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning*, GAO-07-549 (Washington, D.C.: May 31, 2007). See also GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2006).

[5]In this report, we use the term "framework" to refer to the key elements developed to plan and coordinate reconstruction and stabilization operations under NSPD-44. The first section of our report discusses three elements for planning these operations, while civilian response mechanisms, which S/CRS considers a fourth element, are discussed in the second section of this report.

State has begun developing three civilian corps—another element of the framework—to deploy rapidly to international crises, but key details for establishing and maintaining these units remain unresolved. First, State created two units—the Active Response Corps (ARC) and the Standby Response Corps (SRC)—comprised of U.S. government employees to act as first responders to international crises. State also has collaborated with other U.S. government agencies involved in such operations to create similar units. However, these efforts are limited due to (1) State's difficulties in achieving planned staffing levels for ARC and providing training opportunities available to SRC volunteers, (2) other agencies' inability to secure resources for operations unrelated to their core missions, and (3) the possibility that deploying agency staff and SRC volunteers would result in staff shortages at their home units. Second, in 2004, State began developing the initial concept for the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC), which would be made up of U.S. civilians who have skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations, such as civil engineers, police officers, judges, and public administrators, that are not readily available within the U.S. government. CRC personnel would become full-time term federal employees once they are deployed. S/CRS developed a plan to recruit the first 500 volunteers, and NSC has approved a plan to expand the roster to 2,000 volunteers in 2009. In May 2007, State received the authority to reallocate up to $50 million to support and maintain CRC, but it does not yet have the authority to obligate these funds. In addition, issues related to volunteers' compensation and benefits that could affect CRC recruitment and management would require congressional actions. Furthermore, State has not yet clearly defined the types of missions for which CRC would be deployed. Finally, State has estimated costs for establishing CRC and keeping it ready to deploy. However, these estimates do not include costs for deploying CRC personnel to other countries or sustaining them while there.

We recommend that the Secretary of State clarify and communicate roles and responsibilities within the Department of State for stabilization and reconstruction operations, and work with interagency partners to complete and test the framework by applying all of its elements to an actual operation. We also recommend that Congress, when considering whether to authorize the establishment of CRC, should consider requiring the Secretary to report on CRC's development, sustainment, deployment, and the types of operations for which it would be used, and potential obstacles that could affect recruitment, retention, and deployment of volunteers, to better understand the long-term fiscal and oversight commitments that would accompany its authorization.

The Department of Commerce (Commerce) and State provided written comments on a draft of this report (see apps. II and III). State's comments included a joint response from State, DOD, and USAID. Commerce stated that the report provided a good overview of the new planning process but did not comment on the report's recommendations. State partially concurred with GAO's recommendations but noted that recent progress S/CRS made developing the planning and coordination framework and CRC was under reported. In the joint State, DOD, and USAID response, the agencies stated they are committed to the new framework and reiterated State's point that the draft report did not reflect the achievements made over recent months. The agencies did not comment on the report's recommendations or matter for congressional consideration. The Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Justice, and State and USAID also provided technical comments, which were incorporated into the report, as appropriate. The Departments of Homeland Security and the Treasury were provided copies of the draft report but did not comment. We disagree with the assertion that our draft report did not reflect changes that have occurred since the completion of our fieldwork. We completed our initial audit work in August 2007 and included in our draft report discussions and assessments on the framework elements NSC approved in March 2007 and on civilian response mechanisms. Our draft report did not include NSC-approved details for ARC, SRC, and CRC because those details were not provided until October 2007. We incorporated this new information into our final report, as well as other information from written and technical comments from six agencies. Our findings, conclusions, and recommendations reflect the status of the planning framework and CRC as of October 2007.

Background

Following problems with reconstruction efforts in Iraq in the fall of 2003, an internal State report concluded that the U.S. government had no standing civilian capacity to plan, implement, or manage stabilization and reconstruction operations; and the United States had relied on ad hoc processes for planning and executing these efforts. State recommended the establishment of a new office to provide a centralized, permanent structure for planning and coordinating the civilian response to stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Accordingly, in August 2004, Secretary of State Powell announced the creation of S/CRS to coordinate U.S. efforts to prepare, plan, and resource responses to complex emergencies, failing and failed states, and post-conflict environments. Such efforts could involve establishing security, building basic public services, and supporting economic development. The

Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 granted statutory authorization for S/CRS within the Office of the Secretary of State.[6]

In December 2005, President Bush issued NSPD-44 to improve the coordination, planning, and implementation of reconstruction and stabilization operations. NSPD-44 assigned the Secretary of State responsibility for planning and coordinating U.S. government stabilization and reconstruction operations in countries and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife. The Secretary, in turn, delegated implementation of the directive to the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. NSPD-44 identifies the specific roles, responsibilities, and coordination requirements of U.S. government agencies that would likely participate in stabilization and reconstruction operations. It also requires State to lead the development of a civilian response capability, including the capacity to ensure that the United States can respond quickly and effectively to overseas crises. Finally, NSPD-44 established the NSC Policy Coordination Committee[7] for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations, which is co-chaired by the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and NSC, and is comprised of representatives from other executive agencies.

State's Interagency Planning Framework Lacks Full NSC Approval, Clear Guidance, and Interagency Support

S/CRS has led an interagency effort to develop a framework for planning and coordinating U.S. stabilization and reconstruction operations. NSC has adopted two of three elements of the framework—the Interagency Management System and procedures for initiating its use. One element—a guide for planning stabilization and reconstruction operations—is still in progress. As of October 2007, the framework has not been fully applied to any operation. In addition, guidance on roles and responsibilities for State's bureaus and offices is unclear and inconsistent, and the lack of an agreed-upon definition of a stabilization and reconstruction operation poses an obstacle to interagency collaboration. In addition, some interagency partners have shown limited support for the framework and S/CRS. Some partners described the proposed interagency planning process as cumbersome and time consuming. S/CRS is taking steps to strengthen the framework's effectiveness by addressing agencies'

[6]*Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005* (Pub. L. 108-447, sec. 408).

[7]NSC policy coordination committees manage the development and implementation of national security policies and serve as the main day-to-day mechanism for interagency coordination of national security policies.

concerns and providing training to interagency partners, but differences between the planning capacities and procedures of U.S. government civilian agencies and the military pose obstacles to effective coordination.

S/CRS Has Led the Development of an Interagency Framework for Planning and Coordinating U.S. Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

S/CRS has led an NSC interagency group to create a framework for developing specific reconstruction and stabilization plans under NSPD-44. Sixteen U.S. agencies participated in NSC interagency working groups tasked with developing the framework,[8] including DOD. The framework is intended to guide the development of U.S. planning for reconstruction and stabilization operations by facilitating coordination across federal agencies and aligning interagency efforts at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Key elements of the framework include

- the Interagency Management System (IMS) for managing high-priority and highly complex crises and operations,
- a guide for planning specific reconstruction and stabilization operations, and
- procedures for initiating government-wide planning, including the IMS and the planning guide.[9]

IMS, the first element of the framework, was created to manage high-priority and highly complex crises and operations. IMS is a system for guiding communication and coordination between Washington policymakers and Chiefs of Mission, and civilian and military planners. In March 2007, NSC approved IMS and, with the Cabinet Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries, would determine whether IMS is required for a specific operation. If IMS is used, it would consist of three interagency groups: a Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG), an

[8]The Policy Coordination Committee for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations created interagency working groups to develop plans and processes for implementing NSPD-44 that focus on sectors of reconstruction and stabilization, such as transitional security and rule of law, humanitarian response and social well-being, and conflict prevention and mitigation. Among other responsibilities, each working group was tasked with identifying current reconstruction and stabilization capabilities and gaps in those capabilities; lessons learned; and issues for diplomatic outreach.

[9]United States Joint Forces Command J7 and Department of State, Pamphlet Version 1.0, U.S., *Government Draft Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (December 2005).

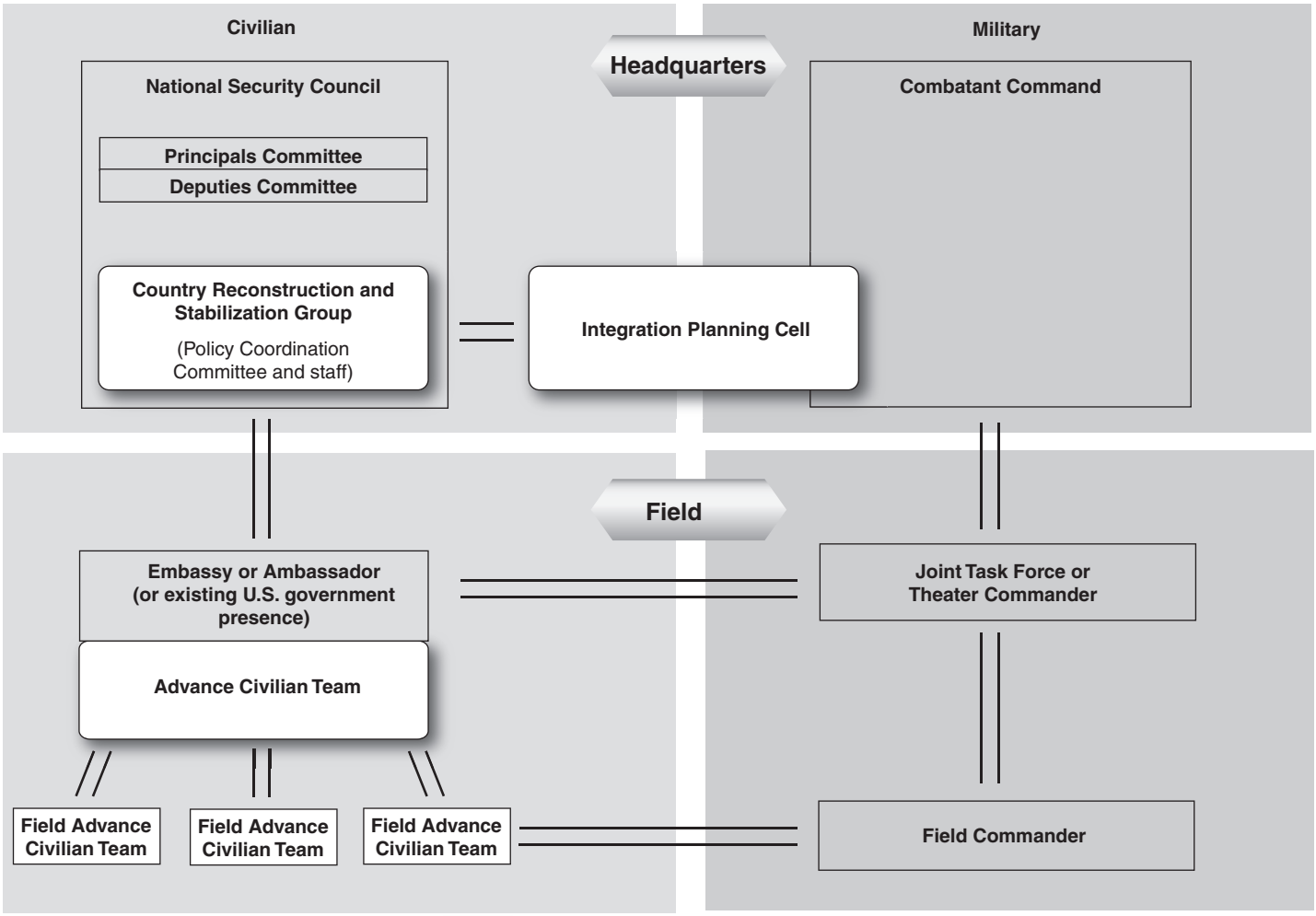
Integration Planning Cell (IPC), and an Advance Civilian Team (ACT) (see fig. 1).

CRSG would be responsible for developing and integrating U.S. government policies, integrating civilian and military plans, and mobilizing civilian responses to stabilization and reconstruction operations. It would be comprised of the NSC policy coordination committee responsible for the country or region and would be supported by a secretariat comprised of staff from multiple agencies that develop the plans in conjunction with Chiefs of Mission and the U.S. military. CRSG also would mobilize resources, monitor and evaluate implementation, and coordinate with international partners.

IPC would be responsible for integrating U.S. civilian agencies' plans with military operations. IPC members would include civilian agency staff with country-specific, functional, or planning expertise. IPC would be located at the headquarters of the military combatant command responsible for planning military operations but would report to the CRSG rather than the combatant commander. IPC would not be formed when planning and implementing operations that do not require military actions.

ACT would be deployed to the U.S. embassy, if one exists, to set up, coordinate, and conduct field operations and provide implementation planning and civilian-operations expertise to the Chief of Mission and military field commanders. ACT could be supported by Field Advance Civilian Teams (FACT) to help implement reconstruction and stabilization programs at the provincial or local levels.

Figure 1: Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations



Sources: GAO analysis of Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization and S/CRS documents.

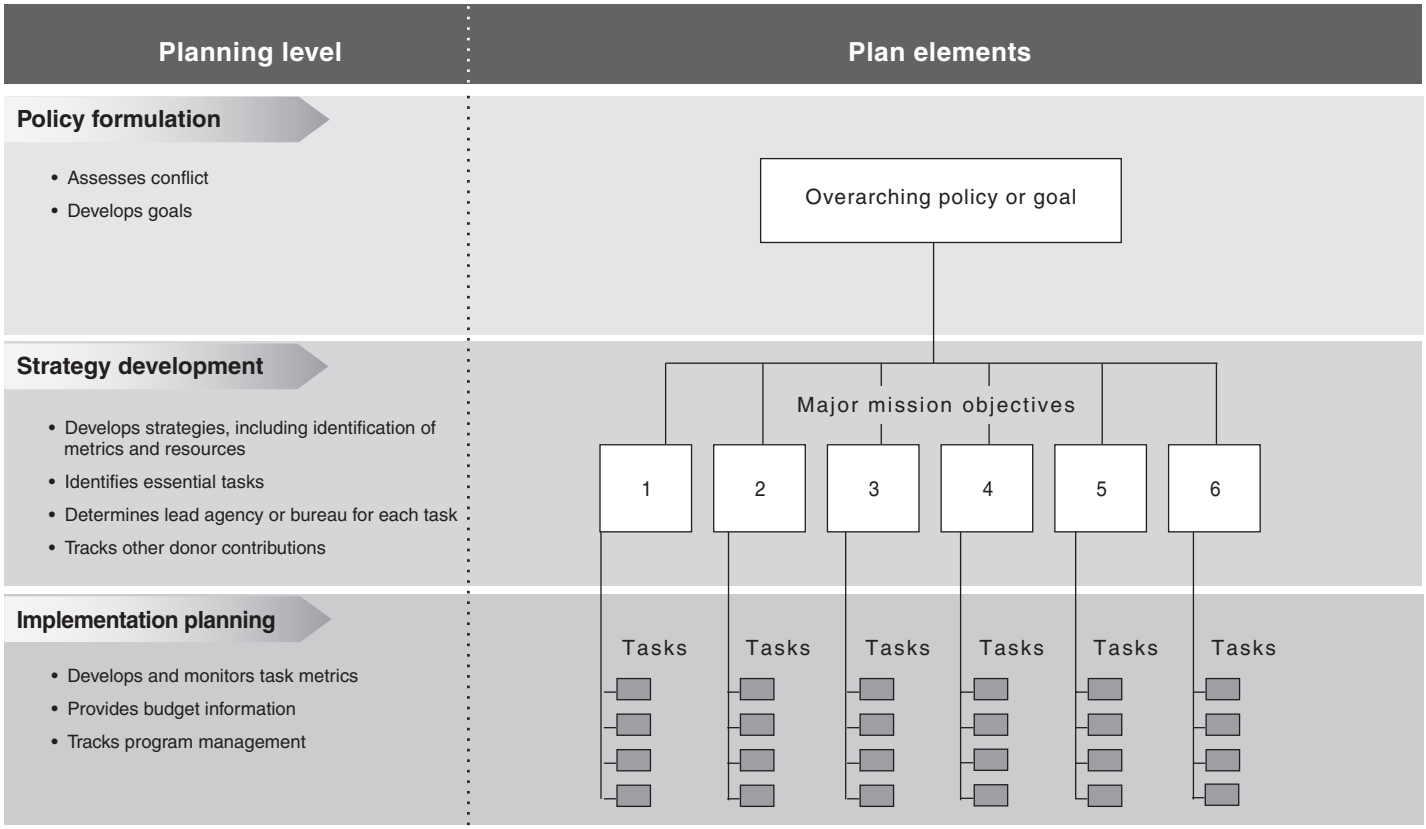
Note: The U.S. military may or may not be involved in specific operations. The figure shows operations that include U.S. military efforts. NSPD-44 also charges State with coordinating U.S. reconstruction and stabilization efforts with foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. Although important, these areas lie outside the scope of our review and are not included in the figure.

The second element of the framework, the planning guide, has not been approved by NSC because State is rewriting the guide to address interagency concerns. Although NSC is not required to approve the planning guide, S/CRS officials stated that NSC approval would strengthen

the framework's overall standing among interagency partners. Without NSC approval, the framework lacks the authority needed for interagency use. The planning guide divides planning for stabilization and reconstruction operations into three levels: policy formulation, strategy development, and implementation planning (see fig. 2). As currently envisioned, the guide states that goals and objectives at each level should be achievable; have well-defined measures for determining progress; and have goals, objectives, and planned activities that are clearly linked. At the first level of planning, policy formulation, Washington-based policymakers would articulate the overall goal or desired outcome the United States plans to achieve.[10] At the second level, strategy development, the same Washington policymakers, in conjunction with the relevant Chiefs of Mission, would define the major objectives and essential tasks necessary to achieve the overarching policy goal, the resources necessary for completing each objective, and the implementing agency or bureau. At the third level, implementation planning, the agencies, bureaus, and overseas posts responsible for implementing the programs and tasks for achieving the objectives would develop work plans, resource requirements, and metrics for monitoring progress.

[10]Washington policymakers would include NSC, Assistant Secretaries for State's regional bureaus and their counterparts at other civilian agencies, the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, and DOD.

Figure 2: Draft Planning Guide for Integrated U.S. Government Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations



Sources: GAO analysis of draft planning guide for reconstruction and stabilization and S/CRS documents.

The third element, which the NSC approved in March 2007, establishes procedures for using the framework when agencies are responding to an actual or imminent crisis or engaging in long-term scenario-based planning. Factors that may trigger a U.S. response to a crisis include the potential for significant military action in the near-term; actual or imminent state failure; events with significant potential to undermine regional stability and development progress, such as coups, economic collapse, or severe environmental damage; large-scale displacement of people; and impending or actual genocide, ethnic cleansing, or massive and grave human-rights violations. Planning for crisis responses may be initiated by the NSC (including the Cabinet Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, or Policy Coordination Committees) or by a direct request from the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense. Long-term scenario planning may be conducted for crises that may emerge within 2 to 3 years. NSC, Chiefs of Mission, and Regional Assistant Secretaries of

State may request the initiation of long-term scenario-based planning based on five criteria: (1) the potential impact on U.S. national security and foreign-policy objectives; (2) the regional impact or scale of humanitarian needs; (3) the potential for significant U.S. military involvement; (4) the probability of a crisis occurring, as indicated by U.S. government agencies, the United Nations, or other international organizations; and (5) the ability of the affected country or neighboring countries to respond to a crisis.

As of October 2007, the framework has not been fully applied to any stabilization and reconstruction operation. S/CRS and interagency partners have used draft versions of the planning guide to plan operations in Haiti, Sudan, and Kosovo, but implementation of the resulting plans has been limited. Only the plan for Haiti was implemented. The plan for Sudan was not implemented because it was completed just as the government of Sudan and opposition groups signed a peace accord. Interagency planning for potential operations in Kosovo is ongoing.

According to State officials, the administration is using interagency processes created in *NSPD-1 National Security Council System* for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. NSPD-1 established the process for coordinating executive departments and agencies in the development and implementation of national security policies, which includes the interagency Principals Committee, Deputies Committee, and policy coordination committees.[11] In May 2004, the President issued NSPD-36 to direct U.S. operations in Iraq following the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi government. This directive made State responsible for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. government employees, policies, and activities in Iraq, except those under the command of an area military commander or seconded to an international organization. According to the directive, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command—under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense—continues to be responsible for U.S. efforts with respect to security and military operations in Iraq, including U.S. efforts in support of training and equipping Iraqi security forces. In April 2006, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and the U.S.-led Multi-National Force-Iraq developed their first joint campaign plan for Iraq and issued a revision to their joint plan in July 2007.

[11]NSPD-1 organized NSC and its committees for the current administration. NSPD-1 placed oversight of stabilization and reconstruction operations under the six regional Policy Coordination Committees, which are chaired by officials of Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary rank, designated by the Secretary of State.

Guidance Lacks Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities and a Common Definition for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations

We found that NSPD-44, related State and administration guidance, and the planning framework collectively do not provide clear direction in three key areas. First, S/CRS's roles and responsibilities conflict with those assigned to State's regional bureaus and Chiefs of Mission in the *Foreign Affairs Manual*. Second, guidance is inconsistent regarding S/CRS's responsibilities for conflict prevention efforts, which could compromise the office's ability to fulfill its mandate. Third, the lack of a common definition for reconstruction and stabilization operations poses an obstacle to interagency collaboration.

First, S/CRS's roles and responsibilities conflict with those of State's regional bureaus and Chiefs of Mission. In October 2005, we reported that collaborating agencies must agree on how to lead collaborative efforts.[12] According to the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, each regional bureau is responsible for U.S. foreign relations with countries within a given region, including providing overall direction, coordination, and supervision of U.S. activities in the region.[13] In addition, Chiefs of Mission have authority over all U.S. government staff and activities in their countries.[14] As S/CRS initially interpreted NSPD-44, S/CRS's roles and responsibilities included leading, planning, and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations; these responsibilities conflict with those of the regional bureaus and Chiefs of Mission. S/CRS officials stated that they expected the next version of the *Foreign Affairs Manual* to include a clearly defined and substantive description of the office's roles.

Second, guidance varies regarding S/CRS's responsibility for preventing conflicts. NSPD-44 and the memo announcing S/CRS's creation include conflict prevention as one of the office's responsibilities. However, S/CRS's authorizing legislation and the State memo aligning S/CRS with the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance (DFA) do not explicitly include conflict prevention as a responsibility. Ambiguity about S/CRS's prevention role could result in inadequate prevention efforts. A DOD official in the Global Strategic Partnerships office stated that responsibility for prevention is not currently assigned to anyone, and the work might not be done without such an assignment.

[12] GAO-06-15.

[13] *Foreign Affairs Manual*, 1 FAM 112 (a).

[14] 22 U.S.C. 3927.

Third, the lack of a common definition for reconstruction and stabilization operations poses an obstacle to effective collaboration under the framework. In our October 2005 report, we found that collaborative efforts require agency staff to define and articulate a common outcome or purpose.[15] While the framework includes definitions for reconstruction and stabilization, it does not define what constitutes stabilization or reconstruction operations or explain how these operations differ from other types of military and civilian foreign assistance operations, such as counterinsurgency operations, counterterrorism operations, and standard development assistance. In addition, while S/CRS has developed a list of basic terms related to reconstruction and stabilization, staff from other bureaus and agencies had different definitions of these terms. As a result, it is not clear when agencies and bureaus are expected to apply the framework. S/CRS staff said that it is difficult to clearly define reconstruction and stabilization and difficult to determine when a response to a crisis constitutes a reconstruction or stabilization operation. Prior GAO work shows that the lack of a clear definition can pose an obstacle to improved planning and coordination of reconstruction and stabilization operations. In our previous report on DOD's stability operations approach, GAO found that the lack of a clear and consistent definition of stability operations caused confusion among military planners and limited progress in strengthening stability-operations capability.[16]

Civilian Interagency Partners Have Concerns about S/CRS and the Planning Framework

State and other U.S. civilian agencies have concerns about the planning framework for three key reasons. First, some civilian interagency partners are concerned that S/CRS is assuming their traditional roles and responsibilities. Staff from one of State's regional bureaus believed that S/CRS had enlarged its role in a way that conflicted with the Regional Assistant Secretary's responsibility for leading an operation and coordinating with interagency partners. USAID staff noted how their agency had planned and coordinated reconstruction operations in the past and questioned why S/CRS now had these roles. Although most agency staff and outside experts we interviewed agreed that interagency coordination should improve, some USAID and State employees questioned why NSC was not given the primary role for planning and

[15]GAO-06-15.

[16]GAO-07-549.

coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations or for implementing NSPD-44.

USAID and regional bureau staffs also said some aspects of the planning framework were unrealistic, ineffective, and redundant since interagency teams had already devised planning processes for ongoing operations in accordance with NSPD-1. For example, planning for U.S. assistance to Sudan and Darfur before 2005 was led by State's Bureau of African Affairs. In 2005, S/CRS applied an early version of the planning guide to ongoing efforts in Sudan. USAID staff involved in both the regional bureau-led planning and S/CRS-led planning stated they were frustrated that S/CRS staff were not well-versed in Sudan policy and had to be educated before planning could occur. Other staff said S/CRS should focus more on filling the gaps in planning and operational mechanisms and focus less on policy development.

Concerns about roles and responsibilities have led to confusion and disputes about who should lead policy development and control resource allocation. As a result, some of State's regional bureaus have resisted applying the new interagency planning process to particular reconstruction and stabilization operations. S/CRS staff said one regional bureau discouraged the office's involvement in a country that S/CRS identified as appropriate for the framework; another bureau is generally reluctant to allow S/CRS to participate in its efforts in the region. In addition, State and other agency staff said S/CRS had conflicts with DFA over which office controlled resource allocation for these operations. These disputes made it difficult for S/CRS to coordinate and plan reconstruction and stabilization operations using the framework.

Second, some interagency partners stated that senior officials have provided limited support for S/CRS and its planning framework. In our October 2005 report, we stated that committed leadership from all levels of an organization is needed to overcome the barriers that exist when working across agency boundaries.[17] Staffs from various State offices said senior officials did not communicate strong support for S/CRS or the expectation that State and interagency partners should follow its framework for planning and coordinating reconstruction and stabilization operations. In addition, S/CRS was not selected to lead planning for recent high-priority operations. When the office was created in 2004, S/CRS and

[17]GAO-06-15.

other State officials agreed that it would not focus efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq because these operations had existing processes, and policymakers feared that the scope of those operations would overwhelm S/CRS. However, S/CRS has not been given key roles for operations that emerged after its creation, such as the ongoing efforts in Lebanon and Somalia, which several officials and experts stated are the types of operations S/CRS was created to address. These officials and experts stated that S/CRS has a large responsibility but little authority and no resources to achieve it.

Third, interagency partners believe the planning process, as outlined in the draft planning guide, is too cumbersome and time consuming for the results it produces. Officials who participated in the planning for Haiti stated that the process provided more systematic planning, better identification of interagency goals and responsibilities, and better identification of sequencing and resource requirements. However, some officials involved in planning operations for Haiti and Sudan stated that using the framework was time consuming, involved long meetings and extra work hours for staff, and was cumbersome to use because it was overly focused on process details. Staff also said that, in some cases, the planning process did not improve outcomes or increase resources, particularly since S/CRS has few resources to offer. Other officials were frustrated when S/CRS processes were applied to interagency planning efforts that they believed were already functioning. As a result of these concerns, officials from some offices and agencies expressed reluctance to work with S/CRS on future reconstruction and stabilization plans.

State Is Taking Steps to Revise and Strengthen the Framework

State is taking steps to strengthen the framework by revising and updating its draft planning guide based on feedback from other agencies and participants. S/CRS said it would commit to ensuring that the S/CRS-facilitated planning process is not duplicative or overly burdensome relative to its results and intends to provide assistance to State regional bureaus.[18] S/CRS also said the revisions would provide more details about

[18]State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, *Update to Draft USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (Washington, D.C.: August 2006). When S/CRS and U.S. Joint Forces Command issued the first draft in December 2005, they distributed it to stakeholder agencies and requested their feedback. S/CRS is currently developing a revised framework based on stakeholders' comments.

the framework's implementation at the field level and metrics to assess progress.

State officials also said S/CRS's realignment under DFA would strengthen S/CRS's control over reconstruction and stabilization resources. On March 12, 2007, the Secretary of State aligned S/CRS with DFA, while still maintaining a direct reporting relationship between S/CRS and the Office of the Secretary. DFA is charged with reorganizing U.S. foreign assistance and has authority over all State and USAID foreign-assistance funding and programs. However, it is not clear how the change will affect S/CRS's role and the use of the framework. DFA has procedures and tools to guide the development of operational plans for foreign assistance, and its staff said some of those processes would likely be applied to S/CRS planning.

According to S/CRS officials, S/CRS and DFA have recently developed a more productive working relationship than they had in the past. For example, the two organizations recently settled a dispute over funds State could receive from DOD under section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006. This act authorized the Secretary of Defense to transfer up to $100 million per year in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 to State to be applied to stabilization and reconstruction operations.[19] According to State and DOD staff, in 2006 only $10 million was transferred to State due to a dispute between S/CRS and DFA over which office controlled the money. However, according to the March 2007 memo aligning S/CRS with DFA, S/CRS would be responsible for overseeing the transfer and use of these funds. S/CRS provided documents that indicated that State had obligated approximately $99.7 million of the $100 million available under section 1207 for fiscal year 2007. This funding was applied to ongoing stabilization and reconstruction operations in Haiti, Nepal, Columbia, Yemen, and Somalia; to the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership; and to infrastructure, economic development, rule of law programs, and counterterrorism activities in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In addition, S/CRS participated in DFA's review of U.S. assistance to some countries for fiscal year 2008 and, as S/CRS acquires

[19]Pub. L. 109-163, sec. 1207.

new staff, it plans to assume responsibility for the budget process of countries in DFA's "rebuilding" category.[20]

Although S/CRS has not finished updating the framework guide or determined its role under DFA, it has taken other steps to strengthen the use of the framework and prepare interagency partners to coordinate effectively. For example, S/CRS offers Foreign Service Institute courses to train interagency participants in planning stabilization and reconstruction operations, leading and managing interagency coordination for such operations, and applying tools for early warning and conflict assessment. S/CRS reported that 352 federal employees participated in its training courses in 2006 and 452 employees participated in 2007.[21] The majority of participants were from State, DOD, and USAID, although S/CRS reported that staff from seven other agencies also attended classes. Course instructors said it was difficult to attract participants from other agencies and described advertising to those agencies as ad hoc, in part because the Foreign Service Institute does not have an up-to-date list of contacts. S/CRS staff said they were exploring other strategies for recruiting course participants, such as identifying key agency leaders who agree that their staffs should attend.[22] S/CRS also has developed tools and information to strengthen reconstruction and stabilization operations, such as information on guiding concepts and terms and tools for early warning and prevention, assessing best practices, and applying lessons learned.

[20]DFA developed the Foreign Assistance Framework to guide the budget process for foreign-assistance programs. The framework identifies five categories of countries receiving foreign assistance including rebuilding, developing, transforming, sustaining partnership, and restricting. The rebuilding category includes countries "in or emerging from and rebuilding after internal or external strife."

[21]This figure includes S/CRS staff who received the training. In addition, several GAO staff participated in courses in fiscal year 2007 to obtain information about the S/CRS framework and the office's efforts to train interagency staff.

[22]State currently pays tuition for non-State participants, and staff said other agencies do not have funds available for this purpose.

Differences between Military and Civilian Planning Pose Obstacles to Coordination

Although S/CRS made efforts to strengthen both coordination and the commitment of key DOD officials to the goals of S/CRS, several differences in military and civilian planning capacities and procedures pose obstacles to effective coordination.[23] First, differences in planning capacities and resources make coordination difficult. In our report on DOD's stability operations approach,[24] we found that DOD and non-DOD organizations do not fully understand each other's planning processes, and non-DOD organizations have limited capacity to participate in DOD's full range of planning activities. State officials noted its planning differs from DOD's; State is more focused on current operations and less focused on the wide range of potential contingency operations for which DOD must plan. State does not have a large pool of planners who can deploy to DOD's combatant commands. DOD officials noted that their efforts to include non-DOD organizations in planning and exercise efforts were stymied by the limited number of personnel those agencies can offer. State officials indicated it does not have DOD's capacity to staff operations and planning; both DOD and State staff doubted that civilian capacity and resources would ever match the levels desired.

Second, State generally does not receive DOD military plans as they are being developed, which restricts its ability to harmonize reconstruction and stabilization efforts with military plans and operations as required by NSPD-44. DOD does not have a process in place to share, when appropriate, information with non-DOD agencies early in plan development without specific approval from the Secretary of Defense.[25] DOD's hierarchical approach limits interagency participation while plans

[23]S/CRS has emphasized the importance of close coordination between military and civilian government, while acknowledging that not all reconstruction and stabilization operations require military participation. S/CRS has been involved in more than a dozen joint exercises to practice civilian and military coordination and strengthen interagency operations. For example, S/CRS partnered with the U.S. Joint Forces Command to support Multinational Experiment 4 in February and March 2006 to test crisis coordination among eight countries and North Atlantic Treaty Organization partners. S/CRS also is coordinating interagency input into the U.S. Joint Forces Command-led Multinational Experiment 5 series.

[24]GAO-07-549.

[25]Specifically, DOD officials stated that DOD's policy is not to share DOD contingency plans with agencies or offices outside DOD unless directed to do so by the Secretary of Defense, who determines their need to know. However, these officials also noted DOD's planning policies and procedures state that a Combatant Commander, with Secretary of Defense's approval, may work in coordination with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Joint Staff to seek input on plan development from other U.S. government agencies.

are being developed by the combatant commands at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. NSPD-44 working groups are developing a process for reviewing military plans, when appropriate, but are not yet ready to use it.

Third, agency staff and outside experts have found that differences in organizational structure, terminology, and information systems pose obstacles to effective coordination between military and civilian agencies. For example, S/CRS found that differences between civilian agencies' headquarters and field organization and the strategic, operational, and tactical organization of the military can make coordination more difficult.[26] The Administration's July 2007 report to Congress stated it was developing common standards and systems, including blogs and other technologies, to address inconsistencies in U.S. information management systems and to support interagency collaboration and communication.[27]

In our stability operations report,[28] we recommended that the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, provide implementation guidance on the mechanisms needed to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans; develop a process to share planning information with non-DOD agencies early in the planning process, as appropriate; and orient DOD and non-DOD personnel in each agency's planning processes and capabilities. In commenting on the report, DOD said it partially agreed with our recommendations but did not indicate the steps it would take to implement them.

[26]State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, *Update to Draft USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (Washington, D.C.: August 2006).

[27]DOD, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Report on Improving Interagency Support for United States 21st Century National Security Missions and Interagency Operations in Support of Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations* (Washington, D.C., July 19, 2007). Congress mandated this report in the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Pub. L. 109-364, sec. 1035).

[28]GAO-07-549.

State Has Not Addressed Key Details for Establishing and Maintaining Rapid Deployment Corps

State has begun developing three civilian corps to deploy rapidly to international crises but has not addressed key details for establishing and maintaining these units. First, State created two units within the department—the Active Response Corps (ARC) and the Standby Response Corps (SRC)—and has collaborated with several other U.S. government agencies to create similar units. State and other agencies, however, face challenges in establishing these units, including (1) difficulties in achieving planned staffing levels for ARC and providing training opportunities for State's SRC volunteers, (2) agencies' inabilities to secure resources for operations not viewed as part of their core missions, and (3) the possibility that deploying volunteers could result in their home units having insufficient staff. Second, in May 2007, State began an effort to establish the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC), which would be made up of U.S. civilians who have skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations, such as civil engineers, police officers, judges, and public administrators, that are not readily available within the U.S. government. If deployed, reservists would become federal employees. State, however, does not yet have congressional authority to establish the CRC or to provide the planned benefits package for CRC personnel. In addition, State has not clearly defined the types of missions for which CRC would be deployed. Further, State has estimated the costs for establishing and keeping CRC ready to deploy, including costs for recruiting, training, equipping CRC personnel, but these estimates do not include the costs of deploying CRC personnel to other countries or sustaining them once deployed.

State, USAID, and the Department of the Treasury Have Developed Some Internal Capacity to Deploy Staff Rapidly in Support of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

To meet NSPD-44 requirements for developing a strong civilian response capability, State and other U.S. agencies developed internal mechanisms to reassign personnel in support of stabilization and reconstruction operations. S/CRS has taken the lead in expanding State's internal capacity to respond to conflict by creating ARC and SRC.[29] S/CRS also collaborated with several other U.S. government agencies to initiate the development of ARC and SRC units within those agencies.

In 2006, State developed ARC within S/CRS to deploy during the initial stage of stabilization and reconstruction operations. S/CRS has 15 temporary staff positions for ARC; ARC staff serve 1-year rotations. In October 2007, 10 of the 15 authorized positions were staffed. ARC staff deploy to unstable environments to assess countries' or regions' needs and help plan, coordinate, and monitor a U.S. government response. Since 2006, ARC staff have deployed to seven locations: (1) Sudan, to help implement the Darfur Peace Agreement; (2) Eastern Chad, to monitor the displacement of civilians resulting from the conflict in Darfur; (3) Lebanon, to assist with the evacuation of American citizens and to coordinate assistance immediately following the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict; (4) Kosovo, to help plan for a follow-on to the United Nations Mission to Kosovo; (5) Liberia, to coordinate reforms of the security sector; (6) Iraq, to assist with integrating new Provincial Reconstruction Team members; and (7) Haiti, to plan the implementation and oversight of programs to improve security, local government capacity, and economic opportunity in Cité Soleil. According to S/CRS, regional bureau staff, and State's Office of the Inspector General, ARC involvement and performance in these operations has been positive. When not deployed, ARC members engage in training and other planning exercises and work with other S/CRS offices and State bureaus on related issues to gain relevant expertise.

SRC would deploy during the second stage of a surge to stabilization and reconstruction operations. SRC works to support activities of ARC when additional staff or specialized skills are required. Unlike ARC, SRC does not have not dedicated staff positions. Rather, when not deployed, current employees on the SRC roster serve in other capacities throughout State.

[29]Before the creation of ARC and SRC, State had a program to provide operational capacity for stability operations through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. However, according to the U.S. Institute for Peace, this capacity was limited to providing police for international police missions through a private contractor. U.S. Institute for Peace, *Building Civilian Capacity for U.S. Stability Operations* (Washington, D.C.:, April 2004).

Currently, SRC is composed of about 90 State employees and 210 State retirees. In July 2007, NSC approved S/CRS plans to increase SRC to a roster of 500 volunteers government-wide by fiscal year 2008, and to a roster of 2,000 volunteers government-wide by fiscal year 2009. If called upon, SRC members would be available for deployment within 60 days and could be deployed for up to 6 months. According to S/CRS staff, the office aims to have up to one-quarter of this standby corps ready for deployment at any one time. However, to date, S/CRS has deployed SRC members to only two ongoing operations: one to Sudan in support of the Darfur Peace Agreement and one to Chad to support refugees from Eastern Darfur.

Although S/CRS has started working with other U.S. agencies to establish units similar to ARC and SRC, these efforts are in very early stages. Currently, only USAID and the Department of the Treasury have established mechanisms for responding rapidly to stability and reconstruction missions. USAID uses the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Office of Transition Initiatives to respond to conflict situations.[30] In addition, USAID has started developing its own internal surge capacity and has identified 15 staff available for immediate deployment to crises. USAID's Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance developed a proposal to create a civilian reserve office to respond to stabilization and reconstruction operations and requested funds to hire, train, equip, and deploy more than 50 staff specifically for this purpose. The Department of the Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance has ongoing programs around the world and intends to build the capacity to lead long-term stability operations.[31] In addition, the Office of Technical Assistance developed the First Responder Initiative in 2004, which includes approximately 30 staff who are willing to deploy rapidly to conflict areas in support of stabilization and reconstruction operations.

[30]The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance uses Disaster Area Response Teams and Response Alternatives for Technical Services, among other mechanisms, in support of humanitarian assistance in stabilization and reconstruction missions. The office also has standing agreements with disaster assistance teams around the world that are trained and equipped to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world. The Office of Transition Initiatives has 16 staff available for deployment, but the staff take assignments by mutual consent. The staff also said that, depending on availability and needed skill sets, other employees may deploy to humanitarian missions.

[31]These programs focus on economic governance for developing countries so that their governments can become legitimate sources of power. The Office of Technical Assistance focuses on countries in failed-state environments and has deployed staff to assist operations in such places as Iraq and Haiti.

State and Other Agencies Face Challenges That Limit Their Efforts to Establish and Deploy Rapid Response Units

State and other agencies face challenges in establishing their rapid response capabilities. These challenges include (1) difficulties in achieving planned staffing levels for ARC and providing training opportunities for State's SRC volunteers, (2) agencies' inability to secure resources for operations not viewed as part of their core missions, and (3) the possibility that deploying agency staff and SRC volunteers would result in staff shortages in their home units.

S/CRS has had difficulty establishing positions and recruiting for ARC and training SRC members. S/CRS plans to increase the number of authorized staff positions for ARC from 15 temporary positions to 33 permanent positions, which State included in its 2008 budget request. However, according to S/CRS staff, it is unlikely that State will receive authority to establish all 33 positions. Although S/CRS has not had difficulty recruiting SRC volunteers, it does not presently have the capacity to ensure they are properly trained for participating in stabilization and reconstruction operations. ARC staff and SRC volunteers would be required to complete five courses offered jointly by S/CRS and the Foreign Service Institute. According to S/CRS staff, the Foreign Service Institute does not currently have the capacity to train the 1,500 new volunteers S/CRS plans to recruit in 2009. S/CRS is studying ways to correct the situation.

Although other agencies have begun to develop a stabilization and reconstruction response capacity, most have limited numbers of staff available for rapid responses to overseas crises. Most agencies' missions are domestic in nature. Nonetheless, domestic policy agencies, including the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice, operate overseas programs. However, officials from these agencies said international programs are viewed as extensions of their domestic missions.[32] As a result, it is difficult for these agencies to secure funding for cadres of on-call first and second responders.

Finally, State and other agencies said that deploying volunteers can leave home units without sufficient staff and, as a result, they must weigh the value of deploying volunteers against the needs of their units. For example, when not deployed to stabilization and reconstruction

[32]Officials from the Department of Justice said the agency is not a foreign affairs agency and its base appropriations provide for its defined missions. Funding for Justice Department stabilization and reconstruction activities is achieved through interagency agreements, generally through agreements with State and USAID pursuant to section 632 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2392).

operations, current State SRC volunteers serve normal duty rotations at overseas posts or within State's various bureaus and offices within the United States. According to State's Office of the Inspector General, S/CRS has had difficulty getting State's other units to release the SRC volunteers it wants to deploy in support of stabilization and reconstruction operations.[33] The home units of the volunteers do not want to become short of staff or lose high-performing staff to other operations. Other agencies reported a reluctance to deploy staff overseas or establish on-call units because doing so would leave fewer workers available to complete the offices' work requirements. Some civilian agencies recently agreed to identify, train, and deploy employees to stabilization and reconstruction operations provided that State fund the efforts. According to S/CRS staff, however, the training and deployment of non-State ARC and SRC would not begin until fiscal year 2009.[34]

S/CRS Has Made Efforts to Establish CRC

In 2004, S/CRS developed an initial concept for CRC, which would be deployed in support of stabilization and reconstruction operations. CRC would be comprised of U.S. civilians who have skills and experiences useful for stabilization and reconstruction operations, such as civil engineers, police officers, judges, and public administrators, that are not readily available within the U.S. government. Reservists would serve 4-year terms of voluntary service and, if called upon, would deploy for rotations of up to 1 year. Reservists would remain in their daily jobs until called upon for service and would be ready for deployment within 30 to 60 days. Deployed CRC personnel would be classified as full-time term federal employees, with the authority to speak for the U.S. government and manage U.S. government contracts and employees. Volunteers would receive training upon joining CRC and would be required to complete annual training. In addition, they would receive training specific and relevant to an operation immediately before deployment.

According to S/CRS staff, NSC has approved plans to develop a roster of 2,000 volunteers by fiscal year 2009; however, a BearingPoint study commissioned by S/CRS found that CRC would require at least 3,550

[33]State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, *Report of Inspection: Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization*, ISP-I-07-26 (Washington, D.C., May 2007).

[34]State plans to request funds to deploy interagency response teams in the fiscal year 2009 budget. Training would occur only if this request was approved.

volunteers to respond to CRC goals.[35] The BearingPoint study also noted that decisions about CRC's roster size would likely evolve over time.[36] In addition, a panel of experts convened by the Congressional Research Service concluded that the proposed roster may represent only a portion of what is likely required.[37] The panel noted that simultaneously deploying CRC to two large and one small operation, as defined by BearingPoint, could require deploying the entire CRC roster.[38] S/CRS staff said the office would assess whether to expand the roster in subsequent years.

CRC Lacks Congressional Authority in Key Areas and a Clearly Defined Mission

State cannot spend any funds for the CRC until Congress has authorized the CRC's establishment. In 2007, Congress granted State the authority to reallocate up to $50 million of Diplomatic and Consular Programs to support and maintain CRC.[39] However, the legislation specified that no money may be obligated without a subsequent act of Congress. Legislation that would authorize CRC is pending in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, but as of October 2007, neither chamber had taken action on the bills.[40]

In addition, State needs congressional authority to provide key elements of the planned compensation package for deployed volunteers. Under current plans, deployed volunteers would become full-time term federal employees and would receive compensation and benefits similar to those received by Foreign Service employees. Such compensation and benefits would include

[35]BearingPoint, *Management Study for Establishing and Managing a Civilian Reserve* (McLean, Virginia, 2006).

[36]BearingPoint, pp. 11, 69, and 71.

[37]Congressional Research Service, *A Civilian Reserve for Stabilization and Reconstruction Abroad: Summary of a Workshop on U.S. Proposals and International Experiences and Related Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C., 2007).

[38]BearingPoint's study said the reserve should be capable of deploying simultaneously to one large, one medium, and one small operation. BearingPoint defines these sizes in terms of deployment years. A large deployment year would see 900 to 1,200 volunteers deployed, a medium deployment year would see 600 to 900 volunteers deployed, and a small deployment year would see up to 600 volunteers deployed.

[39]This authority was granted in the fiscal year 2007 supplemental appropriation to fund operations in Iraq and elsewhere. See U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Pub. L. 110-28, sec. 3810).

[40]See 110th Congress, S. 613 and H.R. 1084.

- salary commensurate with experience;
- danger, hardship, and other mission-specific pays, benefits, and allowances;
- recruitment bonuses for hard-to-fill positions;
- overtime pay and compensatory time;
- leave accrual and payment for unused leave upon service completion;
- competitive hiring status;
- federal health, life, and death benefits, and medical treatment while deployed;
- dual compensation for retired federal workers; and
- the ability to count deployed time toward retirement benefits.

The pending legislation would address some of the compensation authorities needed by State to offer the full proposed benefits package to CRC personnel. Specifically, it would authorize State to provide the same compensation and benefits to deployed CRC personnel as it does to members of the Foreign Service. However, the proposed legislation does not address whether deployed CRC personnel would have competitive hiring status for other positions within State or whether the time deployed would count toward government retirement benefits. In addition, deployed personnel would not have re-employment rights similar to those for military reservists. Currently, military reservists who are voluntarily or involuntarily called into service have the right to return to their previous place of employment upon completion of their military service requirements.[41] However, the pending legislation to authorize CRC does not include similar rights for deployed CRC personnel. S/CRS staff said that the Civilian Reserve Task Force would assess whether re-employment rights are necessary based on the experience of recruiting the first 500 personnel.

[41]See Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act, 38 U.S.C. Secs. 4301-4333.

Further, S/CRS is moving the civilian reserve concept forward without a defined set of potential missions in which CRC would participate. According to S/CRS staff and pending legislation in the House and Senate that would authorize CRC, reservists would deploy to specific nonhumanitarian stabilization and reconstruction missions when called upon by the President. However, as with the planning guide and IMS, there is no agreed-upon definition for what constitutes a stabilization and reconstruction mission. S/CRS staff said they are still working through the conceptual differences between these and other types of operations, such as for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, but that under its current approach, CRC could be deployed to almost any operation in a conflict zone.

State Has Estimated Some Costs for CRC

Although State has estimated some costs for establishing and sustaining CRC at home, the estimates do not include the costs of deploying CRC personnel to other countries or sustaining them once deployed.

As shown in table 1, State has identified about $135 million in estimated costs for establishing and sustaining CRC at home during fiscal years 2008 and 2009.[42] In comparison, Bearing Point's study estimated that a 3-year startup period would cost approximately $341 million. Under current State plans, these funds would come from the fiscal year 2007 reallocation authority and from State's fiscal year 2009 budget. The administration did not request any funds for CRC in fiscal year 2008.

[42]This plan was developed by the Civilian Reserve Task Force, which is led by S/CRS, and approved by NSC in July 2007.

Table 1: State's Estimated Startup Costs for CRC for Fiscal Years 2007 through 2009

Dollars in millions			
Funding Purpose	**CRC Established with 500 Personnel**	**CRC Expanded to 2,000 Personnel**	**Total**
Marketing, recruiting, screening, and enrolling	$7.7	$17.2	**$24.9**
Training	5.1	13.1	**18.2**
Equipment Purchases	2.3	45.4	**47.7**
Administration	6.4	12.6	**19.0**
Compensation	4.2	20.7	**24.9**
Total	**$25.7**	**$109.0**	**$134.7**

Source: Department of State documents and staff.

If Congress authorizes the CRC, State plans to obligate approximately $26 million of the $50 million authority in fiscal year 2007 supplemental funds to market the program and recruit, screen, and enroll the first 500 CRC personnel, including 350 with expertise in rule of law issues ($7.7 million); train the first 500 personnel ($5.1 million); purchase equipment such as armored vehicles, police weapons, electronics, cots, tents, and body armor ($2.3 million); administer CRC, such as establishing a home office and a U.S. Deployment Center, and hiring 37 new government staff and contractor positions to manage CRC's day-to-day administrative functions ($6.4 million); and compensate CRC personnel when they are being trained ($4.2 million).

State currently estimates that it will cost about $109 million to expand the CRC to 2,000 personnel in fiscal year 2009 (see table 1). In this phase, State would hire up to 26 additional administrative staff and provide training for the new CRC volunteers.[43] As of October 2007, the Office of Management and Budget had not yet approved State's request for $109 million. The actual funding request for 2009 may differ from these estimates.

S/CRS estimates that the annual costs for sustaining at home a 2,000-volunteer CRC would be up to $47 million. According to S/CRS staff, these

[43]S/CRS stated that it would establish up to 63 total permanent and contract administrative positions depending on the actual size of CRC. These staff would be responsible for such functions as recruiting, training, logistics and supply management, payroll, and benefits management, among other duties.

annual costs include the activities needed to ensure that CRC personnel are ready to deploy. However, they do not include costs for deploying CRC personnel outside the United States or sustaining them once overseas. Deployment and overseas sustainment costs could include security costs, which may be high in a conflict zone; salaries and allowances; operation and infrastructure costs, including for facilities; and life support, such as food, lodging, and medical support.

Conclusions

Government personnel and outside experts in national security issues agree that the U.S. government must improve its capacity to plan for and execute stabilization and reconstruction operations. To address these issues, S/CRS and its interagency partners have worked to develop a new interagency planning and coordination framework and rapid response corps of civilian government and nongovernment personnel. Since the framework has never been fully applied, an understanding of its benefits and drawbacks remains unknown. However, concerns about roles and responsibilities and the value of the framework have slowed its acceptance by interagency partners. Although there is no requirement that NSC approve all elements of the framework, without such approval it will be difficult to ensure that U.S. government agencies collaborate and contribute to interagency planning efforts to the fullest extent possible.

S/CRS has not completed developing plans to fully establish and maintain CRC, but is seeking authorization to begin recruitment of CRC volunteers. Although State received authority to reallocate up to $50 million for CRC, a separate act of Congress is required to authorize CRC before State may obligate that or future funding. S/CRS has developed a plan for using this funding to train, equip, and keep ready to deploy up to 2,000 CRC personnel by fiscal year 2009. However, costs of deploying CRC personnel to operations outside of the United States or of sustaining them at their new posts are not included. In addition, S/CRS has not yet specified types of missions for which the CRC would be used. Moreover, failure to provide full benefits and re-employment rights could affect State's ability to recruit and retain personnel for CRC. These are critical elements for Congress to consider when debating the long-term commitment associated with authorizing CRC and the future oversight of CRC operations and effectiveness.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To strengthen interagency planning and coordination of stabilization and reconstruction operations, we recommend that the Secretary of State clarify and communicate specific roles and responsibilities within State for S/CRS and the regional bureaus, including updating the *Foreign Affairs Manual*.

In addition, we recommend that the Secretary, with the assistance of interagency partners, finish developing the framework and test its usefulness by fully applying it to a stabilization and reconstruction operation.

Matter for Congressional Consideration

To better understand the long-term fiscal and oversight commitments that would accompany authorizing CRC, when considering whether to grant such authority, the Congress should consider requiring the Secretary of State, in consultation with other relevant agencies, to report on the activities and costs required for its development; the administrative requirements and annual operating costs once it is established, including for sustainment at home, deployment, and sustainment once deployed; the types of operations for which it would be used; and potential obstacles that could affect recruitment, retention, and deployment of personnel.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We received written comments on a draft of this report from the Department of Commerce (Commerce) and State (see appendixes II and III). In addition, State, DOD, and USAID submitted a joint statement to the draft report, which is included as part of State's comments. The Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Commerce, Defense, Justice, and State and USAID also provided technical comments, which were incorporated into the report, as appropriate. The Departments of Homeland Security and the Treasury were provided copies of the draft report but did not comment.

Commerce stated the report was a good overview of the new process for planning and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction operations, but did not comment on the report's recommendations and matter for Congressional consideration.

State said it partially concurred with our recommendations. It said that while it had no objections to the recommendations, it believes the progress made toward developing a civilian R&S capability was underreported. State said that the data GAO presented preceded a tremendous period of growth and change for the interagency process. In a

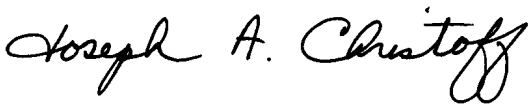
joint statement, State, DOD, and USAID reiterated the draft report did not reflect the achievements made over recent months, including the IMS, ARC, SRC, and CRC. The joint statement did not comment on the report's recommendations or matter for Congressional consideration.

When providing technical comments, USDA, Justice, USAID each stated strong support for the new planning and coordination framework, and that they would continue to work with S/CRS to improve civilian deployment capabilities for stabilization and reconstruction operations. USAID further stated that more work is needed to clarify roles and responsibilities, particularly in the relationships between S/CRS and DFA, and between S/CRS and USAID.

We disagree with the assertion that our draft report did not reflect changes that have occurred since the completion of our fieldwork. We completed our initial audit work in August 2007 and included in our draft report discussions and assessments on the framework elements NSC approved in March 2007 and on civilian response mechanisms. Our draft report did not include NSC-approved details for ARC, SRC, and CRC because those details were not provided until October 2007. We incorporated this new information into our final report, as well as other information from written and technical comments from six agencies. Our findings, conclusions, and recommendations reflect the status of the planning framework and CRC as of October 2007.

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, State, and the Treasury and to the Administrator for USAID. We will also make copies available to others on request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staffs have questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4128 or at christoffj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.



Joseph A. Christoff
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To address both of the objectives of our review, we examined U.S. government documents and research and conducted more than 50 interviews with staff from 31 offices and bureaus at eight U.S. agencies with roles in reconstruction and stabilization operations (see table 2). We also interviewed staff members and reviewed reports and documents from eight U.S. government and independent research organizations.

Table 2: Agencies and Research Centers Contacted for GAO Review

Agency	Bureau or office contacted
Department of State	• Bureau of African Affairs • Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs • Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs • Bureau of International Organization Affairs • Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement • Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs • Bureau of Political Affairs • Bureau of Political-Military Affairs • Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs • Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs • Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance • Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization • Office of the Inspector General
Department of Agriculture	• Foreign Agricultural Service
Department of Commerce	• International Trade Administration
Department of Defense	• Office of the Secretary of Defense • Office of the Secretary of Defense, Policy • Joint Staff, J5
Department of Homeland Security	• Office of International Affairs
Department of Justice	• National Security Division
Department of the Treasury	• Office of Technical Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development	• Africa Bureau • Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance • Food for Peace • Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance • Office of Military Affairs • Office of Transition Initiatives
U.S. Government Research Centers	• Institute for Defense Analyses • National Defense University • U.S. Institute for Peace

Agency	Bureau or office contacted
Independent Research Centers	• Brookings Institution • Center for Global Development • Center for Strategic and International Studies • Project on National Security Reform • RAND Corporation

Source: GAO.

To determine the Department of State's (State) efforts to improve interagency planning and coordination for stabilization and reconstruction operations, we interviewed current and former staff from the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) and reviewed documentation on its development, roles, and responsibilities. Documents reviewed include Presidential Decision Directive 56, National Security Presidential Directives 1 and 44, Section 408 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005,[1] the *Foreign Affairs Manual*, and internal State reports and memos. We also reviewed documentation from and held discussions with S/CRS, State's regional and program bureaus, other agencies, and public and private research institutions on the development of the new planning framework for stabilization and reconstruction operations. Topics reviewed and discussed included mechanisms for triggering the process, roles and responsibilities of various actors, the Interagency Management System, the new planning template, and monitoring and evaluation requirements. We also discussed planning efforts and, where possible, reviewed resultant plans for stabilization and reconstruction operations in Haiti, Sudan, and Kosovo with S/CRS, staff from State's relevant regional bureaus, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Finally, we participated in five training courses on stabilization and reconstruction planning developed and taught by S/CRS staff in conjunction with the Foreign Service Institute.

To determine State's efforts to improve the deployment of civilians to these operations, we reviewed documents and interviewed State and other agencies' staffs about the existing internal capacity each has for supporting stabilization and reconstruction operations and the actions they are taking to develop rapid deployment units and capabilities. We reviewed the development of the Active Response Corps, Standby Response Corps, and Civilian Reserve Corps by interviewing State staff from S/CRS, regional bureaus, select program bureaus, and the Office of

[1]Pub. L. 108-447.

the Inspector General. We reviewed BearingPoint's study for creating and maintaining the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC) and S/CRS plans for implementing the study's recommendations, we examined proposals and assessments prepared by the U.S. Institute for Peace, the Institute for Defense Analyses, and the Congressional Research Service, and we reviewed pending legislation in the Senate and House of Representatives that would authorize CRC. Finally, we discussed S/CRS's civilian reserve concept with staffs from other agencies including the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Justice, and the Treasury, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as with private research institutions, including the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the RAND Corporation.

We conducted our review from July 2006 to October 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Commerce

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary for International Trade
Washington, D.C. 20230

OCT 23 2007

David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
United States Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

Thank you for sharing with us the draft United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled, "Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps," and for the opportunity to comment on the report. The report provides a good overview of the complexities associated with the development and implementation of a framework for U.S. agencies to use when planning and coordinating reconstruction and stabilization operations for countries threatened by conflict.

Technical comments and corrections have been attached in a separate document for your consideration.

Thank you for your work in producing this report.

Sincerely,

Christopher A. Padilla, Acting

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE COMMENTS

Government Accountability Office Report GAO-08-39
Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps

Department of Commerce Contact:
Merriam Mashatt, International Trade Administration
(202) 482-3499, Merriam.Mashatt@mail.doc.gov

1. Page 25: Delete the reference to "Commerce" in the third sentence of the first paragraph (below). This sentence does not reflect the official position of the Department of Commerce and is factually incorrect. International programs are a central part of the Department's core mission and the Department's appropriations reflect this fact. Already, the Department plays a significant role in stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan.

   In addition, insert the language as the last 2 sentences of the first paragraph. Commerce comments in bold text below:

   "Although other agencies have begun to develop a stabilization and reconstruction response capacity, most have limited numbers of staff available to respond rapidly to overseas crises. Most agencies have primary missions that are domestic in nature although many agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security and Justice operate overseas programs. However, according to ~~Commerce,~~ Homeland Security, and Justice officials, international programs are not viewed as central to their core missions, either by the agency or their appropriators. As a result, it is difficult for these agencies to secure funding to deploy to active stabilization and reconstruction operations, whether as part of a cadre of on-call first and second responders or for longer-term assistance programs. **Start Insert - The Department of Commerce is taking steps to develop a capability that could be deployed for reconstruction and stabilization efforts. Over the next year, the International Trade Administration intends to conduct analysis and execute a series of tabletop exercises to develop a reconstruction and stabilization response mechanism for relevant Department of Commerce agencies and bureaus. - End Insert."**

   2. Page 14 through 16 and in Summary Sections
   In the section entitled "Civilian Interagency Partners Have Not Accepted the Framework Due to Concerns about Roles and Responsibilities, Limited Support for the S/CRS, and a Cumbersome Planning Process," the current use of the term "interagency" is misleading. The Department of Commerce does not claim to have these objections to the framework and it is inaccurate to include implicit or explicit references to the Department of Commerce in this section. Please redraft this section and any other summary sections referring to this section to make it clear that the Department of Commerce, as a civilian interagency partner, does not hold the assertions made in it.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of State

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

United States Department of State

Assistant Secretary for Resource Management and Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520

OCT 24 200

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION: Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps," GAO Job Code 320438.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Sheila Gwaltney, Senior Advisor, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization at (202) 663-0842.

Sincerely,

Sid Kaplan (Acting)

cc: GAO – Sam Bernet
S/CRS – John Herbst
State/OIG – Mark Duda

Department of State, Defense, and USAID Joint Response

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION:
Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps
(GAO-08-39, GAO Code 320438)

On behalf of the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) thanks the Government Accountability Office for the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report.

We welcome the GAO's review of the U.S. Government's efforts to develop the systems and procedures for whole-of-government planning and management of reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) policy and operations. Our nation's security will be strengthened by improving the capacity of civilian agencies to prevent or mitigate conflicts that may threaten us, and stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict by fostering stability, democracy, and economic development.

Our agencies share the view that the GAO report, which was over a year in preparation, does not reflect the achievements made over recent months in developing interagency mechanisms for effective management of R&S situations. Chief among those achievements was the formal approval by all agencies of the Interagency Management System (IMS), which provides the framework for comprehensive policy and program management for R&S operations, integrated within Washington agencies, as well as our embassies and regional combatant commands. We also have made significant strides in the planning for a Civilian Reserve Corps, which, if Congress funds it, will create a critically important capability benefiting the nation. We have determined the interagency composition of the Active Response Corps and the Standby Response Corps, and created additional interagency tools for R&S management. The results of these advances also can be seen in recent engagements in Afghanistan, Haiti and Liberia, to name just three specific examples.

Our agencies have each commented separately on the GAO report, but we also wanted to take this opportunity to provide a joint response in recognition of the unprecedented degree of interagency cooperation and collaboration on these issues of national importance.

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION:
Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps
(GAO-08-39, GAO Code 320438)

Introduction

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the GAO Draft Report, "*Stabilization and Reconstruction: Actions Are Needed to Develop a Planning and Coordination Framework and Establish the Civilian Reserve Corps.*" The Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) was established formally in August 2004, and received its mandate, as delegated by the Secretary of State, from National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) of December 2005. Its core mission is to enhance our nation's capacity to lead, coordinate, and institutionalize civilian capability to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a more sustainable path toward peace, democracy, and a market economy. Over the three years since it was established, S/CRS has led the interagency effort in Washington to implement the President's vision to develop the systems and procedures to provide comprehensive, whole-of-government planning for and management of reconstruction and stabilization operations.

In her February 8, 2007 remarks on transformational diplomacy, Secretary Rice stated:

"When it comes to working comprehensively to help societies rebuild after conflict, one group of diplomats is truly at the forefront of our efforts; that is, our Office of Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. These individuals are not just helping our Department to plan for the next Bosnia or Liberia or Haiti. Some of them are actually deployed right now in the hottest spots overseas. . . . These men and women are part of our effort to create an expeditionary arm of the Department of State. It is a way of thinking and training and operating that is mostly new for us, but one that we must adopt."

Over the last year, S/CRS has worked with fifteen agencies associated with reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) to develop integrated planning, operations, and civilian response systems. Based on S/CRS' demonstrated capacity for developing reconstruction and stabilization plans and operations, this office is prepared to take on the role for which it was created: to coordinate the interagency in managing the U.S. Government response to the next crisis with reconstruction and stabilization implications.

S/CRS and its interagency partners have made great progress over the last several months in creating the procedures and tools for managing R&S operations. These are ready for use. The Interagency Management System (IMS) and its components can be activated to plan for, manage, and staff a whole-of-government R&S response to a foreign crisis. The Washington-based, interagency component of the IMS, the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG), can provide policy options and overall management of the R&S response. The CRSG's secretariat, an interagency, working level team, can immediately begin planning with the relevant regional bureau and embassy involved. If significant U.S. military involvement is anticipated, S/CRS can assemble an interagency team of planners and experts to send to the relevant Combatant Command as an Integration Planning Cell (IPC). If requested by the Chief of Mission, members of the Active Response Corp (ARC) can deploy immediately to assist the Embassy as the core element of an Advance Civilian Team (ACT).

The S/CRS Interagency Process Has Just Begun

As noted above, S/CRS is a relatively new organization and is creating a fundamentally new approach to enable more timely, integrated, and effective management of U.S. Government efforts in reconstruction and stabilization. This new approach requires modification of long-standing bureaucratic practices and creation of new habitual relationships, lines of communication, and forms of cooperation. In the year since work on the GAO report was begun – which represents a third of the lifespan thus far for S/CRS – the office's engagement with interagency partners has expanded, deepened and been strengthened.

See comment 1.

For example, a series of working groups and other formal structures regularly bring together representatives of the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Treasury, Justice, Agriculture, Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, Transportation, the U.S. Agency for

International Development (USAID), the intelligence community, and the National Security Council (NSC) to prepare for effective whole-of-government planning for and management of reconstruction and stabilization efforts. Within the Department of State, regional bureaus and S/CRS have collaborated to develop and implement programs in Haiti, Nepal, Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Colombia, Liberia, Yemen, the trans-Sahara region, the tri-border region in Asia (Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia) and in Somalia. The data presented in this GAO study, while perhaps accurate at the time of collection several months ago, preceded a period of tremendous growth and change for the interagency process and do not adequately reflect the current situation.

See comment 1.

Areas of Significant Progress Not Adequately Recognized in the Report

The critical areas of progress listed below were not captured in the GAO report and are important developments that round out the report's findings.

See comment 2.

Implementation of NSPD-44: *The GAO report states that two of three elements of an interagency framework for planning and coordinating R&S operations have been approved.* In fact, since January 2007, the NSC has approved three of four major components of the interagency management effort for R&S engagements. The three approved components are the Interagency Management System (IMS); procedures for initiating the IMS; and the civilian surge mechanism, a critical component of which is the Civilian Reserve Corps (CRC). Work on the fourth element, the planning framework, is in progress.

See comment 3.

The GAO report at one point incorrectly stated that NSPD-44 delegates authority to S/CRS for leading U.S. Government R&S efforts, while in other sections correctly notes that the Presidential directive tasks the Secretary of State with this responsibility. Specifically, NSPD-44 delegates to the Secretary responsibility for "*integrated* U.S. Government efforts involving U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities" to prepare for, plan, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations in the range of failing and post-conflict states (Emphasis added). The Secretary of State in turn can delegate to S/CRS responsibility for leading these efforts. S/CRS has worked with its partners from a variety of relevant agencies to establish the tasks and systems needed for R&S mobilization, management and field operations as well as the exercises and experimentation necessary to test and refine these systems. The interagency agreed on an implementation work

plan and timeline that will produce the interagency tools and procedures to enable whole-of-government engagement in R&S situations. Greater detail on these tools and procedures is provided below.

See comment 4.

Interagency Management System (IMS): Early in 2007, the NSC approved the IMS and the procedures for initiating its use. The IMS provides the framework to enable Washington policymakers, Chiefs of Mission, and military commanders to manage complex R&S engagements jointly. It ensures coordination among all U.S. Government stakeholders, elaborates the roles and responsibilities for interagency teams, and facilitates and supports integrated strategic and implementation planning.

The GAO report states that there is lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities among regional bureaus and S/CRS and among agencies of the U.S. Government. The Department notes that continuing work on the IMS by S/CRS, the Department's regional bureaus, and our interagency partners will refine and test the IMS through a number of events, experiments, and exercises with the goal of further identifying gaps and clarifying roles and responsibilities both within the Department of State and among executive branch agencies.

Over ten U.S. Government departments participated in a recent demonstration of the IMS and in the after-action review that provided very useful input to help the interagency fine tune IMS procedures and mechanisms. The Department also notes that S/CRS works to complement the existing roles of regional and functional bureaus at State, USAID, and other agencies working in R&S. S/CRS may, depending on the circumstance, assist with conflict assessment and planning processes for reconstruction and stabilization in conjunction with its interagency partners; in the field – if asked by the Chief of Mission – elements of the interagency Advance Civilian Team may function as an executive office or clearinghouse for information and action, or provide critical liaison among various field elements that are executing the tasks routinely associated with their agency's mandate.

See comment 5.

Procedures for Initiation of Whole-of-Government Planning: Early in 2007, the NSC also approved interagency-agreed criteria and processes for initiating or "triggering" whole-of-government planning for specific R&S engagements, including immediate crisis response as well as long-term scenario-based (or contingency) planning. Senior policy-level bodies,

Chiefs of Mission and State Department Regional Assistant Secretaries may request that the Reconstruction and Stabilization Policy Coordinating Committee consider initiating whole-of-government planning for long-term scenarios, while senior officials (such as the Secretary of State or Defense) can authorize planning for imminent crises. The criteria for triggering whole-of-government R&S planning and response include significant actual or potential U.S. military involvement; significant threats to regional security; and actual or imminent state failure, particularly where the host government is unwilling or unable to respond; excessive mortality rates; or large-scale displacement of people.

See comment 6.

Draft Planning Framework: Once planning is triggered by the above process, the interagency planning framework will be used to guide department and agency involvement in a whole-of-government planning effort at the levels of both strategy and implementation. The goal of the planning process is to translate a whole-of-government approach to policy and strategy development into operational effectiveness. The development of concepts and plans must ensure integration across major mission programs, as prioritized activities frequently have multiple effects, and when implemented and coordinated correctly can be synergistic and achieve multiple objectives. As a principle, the planning process should reflect the greatest amount of consultation in the field with local stakeholders that the environment allows.

See comment 7.

Civilian Surge Capability: In the State of the Union address in January 2007, President Bush called for the creation of an expeditionary or civilian reserve corps, noting that "such a corps would function much like our military reserve. It would ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them. And it would give people across America who do not wear the uniform a chance to serve in the defining struggle of our time."

In testimony on February 7, 2007, to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Secretary also underscored the importance of establishing the Civilian Response Corps that the President proposed in the State of the Union. She noted: "… we don't have a counterpart to the military, national guard, or reserve corps of civilians who can be ready and trained to go out and perform these functions: engineers, lawyers, agricultural specialists. And so we are charged with developing the concept for a Civilian Response Corps. We will be coming to the Congress for support for that concept and for

funding for that concept so that we can have a ready reserve of civilians to take exactly this kind of task."

Following the State of the Union address, and the inclusion of up to $50 million in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (P.L. 110-28), S/CRS formed an interagency Civilian Reserve Task Force, made up of representatives from the State Department, USAID, the Departments of Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Treasury and with the Department of Defense (DOD). The Task Force has worked for the last eight months to develop the policies, procedures and infrastructure necessary to stand-up the U.S. Civilian Reserve Corps.

The critical step remaining to create the CRC is securing the authorizing legislation necessary to access the supplemental funding. The key legislation, "The Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2006," passed by unanimous consent in the Senate during the 109th Congress. That important legislation, with minor changes, has been reintroduced as S. 613, with a similar bill being introduced on the House side in the form of H.R. 1084. While there is bipartisan support for the legislation, the bills nonetheless are still pending. If this authorizing legislation is enacted, up to $50 million in the P.L. 110-28 would become available to support and maintain the CRC.

See comment 7.

The GAO report does not fully convey the progress that has been achieved in preparing to stand up the CRC, pending authorization by Congress. These achievements include:

- An NSC-approved CRC Mission Statement;
- Determination of the skills sets that will be required by the CRC to respond to critical stabilization and reconstruction missions. A total of 121 separate positions have been identified for which fully developed position descriptions have been completed;
- Development of the necessary interagency human resources policies, mechanisms, and procedures for recruiting, hiring and compensating CRC members;
- Development of a detailed training plan for the CRC members that will leverage existing training capacity and also create new courses tailored to the needs of the CRC;

- Candidate search culminating in a short-list for the Chief Operating Officer of the CRC. The position will be filled once funding becomes available upon enactment of the CRC authorizing legislation;
- Development of a draft memorandum of understanding between State and other U.S. Government civilian agencies regarding the roles and responsibilities for recruiting, selecting, training, and managing the CRC when deployed;
- Secured space and staffing plan for the CRC Administrative Office (Home Office);
- Concept development of the CRC deployment center, to be established and operated by USAID; and
- Draft CRC Agreement outlining the terms and conditions of CRC service.

See comment 7.

The GAO report contains a number of technical errors related to the CRC. First, the GAO states that CRC members will be temporary U.S. Government employees. It is important to clarify that all CRC members will be full-time, term federal employees if and when they begin their pre-deployment training. As envisioned by S. 613, CRC members will enjoy important benefits and employment rights. Following the recruitment of the first five hundred members of the CRC, the Department will evaluate whether other employment terms need to be considered, including the question of reemployment rights.

See comment 7.

Second, the GAO report raises the issue of whether and what punitive actions could be taken for CRC members who refuse to deploy. The Department notes that all Civilian Reservists will be required to sign a Service Agreement that will outline acceptable reasons for service deferments and actions that will be taken if the Reservist refuses to deploy. S/CRS is in the process of preparing this agreement.

See comment 8.

Third, the GAO report states that S/CRS is moving the CRC's development forward without a set of potential missions for which it could be deployed. This point is somewhat puzzling to the Department. Similar entities, such as the military reserves, do not maintain lists of possible deployments and are not limited to certain missions specified in advance. The CRC is intended to provide the civilian surge and backup capability for R&S crises. Reservists will train for deployment under a variety of circumstances and must have the flexibility to respond to different situations.

Finally, the GAO report states that the plan for expanding the CRC from 500 to 2000 members has not been made public. The Department notes that the expansion plan has been drafted and is still undergoing internal review and will be shared with the Congress when the review is completed.

See comment 9.

Development of Surge Capability in the ARC: *The GAO report states that the Department of State has been unable to achieve planned staffing levels for the one of the other components of civilian surge, the Active Response Corps (ARC).* The Department notes that the ARC currently has ten officers. These ARC members represent a mix of Foreign Service and Civil Service employees assigned to the ARC, plus detailee employees from other offices within State. All have training necessary to deploy; most also have experience from previous deployments and exercising with the military. In late Fiscal Year 2007, S/CRS added three new Civil Service positions to regularize the positions filled by detailees. S/CRS also began to recruit additional detailees from other agencies, effectively making the ARC interagency, and is actively recruiting Foreign Service Officers in the current assignment cycle. We are awaiting the outcome of the Fiscal Year 2008 Department budget request to determine future ARC personnel levels.

See comment 9.

The Standby Response Corps (SRC) currently has in excess of 90 vetted members, from all areas of the State Department. A small but growing number of those members have received at least the minimum necessary training. Efforts are currently underway to increase the current roster of 90 and add USAID employees to it, and to get written commitments from the State Department and other agency personnel systems to allow SRC members to train and deploy as needed while still filling their "day" jobs.

Elements of the ARC and the SRC have deployed to Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Haiti, Kosovo, Liberia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Two SRC and approximately one dozen ARC members have deployed for periods of between one and five months.

S/CRS has a full-time development officer devoted to building up the SRC. Both that position and the positions of the Director of the Office of Civilian Readiness and Response, the ARC Director and her deputy have as their number one goal the expansion of the ARC and the SRC. That is also the primary goal of a two-person training unit that is developing and maintaining the necessary training regime for a fully capable ARC and SRC.

See comment 9.

Training: *The GAO report states that there is a lack of training opportunities for one of the three civilian surge capabilities, the Standby Response Corps (SRC).* The Department notes that R&S training opportunities are available and are increasing at a rapid pace among the interagency as training, education, exercises, and experiments are being designed and delivered to meet the needs of current and future engagements. SRC volunteers have the opportunity to access training provided by multiple agencies and the Department is working to ensure that SRC members are able to take time from their current assignments to pursue professional development. ARC members, on the other hand, are able to complete an extensive training regimen and engage in exercises due to the nature of their jobs.

Based on the interagency R&S training strategy of 2005, S/CRS is currently involved in the design and delivery of courses at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and National Defense University, as well as helping design distance learning courses at Joint Forces Command, the DOD, and the Department of Commerce.

See comment 9.

S/CRS courses with FSI are increasing from five in 2006 to ten in 2008. All courses focus on integrated and interagency R&S topics. The R&S courses reserve informally 80% of the tuition-free slots for agencies and offices that do or will contribute SRC members. Outreach to the interagency community to increase enrollment in S/CRS's FSI courses has been successful. The number trained increased from 352 to 432 in the past year with basic courses having reached capacity. A majority of the participants are from State, USAID, and DOD as these are the leading agencies in overseas operations; however, nine other agencies are consistently involved as their leadership recognizes the new requirements outline.

Of equal significance, S/CRS convened an interagency body to develop a training program tailored to meet current and future needs. This group established an interagency training implementation strategy and is systematically addressing each component necessary to prepare to train future personnel.

See comment 10.

Expansion of 1207-funded activities and coordination with the Office of the Director for Foreign Assistance: The Department appreciates GAO's recognition of the expansion of R&S activities funded under Section 1207. The GAO report states that the Department obtained only $10 million of the

$100 million of funds authorized in Fiscal Year 2006 under Section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for R&S projects, and that confusion between S/CRS and the Office of the Director for Foreign Assistance (F, which had just been created) complicated transfer of additional funding that year. Building on the FY06 experience, and in complete coordination with F, S/CRS worked closely with the Office of the Secretary of Defense during Fiscal Year 2007 to identify and obtain approval for seven interagency projects, totaling $99.745 million of the $100 million Congress authorized DOD to transfer.

See comment 11.

Conflict Prevention: *The GAO asserts that S/CRS's authorizing legislation does not include conflict prevention.* While "conflict prevention" is not explicitly mentioned in Public Law 108-447 that created S/CRS, the law does call upon the office to "address crises in countries and regions that are in, *or are in transition from*, conflict or civil strife." (Emphasis added) Conflict prevention is an important mechanism to support societies in this transitional phase to ensure that conflict does not re-emerge during the stabilization and reconstruction periods through support for stabilizing influences and deterrence of the destabilizing influences. Conflict prevention is thus inherent in the basic work of S/CRS.

Other Comments

See comment 12.

Inclusion of personal observations by U.S. Government officials: The GAO report contains personal comments voiced by U.S. Government employees that are in direct contradiction to the official positions of these individuals' agencies. In some cases, these personal views are taken out of context; in others, it is not clear when the statements were made or if the individuals' views have changed due to intervening developments. While the Department fully respects the rights of individuals to express their personal opinions, the GAO report would be more balanced and would benefit if these personal observations were identified as such.

The Department's Response to the Recommendations:

See comment 13.

Partially concur. While the Department poses no objections to GAO's recommendations, we believe the progress made toward achieving the goals articulated in the recommendations, as well as the overall progress achieved toward developing a civilian R&S capability, is under-reported.

The Department stands ready to assist the GAO in the future to update this report's evaluation of the U.S. government's civilian interagency surge capabilities. The Department is confident that S/CRS will continue to develop this capability, fully implement a planning and coordination framework, and establish a Civilian Reserve Corps.

GAO Response to State's Comments

We disagree with the assertion that our draft report did not reflect changes that have occurred since the completion of our fieldwork. We completed our initial audit work in August 2007 and included in our draft report discussions and assessments on the framework elements NSC approved in March 2007 and on civilian response mechanisms. Our draft report did not include NSC-approved details for ARC, SRC, and CRC because those details were not provided until October 2007. We incorporated this new information into our final report, as well as other information from written and technical comments from six agencies. Our findings, conclusions, and recommendations reflect the status of the planning framework and CRC as of October 2007. We also have specific comments to points raised by State (see below).

1. While we are aware of the efforts S/CRS and regional bureaus have made in the countries cited, we note that S/CRS involvement in most of them includes the deployment of a small number of staff or the allocation of section 1207 funds, which we recognized in the report. We also note in the report that S/CRS applied its draft planning guide to operations in Haiti and Sudan, and we note the outcomes of those plans. We also report that interagency staff involved in those efforts had different points of view on the merits of the planning process, that the planning guide is still in development, and that S/CRS is revising the planning guide based on partners' concerns.

2. We chose to discuss CRC separately because of the potential costs associated with its development and sustainment. However, we acknowledge within the report that State views civilian response mechanisms—ARC, CRC, and SRC—as the fourth major element of the framework.

3. We have changed the text in our report to reflect State's comment.

4. We reported on the basic structures of the IMS. We note that it is designed to ensure coordination between Washington and the field, and between the civilian and military sectors of government. However, since IMS has never been used, it is premature to state whether it is an effective tool. We found, however, that different documents outline different roles and responsibilities for S/CRS. While State and S/CRS have taken some steps to clarify S/CRS' role, some interagency partners stated more must be done. For example, when providing comments on a draft of our report, USAID stated it would like more definition on the relationships between S/CRS and DFA, and S/CRS and USAID. State would seem to agree with this assessment since it plans to use exercises to identify gaps and clarify roles and

responsibilities. Although we are encouraged that State plans to take these actions, we believe the true test of IMS's effectiveness will come when it is applied to an actual operation.

5. We reported on the procedures for triggering the use of IMS and, once finalized, the planning guide. As with IMS, the true test of the effectiveness of these procedures will come when it is used for an actual operation.

6. We reported on the ongoing development of the draft planning guide, including its features; its use for planning operations in Haiti, Sudan and Kosovo; and revisions S/CRS is making based on partners' concerns. We also note that although NSC need not approve this element, such approval would add credibility to the guide and the framework, as a whole.

7. Based on these comments and technical comments from State, we updated information on State's plans for establishing CRC, including startup costs, annual costs, and authorizing legislation. We acknowledge that NSC approved a plan to establish by 2009 a roster of 2,000 CRC reservists who would deploy to stabilization and reconstruction operations. Although we constrain our discussion to higher-level considerations, we are encouraged by the list of achievements State says it recently made; however, we note that a number them are still in the draft or conceptual stage of development. In addition, we removed from the final report discussion on the punitive actions State could take against volunteers who refused to deploy.

8. We did not state that lists of possible locations for deployment of CRC volunteers should be maintained. Our finding and conclusion pertain to the lack of clarity for the type of operations for which CRC would be used. As stated in the report, State has not clarified how stabilization and reconstruction operations differ from other operations, such as counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, or traditional development assistance programs. Having a clear definition of the types of operations CRC volunteers could deploy to would enable State to better define the skill mix it needs for the CRC roster. It would also provide a basis for Congressional oversight and a valuable check against potential misuse.

9. We updated our discussions or ARC and SRC based on information provided in these and other technical comments. We are encouraged that S/CRS has developed these courses—five of which GAO staff attended. However, based on our findings, we are concerned that

S/CRS and the Foreign Service Institute may not have the capacity to provide full training to 3,000 SRC and CRC volunteers in fiscal year 2009.

10. We adjusted the report to reflect this new information. We note that approximately $80 million of the $99.75 million was obligated in the final month of the fiscal year.

11. We do not challenge States interpretation that the legislation implicitly authorizes S/CRS to engage in conflict prevention activities. Our point was to show that ambiguities between the sources of S/CRS authorities can lead to confusion among partners over S/CRS's true roles and responsibilities.

12. Although agencies may have official positions that they support S/CRS and the new framework, our fieldwork revealed that many individuals within State's regional and program bureaus and other agencies have not yet accepted it.

13. We disagree with the assertion that our report does not reflect changes that occurred since the completion of our fieldwork. We completed our initial audit work in August 2007, and in October 2007 we obtained and incorporated additional information from agencies written and technical comments on a draft of our report. Our report reflects the status of the framework and development of civilian response capabilities as of October 2007.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Joseph A. Christoff, (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual contact named above, Judith McCloskey, Assistant Director; Sam Bernet; Lynn Cothern; Marissa Jones; and Sona Kalapura made key contributions to this report. Technical assistance was provided by Joseph Brown, Debbie Chung, Martin De Alteriis, Mark Dowling, Holly Dye, Francisco Enriquez, Timothy Fairbanks, Etana Finkler, Bradley Hunt, Marisela Perez, Nina Pfeiffer, and Jeremy Sebest.

GAO's Mission

The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through GAO's Web site (www.gao.gov). Each weekday, GAO posts newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence on its Web site. To have GAO e-mail you a list of newly posted products every afternoon, go to www.gao.gov and select "E-mail Updates."

Order by Mail or Phone

The first copy of each printed report is free. Additional copies are $2 each. A check or money order should be made out to the Superintendent of Documents. GAO also accepts VISA and Mastercard. Orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent. Orders should be sent to:

U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW, Room LM
Washington, DC 20548

To order by Phone: Voice: (202) 512-6000
TDD: (202) 512-2537
Fax: (202) 512-6061

To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact:

Web site: www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm
E-mail: fraudnet@gao.gov
Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470

Congressional Relations

Gloria Jarmon, Managing Director, jarmong@gao.gov, (202) 512-4400
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125
Washington, DC 20548

Public Affairs

Chuck Young, Managing Director, youngc1@gao.gov, (202) 512-4800
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149
Washington, DC 20548

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER