

# Inter Agency Essay



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## **WE Are the Interagency: Exercising a Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Action and Conflict Termination and Stabilization**

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### **Foreword**

For years, the federal government has grappled with the question of how best to consolidate its response to a major crisis—that is, to share relevant information to create unity of purpose while preserving the operational effectiveness of each agency or component. This is difficult for any large organization, but particularly so across the spectrum of federal agencies, where the organizational culture and ways of communicating vary widely. The difficulties multiply in an international setting, given the need for cooperation with foreign governments and international organizations. In the case of stability operations overseas, the situation is exponentially more complex, as it may require coordinating efforts in an environment beset by civil conflict, the breakdown of central authority, and rivalries among neighboring countries.

While federal officials clearly grasp the importance of interagency coordination and collaboration, they find it difficult to put theory into practice. It is for this reason that multi-agency exercises are crucial; they provide a yardstick to measure performance and help ensure the response to a future crisis is prompt, seamless, and effective. The United States European Command's (EUCOM) annual, theater-level exercise AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2009 provided a complex multinational scenario to evaluate the interagency response to an overseas conflict and subsequent efforts to stabilize the affected area. The exercise's design went beyond previous Joint Staff directed exercises, combining participants from eight federal agencies and incorporating ambitious training objectives. The overarching goal was to synchronize military and civilian agency operations early in the concept phase of the response to the crisis. In the course of the exercise, the participants embraced the idea that military units can act as enablers for U.S. government, multilateral organizations, nongovernmental agencies, and host nation organizations to help execute civilian tasks and pave the way for a return to stability.

This article outlines the approach participants took during AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2009 to execute a coordinated U.S. government response to an international crisis and describes the best practices developed during the exercise. It also offers recommendations relevant for future deployment of interagency teams, whether for joint exercises or an actual crisis. This exercise reinforced the importance of interagency coordination as soon as possible when a crisis begins to unfold, so the expertise of each agency is brought to bear early in the planning process. The synergies derived from exercises such as AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2009 help us leverage our collective strengths and ultimately enhance our ability to respond effectively to future crises, wherever they may be.

**General Carter F. Ham**  
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**(Commander, Joint Task Force-Austere Challenge 2009)**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2009 AND WORKING TOWARD A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH**

In a 2009 address to the students and faculty at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, commented, “The United States military is necessary, but it is not sufficient alone.” In other words, the U.S. military is a force for freedom and good in the world, but it is not the solution to every problem.

The Chairman also noted that the American military is stretched thin, often executing missions that service members have not been trained to do. “As this crisis really takes hold, there will be places that become unstable that we haven’t anticipated,” he said. “We need a whole-of-government approach.”<sup>1</sup> This is precisely the approach that the Joint Task Force-Austere Challenge and U.S. government planning teams embraced and exercised during AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2009 (AC09).

Since July 2006, staffs from thirty governmental agencies and offices have been developing plans to better integrate the government’s interagency capacity to prepare for and respond to post-conflict situations and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife. Emerging from those efforts is an interagency management system that addresses post-conflict response and links together civilian and military planning and actions at all levels. Exercising many components of this system, AC09 participants gained valuable insights and lessons.

Crisis action planning executed in January 2009 and an interagency planning conference conducted two months later were key initial components in planning and executing AC09. These initial components set the foundation for successful exercise execution and provided insights into future interagency operations.

### **CRISIS ACTION PLANNING, JANUARY 2009**

#### **JOINT TASK FORCE (JTF) HEADQUARTERS, GERMANY**

A small team of civilian subject matter experts from the State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS)<sup>2</sup> along with Department of Defense (DoD) planners in Germany formed a core, planning group for crisis action planning. The group assembled at 7th Army Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, the EUCOM designated JTF for AC09.

These civilian experts later became the lead representatives of the government’s Advanced Civilian Team (ACT) that later embedded in the deployed JTF staff. The intent of the ACT was to foster a more comprehensive government approach to the crisis scenario. Although the concept continues to evolve, at the time of AC09, the ACT supported embassy functions, specifically stability and reconstruction tasks, in a crisis environment. The ACT integrated with the designated JTF staff prior to deployment to facilitate unified interagency planning at the operational level.

These civilian experts were instrumental in assisting JTF planners translate national strategic objectives to operational and tactical military objectives—a fundamental activity during crisis action planning—directly supporting a whole-of-government campaign design that each component could understand and support. Key outcomes during crisis action planning were reaching agreement on a common approach, acquiring a shared understanding of the crisis, and identifying the necessary operational level response.

**INTERAGENCY PLANNING CONFERENCE, MARCH 2009**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

In March 2009, unified planning continued through an interagency planning conference hosted by the S/CRS in Washington, DC. The words “WE are the interagency” spoken during that conference, served as a constant reminder that interagency integration is a primary cultural imperative for any endeavor requiring a civil-military response.

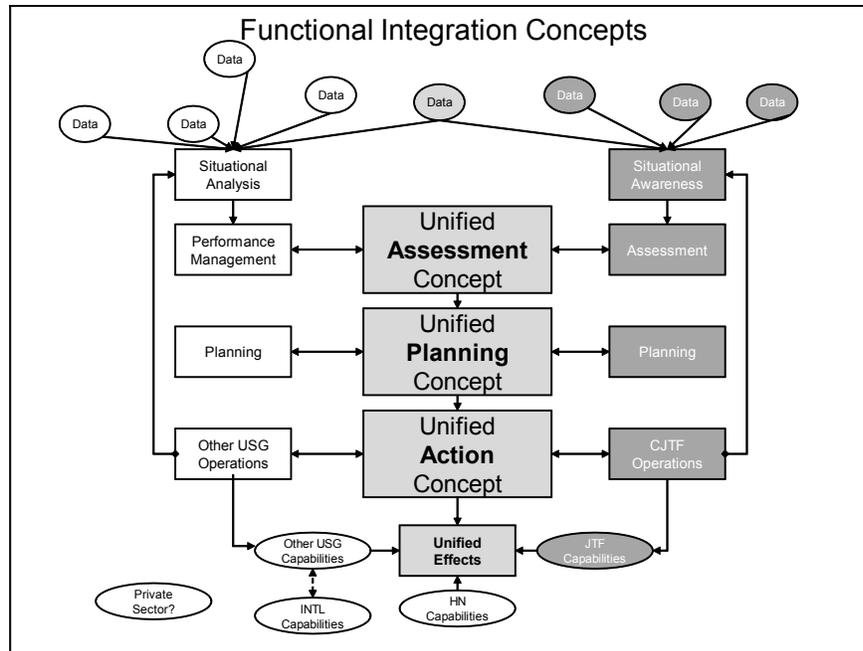
For the military participants, it reinforced that the DoD is a component of the interagency community and not a separate element. “WE are the interagency” also accentuated the essential task of the conference: How do WE, representatives of the agencies and entities of the executive branch of the government, fulfill the directives outlined in National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD 44) that calls for improved interagency coordination, planning, and implementation of stability and reconstruction efforts? How do WE achieve true, dynamic interagency coordination and unified effort? More discretely, what must WE do to integrate our different roles and responsibilities into a whole-of-government, comprehensive approach to the complex problems presented during the exercise? These questions provided a continual challenge in developing a unified approach to crisis management and stabilization from the onset of planning through exercise execution.

The Interagency Planning Conference was unprecedented in attendance and scope. Representatives from the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, Treasury, Commerce, and Health and Human Services as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Public Health Service assembled for a week of planning refinement and mission reviews prior to the execution of the exercise. The intent of the conference was to execute the requirements inherent in NSPD-44 from an operational perspective by defining processes for operational level interagency action integration and developing baseline roles and responsibilities for participating personnel and organizations in the scenario-based exercise.

During the conference and breakout sessions, the planners developed an understanding of functional integration across four identified critical areas: (1) situational analysis (intelligence), (2) performance management (assessments), (3) planning, and (4) operations. These four areas encompass the range of activities governmental organizations execute in order to achieve national objectives in crisis and post-crisis environments. While planners initially identified the objectives and key tasks during crisis action planning, they made subsequent refinements through continuous dialogue within the integrated planning team.

This conference was broader in scope and had significantly more organizations participating than the earlier crisis action-planning phase. However, both the crisis action-planning phase and the interagency planning conference allowed organizations to gain a better understanding of the current environment. Planners determined which changes within the environment were desirable; how agencies could influence these changes; which activities and operations agencies should execute; and which lead agency, including host nation (HN), should be responsible.

Continuous assessments measure the effectiveness of activities and enable subsequent unified adjustments to “the plan,” which serve as feedback for the crisis response framework. Figure 1 below depicts this concept. In Figure 1, white identifies ACT activities and dark gray identifies JTF activities. The blending of the two colors as they meet in the middle depicts the integration of activities in the four identified critical areas, with the resultant unified concepts.



**Figure 1: Functional Integration Concepts**

## LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS IN EXECUTION

During execution of AC09, the ACT split into two elements. One element embedded with the U.S. Embassy in its traditional augmentation role during crisis or conflict. The other smaller group embedded with the deployed JTF headquarters, establishing a JTF-level joint interagency coordination team (JIACT) as a conduit to coordinate interagency activities. Normally, JIACs are formed at the higher combatant command level, and in this exercise, EUCOM did establish a JIACT. The additional JTF-level JIACT was unique to AC09 and coordinated activities focused directly within the HN. There was significant discussion on the rationale to form a second operational level JIACT, and some expressed concerns over control and connectivity of a forward JIACT performing “reach back” to parent agencies with the potential for bypassing the higher level JIACT. In the end, the construct was necessary and performed required representational functions while keeping the higher level JIACT “in the loop” with better information than would otherwise have been available without a forward interagency team.

This functional construct was developed during the interagency planning conference and evolved throughout the conduct of the exercise. The primary intent was to integrate staffs at the lowest level possible to create “multilevel” integration. For example, the ACT embedded personnel at several locations within the JTF: operations center, future operations cell, and plans section. ACT members had from 5 to 15 years of service with their agencies, which roughly corresponds to a range of military professional experience from captain to lieutenant colonel.

As the exercise unfolded, planning continued, and the JTF increasingly oriented on creating positive conditions for post-conflict stability and integrating activities with interagency partners across the critical areas identified earlier during the planning conference: situational analysis, performance management or assessments, planning, and operations.

**Situational Analysis.** Each governmental and nongovernmental agency (NGO) involved in the specific operation collects raw data, analyzes the data, and presents it in a form that enables

understanding and decision-making. Given the inherent condition for segregated data collection and disparate analysis, each agency or entity creates its own level of understanding that may or may not correspond to another agency's or entity's understanding. The AC09 team was required to create interagency fusion—integration of disparate data and analysis to support common understanding across the interagency team. The exercise team used the term “non-traditional collection” to describe broad-based collection efforts that go beyond the more traditional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance collection efforts and include the unique collection requirements for stability operations. Once the focused collection effort produced the data, an interagency fusion process provided common graphic and text reports, and the exercise team posted them to common network portals and distributed them to key organizational leaders. The interagency team fused common data and avoided the information fratricide that often occurs when using stove-piped assessments and reporting. The team also identified those organizations responsible for data collection and analysis and those organizations required to participate in the vetting process for the fused reports. Intelligence and information sharing must occur in an interagency and, in many cases, a nongovernmental environment in a deployed crisis setting. Planners must consider information sharing and release authorities and establish a shared data and information policy during the planning phases to ensure common understanding and establish unity of effort.

**Assessment.** Assessments drive operational adjustments and revisions to the plan. While U.S. strategic guidance, the EUCOM operations order, the embassy country-level plan, and the JTF operations order all had complementary yet differing tasks, a common assessment process supported the senior leadership of both the task force and the embassy with a framework to direct planning and demonstrate progress toward achieving interdependent objectives. More importantly, the assessments captured key metrics and emerging trends, which allowed staff and senior leaders in both the JTF and country team to discuss necessary changes to the operations or realize opportunities available within the range of interagency activities. This approach proved difficult from the start because of the varying roles and responsibilities of those involved. For example, the embassy's country plan is a multi-year plan with long-term objectives. In AC09, the country plan covered three years, yet the JTF commander envisioned an operational timeline focused on immediate military operations and a redeployment of the majority of forces within 12 months. What the interagency team ultimately realized during the exercise was that although one size does not fit all, common immediate and short-term assessments are necessary to facilitate unified action under the comprehensive approach to crisis management and conflict termination.

**Planning.** During any operation, multiple echelons adjust their plans throughout execution. These adjustments primarily fall within two categories: (1) contingency options identified during planning efforts; and (2) changes based on emerging trends or unexpected changes to the operational environment. These adjustments must be planned in an integrated manner. The JTF commander and the ambassador must communicate regularly to determine what planning priorities the task force and embassy staffs pursue. As the JTF executes a limited portion<sup>3</sup> of the long-term country plan, the military commander should understand the potential impacts of operational adjustments to that plan. Concurrently, the ambassador should understand the potential impacts of country plan adjustments to JTF operations. Since the JTF commander and ambassador operate under different authorities, they may have different priorities and requirements. To mitigate this, they must form integrated teams that epitomize teamwork and establish systems that generate critical thought and inquiry to ensure unified planning efforts continue.<sup>4</sup> Both organizations must promptly identify conflicts, such as differences in understanding planning outputs, and resolve them quickly and at the lowest level possible.

**Operations.** When executing operations, a critical component for a comprehensive approach is developing a unified common operating picture (COP) that establishes a baseline of understanding of the environment. The JTF must rely on the ACT to establish a graphic display (software and network supported) that depicts other-than-JTF efforts, while the ACT must rely on the JTF to establish a similar graphic display depicting its efforts. Both must then fuse these graphic displays into one unified COP. The ACT operations cell and the JTF operations center are the primary monitoring and reporting centers for operations execution, and they must see each other as peer organizations to cultivate common situational awareness. The graphical depiction of the unified COP continued to evolve and remained a work in progress at the end of the exercise.

As the exercise progressed, the critical requirement for maintaining common situational awareness emerged as a special focus area for the JTF and embassy leadership. The notion of a unified COP, a truly common interagency supported operational picture, became a subject of both operational debate and technical discussion. For example, displaying U.S. military units on a personal computer or command post display screen is straightforward and technically simple. However, it is difficult to depict operationally the actual activities each unit engages in over time. As interagency actions and activities were added and geospatially referenced, the COP became more complex. For example, simply placing a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) icon in its geographic location does not paint a true picture of DART activities. The activities of a government reconstruction team working with an NGO and coordinating with a local political leader is lost on normal COP displays.

The COP integration and display of all activities in the crisis environment or post-conflict environment reflect the changing nature of understanding standardized doctrinal icons for joint operations. During the exercise, the JTF and embassy created layered data overlays with regularly updated callout boxes and posted them to the common portal to depict both activities and location of U.S. government efforts. Yet, they failed to reach a consensus on the most acceptable method to depict the elusive unified COP. In short, the military bias for graphical depiction of unit locations does not necessarily translate to non-military segments of the government. For future exercises, interagency and JTF leaders must ensure that staffs establish better mechanisms for depicting a unified situational awareness. Despite this issue, the dialogue and discourse generated during the evolution of the unified COP proved invaluable in the education of all involved. In other words, the journey was as important, if not more important, than the destination.

AC09 was an invaluable environment for the target audience to learn and adapt. One example of learning involved the evolution of JTF embeds at the embassy. The task force initially embedded one intelligence analyst and a planner in the ACT located at the embassy to facilitate integration of intelligence and planning efforts, which proved insufficient in a practical sense. By the end of the exercise, an additional intelligence analyst, three more planners, and an assessments officer were embedded into the embassy. This increase in personnel and the additional skill set provided by the assessment officer highlight the need to develop joint manning documents that identify personnel to embed with the supported embassy.

The target audience also had to adapt. Military personnel, comfortable with readily identifiable rank and authority, may be uncomfortable with more nuanced peer leadership and team-based decision processes in non-uniformed agencies and entities of the government. Civilian personnel, comfortable with peer leadership, may be uncomfortable with rank-based hierarchies and formal processes understood by military staffs. Even basic lexicon is different across the agencies. The JTF, using formal joint doctrine and terms of reference, created a language barrier for some who use “plain English” to describe and discuss actions and intent. Even in technical communities

of interest within the interagency, the lexicon varies. The government should establish a regular series of integrated exercises and encourage interagency exchanges to continue the learning and development of common practices across the organizations to foster comprehensive mindsets and skill sets.

**UNIFIED ACTION TOWARD SECURITY, STABILITY, TRANSITION, AND RECONSTRUCTION OPERATIONS**

During the conduct of the exercise, the JTF assumed a traditional leading role in the execution of offensive operations and forced the adversary to withdraw. Concurrently, the task force and country team focused on creating a security, stability, transition, and reconstruction operations (SSTRO) task list<sup>5</sup> that delineated responsibilities between the JTF and other government agencies for stability tasks required during and after major combat operations. Figure 2 depicts the result of this effort. More importantly, it also identifies the entities responsible for tasks during transitions as sufficient capacity is generated to meet minimum needs. For example, the JTF would initially take the lead for Task 1: Secure critical or sensitive facilities and key government leaders, which directly support Objective A: Restoration of sovereignty. This task would transition to the host nation as security forces reconstituted, redistributed within the operational environment, or attained a level of capacity in some other manner or method.

Pri.	Initial OPR	Transitions To	Task	Nested USG OBJ
1	JTF	HN	Secure critical or sensitive facilities, key government leaders	OBJ A
2	Embassy (EMB)	HN	Reconstitute HN missing in action (police) forces	OBJ B
3	JTF	HN/ICRC/NGOs	Provide life, limb, and eyesight emergency care	OBJ C
4	JTF	OFDA/WFP	Provide humanitarian assistance	OBJ B
5	JTF/USEMB	USEMB PAO	Conduct key leader's engagement IOT inform and influence (could be to "stay home"; establish social network at the local and national levels)	OBJ D
6	JTF	DoS	Advise HN forces in conduct of IED/Mine/unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearing operations	OBJ A
7	USEMB	OFDA	Participate in Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center (HACC) (or determine what triggers the JTF to establish a HACC) IOT coordinate HA assistance	OBJ B
8	JTF	HN/World Bank/USAID	Provide emergency electrical supply to key infrastructure utilities (pumping stations water treatment, etc.)	OBJ E/OBJ B
9	JTF	HN/World Bank/USAID	Re-establish local sanitation services as well as sanitary sewer disposal and get them to work immediately	OBJ C/OBJ E
10	JTF	COM/DoS/USAID OTI	Identify and neutralize political destabilizing elements	OBJ B
11	JTF/USEMB	HN/World Bank	Effect repairs to air fields to re-establish capability	OBJ E
12	JTF	HN/World Bank	Repair roads and bridges where damaged along critical main supply routes (MSRs) for JTF operations and immediate HA	OBJ E
13	JTF	HN/DoD	Reconstitute HN Ministry of Defense forces	OBJ F/OBJ B

**Figure 2: Whole-of-Government SSTRO Tasks**

Throughout the exercise, the JTF commander made it clear the task force was to enable host nation, U.S. government, NGO, and/or other efforts to support stabilization and reconstruction efforts by committing specified capabilities in a coordinated manner. In other words, the JTF did not act as the first responder by default and intentionally constrained specific military capabilities to allow other organizations to perform support actions. Ultimately, this approach demonstrated these agencies' capabilities to meet the needs of the population and eliminated the perception that a foreign military force was coming to the aid of a distressed population.

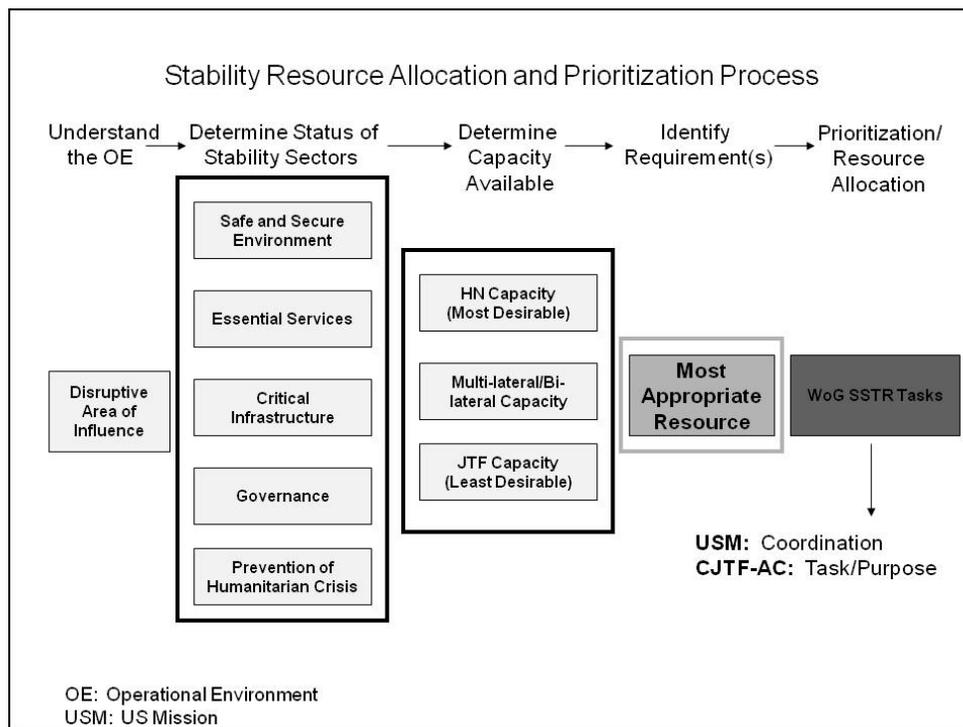
When determining what the JTF should accomplish in support of stabilization and reconstruction

the interagency team considered moderating JTF-led activities. The task force and embassy staffs developed the phrase “disruptive areas of influence” to describe areas where belligerent neighbors (in this case the invaders) still wielded control or significant influence over the terrain or population or had indirect influence through proxies and could continue to oppose the host nation and coalition efforts through irregular warfare. By defining the operational environment and using joint doctrine to maintain a predictive and continuous analysis, the JTF could offer capabilities in identified distressed areas without blanketing the operational area with military elements conducting tasks better suited for the host nation or other agencies.

Collaboration among all task force and embassy staff members allowed the staffs to characterize stability sectors within the areas of disruptive influence. Some areas presented a security challenge, while others presented a domestic, political, or humanitarian relief challenge. Some areas presented a complex array of stability issues and required an integrated solution set involving JTF, host nation, U.S. governmental, and NGO actions. For exercise AC09, the JTF identified five key stability categories: (1) safe and secure environment, (2) essential services, (3) critical infrastructure, (4) governance, and (5) prevention of humanitarian crisis. A distressed area was considered stable when it reached an acceptable level of performance in each of these five categories as assessed by the JTF, the embassy, and the host nation.

A deliberate prioritization and allocation process was necessary to determine what specific tasks and actions needed to be performed in each stability category, what entity would perform them, and what resources each entity would require. Figure 3 depicts the system developed and employed during the exercise to meet this challenge.

An attendant strategic communications effort coordinated between the host nation and U.S. government accompanied these activities. This effort communicated the status of stabilization and reconstruction efforts to the local population, regional actors, and the domestic populations of contributing or donor nations.



**Figure 3: Stability Resource and Prioritization Process**

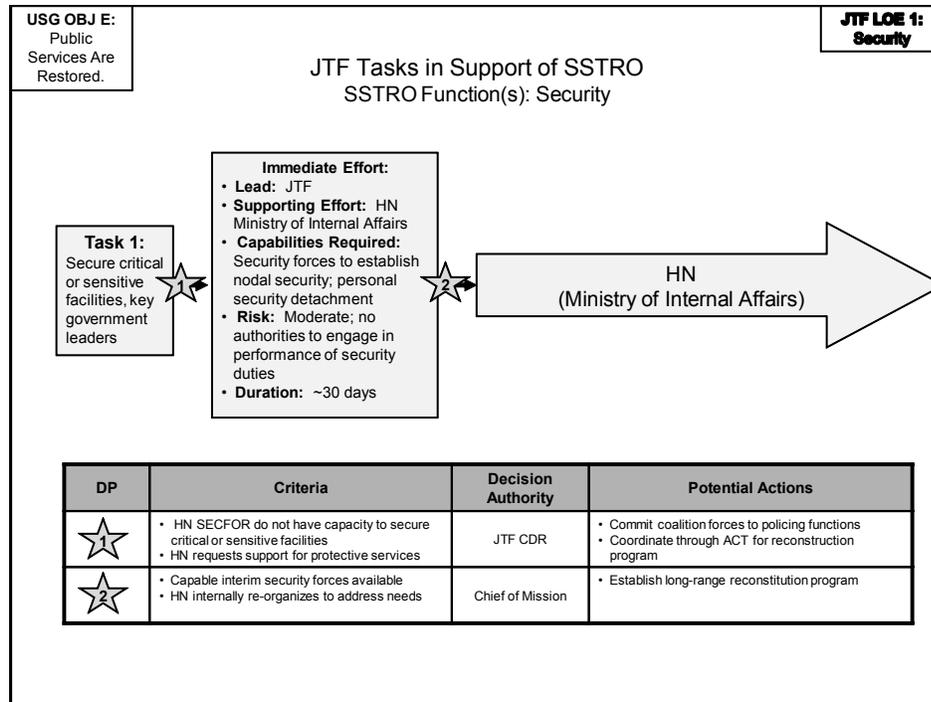
## INTERAGENCY SUPPORTED LINES OF EFFORT

The JTF established consolidated stability operations lines of effort consisting of: (1) security, (2) reconstruction, (3) humanitarian assistance, (4) enabling civil governance, and (5) security assistance. The initial organization around stability categories established a baseline for understanding the environment in distressed areas and activities within them, while the stability operations lines of efforts framed the broad approach to post-conflict operations aimed at achieving national objectives. For the lines of effort, the JTF was the lead for security while the embassy was the lead for reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, and enabling civil governance. In conjunction with the Office of Defense Cooperation at the embassy, EUCOM was responsible for security assistance.

Ultimately, these lines of effort led to the prioritization of tasks and resources within both the embassy and the JTF during the daily joint interagency working group (JIAWG) meeting. The JIAWG, co-hosted by the ACT and JIACT, facilitated dialogue between the task force and the country team and determined which specific tasks the military would accomplish in support of stabilization and reconstruction efforts. The JTF then issued these tasks in the daily tasking order to its subordinate components for execution and briefed the status of each during the its morning update. The JTF morning update was an important daily touchstone for the staffs, with the JTF, subordinate components, and the embassy (including the Ambassador) attending via a video-teleconference link.

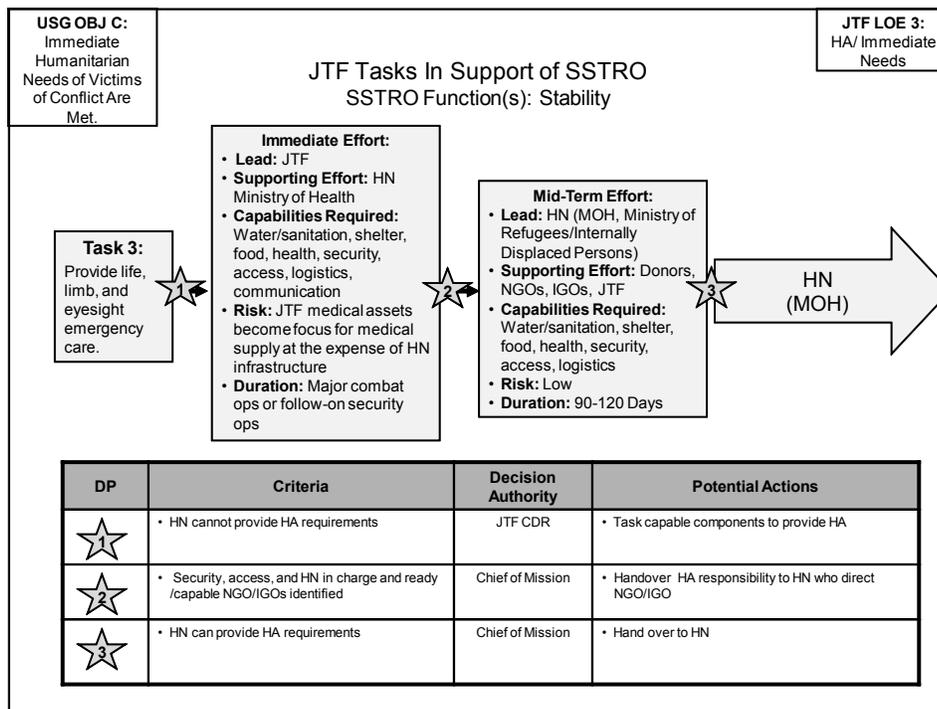
The colloquial phrase “rolling transition to stability operations” depicts exactly that—in some areas the JTF conducted stability tasks while in other areas the main effort focused on offensive operations. In effect, the task force conducted both offense and stability operations simultaneously. The task list delineated which entity was responsible for each task and enabled conduct of simultaneous offensive and stability operations. Because of a lack of host nation or multi/bi-lateral capacity, JTF-led tasks identified which agency or entity the task would transition to and when that transition would occur based on specifically identified conditions.

In the preferred case, the host nation assumed direct responsibility for stability tasks in the post-conflict period. Figure 4 depicts the construct for a stability task that did not require an interim JTF or government effort. The host nation had adequate capacity in place to assume the lead on the task, and did not require U.S. resources except upon request in exceptional cases. By integrating JTF and embassy continuous assessments with host nation agency input and using the unified common operational picture displays, initial decision points provided lead-time for the task force to provide select capabilities in support of the stabilization and reconstruction task listing. These decision points addressed distressed areas where the host nation required interim U.S. support to create positive conditions in the stability sector.



**Figure 4: JTF Tasks in Support of SSTRO (No Interim Effort)**

Figure 5 depicts the same methodology described in Figure 4 except that an interim organization is required between the JTF and host nation.



**Figure 5: JTF Tasks in Support of SSTRO (Interim Organization)**

## CRISIS ACTION AND CONFLICT TERMINATION—RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AC09

Austere Challenge 09 provided an excellent opportunity for insight on issues associated with interagency cooperation, coordination and collaboration. The following recommendations are relevant for the future deployment of interagency teams, whether for joint exercises or an actual crisis.

**Strategic direction.** The U.S. government must continue developing the interagency management system as a means of establishing the strategic direction for crisis response in order to allow coherent operational level planning and execution of comprehensive activities. The crisis action-plan phase of AC09 began with a review of the directives and strategic framework developed by the National Security Council Deputies Committee and approved by the National Command Authority. This review allowed each respective governmental department to begin coordinating and operationalizing its intent from a common framework. However, this system needs to create the policies, processes, and procedures that will allow seamless and effective interagency actions at all levels: strategic, operational and tactical.

**Early integration of interagency partners with the JTF.** Early integration, beginning with initial conflict action/crisis reporting, is a key and necessary element for successful interagency integration, but it is not sufficient in and of itself. Early assimilation enables the JTF to take an integrated approach to the operational design and planning of the military response and continue to refine planning and execution. As the crisis or conflict develops and military forces begin flowing into the conflict area, the JTF and embassy must exchange carefully designated staff members, which enhances communication and collaboration.

Specifically, the integration of ACT personnel into the JTF staff as members of the joint planning group during crisis action planning proved invaluable during AC09. This integration process should be continued for future JTF formations<sup>6</sup> to facilitate true interagency coordination within the totality of the crisis response framework. Embedding interagency civilian personnel within the JTF at the earliest practical point is critical to achieving a true comprehensive approach. Additionally, the JTF must embed operations, intelligence, and planning capabilities within the embassy's country team at the earliest practical moment. Once national leaders determine that a situation requires the establishment of a JTF, they must make a concurrent decision to establish an interagency integration forcing function in some form or fashion. An ACT as exercised during AC09 is one approach. ACT personnel are in a position to understand and assist in the creation of standard processes as the JTF is forming, which enables them to influence JTF activities and operational objectives from onset. Similarly, JTF personnel embedded in the embassy are in a position to understand the ambassador's intentions and the nuances of the embassy's working environment. Early integration serves to facilitate a common baseline of understanding between both staffs prior to deployment, as opposed to a traditional link-up that occurs in the operations area once crisis operations commence. This early integration also provides direct linkage back to multiple parent departments and agencies as planners craft the operational level approach to the crisis.

**Continue to build the team.** WE, the interagency, must build expanded U.S. government professional teams that are comfortable in different environments for a 21st century approach to government activities. A way to accomplish this is to expand the Interagency Planning Course, offered by the State Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, to ensure an output equal to the need. Additionally, it may prove beneficial to develop a military special skill identifier, similar in concept to the current DoD joint planner qualification, to identify and manage individuals with

interagency planning expertise. At the very least, the U.S. government must continue to leverage joint, interagency, and coalition partners in exercises with complex scenarios and view them as the mechanism for achieving strategic goals. Individuals who are comfortable working with outside agencies are better able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of varying government entities, which allows them to leverage strengths and mitigate weaknesses to everyone's benefit.

**Professionalization of the process and human capital in the interagency environment.** In addition to heeding the recommendations above, the U.S. government should establish guidance and programs for interagency education and professional development across the spectrum of the governmental departments, agencies, and offices. Continuing to resource joint-interagency forums, exchange programs, education, and exercises that focus on a whole-of-government approach to share mechanisms and best practices will enhance the U.S. government's ability to meet strategic objectives.

**Review C4I systems and protocols.** The U.S. government should reassess interagency secure communications and information technologies (data, voice, and video) for interoperability and compatibility, particularly when these technologies are deployed in "fly away" configurations and used in "austere" environments. This portion of the ACT concept was not exercised during AC09. With finite JTF and embassy resources, any ACT-like organization must be self-sufficient to the maximum extent possible. Ex-military with operational experience may be a source to draw from when setting up an operations center from scratch.

**Reassess intelligence policies and programs for U.S. and host nation support during crisis.** Appropriate policy reviews and subsequent changes, particularly with regard to intelligence sharing and foreign disclosure, may improve unified situational understanding and interagency fusion. Changes of classification and disclosure standards may also lead to streamlined, responsible release of time-sensitive intelligence and operational information to host nation, multi-national and NGO partners whose missions directly affect national goals and objectives, which will better support unified action.

## CONCLUSION

"Bereft of outside agency input, the military will generally fill the void as it sees fit."<sup>7</sup> Taken from the USAID's *Field Operations Guide*, this observation alludes to what may happen during operations involving the military in a comprehensive approach to crisis actions, conflict termination, and stabilization. Lacking interagency integration and active teaming, the military will quickly seek to use its capabilities to fill perceived operational voids. The military inclination for predictive analysis and detailed planning creates an ingrained expectation that military staffs will predict and mitigate negative conditions when identified. What are "we" (the military) doing about "X" should be what are "WE" (the whole-of-government) doing about "X?" This latter approach applies the tools, relationships, and influences to achieve national objectives. Exercise AC09 presented the first large-scale exercise that employed the ACT concept as an integration mechanism and demonstrated the challenges and complexity of interagency integration. DoD should make every effort to continue collaborating with other government departments and agencies through complex joint, interagency, and multi-national exercises. By serving as a forcing function and learning vehicle, DoD can enhance the development of the right professionals, processes, and integration mechanisms for the Nation in the 21st Century security environment. *IAE*

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Garamone, J., *U.S. Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Addresses Students and Faculty at Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, N.J., Feb. 5, 2009*, American Forces Press Service, Princeton, N.J., Feb. 6, 2009.
- 2 From the S/CRS website <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/c12936.htm> accessed on 15 JUL 09, S/CRS Mission Statement: “To lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity 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 sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy.”
- 3 While the JTF plan itself is limited in scope and duration when compared to the embassy’s Country Plan, the overall combatant command’s military engagement plan with the country is the military equivalent of the long-range plan.
- 4 Not only dialogue at the action officer level, the criticality of JTF Commander and Chief of Mission dialogue cannot be undervalued.
- 5 DoDDirective 3000.05 “Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.”
- 6 During AUSTERE CHALLENGE, the Civilian Response Corps was still being established. Participants from across the U.S. Government were assembled to represent CRC members for the exercise. In future exercises, it is expected that CRC members will participate.
- 7 U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Field Operations Guide v 4.0*, [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/disaster\\_assistance/resources/pdf/fog\\_v4.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/resources/pdf/fog_v4.pdf)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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