

PDD/NSC 56
Managing Complex Contingency Operations
May 1997

*[Study hits White House on peacekeeping missions](#) Rowan Scarborough *The Washington Times* December 06, 1999 -- President Clinton signed PDD 56 in 1997 as an order for the Pentagon, State Department, CIA and other agencies to create a cohesive program for educating and training personnel for peacekeeping missions. But two years later, the A.B. Technologies consulting firm found, little has been done.*

The Clinton Administration's Policy on
Managing Complex Contingency Operations:
Presidential Decision Directive
May 1997

Purpose

This White Paper explains key elements of the Clinton Administration's policy on managing complex contingency operations. This unclassified document is promulgated for use by government officials as a handy reference for interagency planning of future complex contingency operations. Also, it is intended for use in U.S. Government professional education institutions, such as the National Defense University and the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, for coursework and exercises on interagency practices and procedures. Regarding this paper's utility as representation of the President's Directive, it contains all the key elements of the original PDD that are needed for effective implementation by agency officials. Therefore, wide dissemination of this unclassified White Paper is encouraged by all agencies of the U.S. Government. Note that while this White Paper explains the PDD, it does not override the official PDD.

Background

In the wake of the Cold War, attention has focused on a rising number of territorial disputes, armed ethnic conflicts, and civil wars that pose threats to regional and international peace and may be accompanied by natural or manmade disasters which precipitate massive human suffering. We have learned that effective responses to these situations may require multi-dimensional operations composed of such components as political/diplomatic, humanitarian, intelligence, economic development, and security: hence the term complex contingency operations.

The PDD defines "complex contingency operations" as peace operations such as the peace accord implementation operation conducted by NATO in Bosnia (1995-present) and the humanitarian intervention in northern Iraq called Operation Provide Comfort (1991); and foreign humanitarian assistance operations, such as Operation Support Hope in central Africa (1994) and Operation Sea Angel in Bangladesh (1991). Unless otherwise directed, this PDD does not apply to domestic disaster relief or to relatively routine or small-scale operations, nor to military operations conducted in defense of U.S. citizens, territory, or property, including counter-terrorism and hostage-rescue operations and international armed conflict.

In recent situations as diverse as Haiti, Somalia, Northern Iraq, and the former Yugoslavia, the United States has engaged in complex contingency operations in coalition, either under the auspices of an international or regional organization or in ad hoc, temporary coalitions of like-minded states. While never relinquishing the capability to respond unilaterally, the PDD assumes that the U.S. will continue to conduct future operations in coalition whenever possible.

We must also be prepared to manage the humanitarian, economic and political consequences of a technological crisis where chemical, biological, and/or radiological hazards may be present. The occurrence of any one of these dimensions could significantly increase the sensitivity and complexity of a U.S. response to a technological crisis.

In many complex emergencies the appropriate U.S. Government response will incur the involvement of only non-military assets. In some situations, we have learned that military forces can quickly affect the dynamics of the situation and may create the conditions necessary to make significant progress in mitigating or resolving underlying conflict or dispute. However, we have also learned that many aspects of complex emergencies may not be best addressed through military measures. Furthermore, given the level of U.S. interests at stake in most of these situations, we recognize that U.S. forces should not be deployed in an operation indefinitely.

It is essential that the necessary resources be provided to ensure that we are prepared to respond in a robust, effective manner. To foster a durable peace or stability in these situations and to maximize the effect of judicious military deployments, the civilian components of an operation must be integrated closely with the military components.

While agencies of government have developed independent capacities to respond to complex emergencies, military and civilian agencies should operate in a synchronized manner through effective interagency management and the use of special mechanisms to coordinate agency efforts. Integrated planning and effective management of agency operations early on in an operation can avoid delays, reduce pressure on the military to expand its involvement in unplanned ways, and create unity of effort within an operation that is essential for success of the mission.

Intent of the PDD

The need for complex contingency operations is likely to recur in future years, demanding varying degrees of U.S. involvement. The PDD calls for all U.S. Government agencies to institutionalize what we have learned from our recent experiences and to continue the process of improving the planning and management of complex contingency operations. The PDD is designed to ensure that the lessons learned -- including proven planning processes and implementation mechanisms -- will be incorporated into the interagency process on a regular basis. The PDD's intent is to establish these management practices to achieve unity of effort among U.S. Government agencies and international organizations engaged in complex contingency operations. Dedicated mechanisms and integrated planning processes are needed. From our recent experiences, we have learned that these can help to:

- identify appropriate missions and tasks, if any, for U.S. Government agencies in a U.S. Government response;
- develop strategies for early resolution of crises, thereby minimizing the loss of life and establishing the basis for reconciliation and reconstruction;
- accelerate planning and implementation of the civilian aspects of the operation;
- intensify action on critical funding and personnel requirements early on;
- integrate all components of a U.S. response (civilian, military, police, etc.) at the policy level and facilitate the creation of coordination mechanisms at the operational level; and
- rapidly identify issues for senior policy makers and ensure expeditious implementation of decisions.

The PDD requires all agencies to review their legislative and budget authorities for supporting complex contingency operations and, where such authorities are inadequate to fund an agency's mission and operations in complex contingencies, propose legislative and budgetary solutions.

Executive Committee

The PDD calls upon the Deputies Committee to establish appropriate interagency working groups to assist in policy development, planning, and execution of complex contingency operations. Normally, the Deputies Committee will form an Executive Committee (ExCom) with appropriate membership to supervise the day-to-day management of U.S. participation in a complex contingency operation. The ExCom will bring together representatives of all agencies that might participate in the operation, including those not normally part of the NSC structure. When this is the case, both the Deputies Committee and the ExCom will normally be augmented by participating agency representatives. In addition, the chair of the ExCom will normally designate an agency to lead a legal and fiscal advisory sub-group, whose role is to consult with the ExCom to ensure that tasks assigned by the ExCom can be performed by the assigned agencies consistent with legal and fiscal authorities. This ExCom approach has proved useful in clarifying agency responsibilities, strengthening agency accountability, ensuring interagency coordination, and developing policy options for consideration by senior policy makers.

The guiding principle behind the ExCom approach to interagency management is the personal accountability of presidential appointees. Members of the ExCom effectively serve as functional managers for specific elements of the U.S. Government response (e.g., refugees, demobilization, elections, economic assistance, police reform, public information, etc.). They implement the strategies agreed to by senior policy makers in the interagency and report to the ExCom and Deputies Committee on any problems or issues that need to be resolved.

In future complex contingency operations to which the United States contributes substantial resources, the PDD calls upon the Deputies Committee to establish organizational arrangements akin to those of the ExCom approach.

The Political-Military Implementation Plan

The PDD requires that a political-military implementation plan (or "pol-mil plan") be developed as an integrated planning tool for coordinating U.S. government actions in a complex contingency operation. The pol-mil plan will include a comprehensive situation assessment, mission statement, agency objectives, and desired endstate. It will outline an integrated concept of operations to synchronize agency efforts. The plan will identify the primary preparatory issues and tasks for conducting an operation (e.g., congressional consultations, diplomatic efforts, troop recruitment, legal authorities, funding requirements and sources, media coordination, etc.). It will also address major functional / mission area tasks (e.g., political mediation / reconciliation, military support, demobilization, humanitarian assistance, police reform, basic public services, economic restoration, human rights monitoring, social reconciliation, public information, etc.). (Annex A contains an illustrative outline of a pol-mil plan.)

With the use of the pol-mil plan, the interagency can implement effective management practices, namely, to centralize planning and decentralize execution during the operation. The desired unity of effort among the various agencies that is created through the use of the pol-mil plan contributes to the overall success of these complex operations.

When a complex contingency operation is contemplated in which the U.S. Government will play a substantial role, the PDD calls upon the Deputies Committee to task the development of a pol-mil plan and assign specific responsibilities to the appropriate ExCom officials.

Each ExCom official will be required to develop their respective part of the plan, which will be fully coordinated among all relevant agencies. This development process will be transparent and analytical, resulting in issues being posed to senior policy makers for resolution. Based on the resulting decisions, the plan will be finalized and widely distributed among relevant agencies.

The PDD also requires that the pol-mil plan include demonstrable milestones and measures of success including detailed planning for the transition of the operation to activities which might be performed by a follow-on operation or by the host government. According to the PDD, the pol-mil plan should be updated as the mission progresses to reflect milestones that are (or are not) met and to incorporate changes in the situation on the ground.

Interagency Pol-Mil Plan Rehearsal

A critical aspect of the planning process will be the interagency rehearsal/review of the pol-mil plan. As outlined in the PDD, this activity involves a rehearsal of the plan's main elements, with the appropriate ExCom official presenting the elements for which he or she is responsible. By simultaneously rehearsing/reviewing all elements of the plan, differences over mission objectives, agency responsibilities, timing/synchronization, and resource allocation can be identified and resolved early, preferably before the operation

begins. The interagency rehearsal/review also underscores the accountability of each program manager in implementing their assigned area of responsibility. During execution, regular reviews of the plan ensure that milestones are met and that appropriate adjustments are made.

The PDD calls upon the Deputies Committee to conduct the interagency rehearsal/review of the pol-mil plan. Supporting agency plans are to be presented by ExCom officials before a complex contingency operation is launched (or as early as possible once the operation begins), before a subsequent critical phase during the operation, as major changes in the mission occur, and prior to an operation's termination.

After-Action Review

After the conclusion of each operation in which this planning process is employed, the PDD directs the ExCom to charter an after-action review involving both those who participated in the operation and Government experts who monitored its execution. This comprehensive assessment of interagency performance will include a review of interagency planning and coordination, (both in Washington and in the field), legal and budgetary difficulties encountered, problems in agency execution, as well as proposed solutions, in order to capture lessons learned and to ensure their dissemination to relevant agencies.

Training

The U.S. Government requires the capacity to prepare agency officials for the responsibilities they will be expected to take on in a planning and managing agency efforts in a complex contingency operation. Creating a cadre of professionals familiar with this integrated planning process will improve the USG's ability to manage future operations.

In the interest of advancing the expertise of government officials, agencies are encouraged to disseminate the *Handbook for Interagency Management of Complex Contingency Operations* published by OASD(S&R) Strategy at (703) 614-0421.

With the support of the State and Defense Departments, the PDD requires the NSC to work with the appropriate U.S. Government educational institutions--including the National Defense University, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center and the Army War College--to develop and conduct an interagency training program. This program, which should be held at least annually, will train mid-level managers (Deputy Assistant Secretary level) in the development and implementation of pol-mil plans for complex contingency operations. Those participating should have an opportunity to interact with expert officials from previous operations to learn what has worked in the past. Also, the PDD calls upon appropriate U.S. government educational institutions to explore the appropriate way to incorporate the pol-mil planning process into their curricula.

Agency Review and Implementation

Finally, the PDD directs each agency to review the adequacy of their agency's structure, legal authorities, budget levels, personnel system, training, and crisis management procedures to insure that we, as a government, are learning from our experiences with complex contingency operations and institutionalizing the lessons learned.

Annex A: Illustrative Components of a Political-Military Plan for a Complex Contingency Operation

- Situation Assessment. A comprehensive assessment of the situation to clarify essential information that, in the aggregate, provides a multi-dimensional picture of the crisis.
- U.S. Interests. A statement of U.S. interests at stake in the crisis and the requirement to secure those interests.
- Mission Statement. A clear statement of the USG's strategic purpose for the operation and the pol-mil mission.
- Objectives. The key civil-military objectives to be accomplished during the operation.
- Desired Pol-Mil End State. The conditions the operation is intended to create before the operation transitions to a follow-on operation and/or terminates.
- Concept of the Operation. A conceptual description of how the various instruments of USG policy will be integrated to get the job done throughout all phases of the operation.
- Lead Agency Responsibilities. An assignment of responsibilities for participating agencies.
- Transition/Exit Strategy. A strategy that is linked to the realization of the end state described above, requiring the integrated efforts of diplomats, military leaders, and relief officials of the USG and the international community.
- Organizational Concept. A schematic of the various organizational structures of the operation, in Washington and in theater, including a description of the chain of authority and associated reporting channels.
- Preparatory Tasks. A layout of specific tasks to be undertaken before the operation begins (congressional consultations, diplomatic efforts, troop recruitment, legal authorities, funding requirements and sources, media coordination, etc.).
- Functional or Mission Area Tasks / Agency Plans. Key operational and support plans written by USG agencies that pertain to critical parts of the operation (e.g., political mediation/reconciliation, military support, demobilization, humanitarian assistance, police reform, basic public services, economic restoration, human rights monitoring, social reconciliation, public information, etc.).