

Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction

Observations and Recommendations from the Field

Executive Summary

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Problems Observed in the Field

If the civil authorities do not provide social services reliably, its population may seek alternatives that undermine the legitimacy of the state

A WWII maxim cautioned, “when the fighting stops, be seen cleaning up.” Our assistance in the efficient and effective provisioning of social services by the host government is critical to the daily comfort and security of the affected population. We must be prepared to support the creation of legitimate state authorities that have the capability to serve their citizens. When Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) efforts are neglected by the US military, and the legitimate authorities cannot deliver social services effectively, the population will seek alternatives that may supplant the legitimacy of a central authority and reduce trust in the capacity of the State to rebuild.

Military personnel lack SSTR training and equipment

Although Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.05 clearly articulates US policy on conducting SSTR operations with non-traditional partners, military personnel are neither trained nor equipped to operate within an SSTR environment. The result is a loss in efficiency and effectiveness when assisting a disrupted society. Personnel also lack professional incentive to pursue SSTR billets.

US policies undermine efforts of far-forward SSTR personnel

An SSTR response requires rapid, effective, and broad-based information sharing with international and non-military partners. US policy and doctrine undermine the ability of far-forward personnel to cooperate with those partners and to work effectively with the affected population and the host government. These shortfalls are compounded by several factors:

Lack of Reliable Civ-Mil Communications. Military personnel far-forward often lack reliable and interoperable communications links with local and international partners. Bidirectional communications have also been impeded by bureaucratic approval processes that have proven unable to flex rapidly enough to meet mission needs.

Restricted Ability to Share Information with SSTR Partners. Despite the high value found in sharing maps, imagery, and other information with our local and international partners, these data are often kept classified or otherwise limited in distribution for reasons that are not always valid. US personnel are also prohibited from transferring these data on removable media such as USB drives, despite these tools often being the only universal and ubiquitous means of information exchange in harsh SSTR environments.

Lack of Tools for Disconnected Cooperation. Many SSTR missions are conducted while disconnected from any inter-organizational communications capability or internet connectivity. By policy, US personnel often cannot use the commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software tools for disconnected cooperation which international partners have found effective. They consequently find it difficult to tap into the mesh of information flow within the international SSTR community and occasionally fail to receive critical information from SSTR partners.

SSTR Field Rotation Policies Break Fragile Bonds. Some cultures highly value a single trusted face in the context of daily operations. When personnel rotations from SSTR positions substitute one individual for another and fail to allow for overlap between the departing and incoming personnel, SSTR staff may be unable to prevent significant disruptions in the relationships and the consequent degradation of nascent and delicate networks of trust.

Recommendations Overview

Planners must establish a detailed, systematic, and reproducible approach to conducting SSTR operations. We must be prepared to assist the host country with provisioning social services as soon as the circumstances are safe to do so, and US forces must perform such SSTR operations efficiently and effectively. SSTR operations must also have policies that actively integrate SSTR personnel into the activities and mesh of information flow between non-traditional partners and the local population. Suggestions follow:

1. OPERATIONS AND FIELD POLICY

Develop a Systematic Approach to SSTR Operations

Establish processes to ensure that SSTR development under DoDD 3000.05 occurs on a level commensurate with conflict planning.

Ensure that SSTR personnel develop methods for cooperating with all partners to strengthen both the core infrastructure and civil society in regions likely to require SSTR operations. Direct that such planning should transfer those responsibilities to the host government incrementally as capabilities develop.

Delegate Administration of Social Services to the Host Government

Empower the host government to design, manage, and implement policy and hold it accountable for its effective implementation. Clearly specify roles and responsibilities for all partners. Establish benchmarks that track the increase in state capacity over time. Establish timeframes for the host government to assume administration of social services and plan for non-state actors to exit SSTR operations.

Cooperate with Non-Military Partners

Provide clear guidance that close cooperation and complementary efforts with non-military partners is a desirable, necessary, and expected component of any SSTR response (recalling DoDD 3000.05 sections 4.4 and 4.5).

Delegate Authority to Local Commanders

Enable far-forward commanders to determine the methods and tactics by which they implement an SSTR plan. To facilitate trust-building with non-traditional partners, authorize far-forward commanders to share information with them proactively.

Implement Overlapping Rotations for SSTR Personnel

Permit departing personnel to build trust between non-traditional partners and incoming US personnel by convening all parties in irreplaceable face-to-face meetings

Use virtual communities after a rotation has occurred to enable departed personnel to advise their replacements and continue to participate in discussions with non-traditional partners.

2. TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Develop a Core Competence in SSTR

Recognize and Cultivate Expertise

Identify SSTR experts and convene them regularly to determine policy and to develop Tactics, Techniques & Procedures (TTPs) for SSTR.

Establish a cadre of personnel who have been trained in the technical, cultural, and social aspects of SSTR operations.

Encourage SSTR personnel to build trust and actively foster mutually beneficial relationships with organizations that are likely SSTR partners.

Educate SSTR personnel in the procedures and treaties to which we are signatories and which define our obligations.

Mandate SSTR Training for Ground Forces

Change pre-deployment training for ground combat forces to embed SSTR objectives into core combat training. Ensure personnel understand their responsibilities to cooperate with local and international SSTR partners under DoDD 3000.05.

Alter TTPs to ensure that personnel receive sufficient hands-on SSTR training to operate safely and effectively in an SSTR environment.

Motivate Military Personnel to Pursue SSTR Billets

Create methods and incentives for military personnel to gain SSTR experience in the field with non-military partners and tie that experience to career advancement.

Extend US Linguistic and Cultural Capabilities

Develop translators steeped in the language within a cultural context, including the region's history, philosophy, poetry, music, literature, and religious texts.

3. INFORMATION FLOW

Encourage Immediate Information Sharing and Cooperation.

Adapt classification policies to allow for the active offering of maps and imagery to partners, as well as other necessary classes of information that enhance SSTR effectiveness, subject only to the approval of a far-forward commander. Direct and enable personnel to proactively share such vital information.

Adopt and Integrate Commonly-used Communications Protocols and Data Formats

Consider adopting and integrating the open-standards based protocols and data formats already in common use among non-traditional SSTR partners.

Establish Bidirectional Civ-Mil Communications in Austere Environments

Provision teams with interoperable communications tools—including satellite and cellular links, and disconnected cooperation software—for sharing with local and international partners. Be prepared to leave that shared communications equipment behind as part of the reconstruction effort.