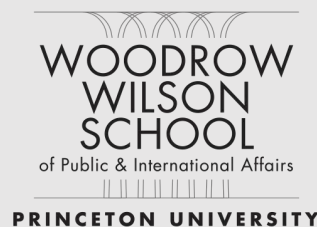




Lessons from the U.S. Civilian Surge in Afghanistan, 2009-2014



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On the cover: Darren Richardson, a U.S.

Department of Agriculture employee, points out a nearby canal to Kuchi tribesmen while Marine Corps Major Jeffrey Seavy looks on in the Bawka district in Afghanistan's Farah province in 2010.

Source: U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Rylan Albright.

Executive Summary

Starting in 2009, the United States deployed an additional 33,000 combat soldiers to Afghanistan, ultimately bringing the total U.S. troop count to over 100,000 by mid-2011. To support this effort, the United States also added nearly 3,000 U.S. government civilians to the 714 already at Embassy Kabul and field outposts. This whole-of-government “civilian surge” was described as an essential component of the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy and was a White House priority.

Implementing the civilian surge was difficult. The State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the two main agencies responsible for providing and managing the extra civilians, had to rapidly recruit, clear, train, and deploy hundreds of people to Afghanistan. The Foreign Service – already strained worldwide – was unable to meet the demand, so the agencies relied on congressionally approved temporary hiring authorities. The quality and qualifications of temporary hires varied. One-year tour lengths, frequent leave, and a high turnover rate in the summer fighting season reduced continuity at Embassy Kabul and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the field. Additionally, the conflict zone experience and qualifications of these civilians varied widely.

After conducting more than 50 interviews with senior officials and experts who implemented or participated in the U.S. civilian surge to Afghanistan and reviewing the relevant primary and secondary documentation, we recommend the U.S. government avoid surging large numbers of civilians to conflict zones for economic development and capacity building in the future. State and USAID are neither designed nor staffed to handle rapid and sizeable deployments. Many civilian activities in Afghanistan were aimed at long-term goals for which a temporary influx of personnel is less effective.

But the civilian surge revealed instructive lessons regarding weaknesses in the personnel systems of State and USAID. To address these, we make four recommendations. First, State should develop an expeditionary skill set among select FSOs. Second, State and USAID should mandate two-year tours in conflict zones. Third, civilian agencies should strengthen efforts to provide certainty to civilian officials’ families and keep these families better connected. Fourth, civilian agencies should review the temporary hiring mechanisms used during the surge as well as the “when actually employed” (WAE) pay structure.

Finally, recognizing that future political, humanitarian or national security imperatives may again lead policymakers to order a surge, even though we believe it to be a flawed policy tool for long-term objectives, we offer a fifth recommendation: State and USAID should create a surge “playbook” to record best practices from the experience in Afghanistan.

List of Abbreviations

AFSA	American Foreign Service Association
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program (DoD)
CEW	Civilian Expeditionary Workforce
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
CSO	Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (DoS)
DFID	United Kingdom Department of International Development
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DLI	Development Leadership Initiative (USAID)
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoS	Department of State
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FSL	Foreign Service Limited
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
GAO	United States Government Accountability Office
MoDA	Ministry of Defense Advisors Program
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU	United States National Defense University
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OAPA	Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (USAID)
OBC	Overseas Briefing Center
OIG	Office of the Inspector General (DoS)
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID)
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSC	Private Service Contractor
R&R	Rest and Relaxation Break
RRB	Regional Rest Break
RSO	Regional Security Officer (DoS)
S/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (DoS)
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SRAP	Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (DoS)
START	Syria Transition Assistance Response Team
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WAE	When Actually Employed

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I. Introduction

U.S. Armed Forces and civilians have been deployed in Afghanistan since 2001. Nearly 15 years later, this presence appears set to continue for the foreseeable future – the U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2012 permits U.S. and NATO troops to stay in Afghanistan until “the end of 2024 and beyond.”¹ More recently in October 2015, President Obama announced plans to keep 9,800 troops in place through 2016 and eventually reduce this presence to 5,500.²

This report details the surge of U.S. civilians into Afghanistan from 2009 to 2014 and the challenges encountered in the implementation of the so-called “civilian surge.” In particular the report strives to tell the story of the civilian surge from a personnel perspective, identify key management and planning challenges, and then present actionable recommendations to improve the abilities of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to lead development and diplomatic efforts in conflict zones.

This analysis of the civilian management effort and recommendations that follow are generally operational in nature, but it is important to note a few high-level conclusions that shape the overarching challenges of the surge. We consistently found during our research that dedicated, hardworking people did their best to implement the civilian surge in Afghanistan but were given unrealistic targets and inadequate tools. State and USAID lack the personnel structures, staffing patterns, family support structure, and required expertise to deploy a large number of people in a short time. Additionally, the resources and funding of these institutions prevent them from having such a surge capacity. The risk in not addressing these issues is great; history will likely repeat itself when these agencies are again asked to surge their staffs.

The report is divided into nine sections. Section II covers the methodology of our research. Section III describes the executive-level effort to initiate and manage the surge. Section IV highlights the main problem faced by State and USAID: the inability to fill billets. Section V catalogues solutions to that problem. Sections VI and VII document challenges that arose both before and after deployment to Afghanistan. Section VIII discusses the efficacy of a “surge” as a policy tool – both for the situation in Afghanistan and in other contingencies. Section IX concludes with findings and recommendations.

¹ Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement Between The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and The United States of America, available at <http://mfa.gov.af/Content/files/BSA%20ENGLISH%20AFG.pdf>

² U.S. President Barack Obama, “Update on America’s combat mission in Afghanistan.” The Roosevelt Room, the White House. 15 October 2015. Statement, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2015/10/15/president-delivers-statement-afghanistan>

II. Methodology

This report was produced in Fall 2015 as part of an academic Policy Workshop at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. The Policy Workshop on “Lessons Learned in Afghanistan” was led by professors Jacob Shapiro and Ethan Kapstein and included a group of seven graduate students. The workshop received useful support and feedback from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) Lessons Learned Program throughout the research process and used their input to frame our research objectives and share data.

More than 50 in-depth interviews were conducted in Washington, D.C., Princeton, New York, London, and Amman. Subjects included former and current principals and action officers from State, USAID, the Department of Defense (DOD), the National Security Council (NSC), Congress, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks. The interviews were conducted following standard journalistic sourcing practices. These interviews revealed the story of the civilian surge from the agents who planned, implemented, and lived it. From the aggregation and distillation of their opinions and recommendations, we formulated the recommendations of this report.

Toward this same end, we read policy documents and other lessons learned reports produced by U.S. government agencies and leading think tanks. These materials helped fill in the operational story of the surge and provided food for thought as we developed our recommendations.

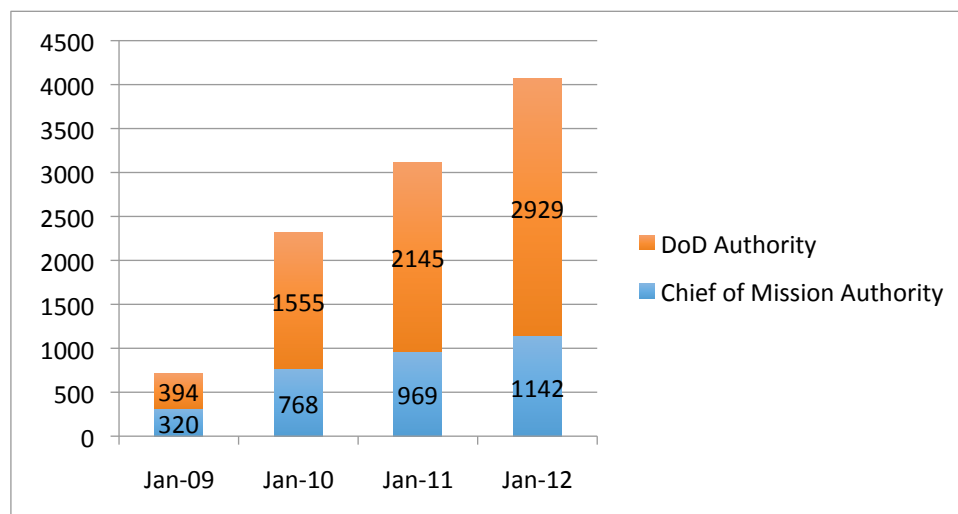
We also consulted available data from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), State, and USAID. These data revealed positions, vacancies, and composition of the civilian workforce deployed to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2014.

III. The Executive Level Effort

In late 2009, President Obama announced a new, comprehensive U.S. strategy for Afghanistan. The Taliban was resurgent, having made major gains and threatening the stability of the fledgling Afghan state. The U.S. administration wanted to demonstrate its commitment to the war and at the same time begin laying out an exit strategy. Following an extensive policy review and debate among key advisors, President Obama decided to deploy additional soldiers in a military surge and simultaneously increase civilian-led efforts to build Afghan governing capacity and initiate sustainable economic growth.

In two years, civilians from at least nine executive branch agencies operating under Chief of Mission authority in Afghanistan would more than triple, from 320 to 1,142; additionally, the Department of Defense civilian presence rose from 394 to 2,929³ (see Table 1). These civilians were drawn not just from USAID, State, and Defense, but also from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, Health and Human Services, Transportation, Treasury, and Homeland Security.

Figure 1. Increase in U.S. Civilian Presence in Afghanistan, Jan 2009 to Jan 2012



Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Afghanistan: Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence," February 2012. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/588869.pdf>

The Strategy of the Civilian Surge

In his December 1, 2009, speech announcing the surge, President Obama said the purpose was "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its

³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Afghanistan: Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence," February 2012, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/588869.pdf>.

capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.”⁴ He feared renewed Taliban control would again allow for terrorist safe havens to take root in the country. To defeat the insurgency and stabilize the country, the United States and its NATO allies would implement a counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy. As defined in the U.S. Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative from 2009, COIN “is the blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes. Unlike conventional warfare, non-military means are often the most effective elements, with military forces playing an enabling role.”⁵ Within the COIN strategy, the U.S. Government would sequence operations in a “clear, hold, build, transition” manner. The clearing and holding would be primarily a military function, with the U.S. military clearing areas of insurgent fighters and establishing a presence to hold the area. At this point civilian agencies, through their various capabilities, would help build the area before transferring the area back to Afghan Government control.

To support the military personnel increase, President Obama also announced a surge of U.S. civilians to Afghanistan. The troops would seek to clear and hold – i.e. expel the insurgents and secure territory. In coordination with the military, the civilians would then oversee the build and transfer work: developing economic, governance, and security capacity and then handing that off to Afghan counterparts. The build step would require technical expertise: agriculturalists to bolster farmers’ productivity and market access; rule of law experts to develop the judiciary; and specialists to build state financial capacity. A broad range of civilian departments and agencies would contribute civilians to the effort. As Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, then-U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, said at the time, “For the first time since the conflict in Afghanistan began eight years ago, we have an innovative, whole-of-government strategy.”⁶

Setting Personnel Targets

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul, led by Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, set the civilian staffing targets for the civilian surge with input from Washington and the military. The White House and NSC were critical to overseeing this effort and compelling whole-of-government action. For example, personnel from departments such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) fell under Chief of Mission authority once they arrived in Afghanistan; however, prior to their deployment, State and the Chief of Mission had no visibility into or influence over USDA or DHS personnel actions. Backed by the White House,

⁴U.S. President Barack Obama, “The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan.” The White House, December 2009. Address to the Nation. Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

⁵ U.S. Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative, “U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide,” January 2009. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>

⁶ Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, “Civilian Strategy for Afghanistan: A Status Report in Advance of the London Conference.” U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. January 21, 2010. Statement for the Record. Available at <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/download/holbrooketestimony100121p&download=1>

Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew held weekly phone calls with agency principals and human resources managers to track the recruitment and deployment of each civilian in the surge.

The primary implementation goal of the surge was to get military forces and civilians into the field as soon as possible. Rapidly meeting the personnel targets was so important to the administration that the Kabul Embassy management officer had a full-time FS2-level Foreign Service Officer – the second-highest non-executive rank – who was dedicated to monitoring the number of incoming personnel. Several senior government officials interviewed for this report questioned the analysis that determined the targets; others criticized the amount of time consumed by fulfilling the requests.

At the same time President Obama announced the surge, he set the withdrawal date: after 18 months, the troops would begin to come home. Perceptions about the duration of the civilian presence varied. Some believed once the military left it would be the civilians' turn to run the show.⁷ Others, however, knew that civilian access to the field was enabled only by the military presence, and once the military left, the civilians would follow.

⁷ Ambassador Ryan Crocker fought hard for a long-term presence with four missions outside of Kabul – Mazar, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat. Now there is no presence there. See Annex B, Interview Notes with Ambassador Ryan Crocker, 16 October 2015.

IV. The Problem: Filling Billets with Full-Time Civilians

The strategic decision to rapidly deploy thousands of civilians to Afghanistan strained the already overstretched State Department and USAID. Lacking a military-like reserve force and facing White House pressure to fill billets in Afghanistan, the civilian agencies pulled Foreign Service Officers and civil servants from other jobs in a zero-sum personnel shift.

Direct Hires

The number of civilian surge billets expanded as the ambassador determined further needs. The final requirement was 732 personnel in Embassy Kabul and 529 in the field, mostly in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).⁸ In reality, 90.6 percent of those positions were filled by December 2011, as shown in Table 1. Many of the civilian agencies never reached their targets. The Department of Justice and USDA, for instance, both came up short by at least 25 percent.⁹

Table 1. U.S. Civilian Level of Manning in Afghanistan, as of December 6, 2011.

Agency	Position requirements	Positions filled	% of Position requirements filled
Mission	1,261	1,142	90.6
Kabul	732	686	93.7
Field	529	456	86.2
State	594	577	97.1
USAID	378	366	96.8
Department of Justice	154	116	75.3
USDA	77	55	71.4
Department of Homeland Security	25	23	92.0
Department of the Treasury	16	11	68.8
Department of Transportation	15	12	80.0
Health and Human Services	1	1	100.0
Department of Commerce	1	1	100.0

Source: GAO, "Afghanistan: Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence," February 2012. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/588869.pdf>

The main problem was that the pool of qualified and available personnel was small. The biggest contributors to the civilian surge were State and USAID, both chronically understaffed agencies with few resources. They had three staffing sources to tap into: Direct Hires (i.e., FSOs), limited hires (granted by extraordinary congressional hiring authority), and contractors.

⁸ Government Accountability Office (GAO), "Afghanistan: Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence," February 2012.

⁹ Ibid.

The Foreign Service was already overstretched. As of October 2011, “Twenty-eight percent of overseas Foreign Service positions were either vacant or filled by upstretch candidates.”¹⁰ This staffing deficiency was worst in hardship posts, where over 20 percent of positions were vacant in late-2011.¹¹ And yet, the State Department’s requirement for the civilian surge was 594 employees by December 2011, equal to nearly 9 percent of all officers in the Foreign Service.

The civilian surge required USAID to put 378 employees in Afghanistan by 2011, according to GAO.¹² This was a nearly four-fold increase from 2008 levels. Considerably smaller than the State Department and similarly understaffed, USAID scrambled to build the human resources infrastructure to support the surge. It would become the “largest and fastest deployment of US direct-hire staff to a single country in 30 years.”¹³

The personnel deficit was particularly acute at the mid-grade level of both State and USAID due to a hiring freeze in the mid-1990s, during which both civilian agencies reduced their workforce.¹⁴ This reduction created a deficit that made 10- to 15-year experience positions hard to fill. Both State and USAID have the capacity to make changes to their staffing patterns, but they typically do so over a longer period of time. According to the GAO, State has a Five Year Workforce Plan, which it updates annually, and uses an Overseas Staffing Model, which it updates every two years to “ensure that the department’s personnel resources are aligned with its strategic priorities and Foreign policy objectives.”¹⁵

No Standing Reserve

In the words of General (Ret.) David Petraeus, “The civilian agencies are not resourced adequately for big endeavors.”¹⁶ One component of this is that unlike the military, State and USAID lack a reserve or float – i.e. undeployed staff available to fill positions. For example, in addition to a large reserve force, the Army has TTHS accounts (Transit, Training, Hospital, Schools), or ways to account for those personnel who are not available to rapidly deploy. For every 100 billets, there are 110-115 soldiers. The staffing patterns of State and USAID, however, are always in deficit. For every 100 billets, there are only 80 or 90 people available.¹⁷

¹⁰ “Upstretch” assignments are defined as “assignments in which the position’s grade is at least one grade higher than that of the officer assigned to it.” See GAO, “Foreign Service Midlevel Staffing Gaps Persist Despite Significant Increases in Hiring,” June 2012, p. 6. Available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/591595.pdf>

¹¹ GAO, June 2012.

¹² GAO, February 2012.

¹³ USAID 2010 Annual Awards Ceremony, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadw232.pdf

¹⁴ GAO, June 2012. p. 5 and GAO, “Strategic Workforce Planning Can Help USAID Address Current and Future Challenges,” Aug. 2003, p. 14. available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/239376.pdf>.

¹⁵ GAO, June 2012.

¹⁶ See Annex B, interview with General (ret) David Petraeus, 24 November 2015.

¹⁷ American Academy of Diplomacy and Stimson Center, “A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness,” Washington DC, October 2008, pg 3 available at http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/FAB_report_2008.pdf.

The challenges associated with staffing hardship posts are even greater than traditional staffing and the risk to successfully implementing U.S. foreign policy was noted as early as 2002.¹⁸

The State Department has tried to build a reserve force of officers with experience and relevant skill sets for conflict zone deployments. In 2004, the State Department created an Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). Originally proposed by Senators Joe Biden (D-Del.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), it was meant to be a clearinghouse of thought and planning for whole-of-government contingency operations, and to coordinate a bench of conflict-specialized reservists, called the Civilian Response Corps.

In 2010, S/CRS was converted into a functional bureau in the State Department, called Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO). Immediately, CSO faced an austere budget climate and resistance from other agencies – including from within State itself. Embassies and regional bureaus rejected incursions into their work by CSO. Plus, its involvement in a country is limited to two years. It recently handed off its role in Syria contingency planning, as the war entered its third year.

Meanwhile, the Civilian Response Corps has never received the resources or mandate to enable it to make a difference. It has had limited impact on conflict zone operations. Without excess or reserve personnel capacity, State and USAID deployments are a zero-sum game as surging FSOs to Afghanistan deprives other missions around the world. Without float, State and USAID deployments are zero-sum.

DoD Civilians

The Department of Defense (DoD) deployed nearly 3,000 civilians to Afghanistan as part of the surge. They performed a wide range of jobs. Some were more traditionally military in nature (e.g., wheeled vehicle mechanics and other maintenance-type personnel), while others had roles that overlapped more with those of civilians from other U.S. government agencies (e.g. Afghan government and ministry advisors). Indeed, the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) program in Kabul remains one of the legacy functions of DoD civilians, and a role that DoD civilians still fill today.

Compared to State Department and USAID, DoD more successfully identified and deployed these civilians to Afghanistan for a few reasons. For one, DoD had a much larger pool of employees to draw from. DoD presently has 750,000 civilians.¹⁹ By contrast, State has 25,000 split between the Civil and Foreign services. USAID has just 4,000 employees. Additionally,

¹⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, “State Department: Staffing Shortfalls and Ineffective Assignments System Compromise Diplomatic Readiness at Hardship Posts,” June 2002, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/234908.pdf>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, available at <http://www.defense.gov/About-DoD>.

many DoD civilians have military experience.²⁰ They are accustomed to the hardships associated with deploying to conflict zones. One report suggests this experience was a key reason enough DoD civilians volunteered.²¹

Critically, when the surge was announced in 2009, DoD had also already begun serious efforts to reform its overarching civilian personnel deployment mechanism, mainly by establishing the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW).²²

Like the State Department's effort to build a Civilian Response Corps, DoD wanted to create a "standing cadre of 'organized, trained, cleared, equipped, and ready to deploy' individuals of a variety of specialties useful across the range of military operations and available to meet the needs of the force in theater."²³ The CEW would create a database detailing the capabilities of each civilian in DoD. Theoretically, the CEW would deploy civilian personnel to conflict zones based on an individual's capabilities, rather than the individual's currently held occupational specialty or office.²⁴ However, although the CEW contributed positively to DOD's ability to deploy civilians to contingency zones, DoD also encountered challenges with its implementation in practice, such as Combatant Commands seeing it as a force provider rather than a program.²⁵

²⁰ Michael Davies and Kurt Muller, "The Civilian Expeditionary Workforce as a Revolution in Defense Culture," Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University, September 26, 2014, 68.

²¹ Ibid, 38.

²² Ibid, 7.

²³ Ibid, 9.

²⁴ Ibid, 9-11.

²⁵ For more on the CEW, see Davies and Muller.

V. Solutions: Incentives and Temporary Hires

In order to fill all of the required billets, State and USAID developed incentives to attract direct hires, expanded temporary hiring authorities, and built the infrastructure – in some cases from scratch – to recruit and track a relatively large number of additional personnel.

Incentives: pay, leave, and follow-on assignments

Buried in the fine print of an FSO's contract is a clause stating officers must deploy to fulfill the "needs of the Service." But State did not direct any additional FSO assignments to Afghanistan.²⁶ Because there were few officers for whom Afghanistan was an attractive assignment, State and USAID, with Congressional approval, introduced a generous incentive package in late 2009.²⁷

The most prominent perk was increased pay. A civilian who deployed to Afghanistan during the surge received an approximate gross salary increase of 70 percent of base pay, comprising a 35 percent bump for danger pay (beginning on the first day a person arrived in country), and another 35 percent for post-differential (hardship) pay (beginning on the 42nd day in country, but retroactive to the first day).²⁸ Non-senior FSOs received an additional 20 percent for uncompensated overtime. As at other postings, officers with proficiency in a hard-to-learn language also received bonuses. All told, some FSOs in Afghanistan were earning up to 130 percent of their base pay.

State and USAID employees were also offered extra leave. During a 12-month assignment, civilians had the choice of either three R&R periods or two R&Rs plus three regional rest breaks (RRBs). An R&R could be up to three weeks (15 full days plus the travel time to and from Afghanistan) and had to be taken in the United States. RRBs were approximately week-long breaks to Dubai or another regional destination of equal travel cost. All told, an employee could spend 50 days per year on leave. Ambassadors and action officers alike agreed the leave time was important for drawing civilians, especially those with families and children, to Afghanistan.²⁹ At the same time, frequent leave increased staffing requirements and negatively impacted continuity.

²⁶ See current FAQ section of USAID's current FSO website. Below question 22, "Do I have to accept every assignment that is offered?" the response states: "Foreign Service personnel express their preference for postings, but must be willing to serve worldwide according to the needs of the Service." Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/careers/Foreign-service/Foreign-service-officer-faq>

²⁷ See Public Law 111-32, available at <https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ32/PLAW-111publ32.pdf>.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State Summary of Allowances and Benefits. Available at https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=134&menu_id=75

²⁹ See Annex B, Interviews with Ambassador James Cunningham, November 5, 2015 and Ambassador Ronald Neumann, November 6, 2015.

Both State and USAID offered preference for follow-on assignments to those who volunteered to serve in Afghanistan. The “Linked Assignment Program” gave preference to those who served in Afghanistan to bid upon and receive their follow-on assignment.

In some cases, State and USAID management may not have fully implemented the incentives. Leave was not always available to all FSOs, and there were restrictions on when it could be taken. The linked assignments system broke down after a few years because embassy staff at requested follow-on posts protested having to take FSOs who were unqualified or simply sought a quiet posting after a year in Afghanistan.

Did this incentive package attract hires motivated simply by money? Opinions in our interviews varied, usually along the lines of seniority. Principals, and especially Ambassadors, said the financial incentive was right and not a primary motivator. Many human resource officers and mid-level FSOs, however, said the pay was excessive and that too many people were in Afghanistan just for the money. “We thought the financial incentives for U.S. government civilians were high,” said Jennifer Anderson, a former USAID temporary hire who served as a Crisis Stabilization and Governance Officer on a PRT in Paktika. “There were too many people there who did not understand or care about the mission, they were just there for the money. It was not the majority of people, but it was an issue.”³⁰

An alternative model? USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)

The OTI “bullpen” presents a possible alternative staffing model for civilian agencies responding to complex crises. The bullpen is a roster of Private Service Contractors (PSCs) that, “...enables the program to be flexible in meeting temporary staffing needs. The bullpen includes an average of [45] individuals on “intermittent” PSC contracts with no guaranteed days of work. This pool of employees includes highly experienced foreign assistance professionals, sometimes retired, including many former USAID mission directors. OTI benefits by being able to quickly ramp up personnel as needed, without carrying salary or overhead costs when not needed, while bullpen members...have the advantage of flexible and adventurous work and the ability to live anywhere in the world.”¹ Interviewees spoke positively about OTI’s work and its potential as a model from which civilian agencies can learn. However, some questions were raised about how easily lessons from OTI could be transferred to the rest of the agency and about whether the model is sufficiently scalable. As a former USAID official said, “[The] OTI [bullpen] is a solid model... Something like that needs to be explored more. But it’s not the same as the Afghanistan surge, the reason being that we were talking numbers like 387.” Ultimately, the issue of scalability is likely to depend in part on the availability of the particular skill set being sought.

³⁰ See Annex B, Interview with Jennifer Anderson, November 6, 2015.

The State Department released an Incentives Evaluation Report in 2011 that sought to systematically evaluate its hardship post incentives. State used data from a poll asking respondents to rank their preferences for certain incentives, to assess the impact of each incentive and provide an analytical basis for effectively managing the entire package. The report concluded that “danger pay and post differential are the most important incentives for staffing hardship posts,” though the complete package and an employee’s personal circumstances (e.g., family) were also key components. Despite the varied incentives, State and USAID could not meet their civilian surge targets solely through direct hires.

Temporary Hires

In 2010, Congress granted State and USAID extensions and expansions of special hiring authorities for limited term employees. The State Department relied on the “3161” mechanism, so named for its eponymous authorizing legislation: US Code, Title 5, Section 3161. It allowed the department to hire personnel on a temporary basis for a period not to exceed five years.³¹ Similarly, USAID requested a Congressional extension of the Foreign Service Limited (FSL) hiring authority with similar parameters as the 3161 mechanism.³²

Additionally, the State Department reactivated retired FSOs. An FSO in either State or USAID must retire by the age of 65.³³ They can be reactivated on a limited basis, however, as When Actually Employed hires (WAEs). A WAE cannot earn more than the difference between their retirement pay and their salary at separation.³⁴ To stay beneath the salary cap, WAEs work limited hours, usually amounting to only four or five months although most staffing needs are year-round.

The Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) was responsible for recruiting and hiring the State Department 3161s. USAID relied on its Afghanistan/Pakistan Task Force and subsequently the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA), in partnership with its HR office, to staff the civilian uplift and hire FSLs. When the order to surge was issued, USAID didn’t have the infrastructure to conduct such a large recruitment effort and so it formed an in-house task force and reactivated seven retired FSOs to form an ad-hoc Tiger Team charged with hiring FSLs.

³¹ US Code, Title 5, Section 3161.

³² USAID sought legislative authority to extend FSL term appointments due to the expansion of USAID’s career FS under the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI). As a result, the Congress provided USAID with authority to extend FSL appointments for up to four additional years. See USAID, “Foreign Service Appointments,” February 7, 2014, 15: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1877/414.pdf>.

³³ U.S. Department of State, Career Frequently Asked Questions, available at <https://careers.state.gov/faqs/faqs-wiki/if-the-retirement-age-is-65-would-the-foreign-service-hire-someone-over-55-knowing-that-they-will-only-have-a-10-year-return-on-their-investment->

³⁴ U.S. Department of State. Reemployed Annuitant (WAE) Program Fact Sheet, available at <https://rnet.state.gov/pdf/ReemployedAnnuitantWAEFactSheet.pdf>

The Tiger Team posted a job announcement on USAJobs and *Monster.com*. A contractor vetted the applications and those qualified were interviewed by at least three members of the Tiger Team, usually by phone. Applicants were judged based on their academic background, performance during the interview (they were scored on their answers to questions), and work experience. The desired qualifications were hard to come by: conflict zone experience, development expertise, demonstrated psychological toughness, and knowledge of how the U.S. government (particularly USAID and the military) works. Even more difficult to find were those personnel with experience in the region or language skills.

There were benefits to using these limited hiring authorities. Employees could be hired for a specific duration. Unlike direct hires, it was quick and easy to bring new employees on board and to let them go at the end of their tour. But the temporary nature of the job carried unavoidable selection problems. The Kabul Embassy management officer during the surge, Kevin Milas, noted that 3161 hires either had normal careers and didn't want to leave them for long or they didn't have a job and were looking for a way to forge a career in the federal government. But there was no career path to retain them.

The USAID Tiger Team and the SRAP officials in charge of hiring 3161s worked diligently and resourcefully to quickly recruit qualified people, but the pool of potential hires was limited. According to various sources at State and USAID, the quality of temporary-hire personnel sent to Afghanistan during the surge was mixed. Some were extraordinary, such as Carter Malkasian, a 3161 hire embedded with the Marines as a political advisor in Garmser. An Oxford PhD, he spoke fluent Pashto, defused conflicts, and influenced local leaders and the Marines.³⁵

But there were still qualification shortcomings. "It was always a challenge to get people with the right skill sets," said former USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore, and "Language was number one, we never had enough people with language skills."³⁶ In an interview, Carter Malkasian drew a contrast between the Foreign Service officers deployed in the early years of the Afghanistan engagement and the 3161 staff brought on during the surge:

"The 3161 program got a different quality of people [than the Foreign Service officers]...They got some people with experience who did a good job, some who were well meaning, and some who were too old or just not a right fit. And the military would complain about this. They thought they were getting a civilian expert and they got an old guy or a kid who was too young. These people were also not part of the bureaucracy so they didn't have the same connections and it was pretty variable how much the Ambassador or civilian leadership at the PRT listened to them. The 3161s wouldn't have the same level of skill set as a diplomat would, and they probably wouldn't have any language skills, so those were some impediments."³⁷

³⁵ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: the war within the war for Afghanistan*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf (2012).

³⁶ See Annex B, Interview with Henrietta Fore, October 23, 2015.

³⁷ See Annex B, Interview with Dr. Carter Malkasian, November 5, 2015.

There were also physical fitness issues. Under State Department rules, medical clearances were granted not on physical fitness but on whether an employee had a medical condition that could not be treated at post. Some 3161 and FSL hires were unfit to serve in a war zone. A Kabul Embassy management officer recalled a 3161 who, too frail to bear the weight of the required flak jacket, removed the plates from it.³⁸ Two USAID officials recalled an FSL who debarked the helicopter in Kabul with a walker.

The management team at the Kabul Embassy petitioned Washington to require a physical fitness test for anyone deploying to Afghanistan. But the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to all civilian agency hiring and no exceptions could be made. FSL and 3161 hiring could not discriminate based on physical ability, and FSOs with disabilities could not be prevented from volunteering.

Additionally, there were issues regarding retention of temporary staff. Many FSLs and 3161s developed knowledge and experience valuable to the U.S. government and performed well in their duties. Yet, for most there was no way to transition from a temporary employee to a career track aside from the regular application process open to all candidates. In effect, the government invested training and experience in these employees but may be unable to make use of them in the future.

Finally, USAID hired many private service contractors, mainly development professionals. State's use of contractors was more limited, but certain bureaus, such as State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), relied on them because they implemented large development programs on the rule of law and counter-narcotics.

There were serious challenges with contractors, such as a lack of accountability.³⁹ At the same time, the use of contractors enabled a more agile and responsive workforce; contractors weren't subject to government hiring processes, security constraints, and certain personnel rules.

³⁸ See Annex B, Interview with Kevin Milas, November 3 and 5, 2015.

³⁹ A more detailed understanding of the challenges regarding use of contractors in Afghanistan was beyond the scope of this report. See Scott Higham and Steven Rich, "USAID Suspends IRD, its Largest Nonprofit Contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 26 January 2015. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/usaids-suspends-ird-its-largest-nonprofit-contractor-in-iraq-and-afghanistan/2015/01/26/0cafe16a-a599-11e4-a2b2-776095f393b2_story.html.

VI. Pre-Deployment Challenges

After direct and temporary hires were identified and recruited, there were difficulties rapidly deploying them to Afghanistan. Temporary hires needed medical clearances, security clearances, and training. Processing such a large number of personnel in such a short time strained existing HR infrastructure. Directors and action officers had to develop new systems, teams, and programs. All of this consumed agency time and resources and carried difficult trade-offs – for example, regarding training

Clearances and Infrastructure

Once external hires were recruited, the medical and security clearance processes slowed the flow of people to Afghanistan. During this time, Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew assiduously tracked the progress of every civilian from every agency.

The State Department put together a dedicated team in Diplomatic Security to work full-time on surge personnel's clearances. To a limited extent, this shortened the clearance process. For example, the ethics clearance process was converted into a two-stage process where an initial "quick look" was sufficient for deployment, with the understanding that State would pull back anyone who didn't pass the subsequent, more detailed review. Still, clearances took months to obtain.

The difficulty surging personnel was particularly acute for USAID. The agency was asked to quadruple its staff in the field. It was constrained by an initial lack of resources, an unrealistic time horizon to meet its personnel targets, and a lack of pre-existing support infrastructure, including even the physical work space for the Task Force in Washington. Over time, USAID got the resources and built the infrastructure. As a result of efforts to surge, Afghanistan and Pakistan came to consume nearly one-third of USAID's program budget.⁴⁰

USAID's Afghanistan/Pakistan Task Force commissioned a team of contractors – called the "Business Analysis Team" or BAT team – to identify why it was taking so long to get people deployed. The team developed a tracking system covering each step of the process – from recruitment to clearances to travel authorization and deployment – to identify bottlenecks. The system helped forecast where civilians would be posted and when they would be coming home. Senior staff ran what were internally referred to as "hair on fire" meetings almost daily to surmount the bottlenecks and get people out the door and into the field.⁴¹ Though USAID missed its initial deadline, it did eventually hit its target. A senior official stated that the system created by the BAT team has been institutionalized at USAID.

⁴⁰ Higham and Rich, "USAID Suspends IRD, its Largest Nonprofit Contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, 26 January 2015.

⁴¹ See Annex B, Interview with Larry Sampler, November 2, 2015.

Training

Because of the rush to get people into the field to accompany the deploying soldiers, training for the temporary hires was limited to four to six weeks. FSLs and 3161s posted to PRTs received one or two weeks of field training with the military and other contractors at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, a National Guard base converted into a simulated Afghanistan. The remaining training consisted of classroom sessions at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, VA – comprising an Afghanistan familiarization course and personal security course.⁴² Some FSOs received language training, but temporary hires did not. Although the FSOs and temporary hires needed to have country-specific training to effectively do their jobs in Afghanistan, this took time and the imperative was to rapidly deploy.

Several officials suggested more time should have been spent on training, especially language. There was also widespread support for continued efforts to enhance civ-mil coordination through pre-deployment training exercises, such as those conducted at Camp Atterbury. Additionally, former USAID officials who served in Afghanistan—especially FSLs—noted the importance of understanding how USAID operates, and recommended a pre-deployment training course focused on understanding the USAID bureaucratic architecture. Former USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore highlighted the potential value of pre-deployment online training.⁴³

⁴² FSI's Training Division and Overseas Briefing Center prepare USG civilian employees for overseas posts.

⁴³ See Annex B, Interview with Henrietta Fore, October 23, 2015.

VII. In-Country Challenges

Once civilians arrived in Afghanistan, further problems arose. At the Embassy in Kabul, there were too many civilians, an organizational restructuring, security constraints, and communication issues among civilian staff. Out in the field, success depended on the quality of civilian-military relationships. For all hires, there was a lack of continuity due to one-year tour lengths, substantial leave, and rapid turnover, all of which caused lost institutional knowledge, time wasted bringing people up to speed, and weakened relationships with Afghan counterparts.

Embassy Kabul: saturation, restructuring, and security constraints

The initial rush to identify and transfer personnel to Afghanistan during the December 2009 holiday period led to people arriving without available housing in locations outside of Kabul. The Embassy Kabul Management Officer at the time, noted that the field was not prepared to take these personnel and they had to wait in Kabul until receiving an assignment with available housing.⁴⁴

The staff at Embassy Kabul ballooned to more than 700 civilians by 2011. Several officials at various levels suggested the number of personnel was too large. One political officer in the Foreign Service who was surged to Afghanistan noted many portfolios overlapped, creating inefficiency and needless competition and sapping motivation. Many civilians were unable to leave the Embassy compound.

The surge in civilians also occurred during a radical restructuring of the embassy. Instead of the traditional embassy structure of one ambassador and one deputy chief of mission, Kabul had five ambassadors leading various missions: the ambassador, a deputy ambassador, an assistant ambassador (who did the work of a deputy chief of mission), an ambassador-level Coordinating Director for Economic and Development Affairs (overseeing USAID, USDA, the economic section, and others) and a fifth ambassador as Coordinating Director of Law Enforcement. One management officer at Embassy Kabul noted that some staff perceived the objective of the restructuring as an attempt to make the embassy more closely resemble a military command. But the change was sudden and people struggled to adjust to the new structure.

As the security situation worsened, it became rare for personnel to venture out beyond the embassy compound walls. Civilians who work in Embassy Kabul must adhere to the Regional Security Office security protocols. These protocols in Afghanistan remain much more restrictive than military movement procedures. In interviews with State Department and USAID officials we heard frustration with these restrictions and concerns that this hampered their ability to meet with foreign counterparts and assess progress of development projects. Officials noted

⁴⁴ See Annex B, Interview with Kevin Milas, November 3 and 5, 2015.

that much of a diplomat's job depends on building relationships with locals and understanding the in-country ground truth. Some suggested the glut of personnel was a contributing factor to the civilians' limited ability to move outside the embassy. More Americans meant more targets for insurgents and more personnel for Embassy security officers to monitor. Ambassador Marc Grossman, who took over SRAP in 2011, said, "At 700 people you've got to do risk avoidance. At 300 people or 200, you have much more capacity to do risk management."⁴⁵

Finally, USAID and State were physically separate on the Embassy compound. Some officials reported discord and communication issues among the different agencies working in the embassy – for example, between the policy experts (State FSOs) and the implementers (USAID). In addition, agencies were on different email systems – notably, OpenNet for the State Department and AIDnet for USAID. A management officer reported that, in the time it could take for an email to pass through the various firewalls of the different systems, he could print off the email and walk it across the embassy to a colleague's office. Such issues were also present in other US missions around the world, but the physical size and volume of the work made it particularly challenging in Afghanistan.

PRTs: civil-military relationships

At the height of the surge, more than 500 Chief of Mission-authority civilians were deployed to the field, either embedded with the military or serving in military-led PRTs.

Each PRT averaged 60 to 80 personnel, mostly military, with six to seven civilians – usually a political advisor, development expert, and a few other specialists in agriculture or rule of law. The PRT commander determined a PRT's objectives and operations. Overall, the role of the civilians varied. Ostensibly, their goal was to perform the build and transfer phases of COIN. But they also supplemented the military stabilization effort.

Many civilians were in the field to "deliver high-impact economic assistance" that would draw "insurgents off the battlefield."⁴⁶ Most were sent to the South and the East, the "geographic heart of the insurgency."⁴⁷ Given the danger, they depended on their military counterparts for security, housing, food, and transportation. This generally meant that a civilian's ability to leave the base was based on the good will of the military commander.⁴⁸

Military commanders often had expectations about the type of civilian they would be receiving and what they would be doing. According to several civilian sources, the soldiers generally

⁴⁵ See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador Marc Grossman, October 21, 2015.

⁴⁶ Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, "Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy," February 2010.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ambassador Crocker tried to resolve this issue by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the military to try to formalize support for travel. See Annex B, Interview with Crocker, 16 October 2015.

welcomed the advice and input of the civilian development experts. But there was a striking disparity in distribution of resources and power. The civilians had minimal access to funds. The military commander had money allocated under the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), and the commander was compelled to spend these funds on short-term assistance projects aimed at stabilization. If the civilians and their military counterparts got along and a relationship of trust was built, then these plainclothes advisors could play an influential role.

Many interviewees referred to the gold standard of civilian-military interaction as Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. They formed and deployed a joint strategic assessment team before Crocker even arrived at post. This immediately signaled hand-in-glove civilian-military integration – a unity of effort that percolated down through the ranks.

An oft-noted benefit of the recent U.S. history in conflict zones is improved understanding between the military and civilian agencies. According to Ambassador James Cunningham, “The nation now has a large cadre of mid-level military officers and diplomats who have experienced and understood what an effective interagency-military relationship truly is and what it should look like.”⁴⁹

Continuity: Tour Lengths and Leave

Civilian tours to Afghanistan were one year in length, which limited the effectiveness of personnel. “It takes two to three months at least to know what you’re doing. You’re most effective after 6-9 months. But then you’re out after a year,” said Embassy Kabul Management officer Kevin Milas. However, he also highlighted the challenges associated with longer tours: “two to three year tours in a combat zone is very difficult and finding takers likely impossible.”⁵⁰

In a 2014 inspection of Embassy Kabul, the State Department Inspector General (IG) noted, “The embassy is critically affected by one-year tours of most Americans.”⁵¹ The State IG went on to highlight that, as a result of one-year tours, “the effect is a loss of expertise, experience, and continuity.”⁵² Ambassador Cunningham recalled, “The single biggest obstacle to my management was the fact that I lost 90 percent of my staff each year.”⁵³

⁴⁹ See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador James Cunningham, November 5, 2015.

⁵⁰ See Annex B, Interview with Kevin Milas, November 3 and 5, 2015.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Inspector General, “Inspection of Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan,” August 2014.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador James Cunningham, November 5, 2015.

Speaking from his experience of more than four years based in Kabul with the World Bank, Dr. Bill Byrd highlighted that the one-year or shorter tours he observed in many other organizations place great difficulties on local governments, as they are forced to continually deal with new, less knowledgeable foreign officials.⁵⁴ Dr. Andrew Wilder, of USIP, added, “In an environment where so much depends on your personal relationships, the rapid turnover of personnel was a killer.”⁵⁵

FSOs had the option to extend for a second year, but the choice was complicated due to the State Department’s bidding timelines, which often required a decision before the FSO had a chance to become familiar with the posting. Thus, many chose not to renew. Because temporary hires didn’t follow the FSO bidding process, they had more time to determine whether or not to extend.

Alternatives to the one-year tour are difficult to implement. There were major concerns that two-year assignments would not draw enough volunteers, and since the State Department chooses not to order directed assignments, leadership cannot demand that FSOs deploy involuntarily. Later on, Embassy Kabul tried to address the tour length issue by developing a menu of assignments unique to service in Afghanistan, such as 18-month and 24-month “hybrid” assignments consisting of some period of time in Afghanistan followed by a shorter period of time in Washington on the Afghanistan desk at State.⁵⁶ But bureaucratic resistance was stiff, and such a system could not be implemented just for Afghanistan. The proposal would entail adjustments to State’s entire personnel management structure. The assignment menu was never established.

Other practices that harmed continuity were that civilians could take up to 50 days of out-of-country leave during their tour and that the majority of the FSOs and temporary hires turned over within the same three-month window during the summer. The lack of staggered departures weakened institutional memory.

⁵⁴ See Annex B, Interview with Dr. Bill Byrd, 2 November 2015.

⁵⁵ See Annex B, Interview with Dr. Andrew Wilder, 3 November 2015.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

VIII. In Retrospect: The Right Policy Tool?

This review of the implementation of the civilian surge from a personnel perspective reveals challenges and flaws. But it also underscores a bigger question: even if the agencies had the capacity and infrastructure to rapidly deploy hundreds of qualified civilians to Afghanistan, would it have made a substantive difference? More broadly, is a rapid, *short-term* influx of personnel a useful policy tool? Specifically for Afghanistan, many officials suggested the civilian effort was hamstrung from the start by unclear or overly ambitious objectives. Additionally, the overall political strategy was not sufficiently well-defined. According to USIP Afghanistan expert Andrew Wilder, “The U.S. political objective in Afghanistan was never clear – in the void, we created military objectives.”⁵⁷

Some officials faulted the logic of the COIN clear, hold, build, transfer model – particularly, the civilian aspects. The military clear and hold phases were explicit. But what exactly did build mean? New infrastructure, capacity, governance systems?⁵⁸ The objectives of the build phase were expansive, imprecise, and interpreted in myriad ways by the military, various civilian agencies, and the different Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). In the words of Jeff Eggers, who served as the Senior Director for Afghanistan and Pakistan on the National Security Council from June 2010 to June 2013, “In 2009, we could walk through the strategy and causal logic of our plan, but we didn’t pressure test it. The plan was to clear, hold, build, and then transition. We assumed that once security was established we could then add in rule of law, economic efforts, etc. The problems came from the build phase.”

As a policy tool, there are objectives for which a surge is clearly useful – for example, emergency disaster relief. Many activities undertaken by U.S. civilian personnel in Afghanistan, however, were long-term in nature. Good governance, capacity building and economic development require years, decades even, of sustained commitment. In the words of Ambassador Crocker,

“The bottom line about [a civilian surge]: The whole concept doesn’t work. And not for the reasons that are often adduced...[A civilian surge] is a completely different construct than a military surge. It’s got to be long term...You have to be talking about a decade or two decades to really make a difference, developmentally or politically... development and quick impact are mutually exclusive concepts.”

Similarly, in looking back on his tenure, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry said, “Two-year tours would have made a large – though not decisive – difference. Our development goals were simply too ambitious.”

⁵⁷ See Annex B, Interview with Andrew Wilder, November 3, 2015

⁵⁸ See Annex B, Interview with Jeff Eggers (US Navy, retired), December 2, 2015.

IX. Findings and Recommendations

This study of the personnel challenges related to the civilian surge revealed several key findings. First, given the short timelines, HR infrastructure and hiring constraints and the unusual, extraordinary nature of the task, the officers responsible for implementing the surge performed admirably, as did those deployed to the field. Dedicated people worked long hours under immense pressure. We are convinced they did the best they could given the constraints.

The effort to rapidly send thousands of civilians to Afghanistan faced many challenges. The agencies lacked the capacity to meet personnel targets, and the job of recruiting, deploying and monitoring personnel sapped agency resources and required high-level attention. Because the pool of potential hires was small, the qualifications of deployed personnel varied widely. Additionally, generous incentives to induce recruits may have caused adverse selection problems.

The overarching recommendation of this report is that U.S. agencies should try to avoid surging large numbers of civilians to conflict zones to conduct economic development and capacity building. State and USAID lack the capacity, personnel structures, and staffing patterns to deploy a large number of people in a short time, and also suffer from a shortage of staff with the required expertise and willingness to deploy. Additionally, the resources and funding of these institutions prevent them from having such a surge capacity. Finally, a civilian surge is an inappropriate model for economic development and capacity-building objectives. These civilian imperatives run on longer timelines than military objectives, such as force protection and targeting. They require sustained commitment of resources and people. A short-term injection of personnel will do little to help achieve the goals of those activities.

Nonetheless, it is also important to acknowledge the context in which the civilian surge in Afghanistan took place. The surge was an urgent attempt by a new administration with few other good options to deal with what was understood to be an emergency situation on the ground that posed a serious risk to the overall U.S. effort.

The surge laid bare several weaknesses in the personnel structures of State and USAID. We offer four recommendations to State and USAID to address some of these weakness. These are concrete changes the two agencies could legally implement and which we believe are politically feasible. Some, however, may require additional funding to implement. Thus, we also urge Congress to provide sufficient funding for the State Department and USAID to act on these recommendations, should they deem them useful.

Additionally, recognizing that a U.S. administration may again decide to surge civilians in an emergency situation – despite the concerns raised about the value of a surge as a policy tool

for achieving longer-term development goals – we recommend the creation of a surge “playbook”.

Recommendation 1: Institutionalize an Expeditionary/Contingency Skillcode Within the Foreign Service

For Foreign Service officers, conflict zones are inherently different than traditional operational environments and require a different skill set. Multiple senior leaders and various reports have stressed the need for FSOs to possess the necessary skills to operate in a conflict environment. For example, the civilian surge in Afghanistan suffered because State lacked FSOs trained in Pashto, Afghan area studies, and in working with the military who could immediately deploy to the country.

One way to build this capability would be to create a training pipeline for FSOs who volunteer. After applying and passing a suitability screening, these FSOs would receive training in language and area studies as well as exposure to operational partnerships with the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency.⁵⁹ Following successful completion of the training, FSOs would be granted an expeditionary/contingency status—a “skillcode”—valid for a set period of time as determined by State or USAID.

The FSO expeditionary skillcode would be analogous to an Army Special Qualification Identifier (SQI) or Additional Skill Identifier (ASI). For example, an Army officer goes through rigorous training to obtain Ranger SQI. Their overall job as an Army officer remains the same, but the special expertise qualifies them to serve on certain missions.

State Department officials would need to determine the duration and location of this process, and it would require additional resources to fund it. But buy-in from external agencies such as DoD and CIA may reduce some of the bureaucratic and funding hurdles. A significant aspect of the recommendation involves a human resource capacity to track those FSOs who have this expeditionary skillcode and prioritize their service in future conflict zones.

Also, though expeditionary skillcode officers would bid on posts and serve tours just like regular FSOs, they would be on call to immediately leave their current post and deploy to a different post as directed if, for example, the government decided to surge to a conflict zone.

Expeditionary/Contingency-qualified FSOs would thus need to be spread widely across embassies to avoid significant operational disruptions should a contingency occur. We therefore recommend socializing the idea and giving incentives to chiefs of mission taking on these officers before implementation begins.

⁵⁹ Ambassador Crocker proposed joint FSO-CIA training for officers assigned to serve in conflict zones. See Annex B, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, October 16 2015.

The lesson of CSO and the Civilian Response Corps was that the way to build a flexible reconstruction expert capability is not through a stand-alone office, but within the existing Foreign Service. This recommendation is in-line with this lesson, as it does not require the creation of a new office or significant changes to existing personnel structures.

This recommendation assumes there would be sufficient interest among Foreign Service Officers to volunteer for expeditionary/contingency training. Given the staffing challenges faced in Afghanistan, this assumption could be questioned. It would therefore be useful to survey FSOs about their willingness to pursue this skillcode and serve directed assignments to gauge the number of likely participants. Should numbers be lacking, it could be worthwhile to consider offering incentives to individuals volunteering for expeditionary/contingency training and assignments.

Recommendation 2: Increase Tour Lengths in Conflict Zones to Two Years

Longer tours are vital to continuity. And the need for them is widely recognized in State and USAID. The recommendation of two-year tours was cited by almost every official interviewed for this report. Institutional knowledge, host country relationships and efficiency all suffer from one-year tours.⁶⁰

In addition to increasing tour length, rotational schedules for officials arriving in country and leaving country should be offset in a way that mitigates losses to institutional capacities and memories. Similarly, the manner in which State and USAID conduct R&R leave in conflict zones should be reviewed to determine ways to mitigate disruptions to operations—a frequently referenced problem.⁶¹

The most often cited concerns over increased tour lengths are family issues, difficulties with post-bidding timelines, burn out, and concerns over whether sufficient civilian staff would bid on two-year posts in conflict zones (given these agencies already faced difficulties filling one-year posts). This type of opposition should be expected - successfully extending tour lengths will require a concerted effort to bring key stakeholders such as the American Foreign Service Association on board.

Efforts to improve the support networks and connectivity for families are addressed in a separate recommendation. In regards to post-bidding timelines, the order and bidding requirements of State and USAID officials will likely need to be re-examined to address this

⁶⁰ See Annex B, Interviews with Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, General (Ret.) Petraeus, State Department Senior Leader, a former USAID official, Dr. Bill Byrd, and former UN official.

⁶¹ See Annex B, Interviews with Ambassador Beth Jones and a Former Government Official.

concern.⁶² Concerning burn out and bidding issues with two-year posts, some thought should be given as to whether tour lengths for all State and USAID officials should be lengthened, or if increased tour lengths should only apply to senior officials (to be determined by individual agencies).

Finally, though the leave package offered to Afghanistan posts was generous, officers reported uncertainty about when leave could be taken and that some employees did not have an opportunity to use all of it. Many civilian agencies operating in conflict zones⁶³ have a guaranteed leave schedule – e.g., six weeks on, two weeks off. Such a leave arrangement would make staff more willing to accept a two-year posting, and it would also help managers to conduct workforce planning.

A more regular and guaranteed leave schedule would provide assurance and enable families to plan. When FSOs are bidding for a hardship post, they should be told what the options are for their family. For Priority Staffing Posts, families were allowed to continue living in their previous country under Chief of Mission authority. Officers reported this generally worked but was often done on an ad hoc basis, depending largely on host country approval to maintain diplomatic status when the principal was no longer at post.⁶⁴

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Efforts to Keep Families Connected

A commonly cited concern surrounding service in a conflict zone, especially when discussing increased tour lengths, is related to hardships from prolonged absence faced by agency employees and their families.⁶⁵ The DoD is accustomed to dealing with families when soldiers deploy and has a vast network of support services and staffing to facilitate these efforts. Civilian agencies, on the other hand, are less adept at this practice, and seem to lack the necessary resources to copy DoD's model.⁶⁶ That being said, if civilian agencies hope to attract the best talent to serve in future conflict zones, incentives related to family-focused services will need to be strengthened.

During the civilian surge, the families of many FSOs posted to Afghanistan were often able to remain at their previous post. This helped ameliorate strain, as families were able to stay in their same homes while the official served her tour. Several of these posts were in Gulf states or Asia, so officers were closer to their families than they would have been had they returned

⁶² See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador Beth Jones. Highlighted difficulties over the post-bidding process in conflict zones and how they complicate the ability of an FSO to conduct a two-year tour

⁶³ The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is an example of an agency that does this.

⁶⁴ See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador James Cunningham, November 5, 2015. Highlighted that this option is not always possible or preferable, but when it was possible, it was often a large incentive to officials and their families.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Highlighted familial concerns during deployments.

⁶⁶ See Annex B, Interview with Ambassador Ryan Crocker, October 16, 2015. Highlighted the lack of a stateside network for families when a State Department official deploys to an unaccompanied post.

to the United States. Their stay remained authorized under U.S. Chief of Mission authority for that country. We recommend institutionalizing this practice – to whatever degree possible – and making families aware of their options as soon as an officer is deployed.

Reviewing how countries are deemed accompanied or unaccompanied post might also represent a way forward in addressing family connectivity issues.⁶⁷ State and USAID should consider criteria for this determination on a regional—not a country-wide—level. For example, in Afghanistan, while the south and eastern portions of the country remain too insecure to allow family accompaniment, there may be a potential for accompanied tours in the western and northern portions of the country.

Finally, civilian agencies should look to implement some form of family readiness groups similar to those utilized within the military. These groups would provide outlets for families to share information and concerns, and an avenue for communication between families and civilian agency leadership.

Recommendation 4: Review Use of Temporary Hiring Mechanisms for FSLs/3161s and the WAE Pay Structure

While there are some legal differences between FSL employees working for USAID and 3161 employees working for State (and the reasons for using two different mechanisms may be worth further inquiry), they were both used during the surge as a way for the agencies to quickly hire and move personnel into Afghanistan. Although some officials did express concern with the wide range of experience and capability levels of these temporary employees,⁶⁸ because the contracts under which these employees were hired are far more flexible than typical civil servants, senior officials from both agencies agreed that these hiring mechanisms are very useful in a conflict zone.⁶⁹ That being said, multiple officials expressed uncertainty over whether these employees were being catalogued in human resource systems for possible future use.⁷⁰

State and USAID should conduct an official review of FSL and 3161 use, database cataloging, and hiring into State and USAID. Many of the FSL and 3161 employees used in Afghanistan have desirable skillsets and experiences; it would be useful to have the ability to contact them again in future conflicts. Doing so requires maintenance of an active list, with regularly

⁶⁷ Kevin Milas highlights his and other FSOs' positive experience having spouses in Kabul who worked at the Embassy. Milas, Kevin. Personal interview. November 3 and 5, 2015.

⁶⁸ Ambassador Ronald Neumann believes a review of 3161 hires and their performance in Afghanistan should be conducted to determine whether the benefits of the hiring mechanism outweigh the costs. Neumann, Ronald. Personal Interview. 6 November 2015.

⁶⁹ See Annex B, Interviews with Ambassador Beth Jones, Ambassador James Keith, a State Department Senior Leader, and a former USAID official on advantages to the 3161 and FSL hiring mechanisms.

⁷⁰ For example, Melissa Sinclair noted usefulness of being able to re-contact these former employees. See Annex B, Melissa Sinclair, Telephone interview, 11 November 2015.

updated contact information. Additionally, former temporary hires should be made aware that they are included on tracking lists so that they are prepared to respond, should they be contacted, and also to demonstrate that the government respects and values the service they have provided and the unique skill sets they possess. The agencies should also consider whether other steps to retain these individuals in whom they have invested and/or to encourage them to apply for career positions may be warranted.

Finally, a valuable source of experienced hires are former FSOs, who can be reactivated as WAEs. By law, a WAE can't earn more than the difference between their retirement pay and their salary at separation. In practice, this salary cap limits the number of hours they work per year – usually only four or five months. Most staffing needs are year-round.

The WAE salary cap ought to be removed. Reactivated DOD civilian retirees face no such restriction. A greater supply of qualified, experienced WAEs would have mitigated some of the need for other temporary hires of variable qualification.

Recommendation 5: Create a civilian surge “playbook” that captures best practices and lessons learned from the experience in Afghanistan.

Although this report concludes that a civilian surge is an imperfect policy tool and should best be avoided when longer-term development goals are being pursued, it is important to recognize that future administrations may nonetheless request the foreign affairs agencies to do so again.

Given the hard-won experience that the State Department and USAID have accumulated implementing the civilian surge in Afghanistan, there is a need to consolidate this expertise into a “playbook” that captures best practices and lessons learned. Letting this valuable experience go without documenting it would be a disservice to all of the dedicated staff who did their best to find ways around the structural constraints they faced and developed tools to support the process when few existed previously. Offices such as OTI and CSO provide USG with the relevant individuals that have experience in conflict zones. These experts should be included in the development of a playbook.

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Annex A: About the Authors

Peter Erickson Pete is an infantry officer serving in the United States Army. After graduating from West Point in 2004, he served in a variety of operational assignments during multiple tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. A General Wayne A. Downing scholar, Pete will return to the operational Army after his studies at Princeton.

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Leigh Ann Killian Leigh Ann is a communications strategist whose experience and interests encompass the intersection of defense policy and instability in the Middle East and South Asia. Prior to enrolling at the Woodrow Wilson School, she worked as a military planner for U.S. Central Command developing and writing military strategies within the interagency of the U.S. Government and Department of Defense. At Smith College, Leigh Ann was awarded a Boren Scholarship and a Critical Language Scholarship to study Urdu and Hindi in India. After earning her B.A., she worked for two years as an Urdu-language insurgent propaganda analyst at U.S. Central Command.

Gordon LaForge Gordon lived abroad for five years before enrolling at the Woodrow Wilson School. In Prague, he was a staff writer and internship program coordinator for Mediators Beyond Borders, which he also represented at the 2009 UN climate change conference in Copenhagen. As a two time Fulbright fellow to Indonesia, he lived in Borneo and Aceh, where he taught English in public high schools and volunteered with community organizations. He most recently worked as a journalist in Jakarta, focusing on politics, corruption and the urban poor. In summer 2015, he interned in the defense plans division of the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels.

Sarah Levit-Shore Sarah has spent ten years working in the international NGO sector, focusing on political transitions, peacebuilding, democracy and governance issues. She began her work with The Carter Center in their Atlanta headquarters and then moved to Nepal where she helped to organize a long-term international election observation mission. She went on to serve as The Carter Center's country representative in Nepal, overseeing the development and implementation of a political transition monitoring project intended to support the ongoing peace process and constitutional drafting efforts. Sarah then served as a political advisor to the Center on Burma/Myanmar. Following this, she joined the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium as a senior associate.

Lauren Rhode Lauren focuses on security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region and speaks Chinese and Arabic. She has worked at: Office of the Secretary of Defense / Policy on the China desk; DoD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation; and U.S. Navy Third Fleet.

Kenneth Sholes Following graduation from West Point with a B.S. in economics, Kenny served as an officer in the United States Army and deployed to Iraq twice. Having completed his military commitment, his interests in transnational terrorism led him to a job in the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). In his most recent position, he served as the NCTC Director's daily intelligence briefer.

Annex B

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101	Former US Agency for International Development Official
102	Former US Government Official
103	US Government Official
106	Development Organization Advisor
107	Former United Nations Official
110	International Organization for Migration Official
112	Stabilization Unit, United Kingdom

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Barbara Bodine, US Ambassador to Yemen, 1997-2001
Date: November 4, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- Ambassador Bodine highlighted “The Future of Iraq Project” as a great example of the planning efforts undertaken by the United States for post-conflict planning of Iraq. Congressionally-funded and led by the State Department, this inter-agency project focused on how to rebuild and develop every sector of Iraqi governance before any possible regime change occurred. It was a plan for “the day after,” but recognized the “day” would be a long term commitment over years. Produced over the course of 18 months, and a broad range of sectorally-specific reports (Ambassador Bodine added that she does not know how many but do know the binders filed “about 4 board feet”) and recommendations from a multitude of U.S. interagency officials, academics, Iraq experts, and Iraqis themselves. The Rumsfeld OSD refused to allow the military to participate and explicitly excluded the results or the participants from the initial Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs planning (sic) efforts. It was completely ignored by the Coalition Provisional Authority when it rebuilt Iraq.
- Ambassador Bodine said that the military intervention in the Balkans was followed by a very large international civilian reconstruction effort. In the Balkans, NATO was never expected nor asked to perform reconstruction, while in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military was asked to perform jobs well outside of its traditional purview.
- Ambassador Bodine added that the United States indeed does have a very long history of civilians being sent into conflict zones to perform development and reconstruction tasks. But, she added that we have to consider the size of our government civilian agencies which perform these important tasks, and understand what they can do, and the timelines required to achieve results. She felt that often of late, we as a country are expecting results to come too quickly. She also noted that civilians not only are sent into conflict zones but more often than not, are working and operating in areas prior to and after the conflict. Reconstruction is a long-term proposition and demands coordination with a multiplicity of actors – governmental, non-governmental and international. “It is not a task but a process.”
- Regarding the Foreign Service of the United States, Ambassador Bodine felt that although Foreign Service Officers are “generalists,” they do have five basic specialties (“cones”) – political, economic, public diplomacy, management and consular, and also develop regional or sectorial expertise. FSOs have the intellectual skill sets to work on wide variety of issues. A core principle and ethos, and requirement for FSOs is also “world-wide availability.” The FS has been “expeditionary” since its creation. Ambassador Bodine strongly recommended against the creation of a “conflict zone” cone for the Foreign Service. She added that crises and conflicts are a global phenomena – Balkans, Iraq, Somalia; they are not new, can be flare-ups or slow-burns, may be natural disasters (famine) that mutates to conflict or reverse. Need to be able to draw

on these various expertise tailored to each crisis. There are some FSOs who develop a reputation for managing crises and conflict well and tend to focus on those issues or regions, but retain the broader skill set of a good diplomat. FSs are the original “purple suiters”. We need to draw on a multiplicity of talents and expertise tailored to the situation.

- Ambassador Bodine further felt that the most important thing confronting the modern Foreign Service in the immediate future is not becoming paralyzed by risk. Ambassador Bodine iterated how important it is that the State Department’s senior officials actively resist institutional risk aversion, which, according to Ambassador Bodine, is an increasing problem in today’s international environment. The most recent QDDR made special note of the need to recognize the need for prudent “risk management” and a greater “risk tolerance” and recognize that risk cannot be avoided.

Interview Notes

Name: Dr. William Byrd, United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
Date: November 2, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key points:

- Speaking from his experience of more than four years based in Kabul with the World Bank, Dr. Bill Byrd highlighted that the one-year or shorter tours he observed in many other organizations place great difficulties on local governments, as they are forced to continually deal with new, less knowledgeable foreign officials. A minimum tour of two years is called for, preferably longer than that.
- HR was overall pretty bad in Afghanistan - not only by the USG but also many of the other foreign donors and partners as well, and I am referring specifically to tour lengths
- The idea of a one-year tour, sometimes it was only six months, is absurd in a country like Afghanistan, unless that person has previous background knowledge. Civilian aid workers and senior generals should not be on one year tours. It's a very complex country and environment to work in. Tours should be a minimum of two years, ideally three. This is the single most important issue related to personnel.
 - The one-year turnover places a burden on the Afghan government as well. Every year they have to educate their new counterparts. There is a cost for all the people around this person, and then again in one year he or she is gone.
 - Even if you have a really skilled person, he or she will not be able to accomplish anything in one year.
 - Typically, they make tours shorter in conflict countries, but those countries are more complicated, it's actually MORE important to have continuity in those places than in places like Paris.
- For the World Bank, we used the normal overseas tour time which is three, sometimes two years. And we hoped people would spend a year before or after they finished working on Afghanistan from Washington. The first WB Director was there eight years and I was there four years.
 - World Bank started with three internationals in country, now it's about 20 internationals and 30 national staff.
- It's better to have fewer people on longer assignments who can get out and go around the country, than lots of short term people
- A generous package of R&R, financial incentives, promotion incentives can be offered and in exchange the person agrees to stay more than one year. It's a non-family post so generous R&R is needed.
 - WB R&R policy is 10 days of leave every 60 days, UN is similar. The biggest obstacle is the family issue, so this generous R&R helps address that.

- When you add up the leave time with R&R, it means each person only works 2/3 of the year, so you have to assign three people to do the work of two full time people. But it will be worth it because the people will be seasoned and knowledgeable.
- I'm a firm believer in on-budget aid. In Afghanistan actually a significant amount of aid has been on budget. The problem was during the surge, aid was 100% of GDP and most of that went off-budget. Most countries never get access to and cannot absorb as much money as Afghanistan was able to productively use on-budget. I think it's also worked in developing good accounting standards.
- Although it's true that security issues and not getting out within Afghanistan is a problem, in the surge they actually could get out, but it's an illusion to think that direct US supervision is the solution to all the problems with development funding that were encountered in Afghanistan. Could use local staff more, audits oversight, publicize how much money has been given.
- Development is a process. South Korea is the fastest success story we've seen and it took 2-3 decades to really take off. The whole idea you can buy people away from insurgency is misbegotten.
 - The aid money would have been better spent in other parts of the country that were more secure.
 - It's also important to look at not just did the military projects work, but also what kind of conflict dynamics were created. There was a risk of military focusing on local strong men.
 - There was lots of pressure to spend money quickly. There is no such thing as government in a box.
- PRTs were not a uniform model, differed in every place.
- Another key lesson: never do the kind of simple-minded allocation of sectors that they did in Afghanistan (i.e. Italy was put in charge of the justice sector, etc.). Instead of developing sectors as per coherent plan, each was portioned off to individual donors that had very different resources and capacities. It was quite disastrous. Created very uneven development and no strategic thinking.
- Situation right now is tough in Afghanistan, problems with national unity government. Situation in 2002 there was a lot of promise, but so many key things went wrong. Government not working, and security looks bad. When Taliban was massing outside of Kunduz, there should have been opportunity to take them out, but Afghans don't have any air support.

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Ryan Crocker, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2011-12
Date: October 16, 2015
Location: Arlington, VA

Direct Quotes:

- “Personalities count and relationships count.”
- On the civilian surge, “The bottom line about it: The whole concept doesn’t work. And not for the reasons that are often adduced.” A civilian surge “is a completely different construct than a military surge. It’s got to be long term... You have to be talking about a decade or two decades to really make a difference, developmentally or politically... development and quick impact are mutually exclusive concepts.”
- Of Ambassador Crocker’s relationship with GEN Petraeus, “We got along really, really well... We quickly agreed that if we did not hang together in every sense, we certainly were going to hang separately.”
- “Somebody should take a look at how our budget process affects our development priorities – and in no good way that I’ve ever seen. You’ve got to have multi-year money... We are not a long-term nation. Particularly overseas. Our adversaries have come to count on that and our allies have come to fear it. But if you’re going to do development, which is a multi-year process, you must have the budgeting to fit it and the commitment to see it through. Otherwise, we’ll have rusty monuments to a system that hasn’t worked very well across the landscapes of Iraq and Afghanistan.”
- “What I argued for and got in Iraq and then subsequently in Afghanistan, is that we are in a contingency situation, we are co-located with the military, and we are going to follow whatever security standards make sense – which in many cases won’t be ours... So rather than the much more stringent Diplomatic Security standards for movement security, we went with military standards. We’re safer in a military convoy if they’ll move us, than with all the razzle dazzle and expense of trying to put our own together. We just don’t have the resources.”
- In terms of the best training for deploying to conflict zones, “... language is the most important weapon we can ever deploy... language is first, second, third, on my list of priorities. Just have to have it if you’re going to be effective in any kind of international situation and particularly in contingency situations.

Key Points:

- Ideal model: civilians embedded within military units as political advisors or development specialists under one chain of command. Institutionalize a joint training program.
- On the civ-mil relationship, Ambassador Crocker directly called commanders in the field for information. Personalities and relationships, especially among leadership, matter. Ambassador Crocker and GEN Petraeus set up a so-called Joint Strategic Assessment Team before arriving in Baghdad to ensure civ-mil efforts were synced.
- Institutionalize the relationships between civilians and the military leadership with whom they'll serve in theater – pair them up before deployment. And then institutionalize the training.
- Ambassador Crocker proposed having FSOs train with CIA counterparts to create cadres of officers working together. For example, early on in Syria, he suggested deploying joint FSO-CIA units to collect intelligence and influence local groups. Ambassador Crocker stated that implementing this type of change and creating expeditionary units requires presidential-level approval.
- Congressional budget process: continuing resolutions and not having multi-year money impacts the fluidity and stability of any reconstruction effort.
- Short (i.e. one year or less), single tours are bad; civilian deployments to conflict zones should be two years at least. One long deployment is better than multiple short ones.
- Improve support and compensation for families.
- To move civilians out of the Embassy and into the field, Ambassador Crocker recommended using sensible security standards. In a conflict zone, this means military standards. He noted the U.S. cannot use “stealth moves” or the tactics of the small Scandinavian countries, but civilians could use more “no-notice moves” to get into the field.
- Training: Language is number one, area studies number two.

Abridged transcript:

Question: Your experiences when you were young leading up to before you joined the Foreign Service – you hitchhiked from Amsterdam to Calcutta and you held some odd jobs. How did those experiences help inform your work as an Ambassador later on? Would you recommend that for anyone who wants to do Foreign Service work?

Crocker: I would. Whatever experience you can get in the international arena is good to have, and it's good to have experiences that will be unlike what you would do if you go to the Foreign Service. I was lucky enough to grow up in the military with a father who was lucky enough to get some good overseas assignments. And that helped a lot. Not everybody can arrange that. But it got me interested in the big world and led me to a junior year abroad before there was such a program – you just had to make it up on your own – and then that led to that trans-Asia trip. And that – it's all commutative – that led me into the Foreign Service. I came back from that trip having knocked on the door of a couple of embassies along the way looking for handouts and met a really nice vice consul who bought me a dinner and I thought I'd like to do that. So I went back, did my senior year, and came to the Foreign Service right after I graduated. But the experience of hitchhiking – you know, it's never the rich people who give you a ride. It's the people about two steps above where you are. Lots of truck drivers, and they only pick you up – first, because they're decent people – but because they probably got a story they want to tell. In whatever broken English they can manage – German was pretty widely spoken in the Middle East then and I could manage in that. And you just see a lot of life that you will never see any other way, and that – having hitchhiked through Afghanistan, down to Kandahar through Ghazni, up to Kabul across the pass – being back there in 2001-2002 and then as Ambassador, I remember the Afghans I met. One truck driver took me home with him in Ghazni and put me up for the night. Wasn't much of a house, but he shared it. It just gives you – it's very anecdotal, you'd be nuts to draw cosmic meaning from any of it, but it gives a flavor to a place you will never get any other way. So, go hitchhike.

Question: Did you learn lessons in Afghanistan during your hitchhiking that applied when you came back to work for the government?

Crocker: Well, again, no great insights. I was struck by the extraordinary hospitality of very poor people. I almost never had to buy food. Whoever picked you up would give you something to eat. So the sense of hospitality, independence, kind of pride – and everybody knows this anyway, but having experienced it at that level – I carried with me and in my later jobs this sense that Afghans are not unique perhaps, but individualistic people, very dignified, very hospitable, and probably not people you want to piss off.

Question: We've heard your working relationship with General Petraeus described as the “gold standard of civilian-military leadership” in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Why do you think your relationship with Petraeus worked so well?

Crocker: Well, one thing you probably already know: personalities count and relationships count. Personal relationships, that is really the essence of policy formulation and implementation, both within

our own government and with other people's governments. We got along really, really well. We also knew what we were up against. We were both asked to do this latter part of 2006, which was the worst of the worst in Iraq. And he was at Leavenworth, I was in Islamabad, and we connected by a very secure phone and just quickly agreed that if we did not hang together in every sense, we certainly were going to hang separately. And there was no guarantee, I mean, hell, only the whiff of a promise that if we did hang together something good might come of it. But it was very stark in late 2006. The previous civ-mil relationships right from the beginning – because I was out there in 2003 – hadn't [worked,] sometimes they were really bad. Sometimes they were OK. But they were never really good. And we both knew that. So that's the first thing we did before either of us even got there was set up a joint team, which we called the Joint Strategic Assessment Team, to look at the campaign plan that General Casey had been using and then to make recommendations to the two of us where we ought to go...

Question: Together?

Crocker: Oh yeah, yeah. He appointed the military handlers, who were LTG H.R. McMaster, now the Deputy Commanding General at U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), three-star, and I appointed David Pearce, the Ambassador to Greece, a very knowledgeable Middle East hand. They then put together a team and they were launched before either of us got to Baghdad. And the signal of course that we were sending to our respective commands is, it won't be like [the past relationships]. And so we decided that's what we had to do. And we kind of had fun doing it.

Question: Were you able to attain that same unity of effort in Afghanistan?

Crocker: Oh yeah, with John Allen. I had the good fortune to have John Allen in Iraq when I was there. As a one-star he was the deputy commander for Multinational Force West (MNF-W) in Anbar, and he was established as the preeminent American on the Sunni tribes in the West. So I would call him up directly when I had a question, an issue. And David Petraeus was fine with that. John Allen's immediate commander, the two-star division commander was not so fine with it. But it's just the way you had to operate. So I knew and respected John Allen way before I got to Afghanistan. Very different personality than Dave Petraeus but knowledgeable in the area, very thoughtful, so yeah we were able to do the same sort of thing. And again, he had been there when Petraeus was there and saw the value of it.

Question: Just very broadly, when you look at the civilian surge that accompanied the military surge, 2009 to 2011, as far as you can see, what worked about it and what were shortcomings?

Crocker: Well, I'll start with my broad perspective, having served in both countries. The bottom line about it: The whole concept doesn't work. And not for the reasons that are often adduced, we can talk about those, but a civilian surge, if you're going to do it, it's a completely different construct than a military surge. It's gotta be long term. If you're going to go into different parts of the country, set up a PRT or consulate, you have to do it for the long haul. You have to be talking about a decade or two decades to really make a difference, developmentally or politically. The whole notion of the surge, of course it was stipulated because Obama announced the Afghan surge was that it was going to be quite

finite. Like two years. It makes no sense to launch a countrywide civilian effort that's only going to go on for two years. I spent my time out there fighting hard for the long-term presence with four missions outside of Kabul – Mazar, Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat. I thought we had that nailed, and now there isn't [any presence there] because the administration said we weren't going to do it. So my advice to any future administration contemplating a civilian surge is don't do it. Unless you are committed and confident your successors are committed to that long-term presence. Now that doesn't suggest there is no civilian role in these things, I think there is, but I would just go for a completely different model. Civilians would be embedded in military units as political advisors, as developmental specialists, and so forth, but part of the military unit. Staying just as long as the military stays and getting unity of command because you can only have one commander.

Question: So this idea of expeditionary diplomacy and these embedded people – like Kael Weston and Carter Malkasian, we've read about and will talk to – do you think there's a way for the State Department to institutionalize this kind of diplomat, to create training programs, to create basically a core of expeditionary diplomats that are somewhere in between a soldier serving in the military and the typical FSO sitting in the embassy? Can you envision a way that we could set up a program like this and operationalize it?

Crocker: Yeah, but it would have to start with the military. There is definitely a role for expeditionary diplomacy, but in most conceivable cases there would be a military presence or action going on. So before State and DoD could kind of figure out what might work – we did, everything was ad hoc. But again, when PRT [civilian] leaders were chosen, having them pair up back here with the unit where they would be, so they were working with military commanders here that they'd be working with deployed, you just want to institutionalize that kind of thing. And then institutionalize the training. The other thing I wish we would do more of – that would not be too hard to do and the military would love it – is I'd like to see us train more with the CIA. We figure this out on the job, where you've got an embassy and a station, and basically the CIA's in the same line of work, different ground rules. For example, I was pushing in Syria early on in the uprising against Assad, that we deploy not troops but a number of Foreign Service and CIA officers to go in – this was before Nusra let alone ISIS had taken over so much – and start working with the opposition on the ground to sort out who's who, who's got what agenda, who's aligned with whom, to both influence and assess, to give us some eyes to do something smart instead of arming the opposition, which hasn't worked well. Now we're just kicking tons of ammunition out of the backs of C-130s. Nusra must love that. That might have worked if we'd engaged the Turks, gotten some force protection on the ground and been willing to take some chances. It would work better if we had a cadre of officers and the Agency had a cadre of officers that could be used to working together.

Question: So how do you build that in? We've talked about that a couple times, just thinking about the framework of the military trying to institutionalize joint training among the services, how do you institutionalize interagency training?

Crocker: That is a critical point. None of this is going to work because that's not the way our government is constructed. Unless the president wants it to work. Because bureaucracies left to themselves are going to pursue their own agendas, defend their own cultures, and not play well together. That's the way we're wired. So when Iraq worked well, the last two years of the Bush administration, it worked well because it was an absolute presidential priority. And he staffed it accordingly. Every single morning, 6am Washington time for two years, I talked to either Steve Hadley or subsequently to Doug Lute when he was given, as Deputy National Security Advisor, the Iraq portfolio – every single morning. And then they would brief the president and the orders for the day were generated. They were White House orders. So everybody had to pay attention. State couldn't go do its own thing, and DoD couldn't ignore everybody else, because the president had it and had staffed it to be sure he got it. So that's what you have to do. If you're going to have real State-DoD, State-Agency linkages the president has gotta say, we're going to do this. It will not happen otherwise. Even with the best-intentioned Secretaries of State and Defense, it's not going to happen. And even though the military would love for it to happen, it isn't going to happen because that's not how American bureaucracy works.

Question: Do you believe, again big picture, that development operations – economic reconstruction and development – is a viable way to stabilize a conflict zone, based on your experiences?

Crocker: If you're going to give it a couple decades. But development and quick impact are mutually exclusive concepts. It just simply doesn't work. This is not to say the whole effort in Iraq and Afghanistan was a total failure, not by any means. Some of the greatest successes have been not bricks and mortar; it's been things like health care and education. Even there I wonder how sustainable it's going to be, teacher training and so forth. But USAID knew this and I had some great Mission Directors in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and they knew this whole thing was screwed up, and this is again why it has to be presidential. Somebody should take a look at how our budget process affects our development priorities – and in no good way that I've ever seen. You've got to have multi-year money, and we don't do that very well. The pressure on USAID – I was being sarcastic about kicking pallets of ammo out of the back of C-130s – well, USAID was forced to do the same thing, just pallets of dollars – get the contract signed, get it signed now. Because the money goes away afterwards. So that's just one part of it. We are not a long-term nation. Particularly overseas. Our adversaries have come to count on that and our allies have come to fear it. But if you're going to do development, which is a multi-year process, you must have the budgeting to fit it and the commitment to see it through. Otherwise, we'll have rusty monuments to a system that hasn't worked very well across the landscapes of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Question: In terms of technical hurdles, like the congressional budgetary process or the general budget process for development, were there other major hurdles you felt we faced?

Crocker: The absence of a civilian personnel structure, indeed the absence of the – and this is quite extraordinary – the absence of a military personnel structure that really intelligently supports contingencies – perhaps not a surprise that the civilian side doesn't do it very well, but neither does the military side. The military personnel system isn't geared for war. And I pushed for this, I thought our

best shot was in the latter part of the Bush administration to set up some standing mechanisms for contingency operations.

Question: A Civilian Response Corps, or something like that?

Crocker: Yeah, my poor colleagues who have struggled with this over in State, I just can't remember the various iterations of what it was called because it was useless. And I never had – in Iraq or in Afghanistan – any reference to that. A real Civilian Response Corps would be modeled on the old FEMA, I think maybe the new FEMA, or USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. OFDA is great, it's really terrific, totally unlike anything else in USAID. They do what FEMA used to do, very small permanent staff, but arrangements with fire departments, police departments, all kinds of agencies across the country, so that when the earthquake hits in Pakistan – I was there, I watched this work – the call goes out. And by prior agreement, people all over the country drop what they're doing, put on an OFDA hat, and deploy.

Question: The fire department here went to Nepal...

Crocker: Exactly. Yeah, in Pakistan for the '05 earthquake we had firemen from LA, and OFDA knows how to do this. But this would have to be on a very different scale, and it would have to be interagency, which takes us back to the White House. And again the State system will not produce the personnel, the mindset of the Foreign Service is not toward expeditionary and contingency operations, and you're only going to change that from the White House. The Foreign Service is not going to change itself. And then there are the subsidiary problems, both military and civilian, of the short single tours. That's just fatal. Yeah, it's hard, but you know the fact that I did two years in Iraq made a huge difference. That second year was the payoff. It almost killed me. But the knowledge you acquire, the credibility you get with Iraqis, you know. And the military is even worse than the civilians on this. Marines do seven month tours, because that's the way the Marine Corps works. Don't tell me there's a war on and the Marine Corps will have seven-month deployments. Period. That's what I mean about the military personnel system.

Question: One of the things someone mentioned to us is that the Marine Corps model is useful because it would be a seven-month deployment but they'd come back?

Crocker: Multiple, right.

Question: So, what's the tradeoff or value of having repeated deployments versus having just one long deployment?

Crocker: I would always go for the longer deployments. But repeated deployments are certainly better than not. Special Forces does it well. But you know fifth group, boy the wheels were off their buses, those guys were just burned out.

Question: They still are.

Crocker: Yeah, but god they did terrific work. They did incredible work. Because they were out there all the time. And you can't do that to people. And you can't do that on a large scale. And things really do break. So you have to kind of figure out if you're going to be in a 20 year war like Afghanistan, you'd think by year 14 we might have figured out, the military might have figured out – this is what I mean about the military personnel system – it just isn't working for long-term contingencies. And I haven't seen much written on that.

Question: Did you notice big differences in the quality of the civilian personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan that you worked with?

Crocker: It was uneven in both places. But generally speaking, there is no draft, people had to put their hands up for both places. So even in the less-than-stellar individuals, there was something burning there. They wanted to be in the fight. So no, from my perch I didn't really see that much difference. Of course, Iraq had the priority. So I think they got more volunteers, overall I think a higher quality, but what I found is that I would rather serve any day in a hard place with a middling who really wanted to be there than a top officer who didn't.

Question: What are your thoughts about incentives and pay structure? Do you think civilian agencies created adverse selection by offering a lot of hardship and danger pay?

Crocker: No, I maybe an outlier in this, but I never liked that idea. You don't go to those places and do those things for money. If you go, you're probably the right person to be doing it. I would much rather see the call to service motivating people to get in it. My own service was pretty disappointing in this regard, where even senior officers weren't leading by example and exhorting others to step forward in the name of the nation and in the traditions of our service. I am a big fan of family support, obviously. And State did do some important and innovative things, for example officers who would volunteer for a one-year tour from another post, their family would remain in that post, in government housing, kids in school, supported by the embassy. So I'd like to see more done for families, and less done to try and incentivize officers.

If you're stateside and your spouse deploys, you get nothing. There is no network for that. You know, I'll be up here [in DC] in a couple weeks for this presentation, there's a State Department award that's named after me for expeditionary diplomacy, the first presentation went to a woman officer who had spent like 15 months in eastern Afghanistan, she was a Pashto speaker, just phenomenal, doing deals with tribes, getting our brigade in there, and then doing some cross-border stuff that was really quite extraordinary. But she had three school age kids that her husband had to take care of, with no support from the State Department. He was trying to hold down his own job, take care of three kids, and mom may come home in a body bag one day.

Question: We've heard from others on the civilian side that while there were calls for more civilian personnel it felt like at times they didn't need more because everyone was stuck inside the Embassy. How did you feel about that and what was the extent of access outside the Embassy?

Crocker: That's another huge issue that I wrestled with in both Iraq and Afghanistan. And I'm certainly glad I was out of it before Chris Stevens was killed because that whole Benghazi reaction has just pushed this in the wrong way. What I argued for and got in Iraq and then subsequently in Afghanistan is that we are in a contingency situation, we are co-located with the military, and we are going to follow whatever security standards make sense – which in many cases won't be ours. And Diplomatic Security (DS) howled, but we got that done. So rather than the much more stringent DS standards for movement security, we went with military standards. We're safer in a military convoy if they'll move us, than with all the razzle dazzle and expense of trying to put our own together. We just don't have the resources. So we got that done. I guess we're all haunted by ghosts – a couple I'm haunted by, there was an officer who was killed in Sadr City in a bombing that might not have been killed had we used DS standards, because for DS standards there would have been a bomb dog to sniff the building before the meeting took place. The military doesn't do that, we went with military standards and he got killed. And a young officer in Afghanistan, a public diplomacy officer who was a really bright individual, did all my departure media, was killed a couple months after that in a military convoy that hit an IED – again, if it was a DS convoy, probably wouldn't have happened. But you know, you're going to lose people if you're fighting a war. And civilian lives are not more precious than military lives. You gotta do it. But now after Benghazi it's just going to be impossible. That's the thing I hate the most about the whole damn debate – it's just, in addition to this rather revolting politicization, it's pushing us to a zero standard where you can't lose anybody ever under any circumstances. And you simply can't do diplomacy that way.

Question: We heard a lot of people who worked with USAID say they had a ton of people there but they were all just in the Embassy on computers doing work they could have done in Washington – sending out memos, sending back cables, etc. We're trying to identify gold standards – e.g., multilateral, or UN or AusAID or DFID, or other people who do this work well in conflict zones – and we've heard the Nordics, the Swedes and Danes were effective in actually getting out to projects, and not having this problem that USAID did of relying on third parties to monitor projects. The Scandinavians were apparently very low key, they'd go in small groups, and they would be kind of ragtag, but they were able to go out. Do you think that kind of thing would be possible for USAID? Or are we too big, are we too loud to do that kind of thing?

Crocker: Well, we're too American. And Americans are in a threat category that no one else is. So yes it does work for the smaller countries and some very intrepid people who do it. But it won't work for us. Now if you're in a non-military contingency environment, it might work. But if you're in a war and we're prosecuting the war, then we are to the adversary enemy combatants whether we're in uniform or not. It's just the way it is. So no, I don't think stealth moves would work for us. Diplomatic Security has badly needed an overhaul for some time. And it's starting to get it by promoting officers who are way more than overseas policemen and giving them language training. I had superior Regional Security Officers (RSOs) in both Iraq and Afghanistan who understood we were there to do a mission, the mission came

first, security had to move to support the mission, which is not the normal mindset. But one thing we figured out was surprise. If I wanted to see a provincial governor, you could figure out if he was in his capital or not, because there is a very open media environment, and I'd just show up. If he didn't know you were coming – Afghan hospitality can adjust to that: "I just happened to be flying over, governor." So if your host doesn't know you're coming, then your enemies don't know it either. And by the time they tweak to it, you're gone. So stealth moves in a beat-up pickup probably aren't the answer. No notice moves are.

Question: You mentioned language training – what is the optimal kind of training to get for the kind of people that are going to deploy, both on the military and the civilian side? And can you comment on the usefulness of your Persian and Arabic training?

Crocker: Yeah, look, language is the most important weapon we can ever deploy. And I find that hugely frustrating too. Special Forces do so much right with their area concentrations – you know, fifth group is Middle East – but they don't do languages... So language is first, second, third, on my list of priorities. Just have to have it if you're going to be effective in any kind of international situation and particularly in contingency situations. Second thing for me, and there's lots of differences on this, it's area studies. I did an academic year at Princeton under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson School – a building I could barely find because it was a non-degree program back then, so I spent all my time over at Jones in Near East Studies. And that, boy that was a year that paid off every single year after that – just knowing the history, the literature. The Near East faculty back then was superb, and it's always good. But yeah I'd put that for my personal toolkit, it was language and area studies – via history, not theory.

Question: Are you optimistic about the future of Afghanistan?

Crocker: I think there's a reasonably good chance, this is what I mean about long-term, and it's not whether we have 10,000 troops there for the next decade, it's the political commitment that goes along with it. If you've got forces deployed in a warzone, then you've got to pay attention politically. That's what we did not do in Iraq. Once the forces were gone and we were out, then we were out completely with the results that you see today. So yeah, I think there is a chance. In fact, I think there's a reasonably good chance. It's never a good thing to have to depend on your enemy's excesses. I still stay connected to folks in Afghanistan, and what the Taliban did or was allowed to do when they were in Kunduz is rippling all over the country. And I think it's really going to hurt them. So, what I'd like to see the administration do, having made this decision – and the president did a fair job laying it out – is continue to build on it: "We're comfortable with this. We can sustain this forever if we need to. The Afghans want us, we are going to be in for as long as it takes. Get used to it." I think that's message for Americans, it's a message for Afghans, whatever side of the fight they're on. The war will end when it ends, and we are determined it will end on terms favorable to ourselves and our allies.

Question: You suggested as a new model going forward to have civilians embedded as political advisors within the military. How would you empower them and at what level to ensure they have the authority to move forward and follow plans?

Crocker: This is where a whole new paradigm comes in. Start with joint training. Again, the only way I can see this working is where a Foreign Service officer, USAID officer, would be part of the military command structure. There can only be one chain of command. So we're probably talking brigade-level. Your civilians would have to be under the orders of the brigade commander – speaking of bureaucratic cultures and resistance... – but again, John Allen did this. He took his whole civil affairs team, and in reverse he did this, in Ramadi he chopped it to a PRT leader. You had X number of Marines who were taking civilian orders and got to wear civilian clothes – god, they loved that. It can be done. I don't think he checked with higher authority to do it. I'd just like us to get way more expeditionary focused on these things. If it makes sense to move with the military for security, then do it. If it makes sense to have civilian officers under military command to get a job done, then do it. If the reverse makes sense, then do it that way. But again that will take a presidential decision.

Question: Do you think we've embraced more of that thinking after the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan? Or do you think there's been some blowback against it, especially after Benghazi?

Crocker: Well, among those who've served, one encouraging thing I've seen is there is much more understanding of military and civilian culture respectively, because you've got a whole lot more on both sides who've served with each other. But you have to institutionalize this. Right now it's just – like the stuff Dave Petraeus and I did. There's no manual on that. So maybe if something like this happens again, somebody will dig out what we did and find it useful. But wouldn't it be nice if that were captured and systematized and taught?

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador James Cunningham, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2012-14
Date: November 5, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- “The nation now has a large cadre of mid-level military officers and diplomats who have experienced and understood what an effective interagency-military relationship truly is, and what it should look like.”
- “The single biggest obstacle to my management was the fact that I lost 90 percent of my staff each year.”

Key Points:

- Ambassador Cunningham expressed that ultimately, the design of the civilian surge was simply not met due to the fact that civilian agencies are not designed to surge personnel.
- Ambassador Cunningham said that because of this, expectations really need to be managed well by senior leaders, from the beginning, about what can realistically occur within a given amount of time.
- Ambassador Cunningham felt that overall, the civil-military pairing and interoperability worked very well. He reiterated the fact that this relationship is absolutely critical if there is to be any chance of having success on the ground.
- Ambassador Cunningham said that practically speaking, building a civil-military partnership and relationship takes deliberate time and effort. He felt that both the military and civilian agencies need to recognize that such a relationship will at times be under severe stress and face incredible demands, but that it is possible to weather these periods and really work hard together in pursuit of common goals and objectives, provided that the leaders from each organization remain committed on making the partnership work.
- Ambassador Cunningham said that the “single biggest obstacle to [his] management was the fact that [he] lost 90% of his staff each year.” The months of May-August witnessed a massive turnover in his staff, and from a managerial point of view, this was severely disruptive. Having said that, Ambassador Cunningham also told us that he knew to expect this, and took not entirely successful steps to compensate.
- Regarding tour lengths, Ambassador Cunningham agreed that in theory, two year tours would be better in terms of having a stronger opportunity to forge relationships with Afghan leaders

and build key relationships. However, similar to sentiments expressed by others, he also told us that the State Department is simply not set up to offer two year tours.

- Ambassador Cunningham had actually tried, on several occasions, to build a series of custom assignments with the State Department Human Resources staff, ranging from 18 months to 24 months, consisting of some time in Afghanistan and a remainder of time in Washington, D.C. However, these efforts were simply too difficult to institute, as each assignment had to more or less be crafted in a custom manner. Ultimately, these “hybrid” assignments never really took hold, although people did occasionally volunteer to extend tours for another year.
- Regarding the incentives and/or obstacles one faces when volunteering to deploy to a conflict zone, Ambassador Cunningham felt that for State Department personnel, career uncertainty was one of if not the the biggest questions looming in the mind of an employee when making the decision to deploy, extend, etc. In other words, people were not sure what the career impacts would be of staying on for additional year, serving in Afghanistan, etc.
- Ambassador Cunningham also said that his staff understandably wanted to know that their families were taken care of during the deployment, no matter where they were. For some families, staying in Washington, D.C. was a completely acceptable option. Other families, if possible, chose to stay where the deployed civilian had most recently come from. While this option (leaving a family in the country the employee served in prior to Afghanistan) is not always possible or preferable, where it is possible was often a big incentive to families and the employee. However, it also required that all of the diplomatic requirements be met in order to facilitate this to happen.
- Ambassador Cunningham felt very strongly about not compelling people to serve in places such as Afghanistan. He explained that “in our business (diplomacy), compulsion is a terrible idea.” His justification for this sentiment is that in such a critical assignment such as serving as a diplomat in a conflict zone, people who do not want to be there can have a disastrous impact and bring the overall mission down, and the consequences can often be more severe than serving in a non-conflict area. Because of the tremendous potential for adverse consequences to the mission, only volunteers who genuinely want to serve in a conflict zone should go.
- When asked whether the turnover of State Department personnel was disruptive from the perspective of occurring in the summer months in Afghanistan, Ambassador Cunningham told us that “the diplomatic fight is year round,” meaning that the summer turnover of personnel was not any more frustrating than had this turnover occurred at a different time of the year. In other words, that the so-called “fighting season” coincided with the high turnover of civilians did not exacerbate what is already a very difficult personnel handover period.
- Ambassador Cunningham, in looking forward, takes hope and confidence in the fact that there is a younger generation of diplomats and military officers who, as a result of the experience in Afghanistan, are skilled in working together in a difficult environment. Ambassador Cunningham expressed hope that the State Department will recognize those who served well in Afghanistan, and will continue to assign them in difficult positions, not only in future conflict zones, but in those positions requiring extensive involvement and interaction with other agencies and the military.

Interview Notes

Name: Karen Decker, Senior Civilian Representative, Regional Command-East, 2012-14
Date: October 29, 2015
Location: Princeton, N.J.

Key Points:

- There are some who think that it's our counter-terrorism fight to win. But it's not our country. The Afghans have to win it. Not everyone understood that.
- In 2012, I was tasked with two things: give my job to an Afghan and take care of my people. That remains our policy – Afghan self-sufficiency is where we are trying to go.
- In my AOR in 2012, we had five priorities:
 - Downsize.
 - Connect your Afghan to an Afghan in Kabul – Afghans spend far too much time talking to Americans, not other Afghans. So Americans need to get out of the way. Everywhere at district level, needed to have plan for how they were encouraging communication between district level officials and provincial levels, and provincial levels to Kabul-based ministries.
 - Focus on economic development in zones. Stop trying to do everything everywhere. Figure out how to link up fruit exporter in Parwan with raisin guy in Kunar. Connect an Afghan to another Afghan so they can do business without you.
 - We did good things on civ-mil partnerships. There was good communication. There was zero Afghan civ-mil coordination. So we reached out to ANA core commanders. We gave them a place to come and meet, brought provincial governors and ANA counterparts to talk (we didn't participate). We were delighted to see them take that forward and call Ministers from Kabul to come explain ministry's activity. Very effective lobbying by Afghans
 - Elections – not a battle between Ghani and Abdullah, was battle between Taliban and corruption. In the East, corruption won. But almost no security incidents, plenty of attempts but ANA handled them. They handled attacks on polling centers, ballot boxes, etc.
- Five main challenges:
 - Challenge in giving our jobs to Afghans. We spent 10 years doing development but not necessarily focusing on creating Afghan capacity at the same time. We needed to get out so Afghans could come in. So our biggest challenge was convincing people to stop doing things. It's hard to pull back, sometimes the hardest thing is to do nothing. Create space for Afghan to pick it up and take forward.
 - Problem with this approach is that we built up capacity but it was not sustainable. We created infrastructure but didn't have plan to maintain it. No budget, no staff, etc. on Afghan side. Danger was we would create infrastructure that would just automatically

degrade. So we had to shift from doing direct development / direct assistance and instead help plan for how to manage.

- Narrative became “America’s not rescuing us, America’s abandoning us.” We had to make clear that making space was not the same as abandonment.
 - Trying to overcome emphasis on strength of the Taliban. Sense in Kabul that Taliban was all-powerful and omniscient. Not strength of the enemy that was the long-term problem, it was the weakness of the state. Taliban – there’s not enough of them, they can’t hold what they take, not a permanent fighting force. Overshadowed fact of how challenged the central government was.
 - Insistence that Afghans meet with each other and stop meeting with us. Don’t underestimate time management – if Afghan officials spend more than half day meeting with US officials, then they are not getting anything else done.
 - Needs assessment on what host government can absorb is important, the surge was too much
- Four takeaways:
 - We need to have a marriage between policy and implementation. The policy people writing cables back to Washington did not have enough contact with the people who were actually making Afghanistan work. This was a big weakness.
 - Need to internalize the difference between short-term service delivery and long-term development. Give fish vs teach fishing, but we confuse the two. Relied on short term service delivery instead of development. Focused on fixing problems, missing fact that capacity of Afghans to do things for themselves was not growing.
 - You don’t need a lot of money to be successful. We did things that cost nothing – i.e. anti-corruption programs that cost nothing, just relied on expertise. Got Indian government to do program linking farmers with markets, that was free. We tend to focus on how much money we spend as opposed to how effective our programs are. One of the most successful USG programs is Fulbright – cost-effective and has life long impact.
 - Learning to make the distinction between what is ungovernable and what is situation in which someone simply won’t govern. At the end of the day few places were ungovernable, but many places where people wouldn’t govern, because we were there.
 - Short-term/long-term is problem we need to solve for ourselves, not Afghans.
 - Risk management is now heavily politicized due to Benghazi, it changed the playing field, I’m a little worried it may never change back. Secretary Kerry talks a lot about healthy risk/managing risk. It’s frustrating to those of us who remember what life was like before this. Now it’s not even question of asking for forgiveness rather than permission. That was the case, now you just can’t. Not because of Afghanistan.
 - The incentives did not make best and brightest want to serve in Afghanistan.
 - On top of that, only 12 month assignments. Better than military 9 months. I do disagree still that we don’t have longer tours, should be at least 2 years. Hard to get something done in one year.

- What worries people who have to sit on compound, is how to get a promotion, what is your job. You have to convince reader that you did something that mattered. Hard to do in some of these jobs.
- Guy got assigned to an embassy in the Gulf and then took a year tour in Afghanistan, leaving his family in the Gulf. So from Bagram he was 4 hour plane ride from home. Embassy in the Gulf took care of wife and three kids. They continued to stay in their residence, kids could still go to school. And instead of trips to Tahiti, he took 5 trips to the Gulf. He re-upped for a second year, the situation worked for his family. I think that's a model. I don't know how much that kind of stuff costs.
 - I don't see why you can't link tours – come serve in the Gulf (or region), leave family there and go serve in Afghan for year or two. That's do-able without degrading ability.
- On Foreign Service side, my biggest challenge was having people volunteer for jobs outside of their specialties. Gulf guy was a consular guy. But I needed political officer, so that was his job. He didn't hit the ground running, knowing how to report and ask questions. We had to do it together for first three months.
- Some of the most sensitive on these issues was USAID. They didn't have enough career people to send. So USAID contracted out, to people who knew their subject matter but they knew nothing about working for USG. And suddenly they were representing USG, which many didn't like. People who made living in NGO communities, had to tow the line on US policy. That was hard.
 - They also had a lot of difficulty working with the military. Came from NGO background, not a lot of love there. We existed because military enabled us, not all of them were sensitive to that. Had a number of EEO issues from poor civ mil communication. Right substantive background but no skills working for USG or interagency.
- Joint training is great idea, sorry to see FSI step away from joint training with military. Trying to shut down stability ops and focus only on crisis management.
- It would be much easier for military to add 10 slots to training it has then for state to create its own. Figure out what it costs and charge us. Use existing infrastructure, easier to adapt program to meet joint needs then to have State create it.
- Easily 85% of what I saw was tremendously effective interagency cooperation.
- Agencies have different tours, not all coming in together. Training needs to be at post, so it has to be distance learning. Are there exercises people could do at post. Emphasis on professional development – we are looking at how to allow a section head to do something with his office to build team, strategic planning, etc. Every Ambassador could host an offsite, etc. No reason why you couldn't do that.
- Lack of understanding about difference between output and outcome. People thought they were doing what they should be. Built 5 schools, etc. that was success. Wasn't until 10 years into a war that you are realizing rebuilding a school that burned down after unoccupied for 5 years.

- Louder chorus from Afghans about why we don't ask them what's needed. We have our checklist
- Biggest area in which Americans need to manage our own expectations is timelines. There was no military solution to that problem. Anyone who thought we could just target Al Qaeda only was being unrealistic. We have to stop making military decisions that have no next step.
- The Afghan assessment of what was important to them was different than our assessment of what was important to them. First and foremost, Afghans asked "Do I have a job? Can I support my family?" And not Taliban or Americans are out to get me. Afghan concern was domestic violence, our concern was Taliban violence.

Interview Notes

Name: Jeff Eggers, Retired Naval Officer and Former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, now a Senior Fellow at New America
Date: December 2, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- “In 2009, we could walk through the strategy and causal logic of our plan, but we didn’t pressure test it. The plan was to clear, hold, build, and then transition. We assumed that once security was established we could then add in rule of law, economic efforts, etc. The problems came from the build phase.”
- “The problem ultimately was that you couldn’t build this capability from scratch. The U.S. had neither sufficient civilians who could go out and conduct these efforts nor a military trained to do it. And the Afghans didn’t have the human capital to do it themselves.”
- “The perception of General Petraeus’s success from the surge in Iraq led to a cognitive bias that this is the way to win. Planning going into 2009 was influenced by some false pretense of what happened in Iraq. There was infrastructure and institutional memory in Iraq, where we could clear and hold and then let it grow. In Afghanistan you clear and hold and then Afghans look at you and say, now what? Lazy thinking gave the U.S. a false sense of hope.”

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2009-11
Date: October 17, 2015
Location: E-mail exchange

Direct Quotes:

- “Two-year tours would have made a large – though not decisive – difference. Our development goals were simply too ambitious.”

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Robert Finn, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2002-03
Date: October 30, 2015
Location: Princeton, NJ

Key Points:

- Ambassador Finn expressed that one of the United States' problems is a lack of strategic planning and foresight. Ambassador Finn attributed this largely to the fact that Americans want and expect very fast results. This type of thinking, especially overseas, can lead to both inflated expectations and poor planning.
- Ambassador Finn mentioned that early on in Afghanistan, the UN employed a "Lead Nation" program, in which a specific country was in charge of a particular program. At the beginning of the conflict, Lakhdar Brahimi, who was the head of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan at the time, only had the 'power of suggestion,' and not the 'power of obligation.' There was no existing mandate which carried authority at the time, and Ambassador Finn expressed that this was a failure of the international system.
- Ambassador Finn felt that Americans generally lack an understanding of foreign cultures, and highlighted how important it was and is to understand the cultures of the places that America is involved in. Ambassador Finn also said that although military personnel are not cultural experts, diplomats and those in the Foreign Service are supposed to be the cultural experts when the country intervenes in a location.
- Having been the Ambassador to Afghanistan several years earlier, Ambassador Finn felt that when the civilian surge occurred in late 2009, the surge occurred too late in our involvement in Afghanistan. Ambassador Finn highlighted the resourcing level given towards Afghanistan while the campaign in Iraq was also occurring, and felt that the early years in Afghanistan amounted to several lost opportunities to really make a significant difference. "The Turks have a saying, 'All five fingers are not the same,' and we would do well to remember that."
- In the early days of the involvement in Afghanistan, the location of the Embassy in Kabul was separate from the military Headquarters in Bagram. This degree of physical separation compounded the difficulties of coordination and communication between the State Department and the two entities. Eventually, this issue was resolved when the military headquarters relocated to Kabul.
- Early on in the conflict, Ambassador Finn expressed that he did not have enough staff and certainly could have used more. However, the larger issue was one of logistics and living space in that there were not enough beds and other living requirements for more people. Logistics were the major problem. There was not enough life support for more State Department personnel during the beginning of the campaign.

- Ambassador Finn said that in the early portions of the conflict, the National Security Council (NSC) was spending significant time in Washington, D.C. deciding which ministries to fund and support. There was a lot of waiting for guidance from the NSC, Ambassador Finn said, especially in the early portions of the conflict.
- Ambassador Finn said that it would have been absolutely key had an office of Reconstruction and Development been fully set up when the country went into Afghanistan.
- Regarding particular skill sets that diplomats and deploying personnel should have before serving in a conflict zone, Ambassador Finn felt that for conflicts in the Middle East or in central Asia, diplomats and military officials need an extensive course on both language and Islam, to include its influence in politics.
- Regarding the future of Afghanistan, Ambassador Finn is simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic. Ambassador Finn believes that we need to continue to stay the course, but we have to really understand how and why the factors on the ground are influencing the outcome, and believes that the next year or so will prove absolutely critical for the future of Afghanistan.

Interview Notes

Name: Henrietta Fore, Former Administrator of the US Agency for International Development and Director of US Foreign Assistance, 2007-09
Date: October 23, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

“It was always a challenge to get people with the right skill sets,” said Henrietta Fore. “Language was number one, we never had enough people with language skills.”

Former USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore highlighted the potential value of pre-deployment online training.

Key Points:

- There is a need for better training and more operational funds at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- There is presently a tremendous disparity in resources, staff, and preparedness for missions in conflict settings between Department of Defense (DOD) and the civilian agencies.
- DOD personnel carried three essential capacities:
 - A) DOD personnel who were trained to be in a hard place, a place with personal physical danger, and were trained to look after themselves.
 - B) DOD personnel understood they were in a situation with very serious life and death risks, and if something happened, they and their families were mentally and physically prepared.
 - C) DOD personnel carried the skills, procedures and resources to accomplish projects (such as building bridges or digging a well).Those three capacities were extremely helpful.
- These capacities did not exist on the civilian side. Civilians should have transportation options (planes, motorized vehicles, boats), have training to go to hard places, and have an understanding that this is all a part of their job.
- It was very hard to recruit/assign civilian staff with young families from the civilian agencies to go to Afghanistan. Civilian agencies do not carry life or medical insurance, civilian agencies did not have a serious preparedness training program. We cannot overcome that culture or that system quickly. It would be very useful for us to have these capacities in the civilian agencies. The Department of State (DOS), USAID, and the non-profits active in Afghanistan all struggled with this challenge.

- The military has ways to look after the families of their personnel, and civilian agencies do not. For example, on the civilian side there is no paid family housing. All families are left in the U.S. in their own private apartments and homes. Paid leave, travel, family travel all needed adjustments. If you can solve those problems, the length of the tour duty can be standardized. You cannot ask someone to serve four years and never see their family, this is not a reasonable expectation for a civilian staff member. If civilian staff members are going to have to work in hardship posts and in non-family postings, you also have to set this early as an expectation in their career, so that civilian staff and their families are prepared for it. Otherwise they are just not ready. They are worried about separation, their families, their personal safety and personal finances to cover expenses.
- If USAID had not been able to rely on the support of the military at the field level, it would not have been possible to have housing, security, medical care and transportation. The military was the only agency that had vehicles. In such a situation, you may be a USAID agriculturalist, but you cannot visit farming communities or rural agricultural cooperatives without the military's help. You are very dependent on the cocoon that DOD provides for, that is the only way you can go anywhere and do your job. So, yes, USAID had a human being present in the field, with extraordinary heroism, but we could not give these people enough tools to be truly successful.
- There was also a massive resource imbalance. For example, DOD might have 100,000 people to put to work on a particular activity, DOS would have 1/10th of that figure, and USAID would have around 1/60th of it. The budgets of these agencies mirrored these figures. If you inverted that ratio, and placed more resources into development, you could get more accomplished. But it would require a wholesale change in the way that funding moves for these agencies works.
- Congress progressively brought down the operative expense money for USAID and increased the program money. While that is very good for the contracts of non profits, consultants and local programs, the effect was an inability to oversee or coordinate programs, and to ensure they were working well within a community, social and economic structure. There must be an understanding that, it is essential to have a car or truck available for USAID staff to visit towns and villages with projects.
- In terms of training, the military trains as a unit before they leave the US. This is a useful model in a tough place. This would be optimal for civilian agencies. It would be good for the civilian agencies' staff to train together for two weeks before going overseas. They could begin to work together, and with the military, and to coordinate how they operate and work as a group. By training as a group they would also have a shared pool of information. These teams could stay together for the rest of their deployment – i.e. a 12-month team or a 24-month team, not just a one-month team. That would be optimum. The constraint will be financial resources.
- If training as a team is not feasible, the next best option would be online classes. The Foreign Service Institute at DOS is the best place to begin. At DOD, one quarter to one third of your military career is spent in training. In most civilian agencies it is one tenth of that level and in USAID it is one sixtieth of that level. And again, that mirrors the operating expense money and size.

- Given limited resources, online training becomes extremely helpful. USAID and DOS civilian staff are very well educated people, so at a minimum online training will be well utilized, purposeful and should be done. This would also mean that it would be possible to train staff and their families. A key to changing the civilian culture to acclimate to high stress and high security postings.
- In deploying staff to Afghanistan, it was always a challenge to get people with the right skill sets. Language was the number one issue, we never had enough people with language skills. As Americans, we must be able to talk with the people in their languages in their towns and villages.
- One major complaint was that people could not get out in the field as much as was needed for the completion of their jobs in community building, housing, governance, agriculture, commerce, education, health, disasters, etc. USAID civilian personnel felt strongly that they were not risk averse. DOS was risk averse. DOD was not risk averse. We did not know how to cope with the different cultures, positions, and individual stances on risk aversion. If every person needed to be protected to the fullest extent possible, this really meant that they should not leave the Embassy in Kabul. But then it was impossible for civilian staff to do their jobs. This was a dilemma that we never fully solved.
- A final and incredibly important issue to consider was mental and emotional health. For our people coming out of Afghanistan, there was a lot of post-traumatic stress (PTS). We did not have enough support set up in the beginning to cope with PTS. This has improved over time, but it needed a thorough beginning-to-end review of preparedness.

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Marc Grossman, Former US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2011-12
Date: October 21, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

“As the security situation worsened, it became rarer for personnel to venture out beyond the embassy compound walls. Many officials cited this as a problem, given much of a diplomat’s job depends on building relationships with locals and understanding the in-country ground truth. Some suggested the glut of personnel was a contributing factor. “At 700 people you’ve got to do risk avoidance. At 300 people or 200, you have much more capacity to do risk management,” said Ambassador Grossman.

Key points:

- Noted that the Foreign Service is already small, and therefore flexible. Believes FSO cones should go away and instead multi-functionality should be promoted amongst FSOs
- Float is a big issue: 90 percent of the foreign service is constantly deployed; Colin Powell decided to approve increasing the FSO corps by 1200 so there would be some float for training and transit.
- The civil service within State is locked in a system where grade is associated with position, not person. This leads to complications and inefficiencies within civil service career paths.
- In responding to whether a sixth cone should be created for expeditionary FSOs, Amb. Grossman agreed that there was a need to promote an expeditionary force. Grossman highlighted previous recommendations from Larry Engleberger, who called for a Department of State reserve corps. Amb. Grossman noted that Ryan Crocker and Ann Patterson should serve as the example for expeditionary FSOs.
- In regards to SRAP, Amb. Grossman believed it was a test bed for a “whole of government” approach to diplomacy.
 - Thought the SRAP concept is good, but that special representative positions should exist for limited periods of time. Amb. Grossman noted that in his opinion, the SRAP should have gone away in December 2013.
- Specific points on Afghanistan:
 - There is only so much the U.S. government can do, and it can’t produce sustainable long-term economic growth. Instead, private enterprise needs to assist and promote this growth.
 - U.S. civilians and military who viewed the Afghan government as their own are wrong. For example, when a PRT member talks of a provincial governor as “my governor.” We don’t own them.
 - There were too many civilians in Afghanistan during the surge. This is partly because the military pulled civilians in through claims that COIN would work if only more civilians were applied to the problem.

- In regards to incentives, Amb. Grossman saw no issue with financial incentives to encourage volunteers. He noted that no State employees have ever been forced to deploy to Afghanistan.
 - Amb. Grossman vehemently disagreed with claims (specifically citing Rajiv Chandrasekaran) that State sent its worst people to Afghanistan. Instead, Amb. Grossman believed there were leadership issues in country that resulted in some personnel difficulties.
 - Amb. Grossman again stressed the need for U.S. civilian agencies to avoid being guilt tripped by the military in regards to supporting COIN strategies in future conflicts.
- Recommendation: To strengthen the voice and congressional influence of the State Department relative to the military, Amb. Grossman suggested that there should be a new Combatant Command created for Reconstruction and that the Combatant Commander should be a State Department official. Ambassador Grossman noted that AFRICOM has a State official as a deputy, and that model is showing some positive signs, albeit some minor difficulties as well.

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Beth Jones, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, 2012-13
and Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2011-12

Date: November 4, 2015

Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- Ambassador Jones expressed that the guidance coming from Ambassador Crocker and Pat Kennedy was that Afghanistan should not be drawn down like Iraq, and specifically, that the Department of State should not accept projects turned over from the military, since the State Department did not have the staff to execute or manage the hundreds of civilian projects undertaken by military units. Ambassador Jones said that this had been a real problem in Iraq according to many State Department officials.
- Ambassador Jones, at the request of Ambassador Crocker, conducted a detailed study over two weeks in late 2011 in order to evaluate the staffing levels for the State Department in Afghanistan and to make recommendations on what staffing adjustments, including drawdowns, should accompany planned military withdrawals. Ambassador Jones visited various sites to determine what should stay open and at what staffing level, and talked with both the military and every civilian agency on site. The overwhelming feedback she received from those she interviewed was that the the military should not turn projects over without adequate civilian staffing in place.
- Ambassador Jones' report was fully coordinated with and then approved by Ambassador Crocker and all five ambassadors in the Embassy, as well as by the senior leadership in the State Department.
- Ambassador Jones reported that USAID employees she interviewed agreed that there were too many USAID employees in the Kabul Embassy. Those she interviewed claimed that this issue stemmed primarily from requirements of the civilian surge, in which Ambassador Holbrooke demanded staffing without reference to whether that staffing could be matched to projects. The multiple R&R's resulted in needing more staff than normal to cover project implementation. Security requirements and logistical issues complicated that ability of all Embassy staff to get their work done.
- Ambassador Jones felt that the security requirements for civilians to get out into the field were not overly restrictive. Recalling the requirements from Iraq, she felt that those in Afghanistan were far less restrictive, and that those people who wanted to get out could usually find a way to do so, thanks to a thoughtful approach to security management by the Embassy security team.

- Without extraordinary hiring authorities (3161 and FSL), it would have been very difficult to accomplish the dramatic staffing increase that the civilian surge required. She said that the 3161 program is the only effective mechanism available to the State Department, whereas, USAID can hire contractors and PSCs as well.
- Ambassador Jones also mentioned that for retired State Department FSOs, the “When Actually Employed” (WAE) guidelines, which caps the salary a retiree can earn to that of the highest salary earned when employed minus the pension one receives, is a serious impediment to serving after retirement, since it restricts FSO’s to part-time work. WAE rules limit the number of hours a retired FSO can work per year. In a place like Afghanistan, a WAE employee can work essentially for only half of every year.
- Ambassador Jones argues that the current WAE limitations can and probably should be reformed. DoD civilian retirees, for instance, do not face the same limitations.
- FSO’s are assigned to PSP posts for one year tours only, although two year tours are preferable, as that assures greater professional depth and subject matter continuity. Unfortunately, it is difficult for people to extend for a second year, as the bid cycle for PSP posts (Baghdad, Kabul, Islamabad) starts first, and only once these jobs are filled does bidding begin on other posts. The impact of this is that new arrivals to PSP posts, who usually arrive in July or August, can seldom opt to stay a second year, as the position they hold has already been filled by September.
- Ambassador Jones also told us, however, that there is an advantage to bidding this way: because PSP posts are assigned first, the State Department had far fewer billets (if any) vacant relative to other agencies.
- Ambassador Jones described to us the importance of interagency working groups needing to discuss policy issues and program implementation with their international counterparts. DoS is leading the effort in planning for Syria, and the good news is that many Europeans are involved in this effort. Ambassador Jones felt that this “is a leadership thing. No one told us to do this; we did it because it is the right thing to do. And after a few days, other USG agencies wanted to be a part of it.”
- Looking forward, Ambassador Jones said that planning for Syria or other conflict zones needs to be an international effort, and not an American effort only. This helps us to get buy in for the policies we are pursuing from the countries whose support we need in the region – when the work is seen as an international effort not a “made in the USA” effort.
- Ambassador Jones feels that with a “whole of government” style approach, you get the range of subject matter experts in the room, to assure that all issues relevant to a conflict zone are addressed. There is no question this is the right way to go, from the beginning. But it is harder and takes longer simply because effective coordination requires detailed planning and discussion.
- Until there is leadership in countries in crisis or conflict that is prepared to do what is necessary in all realms of governance, the Taliban and ISIS and other groups similar to these will continue

to enjoy successes. Regional governments must be prepared to address their populations' economic, health, education and housing needs to reduce the attractiveness of radical groups.

- The Future of Iraq project should serve as a reminder of what happens when the government ignores planning. Even the project was not implemented in Iraq, it served as a model for the Near East Bureau's Syria planning experience. In Afghanistan the kind of planning that was done in the Future of Iraq project was done on the ground in-country.
- Across the Middle East and in other parts of the world, free and fair elections have produced new leaders. However, in some instances, the new leaders are reluctant to relinquish power at the end of their terms and are not always prepared to allow a free and fair election to take place that could result in their being replaced. The key is to continue to work to develop the institutions of good governance and to promote a vibrant civil society that demands a genuinely democratic transition.

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador James Keith, Assistant Chief of Mission, American Embassy Kabul 2010-11
Date: November 2, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- Ambassador James Keith recounted the frequency at which meetings at Embassy Kabul consisted of “principals, deputies and deputies to the deputies.”

Key points:

- Ambassador Keith mentioned to us that in evaluating the surge, both in terms of its effectiveness and its design, that you have to remember the politics of the time, which stressed the fact that this was going to be a surge --- that numbers were going to go up, but they were going to come down quickly as well.
- Ambassador Keith expressed the importance of keeping in mind the strategy of a surge, and whether or not a strategy of clear, hold, build (which requires enormous resources) was ever really achievable in a reasonable time frame. Ambassador Keith argued that the change we were trying to effect was simply not achievable within a period of years, and that if anything, a decade or more would be required to achieve the “build” component of the equation. Most of the U.S. leadership in Kabul understood and accepted that as an accurate assessment, but they did so without necessarily evaluating whether political support for it could be sustained, despite widely circulated criticism that the civilian “build” effort was too slow.
- Understanding this aspect – the pressure to achieve a generation’s worth of change in a short amount of time - explains how and why such significant spending authorizations and an impressive pooling of resources was achieved. But, Ambassador Keith cautioned, the acceleration of spending and rapid use of resources also contains many downsides.
- Ambassador Keith describes the pressure to keep up and “hit the numbers,” as the military numbers increased at the start of the surge to ensure the civilian side was living up to its responsibility. From the beginning, Ambassador Keith argued, one must understand that the the civilian apparatus is under resourced and hard-pressed to spend for future outcomes given the constant pressure of current challenges. It does not have sufficient capacity to break personnel out for extended training, and even at the best of times had to leave positions elsewhere in the world empty to fill war zone slots. Accordingly, civilian agencies had to turn outside their full-time career personnel for assistance in generating the civilians needed in key areas for Afghanistan that included narrow specialties associated with nation building. In this regard, the 3161 mechanism was the primary vehicle which the civilian institutions used to get such additional personnel to Afghanistan.

- Ambassador Keith said that the volume of people needed – the demand – was the driving factor. The advantage of the 3161 is that you can identify expertise and hire quickly for specified or contracted time periods as opposed to using the normal civil or foreign service intake that took time and included an expectation of long-term employment.
- Ambassador Keith mentioned that he had limited need to discipline personnel for unprofessional conduct during his time in Afghanistan. He felt that the screening process for potential employees in Afghanistan was fairly successful. The harder part, Ambassador Keith felt, was getting the right person with the right expertise to the right slot at the right time. Ambassador Keith mentioned that every person who volunteers to serve in a place like Afghanistan wants to serve there for different reasons. Some people are escaping a personal situation, some are seeking a thrill, some are motivated by finances—there are wide and varied reasons for volunteering to serve in that sort of hardship or war zone.
- Ambassador Keith felt that from a manager’s point of view, you’ve got to balance the need to staff an office with the need for incentivizing/rewarding someone for serving. Ambassador Keith felt that using incentives was far preferable to forced assignment, which risked a host of poor outcomes. Perhaps an analogy would be the military’s strong desire to sustain a voluntary force as opposed to resorting to a form of mandatory service in the military through a draft—the issue is how best to maintain professional standards and effective pursuit of core objectives.
- In Afghanistan, one of the particular management challenges stemmed from the fact that during any given month, the staff looked totally different. Generous R and R, morale trips, RRBs, etc., meant that the “room was always different.” It was always a room full of principals, deputies, and even the deputy to the deputy.
- The “summer transfer” of the civilian workforce into/out of Afghanistan was heavy, but not debilitating, recognizing the importance of the “summer fighting season.” It was unavoidable to a large extent as one was dealing with a supply of personnel coming out of posts around the world at roughly that time. Adjustments were made for training and to smooth out the cycle, but there were some organic or inherent limits to change given the need to continue to conduct business in other parts of the world coupled with an essentially static supply of personnel. Moreover, the civilian objective of “build” or nation building was a long-term objective not tied directly to the fighting season.
- Ambassador Keith also mentioned the overwhelming challenge of the “build” effort in the context of ongoing hostilities. Work in Afghanistan was 180 degrees out from the typical foreign service experience in which personnel strive to integrate themselves into their host countries, living off the economy, in local neighborhoods or apartments, immersed in the social, cultural, economic, and political context. Due to security concerns personnel were restricted and there was clearly a difference between what could be accomplished in a peacetime context versus a combat zone. That said, personnel for the most part were able to accomplish their assigned objectives, which necessarily were adjusted to fit with the combat context. The primary challenge was that generational change that is part and parcel of nation building can only be accelerated so much by the acceleration of the delivery of service or resources. Put differently, the “clear, hold” components were much more susceptible to accelerated pace based on accelerated delivery of resources as compared to the “build” component.

- Regarding pre-deployment training, Ambassador Keith thinks this is a great topic to hone in on. The training regime was about as effective as it good be given the need to create it on the fly. The time to make systemic changes that have global effects on our diplomacy and the personnel policies to support that diplomacy is before a conflict, not during it. The changes are complex: how much resource could be devoted to civilian institutions in peace time, how to create a training float in those institutions, how to adjust assignment practices to link civilian and military personnel for year- long not months-long training.
- To create the ability to surge civilian capacity, it is going to boil down to resources that have to be approved by Congress. “We talk a lot about funding ‘soft power’ first and ‘hard power’ second, but the challenge is to provide sufficient resources to civilian departments that have no politically powerful constituency and whose contributions are realized in the long term, well beyond relevant election cycles. Short of a crisis, it just isn’t politically viable to increase significantly civilian foreign affairs budgets, despite the fact that a rational or common sense evaluation would inevitably lead one to conclude that it makes much more sense (and is cheaper by any definition of the word) to spend earlier on civilian (and peacetime military) programs rather than later in a combat context. To exercise soft power well, you’ve got to invest in it. You have to be willing to pay for what you get.”

Interview Notes

Name: Dr. Carter Malkasian, US Department of State Officer, Garmser District, Helmand, 2009-11, now Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Date: November 5, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- “The 3161 program got a different quality of people [than the Foreign Service officers]...They got some people with experience who did a good job, some who were well meaning, and some who were too old or just not a right fit. And the military would complain about this. They thought they were getting a civilian expert and they got an old guy or a kid who was too young. These people were also not part of the bureaucracy so they didn’t have same connections and it was pretty variable how much the Ambassador or civilian leadership at the PRT listened to them. The 3161s wouldn’t have the same level of skill set as a diplomat would, and they probably wouldn’t have any language skills, so those were some impediments.”
- In 2010, S/CRS was converted into a functional bureau in the State Department, called Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO). Immediately, CSO faced an austere budget climate and some degree of resistance from other agencies – including from within State itself. Although there were notable successes, Embassies and regional bureaus did not always welcome incursions into their work by CSO. (Citation: Carter Malkasian and one other interviewee).

Key Points:

- In the early period in Afghanistan, people from DoS tended to be fairly high quality because they were Foreign Service Officers. And some of the FSOs even had training in Dari or Pashto at that time. I worked with an FSO in Kunar who spoke Pashto and had a previous tour in Pakistan, she was quite impressive. They had skill sets to negotiate with people. There was an FSO who spoke Nuristani and was on the PRT in Nuristan. We had some FSOs with real skills at that time.
- 3161 program got a different quality of people. I was a 3161 for the two years I was in Garmser. They got some people with experience who did a good job, some who were well meaning, and some who were too old or just not a right fit. And the military would complain about this. They thought they were getting a civilian expert and they got an old guy or a kid who was too young. Also they were not part of the bureaucracy so they didn’t have same connections and how much the Ambassador or civilian leadership at the PRT listened to them was pretty variable.
- Two shortfalls were that the people were a little bit young and that USAID and DoS don’t come with a lot of assets [compared to the military].
- OTI came in during surge and their money was more flexible. We had an OTI person come in to Garmser and she was very effective, and she could get money to projects.

- [How to create capacity within civilian agencies to work in complex crisis environments]. I'd do it within the Foreign Service or USAID or both. You start the individuals out and there's a certain track for a certain time, not a whole career, where they gain certain skills and capabilities – they know how to speak Arabic, work at the provincial level, understand how tribal systems work or what camposinos are in Latin America. You'd also want to design some things for them to do, so they are not just hanging around, they're trying to implement some kind of stabilizing program. That's one way. I would lean towards that as the way to go.
- The CSO model didn't work out in the end because they are an outside group and not all Embassies want to work with CSO, which is their prerogative. Sometimes yes, you have a really progressive Ambassador she says great. Other Ambassadors say whoa wait, your boss will be in my pool. Sometimes Ambassador is open but Assistant Secretary is not. So you get all this friction when you have a separate organization. Better in the same organization. It's kind of like, do you want your advisors for the Afghan Army in a different chain of command or battalion chain of command? You want them in the battalion because it will work smoother.
- Civ-mil relations: we at the DST needed to show we were capable, could get things done, because my experience was and is that if a military commander knows I'm going to get things done really well and I can talk to district governor really well while other people don't and I handle every detail, he will delegate to me and give me the ball. I in turn have to understand that I'm not the boss, and I have to deal with that. Even though I'm civilian and they're military and DoS theoretically outranks, he has 1000 guns and millions of dollars.
- I think the idea of sending in FSOs to environments that aren't safe is important. Obviously need coordination. I think it's a good idea. I think pairing up FSOs and AID with Special Forces and AOB is a great idea. I don't know if everyone has told Congress how damaging Benghazi has been to risk acceptance. They know they will lose their job, it's not that they are scared, it's clear you WILL lose your job and your bosses will be dragged before Congress. So they don't need to be told not to do it, they know. Ambassadors need to take some risk. I don't know if Congress knows the damage it's caused.
- We fool ourselves into thinking if we build roads and demand change, everything will be better in the future. You don't know that. Better to assume we will be paying money for a long time. And maybe that's worth it. But don't go in thinking you're going to get out of it somehow, and you'll create a wonderful place, Switzerland. I had a lot of people telling me they weren't building Switzerland, they were building Afghanistan good enough, but as far as I could tell, we wanted Switzerland. Have a realistic idea of what's sustainable, know what you're getting into. We've learned part of that lesson that it's very, very hard to try to fix these things. I'm not sure that we've learned the lesson that if you care about it you have to keep watching, not just money or troops, you have to see what's going on. Because we get surprised repeatedly.
- In context of military surge, yes the civilian surge made sense because we helped the military. Prevented some harm being done, I'd like to think we prevented some American deaths, helped accelerate some successes. I think it was good in that regard. Did we save Afghanistan? No. If you removed civilians would it have been a disaster? No. But in that context, I think it was worth it. If you're asking about surging as a whole, that's a longer philosophical conversation.

Interview Notes

Name: Brigadier General (US Army, Retired) Michael Meese, Ph.D.
Date: November 4, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- BG Meese, in describing the genesis of modern Counterinsurgency operations, said that the model employed in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 2001-2002 was very similar to the approach employed in the vicinity of Mosul, Iraq, when General Petraeus commanded the 101st Airborne Division. Petraeus had been a Brigadier General and the U.S. Chief of Operations in 2001-2002. This was a model which really worked relatively well. BG Meese's point was to express how important it is to continue learning, as individuals but also as organizations, from our mistakes, to distinguish what works versus what does not.
- BG Meese compared the numbers of civilians working development in USAID or CORDS type roles in places like Iraq and Afghanistan (1k+) to the number of civilians who had previously worked in conflicts such as Vietnam (10k+), and expressed the importance of managing our expectations, not really so much in terms of objectives, but more so in terms of the time required to achieve those objectives.
- BG Meese felt that one of the main lessons from our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan should be that "leadership matters," referring to the importance and impact of the civilian and military leaders chosen to execute complex missions. This is always true, BG Meese felt, but is especially true if the United States has chosen to intervene in a location which requires that another state's institutional capacity be overhauled. The complexity of the tasks at hand, combined with the changing conditions on the ground, absolutely required good leaders who work and interact well together.

BG Meese expressed that one way to think about the US ability to conduct capacity-building type missions in the future is for our government to determine which institutional capacities would be required in a conflict zone, and to then assign particular agencies with a requirement to maintain an expeditionary personnel component of a particular size in the event that particular skill is required. Examples could potentially include a small subset of personnel existing each at USDA, Department of Treasury, the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Prisons, and other agencies. The point is that such a model allows each agency to maintain an identified, trained body of people who can deploy quickly and assist in whatever area is required. When complete, these people would simply return to their jobs at their respective agencies.

Another option, which the military is already exploring if not actively working towards, is a type of "talent-management" pool which identifies workers by particular skill sets. Senior leaders can view available personnel and quickly vet who possesses a particular skill or experience, such as the ability to speak a language, or education level, previous deployment in a similar job, etc. Such a program is linked to but outside of traditional human resources and assignment systems in the Army.

BG Meese also said that government agencies who work in conflict zones should learn from the challenges that the State Department's current Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) has had, which was formerly the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization(S/CRS). BG Meese offered that by studying and being familiar with the challenges of funding and developing an office for this type of purpose, the government can learn valuable lessons about what type of future capacity is required within our agencies to enable effective work in a conflict or post-conflict area.

The challenge addressed in the final three points is how to get the best talent in the U.S. government to address the issues of development, economic promotion, or other functions in crisis areas. As the lead agency overseas, State will normally have the lead, but they rarely have the talent or expertise in the area that the U.S. policy is trying to develop or promote in the particular nation. Other agencies (Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, and Treasury) have expertise but not the expeditionary culture, resources, or mindset. Defense has the resources and flexible and adaptive leaders, so often they are the default solution. And profit-oriented contractors will always be willing to contract for missions, but their interests may not align with that of the U.S. government. Although we have tried in many ways, we have fallen short in "winning the peace." U.S. national security policy will be much enhanced if we can learn from the last 14 years and improve the organization, structure, and resourcing of these issues.

Interview Notes

Name: Ambassador Ronald Neumann, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, 2005-07
Date: November 6, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- From the beginning, Ambassador Neumann mentioned that the “single greatest thing” the country should fix is the tour length for diplomats, and in particular, extending the length of the tour from one year to two years. Ambassador Neumann stressed the fact that beyond the importance of developing relationships with Afghans, longer tours are vital from the perspectives of organizational learning and leadership.
- Ambassador Neumann went on to express that you can’t have a learning organization under the one-year tour system. Senior leaders, political and military, need to undertake at least two year tours. Ambassador Neumann strongly felt that this should probably occur at the Regional-Command level (Two Star Flag officers for the military and Senior Civilian Representatives and above).
- Ambassador Neumann also added that in addition to helping build a learning organization, two year tours are one way to “treat failure as learning and not as bureaucratic failure.” He explained further that too often, “organizations aim for perfection in what we are trying to do, but in conflict zones, these organizations have to understand that we’re not going to get everything right,” and that “not every offense is something to be fired for.” Much more important, Ambassador Neumann felt, is that “we learn from our failures and correct our mistakes so we don’t continue repeating them.”

Ambassador Neumann also added that there “ought to be a detailed look at the 3161 mechanism used by the State Department,” to determine if there are any patterns with people who had to be sent back, or time required to deploy to country, etc. Felt that this would be the strongest indication of success/failure for that particular temporary hiring authority/mechanism.

Argues that a major lesson we ought to take away from Afghanistan is the positive degree of civil-military integration, and the importance that civil-military integration plays in having success on the ground.

Felt that the military’s planning apparatus is unparalleled, but that civilians need to be able to “plug into that” mechanism easier; conversely, the military needs to think/remember “at what point should this civilian be plugged into this?” If both agencies can understand their own respective strengths and weaknesses, and at the same time try to keep an eye and mind out for the other agency and really try to inject them at key times into important processes, “the whole thing works much better.”

Acknowledged the increased risk aversion in the post-Benghazi security environment, and said that we're going to have to be steadfast in our commitments to get out – that we can't back down and allow this risk-aversion to paralyze our ability to get out and move.

Ambassador Neumann argued that regarding civil-military partnership, it is more important to keep a billet open/vacant if the chemistry between the military and civilian leader isn't there. The consequences of a destructive relationship can unfortunately be that severe.

Ambassador Neumann felt that what events and the situation in Kunduz is certainly important, but also suggested we remember that the north of Afghanistan has long been a dumping ground for Afghan political appointees, and that as a result, the region is quickly becoming a neglected region. The perception from those Afghans on the ground is that they feel disconnected to Kabul.

Moving forward, Ambassador Neumann remains optimistic for Afghanistan, though he acknowledges that it will be "difficult...but not impossible." There is a lot of work that needs to be done, but we have to stay the course and keep trying.

Interview Notes

Name: Dr. Michael O'Hanlon, Brookings Institution
Date: November 6, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- Michael O'Hanlon stressed the need to study and understand our own military history, especially as the Defense Department straddles multiple types of conflict right now. He added that these "messy stability and counterinsurgency operations, if history is any guide, will likely not go away, no matter how hard we wish them to."
- Michael O'Hanlon believes that there is a strong argument for believing that if anything, the country needs an even larger capacity to conduct these types of operations, both within the military and across the array of civilian agencies, citing the growing/increased demand for these types of operations and skill sets.
- Michael O'Hanlon also mentioned that there is often a feeling among policymakers that when we finish a conflict and vow to never undertake a similar enterprise again, there is a pattern in our history such that we end up doing something very similar again, even if we are not initially setting out to undertake such a course of action. Therefore, he argued that "it makes no sense to think that this was the last time."
- Michael O'Hanlon agreed that several factors constrain the likelihood of permanently establishing a standing civilian response corps, or constabulary corps, designed to deploy to conflict zones where significant civilian expertise is needed. First, the budgetary climate and tight fiscal environment make an expensive and cumbersome project difficult. More important, however, O'Hanlon believes that "it's often not clear in a hard operation where the combat ends and the peacekeeping begins; the line tends to blur, and a given mission may have elements of both at the same time or may oscillate a bit back and forth. As such, it's really the soldier who has to be at the center of such missions in many/most cases."
- However, O'Hanlon did argue that the likelihood of continuing to rely on a whole of government/whole of international community approach to solve crises will only increase in the near future, and for this reason, we have to be prepared to undertake large scale civilian-military interventions, even if we think we do not want to do them.
- Among other major lessons from Afghanistan, O'Hanlon argues that the Military, and in particular the Army, needs to come away from Afghanistan with an understanding of what it wants to be able to do.
 - Similar to General (Retired) Petraeus, O'Hanlon thinks we need "Soldier-Pentathletes," describing those who can perhaps "major" in high intensity conflict, but nonetheless possess a "minor" in stability/counterinsurgency operations.

- If we operate under such an assumption, O’Hanlon argues that we need to ensure that these skills for the “major” and “minor” are adequately resourced.
- One potential starting point for improving our current framework for conducting these types of operations, specifically for civilian agencies, is perhaps looking at a “lead agency” approach in which each agency identifies a particular expeditionary requirement, and thus each agency is responsible for maintaining and training an expeditionary capability.
 - Political Party Development
 - Law
 - Electoral Development

Interview Notes

Name: General (US Army, Retired) David Petraeus, Commander, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), 2010-11
Date: November 24, 2015
Location: New York City, NY

Direct Quotes:

- “The civilian agencies are not resourced adequately for big endeavors.”
- “U.S. military support for civilians was actually quite similar to support for coalition partners. Even our closest allies had limits, and we would augment their efforts with U.S. capabilities like Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR); MEDEVAC; combat forces, special operations elements, intel cells, and various other enablers.”
- After a while, military commanders noted that during meetings it was no longer “necessary to ask where person X and person Y were, because we knew the answer – he or she was on leave again.”

Key Points:

- GEN Petraeus said that one of the fundamental lessons from Afghanistan (and any civil-military campaign) is the necessity to map the “organizational architecture” between agencies and organizations properly. This “organizational architecture” includes operational and support relationships for US and coalition forces, etc. In addition, GEN Petraeus said that getting this “organizational architecture” right is an enormous endeavor, intellectually taxing, and one which often requires several iterations to get right.
- GEN Petraeus said that in Afghanistan, he worked with the U.S. Ambassador and USAID Mission Director to develop a shared understanding of the biggest problems confronting the coalition. Together, the three leaders determined that for the largest and most significant problems, they would bring in civilian reserves for civilian missions – even if this meant DoD civilians. Generally speaking, if the task is urgent, GEN Petraeus noted that U.S. leadership would consider applying military personnel to fill the gap.
- GEN Petraeus noted that U.S. civilian agencies were not alone in requiring U.S. military assistance in terms of transport, security, billeting, communications, and life support. Indeed, other coalition partners (who comprised approx. 50,000 of the nearly 150,000 troops on the ground) relied on the U.S. military in some way.
- GEN Petraeus described the “three legs of the rule of law stool” as: (1) judicial, which was “woefully under-resourced” due to the 2004 division of coalition responsibilities; (2) police, whose training became a U.S. responsibility over time; and (3) the prison system, which was also

vastly under-resourced. On the judicial front, a rule of law task force was created early on in Afghanistan to assess capacity in the provinces, but this effort was shortchanged for years by lack of resources devoted by the country responsible. This example shows the inadequacy of resourcing for the overall campaign plan. The shortcoming was not U.S.-specific, but rather spread across the entire international coalition. Ultimately, the military took on all three legs of the ROL stool.

- On tour lengths, GEN Petraeus stated that generally speaking, “longer is better, and longer with less R&R is even better.” He noted that between travel time and R&R, civilians had considerable “down time” over the course of one year – far more leave than U.S. soldiers. He felt that two-year tours should have been implemented for all civilians, not just those in leadership positions. Or, similar to how Special Operations Forces, Special Forces, and some conventional forces serve in combat, civilians could pursue a rotational model (e.g., one year in, one year out, and then return for another year). GEN Petraeus observed that people who returned to theater a second time were much more effective, not only because they knew the issues but also because they could leverage this knowledge during the off-year and deliberately plan for their returns. (In Iraq, he noted, virtually every leader during the Surge was on a second tour, and many were on their third tour in that country.)
- On rotations and timing, GEN Petraeus highlighted the problem of “underlap” and lack of focused preparation before deploying civilians. Whereas the military does training well for units – the deployment cycle takes a full year including two trips to the Combat Training Center, including a final mission rehearsal exercise – the military faces similar issues as civilian agencies when deploying general officers (GOs). GOs get tapped for individual deployments, and like their civilian counterparts who generally deploy individually, GOs have almost no road-to-deployment preparation. Even GOs selected in advance under non-emergency conditions have a very short time to prepare. In contrast, GEN Petraeus noted the better preparation senior NATO and IJC headquarters staff received before deploying.
- GEN Petraeus rejected the idea of rotating Foreign Service Officers through NTC or JRTC because civilian agencies (e.g., State, USAID, and the intelligence community too) are already undermanned, so it is nearly impossible to pull FSOs out of their prior roles to prep for the next ones. Instead of joint training, GEN Petraeus cited the Afghan Hands program as a way to identify civilians to deploy repeatedly and gain more understanding however possible.
- GEN Petraeus noted it is key to view U.S. resourcing and prioritization in context: As Admiral Mullen used to say, “in Iraq, we do what we must; in Afghanistan, we do what we can.”
- GEN Petraeus emphasized that the military commander’s job is to provide the best professional military advice to political leadership. While this advice is informed by awareness of the president’s numerous considerations, it must be driven by the situation and facts on the ground. When President Obama asked for the military’s drawdown recommendation, GEN Petraeus stood by his recommendation at the outset of the deliberations, stating that facts on the ground had not changed. The president’s drawdown was more aggressive than GEN Petraeus’s recommendation.

- If the Afghanistan intervention were repeated, GEN Petraeus's first step would be: "Don't wait until 2010 to get the inputs right." The inputs – ranging from strategy to the level of forces, and from organizational architecture to putting the right people in the right billets – required early intellectual focus and sheer will, but in GEN Petraeus's view, this did not really happen until nearly a decade into the war.
- When asked whether U.S. soldiers should be pentathletes trained across military and civilian tasks, GEN Petraeus said, "no, first we must train the military on the full spectrum of military operations."
- GEN Petraeus's key takeaways were:
 - We must understand a country with enormous granularity before invading it.
 - Be flexible and use existing agencies (policies, standard operating procedures, people), not ad hoc, pickup team organizations. This is far preferable to building a new organizational structure from scratch. Indeed, in establishing the Multi-National Security Transition Command in Iraq, we were "building the world's largest plane while in flight, while it was being designed, and while it was being shot at."
 - We need a clear mission, objectives, and concept. Policies and operations should pass the test that they will take more bad guys off the streets than we create by the operation's conduct or policy's implementation. De-Baathification without an agreed reconciliation process and firing the military without determining the future of those in uniform in Iraq both failed that test.
 - We must get the inputs right earlier than we did in Afghanistan, in particular, but also in Iraq.
 - We undercut our own efforts by announcing the drawdown date in Afghanistan at the same time that we announced the surge. This effectively told insurgents to hunker down, and it put enormous pressure on the military to work fast while the forces were on the ground.

Interview Notes

Name: Robert Perito, United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
Date: October 21, 2015
Location: Via Telephone

Key Points:

- PRTs: (re: PRT workshop report). PRTs in Afghanistan were primarily military, with 60-80 personnel. Typically, an Army LTC would be in command with a small staff and a US National Guard platoon to provide convoy security. Each US PRT had at least three civilian government personnel, one each from State, USAID, and the US Department of Agriculture. The State representative was a Foreign Service Officer, FSO-4, (Army major equivalent) responsible for advising the PRT commander on local politics and political reporting to Washington. USDA staff members were volunteers from all parts of the Department that served six month tours. There was no continuity of assignments; a large animal veterinarian could be followed by a dietitian. USAID representatives were temporary hires or contractors; many were recent graduates on their first USAID assignment. They advised the PRT commander and local officials on development. They did not manage local USAID projects which were administered by experienced USAID professionals based in Kabul. Problems: PRTs lacked goals and objectives. There were no benchmarks to judge performance. PRTs were led by different nations and were organized differently with different missions. Personalities and local circumstances played a big role since the PRT commander and his staff decided what the PRT would do. For the first several years, there was no pre-deployment training for US PRT personnel. Eventually elaborate training programs were created at State/FSI and at various military bases with model villages and Afghan role players.
- EPRT: Embedded PRTs were small, State Department-led units inserted in the US combat brigade teams that took part in the Iraq Surge in 2007. Each unit had at least four officers: a senior State/FSO, a military officer (Army Major), a USAID officer, and an Arabic-language interpreter. Units were augmented by representatives from USDA, Justice, and Commerce, plus contractors and specialists depending on need. EPRTs advised the brigade commander and worked with local civilians. They were disbanded when the “surge” brigades rotated back to the United States. EPRTs were a model for expeditionary diplomacy; they provided military commanders with non-kinetic options and liaison to local civilians.
- Human Terrain Teams: The US military’s Human Terrain Team program (2005-2014) placed contract anthropologists and other civilian social scientists in PRTs and other military units to advise commanders on tribal structures, origins of local conflicts, and ethnic relationships. Military commanders said the teams provided options to kinetic operations to deal with local groups. The program was opposed by the American Anthropological Association that believed assisting the military was unethical. Over time the quality of program personnel declined; the program ended when PRTs closed and US combat units left Afghanistan.

- Police Training: At the height of the NATO police assistance program there were 1700-1900 American police advisors and trainers in Afghanistan working in programs run by the U.S. military. Most were former police officers on contract to DynCorp, a government services firm, and funded by the State Department. The European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) provided serving police officers from EU member states as advisors in the Interior Ministry and on European-led PRTs. Although 400 EU officers were authorized, no more than 250 were deployed at one time. Some 40 other countries provided police advisors and trainers that served in various programs. Most police training, however, was conducted by US soldiers who taught military skills. The result was a militarized Afghan police force with little capacity to undertake law enforcement.
- Ministry of Defense Advisors Program (MODA): From 2010, the MODA program provided senior DOD civilian experts in management and administrative functions to advise their counterparts in the Afghan defense and interior ministries. The program suffered from a disconnect since the NATO Training Mission- Afghanistan was unfamiliar with handling civilians and the Afghan ministries were staffed exclusively with uniformed officers who were uncertain about taking advice from foreign civilians. As a 'work around' in the Interior Ministry, MODA advisors served on teams led by a US Army Colonel who interfaced with the Afghans. The program provided an upgrade in the expertise available, but required participants to be adaptable.
- Big Picture Lessons Learned: PRTs provided a safe venue for civilian personnel in a war zone. Unfortunately, no goals and objectives were provided nor was there much national oversight. PRTs were left to develop their own programs based on directives from foreign capitals and the interests and skills of their staff. Recommendations: PRTs need to have a clear set of goals and objectives; they need a clear chain of command; there needs to be an effective mechanism for coordinating PRTs and other civilian assistance efforts.

Interview Notes

Name: The Honorable Jack Reed (D-RI), Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee
Date: December 2, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key points:

- SEN Reed expressed that Congress remains well aware of the challenges of working in conflict zones which face both the Military and civilian agencies. He also mentioned that the obstacles facing us as a nation, particularly in the 'Phase 4' of operations (post-Conflict), are particularly acute, as it is in this phase that host nation governments really have to function well.
- SEN Reed said that he remains *cautiously* optimistic about the future of Afghanistan, but added that the next year or two will be critical in determining the prospects for long-term success [emphasis SEN Reed's].
- SEN Reed expressed that indeed, the budget climate in Washington, D.C. remains very difficult, and that it is unlikely to see significant budgetary additions to civilian agencies in the near future, unless *the Republican caucus accepts the need for additional revenues to meet these compelling needs* [emphasis SEN Reed's].
- SEN Reed reiterated how proud he was of our military and our civilian agencies working in Afghanistan, and said that it is vital that we continue working to see our goals realized there. He also added that learning from our involvement there is critical, as we have to be prepared for similar types of operations.

Interview Notes

Name: Melissa Sinclair, former USAID Foreign Service Limited (FSL) Development Officer
Date: November 11, 2015
Location: Via Telephone

Key Points:

- I am very grateful for my experience working with a DST in Afghanistan. It's hard to understand the complexities out there from a desk in Washington, D.C..
- The improved civilian-military cooperation and understanding that has come out of our Afghanistan experience is an absolute net positive. USAID now has an office of Civilian Military Cooperation, and a lot of cultural barriers have been pulled down. Likewise, the military has a better understanding of development objectives and the need for working together in these environments.
- At the same time, it is concerning that many of the people who were working with the military were temporary staff (FSLs). Most of the career Foreign Service Officers were in Kabul or the regional leadership hubs. The agency should try to retain contact with the FSLs given the experience they have built up. The civilian agencies should take a hard look at what we can do to retain contact with good people. For example, it would be great if the HR office has a list of the people we've worked with in the past so when calls go out for future surge positions there is a list of vetted personnel who have worked well in these environments with positive personnel reviews.
- In terms of civ-mil cooperation, dynamics were best when there was mutual respect and baseline understanding between both counterparts. Pre-deployment training that included orientation to or joint training with the "other" helped with this. Also, when civilians came to the table with a clear plan, the military would often orient their assets to support it. When this was not the case, when civilians didn't have an executable plan, civ-mil worked less well.
- Another civ-mil best practice that developed was the designation of liaisons and people who embedded in the other side's HQ. i.e. a military person at the USAID mission, and a USAID person at the military HQ. These people helped serve as translators, and they were really useful.
- USAID has a very distinct and complex culture and internal processes. Learning how to function in the AID bureaucracy was the greatest challenge for me. Knowing how to navigate within the agency can be even more important than previous experience in a conflict environment.
- A big part of this is understanding why things are so centralized and why it is sometimes difficult to get fast answers. There are often good reasons for this, but it is frustrating if you don't understand why.

- The other big thing is relationships – knowing how different offices work and who you can ask to help find the answers you need. For field staff, this was at times a challenge with Kabul. At first USAID had its own touch point in Kabul for field staff, and then it got subsumed into the Interagency Provincial Affairs Office. Later on they set up a new touch point office. It was really helpful when there was a clear person you could ask questions to and who had a vested interest in your success.
- USAID had to adapt business practices to work in this conflict environment. Some of their typical practices, such as basing programming on an approved five-year strategy, needed to change because the situation on the ground was too fluid to make a long-term plan. Shorter-term plans were needed. But they didn't have an expedited process for conflict zones... These environments are different from typical AID missions, so we need to adapt our processes and get people who've worked in these environments before to advise along the way. The strides that USAID made in adapting to the environment should be documented – the hiring mechanisms utilized, the adaptations in procurement and vetting practices, etc.
- USAID does excellent planning at the program level - it's amazing what they do. But they don't have policy level planning cycles, which puts them in a reactive position politically.
- Regarding training, the hands on pieces were valuable. The more training you can do together with your military counterparts, the better. Camp Atterbury was good, it made you feel less like a fish out of water when you got in a Humvee for the first time, etc. It was also really valuable just to speak with soldiers who had been out on tours before.
 - People were constantly rotating in and out of DC, it would have been nice to bring us together even informally to learn from people's experiences that way.
- For tour length, perhaps it may be necessary to disaggregate between career staff and temporary staff. Some career people may not want to go for more than one year, but temporary people who specialize in skills relevant to these types of environments might like to stay longer. All of my academic training and most of my previous jobs have focused on conflict environments – I really enjoy this type of work, despite its challenges.
- Retention rates for Afghanistan were lower than for Iraq. This was partly because of the extremely ambitious agenda set for Afghanistan; it was frustrating to see that the objectives we were working on might not be achieved. This made people less motivated to stay for another tour. For many people I think it was difficult to find realistic goals to work toward.
- It is important to have specialists for these types of conflict environments. OTI and Civilian Surge Support are both really interesting models for how this could work.

Interview Notes

Name: Dr. Andrew Wilder, United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
Date: November 3, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- “The U.S. political objective in Afghanistan was never clear – in the void, we created military objectives.”
- “In an environment where so much depends on your personal relationships, the rapid turnover of personnel was a killer” – Dr. Andrew Wilder, USIP

Key Points:

- Strategic shortfalls: A country needs to do good conflict analysis before doing aid programs in a conflict zone –pumping money and weapons into a place tends to create more conflict. The United States tends to not do enough conflict analysis. Afghanistan’s problems are ultimately political in nature, but the U.S. has been ill-equipped for that – “We have two tools in our armory in these situations: one is our military, one is our money.” The U.S. political objective in Afghanistan was never clear. There is a widely held conspiracy theory among Afghans that the U.S. was paying the Taliban to justify its (the U.S.’s) long-term presence in the country. How else, many Afghans wondered, could you explain why such a large superpower failed to have roundly defeated the Taliban?
- Successes: Much has been achieved. There were unrealistic expectations set in 2001. But not as many successes as there should have been given the amount of resources. Reform of the Ministry of Finance was a success and the World Bank had a strong team in country to help with that. The actual Afghan financial system is quite strong; corruption comes mostly from money outside the government. The NSP is another success – community development 101: give small amounts to communities, make them contribute and determine what they want. The health sector is another success – e.g. decreases in infant mortality. The EU, U.S. and WB agreed early on a health care strategy based on building small, local clinics, not big hospitals. There has been strong leadership in Health Ministry.
- Development: A problem with U.S. development was that development money was directed into insecure areas to fulfill security objectives, not development objectives. The development agencies with prior experience in Afghanistan did better. After 2002 there was a “feeding frenzy” – too much money came in too quickly. There were also several unrealistic and at times contradictory accountability mechanisms to track how this money was spent. Too many oversight mechanisms have now created risk aversion and spurred investment in the wrong kinds of programs. Working in Afghanistan requires flexibility and the ability to make mistakes. Our oversight mechanisms ought to promote learning, not just a “gotcha” culture. There wasn’t

enough accountability early on – our money was fueling the corruption (easy solution: spend less money). Overall, the U.S. aid and development infrastructure is broken. The military were open to hearing criticism of their role – many military commanders knew that the CERP spending was crazy. Their livelihoods didn't depend on the CERP money. The development sector, however, was more closed to criticism because to justify budgetary existence they had to show their work was having a stabilization and security effect.

- Lessons Learned: “Can’t do state-building on the quick; it takes a long time.” Had we laid out a 10-year strategy in 2002, it would have been good. But our system doesn’t allow us to do that. We shouldn’t do conflict-zone development unless we have longer term horizons. The United States needed to have a coherent political strategy early on. The military role is effective for moving a political agenda forward – but we needed a political agenda. We should have pushed a political process when we had a lot of troops in. Now we have few troops and the Taliban have less incentive to come to the table. Don’t assume a blank slate – use what is already there. The civilian surge was a bad idea. PRTs should have simply been “Provincial Security Teams,” as security was the number one request from Afghans and the PRTs were poor at doing hearts and minds winning development. The quality of civilian personnel was far more important than the quantity.
- Domestic Issues: The United States must reform the incentive structures at home. We’ve had two failed wars, \$1 trillion each, and we know mistakes were made and there were lessons. The fascinating research question is, why hasn’t anything changed? We blame people in the field, but the broken system in Washington is the bigger issue. We’re losing wars but not taking a hard look at what we’re doing and changing it. Why not? Budgeting is a big problem, but also that there is no appetite to reform our foreign assistance structures. JFK approved our basic foreign aid architecture – hasn’t really changed since then.
- Looking ahead: We should not now try to do too little. The United States must remain engaged at a sustainable level with longer-term commitments. If we pull out completely it could destabilize Afghanistan, which could destabilize Pakistan. We should keep more than 10,000 troops – enough to enable close air support, intelligence, medevac, the logistical support, plus the CT ops. Political and psychological effects of U.S. troops is huge for Afghans and signals that money will keep flowing. After Obama’s announcement, Afghan demands for visas dropped in half.

Interview Notes

Name: A Senior Defense Department Official
Date: November 4, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that Department of Defense personnel requests are managed through a system known as Global Force Management (GFM), and civilians are included in this system. This large process helps to forecast demand across the Combatant Commands, though it is less responsive to ad-hoc requirements. Roughly 90% of force requirements at DoD go through the GFM system.
- The Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW) was an attempt at a mechanism to prepare civilians to deploy to conflict zones, and the program was fully realized, as envisioned by DoD policy. Formal policy for it existed in 2009, but the language was somewhat vague. In essence, the CEW was an attempt to create a standing cadre, a “reserve” of deployable DoD civilians to assist efforts underway in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ultimately, policy gaps prevented its full execution. Those gaps resulted in:
 - Combatant Commands viewing CEW as a force provider rather than its original design as a program.
 - An inability for Components to meet the objectives in the CEW policy, and as a result, the focus for CEW became filling requirements with volunteers.
- A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that DoD civilian jobs (for deployment purposes) are broadly classified into one of two distinct categories: emergency essential, and non-combat essential. An emergency essential position is a job for which a deployment is highly likely, and is in direct support of a combat mission. Alternatively, someone classified non-combat essential can still deploy, but in general, such a position is not statutorily linked to a combat zone requirement. Codings can be changed for these positions, but there is often not a need to change these codings.
- DoD used a “schedule A” hiring authority, which expired in September 2014. This authority was greatly beneficial in allowing DoD to hire someone relatively quickly.
- A Senior Defense Department Official thought that DoD financial incentives for those DoD civilians are sufficiently compelling. Surveys of returning DoD civilians from conflict zones indicate the same.
- Most overseas deployment requirements for DoD civilians are for 1 year in length, though there are some who have extended for a second year.

- Unlike the State Department, DoD does not have a ‘When Actually Employed’ (WAE) restriction, which limits the number of hours that a retiree can work so as to remain below that person’s highest salary prior to retiring.
- DoD pre-deployment training requirements vary by the Combatant Command, but there is an established baseline of training requirements which generally includes a couple of weeks at Camp Atterbury, IN. Medical screening and other requirements are also quite standard and similar to those required of other agencies.
- A Senior Defense Department Official felt that the experiences of deploying civilians to Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years has helped DoD better institutionalize the practices which work the best.
- A Senior Defense Department Official felt that GFM, as a process, is not perfect, but generally effective if Commanders and leaders remain patient and allow it to work. Its strength is in the forecasting and signaling that it provides to units and other service providers.
- A Senior Defense Department Official also mentioned that given the incredible demands met by so many DoD civilians during recent years, the Pentagon is making strong efforts to meet the mental, spiritual, and emotional demands of those civilians who have undertaken multiple tours of duty to conflict zones. In addition, A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that it remains a top priority for her to continue ensuring that DoD civilians receive streamlined medical care needed upon redeployment. If there was an area of improvement which could be made, A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that she would like to see DoD civilians entitled to worker’s compensation more quickly.
- DoD has far more of an automated and institutionalized process to deploy its civilians than other agencies. It also has a stronger culture of compulsory assignments, as evident from the job classifications/codings for each billet, which are evident to each potential employee when they are hired.
- A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that one of the more difficult aspects of returning DoD civilians is recognition of what they have done, in light of the fact that so much recognition surrounds our uniformed military. Therefore, A Senior Defense Department Official mentioned that having the right incentives for those who choose to deploy is critical not only from the perspective of having people volunteer, but also from the perspective of service recognition.

Interview Notes

Name: A State Department Senior Leader
Date: November 23, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- A State Department senior leader wrote a paper while serving in Afghanistan called “Managing the Lag,” which was internal to the State Department, but briefed to DOD and ISAF. The paper highlighted that within the “clear-hold-build” continuum, the US government could do the clearing phase. But often, because of a number of factors (including unplanned changes to the timing and sequencing of locations being cleared) the hold and build portions were always lagging behind where they needed to be. The complexity and importance of the hold and build phases were always under-appreciated. If the hold and build phase were not at where they needed to be, usually insecurity would follow, and in many cases you’d have to start the cycle over again. We were always managing the lag. It became a real problem.
- Reference compulsory assignments, a State Department senior leader believes this is a tough issue and each side has real advantages and disadvantages. This leader leans toward directed assignments, at least for some of the senior ranking personnel and assignments. This leader acknowledges the difficulty in implementing such a measure, but agrees that had they been in place, directed assignments would have better facilitated the chances of “building the team” in the allotted space and time.
- Reference tour length, one senior State Department Senior leader also had mixed opinions. Felt that the one-year tour length combined with the frequency and duration of R and R was disruptive. Also felt that two year tours should be considered for some positions.
- Reference Hiring Authorities, one senior State Department Senior leader that although the 3161 mechanism “got the job done,” the mechanism was rather blunt. Had there been other mechanisms, it would have been helpful. Examples of other mechanisms include limited excursion assignments, or schedule B’s. The main advantage, according to this leader, was that the 3161 allowed the State Department to hire and deliver people to Afghanistan relatively quickly.
- A State Department senior leader mentioned that PSC authority could in fact be extended to other bureaus within the State Department.
- Reference incentives, a State Department senior leader felt that in looking to the future, career promotion boards and panels should strongly consider those who have one or more tours to Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. He believes this would send a strong message to FSO and CS employees and possibly compel some to serve in these locations.

- A State Department senior leader believes that it is only a matter of time before we will need to surge again for some other theater of operation, though perhaps not exactly to the extent that we did for Afghanistan and Iraq. He believes that now is the time for State and the inter-agency to put in place programs, plans, and build our capacity before they are needed. He also believes that like many other things, time, cost and quality are constraints that have to be taken into account when staffing a contingency group. The shorter the time, the higher the cost, the lower the quality.
- A State Department senior leader mentioned that the legal authorities associated with the money flowing through the CDDEA were effective, but more cumbersome than necessary. This stemmed from the fact that 22-24 agencies were trying to work in tandem with each other within Afghanistan at any given time. In many cases each agency had “legal” control over the funding, which lead to a significant amount of inter-agency disagreements. Also, at times many of these agencies were not as responsive as the Embassy would have liked them to be. Much of the programmatic decision making was done in Washington, not in Kabul, which lead to many situations where those responsible on the ground in Kabul, were at times not in control of the funding or people on the ground in Afghanistan. Coordination could have been done better on this point. In order to avoid this problem in the battle space in the future, the legal authorities for the 22-24 agencies need to be given to those responsible on the ground.
- Concerning creating a cadre of personnel available for these contingencies, a State Department senior leader recalled that several Secretaries have tried but the budgetary climate we are in simply makes this tremendously difficult if not impossible. Living on supplemental money is easier than living on non-supplemental. Reality is that State doesn’t have benefit of throwing money at things from a congressional point of view. “Flat is the new up, from a budget point of view. Hopefully we can keep the people we have.”

Interview Notes:

Name: A Senior Civilian Official with service in Kabul during the surge
Date: October 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Direct Quotes:

- Context: It is very important to put the effort in Afghanistan into context. The U.S. had been fighting two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for a number of years, and waging two civilian efforts to help bring about economic development and improve governance while still in the midst of armed conflict in both countries. However, this was a big challenge for U.S. govt. civilian agencies that had not been designed to operate their programs in another country during war or conflict situations. They did not have the training to do so or the resources. In addition, the general perception among those observing the situation was that we had not put enough resources – military or civilian – into Afghanistan. The war in Iraq was initiated and resources diverted to Iraq before the war in Afghanistan was completed and while the assistance and building/development was still in its initial stages. This lack of U.S. and international investment in Afghanistan meant that Afghan authorities did not have as good a chance of producing good and enduring results to help build Afghanistan's economy or train a needed generation of teachers, nurses, engineers, civil servants, etc. to fuel growth and prosperity and to strengthen government institutions and practices, while the Taliban was regrouping after their route in 2002. The surge was an effort to recreate space for the Afghan government to demonstrate success and perhaps to move toward a resolution of the conflict.
- "Discussing the complexity of our mission, we often described it in our light hearted moments as flying an airplane, while re-building the airplane simultaneously with a regularly changing crew, and at the same time carrying out the mission of the flight. Of course, we were all the while trying not to crash and to make sure we could land safely at the end of our mission."
- It was in this context, that the U.S. government decided to make an extra ordinary effort on the military and civilian sides.
- "However, we never figured out how to fix, or address effectively, the corruption of which we saw evidence among Afghan institutions and authorities, or, should I say what we perceived as "corruption," since many Afghans perceived such practices as part of normal business. I concluded that the problem of corruption among Afghan authorities and how it affected Afghan popular perceptions of their government was one of the really serious challenges to success in our efforts. It was a point of much frustration because we knew how threatening it was to our objectives, but were not able to get a good handle on remediating it, despite hard and persistent effort by many in our civilian and military contingents."
- "One of the basic impressions that I came away with is that you cannot make up for centuries of a country's lack of development or replace deeply entrenched practices in only a few years, or even a decade. Cultural change takes a very long time, much persistence and is very hard to

achieve. Helping to generate what has been called a new civil culture is a long-term effort. To fight a war and help change a society successfully is very difficult, while we were changing so many of our staff each year. The rotation in our own ranks made it very hard to maintain expertise and situational knowledge.”

- “I also came away with the lesson that in a situation like this, you need to find ways to deal with corruption and other bad governance practices among your “friends” even as you work against common foes. How do you handle it? What do you do about it? If you just let it go, the bad results come back to haunt your work and prospects for success.”
- “In 2009, 2010, and 2011, we developed and revised USG civilian-military plans. The cooperation and the product got better each year and progressively better included partners and allies. In 2011, for example, we worked very hard to include and integrate well the Afghans into the planning process.”
- “From June 2009 to June 2011, we approximately tripled the numbers of U.S. civilians working under the authority of the embassy Chief of Mission. In late 2011, there were about 1130 to 1170 permanent embassy U.S. citizen personnel assigned there, not counting the steady pass through of temporary duty personnel, our security contractors, or Afghan employees. There were also DOD Civilians who we didn’t count because they were not under COM authority.
- “One of the conclusions I reached after my time in Afghanistan is that both USAID and the diplomatic corps should develop a specialization or “cone” for people who are recruited and trained with the notion that they will serve regularly in war-like zones.”
- “I remember visiting a village in the southern part of Helmand province and an older gentleman in traditional garb approached me. He looked old and worn, with no teeth. He started talking to me in broken English. He said, “Do you know Larry.” I said no I don’t think I know Larry, which Larry? “Larry the Peace Corps volunteer.” The gentleman explained that Larry had been in Helmand province in 1961. “He taught me English and other courses.” The gentleman said he was so happy to have Americans back, especially as his town had been under Taliban control in recent years. I don’t know if he is still alive, but I know the gentleman he worked for who was the mayor was killed in 2014 or 2015 by the Taliban.”
- “One of the real challenges we faced was that for many Afghans we were just ephemeral. They had lived through so much fighting and hardship for many years that they suspected we would just be there briefly and then they would have to survive again with their corrupt or violent fellow Afghans. If we are going to just be ephemeral in the minds of the people we are trying to help, then it’s even harder to win trust and change the situation. You can win a war for a little while, but winning the war in the short term, doesn’t mean you’ve won the peace.”

Key Points:

- The surge was a good idea and a valuable supplement to our military efforts, but it faced big challenges.

- The primary challenges included getting people there as well as the facilities to support them, getting quality people, and then losing them after one year.
- Many of our experts were competent in their fields but not skilled in explaining or justifying to the Washington hierarchy what their programs were doing, e.g. results, problems, likely timetables for progress.
- It took much time and effort to establish agreements with the military to support civilians' development or governance work, and in many areas, security needs really limited that work.
- Very demanding timelines to try to accomplish development and governance goals made it really hard to plan for progress that would last.
- If we expect to try to do this kind of intervention again in the future, we should establish a specialty or "cone" within USAID and the Foreign Service of people who are trained to work in conflict zones. Many of the individuals hired and assigned to work in Afghanistan did not have the skills, training or spirit needed to succeed. We should recruit, train, and deploy people for at least two years in austere environments and take the steps to ensure that USAID and State have a corps of people who know how to do this and are prepared to do this kind of work repeatedly. This will take decisions from the top, a refined program, and sufficient appropriations for hiring and training.
- The idea of a civilian surge was a good one. We had good and dedicated men and women in uniform who were not just a fighting force, but trying to build institutions. They weren't trained to do that. Some were surprisingly good at it, but others weren't. They were dealing predominately with Afghan civilians, and it makes good sense to use civilians as a counterpart to Afghan civilians rather than military. Thus the need to surge in civilians to do what the military had been trying to do on the civilian side, largely what we would characterize as development and governance work. We had a number of civilians accustomed to doing this work in other places, but it turns out not as many as we needed and as we recruited folk from many places, there were really challenges to assure the quality of those recruited, let alone to build a common operational culture among the new arrivals. Such a rapid surge is not easy to do in and of itself. Then, the civilians have the task of trying to bring the Afghan people several hundred years forward in the practice of governance and other skills needed to grow jobs and the economy at a rapid pace: change and learning they were not used to. And, authorities in Washington expected rapid progress. This was all really complicated on so many levels.
- **However, making it happen was a challenge.**
 - You had many challenges, for example:
 - Getting people to do the work
 - Getting the right people (didn't have the time to make it happen)
 - Some good, some bad, some mediocre
 - Got some people who cared, some who wanted to make money
 - Some that didn't know what they were doing (and we wondered why they got hired)

- Had to try to forge teamwork and a set of common procedures, e.g. a common work culture among U.S. civilian experts and with their military counterparts – as well as with Afghan officials and regular people.
 - Too many people only came for one year, really compressing the time to learn and apply expertise and then to have cycles of a new crew having to learn.
- The Foreign Service was not designed to meet the needs of the civilian surge, nor was USAID. We were responding to emergency needs, which made good sense, but we did not have the mechanisms or the trained staff available to surge. We tried to get as many people as we could from our own corps of officers and from the places where we thought we needed experts both in government and by hiring from the private sector. Some places seeking to send experts to support this effort, like the Department of Agriculture, had not done this type of work before overseas. They called upon people from all over their organization as well as retired people to step forward. They were all eager to help but sometimes they weren't agriculture extension people or had never worked in a poor or developing foreign country. We also didn't have structures set up to assure good supervision, support and execution. We were trying to build and improve these structures and practices, as we went forward.
- There were many, many quality people who worked long hours seven days a week in dangerous situations. Many had previous experience living in difficult places. Many thought seriously about the problems and offered creative ideas, observations, and solutions. There were some who stood out immediately because they would come up with good ideas and/or execute them well on their own needing little oversight. There were those who knew what they were doing from USAID, State and other agencies, but they couldn't get enough of the right people there consistently. In addition to the "star" workers, they got the dredges of their agencies as well, and they too often did not have enough of the right people to be doing this work in a conflict zone. And, we faced the challenges of individuals who could just not handle the stress and hardship. This happened at all levels, from senior ranks all the way down to the most junior. The majority of us had not done this before. My colleagues faced really difficult challenges executing their work among Afghans. They often couldn't get out of the embassy compound or military facility to see their projects. The needs to assure security and limited staff numbers were big factors. Many project officers, for example, were overseeing way more money than they were used to overseeing in other countries and without the normal means to assess and evaluate progress or problems.
- Even if one was good at running projects or programs, this didn't mean they were good at communicating, explaining or justifying the programs and the progress or problems they faced. Challenges arose because people couldn't explain what they were doing to Washington leaders and why things were harder to do or took longer than was desired. There were really tough challenges to program implementation. For example, it was hard to define the metrics and measure success. Some wanted to measure success by the number of people going through the training, but that measure doesn't tell you much about the effectiveness of the training. We found we were too often using process and not outcome measures. But, outcome measures are difficult to collect especially in conflict areas. It was really hard to interview people in villages receiving aid, and regularly officers could not easily go back after X number of months to see if the school or clinic was still there and functioning. There were real problems with implementing

the civilian surge and the desired results for rapid improvements in economic development and civilian governance.

- Those who were out with the troops helping to provide aid and advice were dependent on the goodwill of the military to go anywhere, for example. The military had priority missions that often did not include taking a civilian officer out to see the new planting or a training program for local farmers, teachers, etc. This was frustrating for both the civilians and the military. We had to work through a series of agreements to negotiate what support the military would provide and when they would provide it. We got to a mutual understanding eventually, but it was tough to work through the very serious set of issues and did not allow all the access desirable to effectively manage programs just by the nature of the situation and limited security resources.
- There were also challenges with staffing and placing the civilian experts both in the field and in Kabul. Sometimes, early on in the surge, my colleagues would get two days notice that someone was arriving and then they would have to scramble to see what they could do with the person and where we should place them to work. Other times, they learned ahead of time that new people were on their way, but they had no choice about the skill set that the new arrival had as the Washington hiring offices were sending an individual they thought we could use based on broad criteria. Most came without language skills because of the rapid time frame to hire and then we needed a whole structure of support (translators) for them to do their work. It is important to remember that both Washington and our military colleagues were very eager to get expert civilians as soon as possible.
- In that connection, we often ran into differences in the timetable for when results were expected or realistic; between the civilian and military teams and also between Washington and Kabul teams. My colleagues working on training and development from various civilian agencies often felt our military colleagues had been given an artificially fast metric to accomplish goals in governance or development. In general, the development and governance experts felt more time rather than less was needed to get good results. At one point, military colleagues were trying to apply lessons from the Columbia experience and some talked about delivering “government in a box,” but that just wasn’t directly applicable to the situation in Afghanistan for a number of reasons. Civilian and military were often tugging and pulling to set the right expectations for how quickly development and government results could be achieved. It wasn’t over desiring to see change quickly, but about how quickly could you actually do it working with Afghan partners and hope to have lasting impact?
- We worked really hard to build teams among agencies, between civilians and the military and with the Afghans. We made excellent progress, but it was made much more difficult to sustain that progress and team spirit when so many people only stayed for one year at time.
- There have been some very good articles written about how we were fighting the war anew with each rotation of people on the ground. I saw that in my years there. We did have people with experience coming back, but many were new and those who left often were not able to pass on what they had learned. It was frustrating: often the new people were very eager, but they didn’t know much and had to be intensely brought up to speed.

- An excellent idea that has been explored in a number of articles is to create a “cone” or specialty for people who are recruited to serve in war-like or conflict zones. They sign on knowing that most of their assignments will be in those zones. You have a corps of people who are used to doing this. You recruit them, train them, reward them, and with the goal of at least having a corps of specialists to help meet the needs of conflict zone civilian service.
- I think if one decides to do it, then the people can be found, but you would have to have a decision from the top levels of the U.S. government to develop and implement such a concept. You would have to work through requirements and how people would get promoted, rewarded, compensated, rested, etc., and that they would agree to deploy for at least two years. You would need congressional funding.
- During my years in Kabul, the ability of many staff to learn and to apply their knowledge and expertise was limited by inability to travel outside the embassy compound or the base where they were serving. Many civilian experts, for example, couldn’t get out because they needed security to travel. Staff shortages in program offices also meant that people oversaw much more money than they would have done in another country.
- It was very challenging to control the quality of supervision and performance, for many reasons, but given the demands of the situation, we actually sent a lot of people home, more than I have seen as the norm in other overseas postings.
- There were a number of “cultural” differences between the U.S. civilians and military. The military, for example, had a different sense than the civilians about budgeting and funds available. We civilians were regularly anguishing about asking for more funds and how to justify requests for funds. The military had many more resources and a much more expanded sense of resources that they could call for and expect to get. Of course, we faced some of the same problems as the military when we got additional resources – they were hard to use well in the Afghan conflict environment. Justifying and requesting the funds was hard but successfully executing programs and spending money was very hard too.

Interview Notes

Name: A Former Senior Counterterrorism (CT) Official
Date: November 3, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- A former senior CT official argues that although nobody truly understood the depth of Al Qaeda prior to 9/11, we had the clues to see it. Both the 1996 and 1998 *Fatwas* issued by Usama Bin Laden marked a shift for the Bin Laden, as this was the first explicit time that Bin Laden called for jihad against the US.
- The 2000 *Cole* bombing was significant, and shows how little understood AQ was at the time. The attempted January 3, 2000, bombing of USS *The Sullivans* was a precursor to the USS *Cole*.
- A former senior CT official thinks that the timing of the USS *Cole* bombing is very interesting, in that it occurred between the 2nd and 3rd Presidential debate, and yet, the incident was hardly mentioned by Al Gore, George W. Bush, the American people, and the debate commentators. The country was more or less asleep to the threat that existed at the time. A former senior CT official was especially stunned how little anger the Secretary of Defense (William Cohen) and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (General Hugh Shelton) had after the attack. Sadly, the former senior CT official recalls that similar to the manner in which the Pentagon and the State Department reacted to the 1998 Embassy bombings in Africa, these agencies once again focused on improving force protection as opposed to getting at the root of the issue (taking offensive action against Al Qaeda).
- Adding to the USS *Cole* frustration were the CIA and the FBI, which also enabled nothing to happen, as both agencies wobbled about whether to call the attack on the *Cole* an Al Qaeda attack.
- After 9/11, A former senior CT official was hugely supportive of the invasion of Afghanistan. A former CT official believes that Secretary Rumsfeld's goal was to "kill Al Qaeda, knock Bin Laden out of Afghanistan, and move on." A former senior CT official believes that we totally accomplished this goal: we "busted up Al Qaeda and pushed them into the FATA, which is what we wanted to do. We have been successful in the one reason that we went over there," according to this former senior CT official.
- A former senior CT official believes that we should have told the Afghans it was their job to fight the Taliban much sooner, and that "there is only so much you can do for people who aren't willing to fight for themselves." Looking forward in Afghanistan, most important to us as Americans from a national security point of view is that the Remote Piloted Aircraft program continues.

- A former senior CT official stated that “We can’t win wars with drones, but they do make a huge difference. We more or less destroyed Al Qaeda without putting a boot on the ground; this is what we should do against ISIS, drones plus boots.”
- A former senior CT official argued that from a perspective of Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, one issue from Afghanistan (but applicable to other places) is that when there are too many US forces providing the primary security in a country, we are approaching the problem in a flawed manner. A former senior CT official believes that when this is the case, it is an occupation, and too often, the US has been conducting an occupation with COIN sprinkled on top. A former senior CT official feels that COIN has to be done by the locals.
- A former senior CT official felt that in looking forward to potential interventions in conflict areas in the future, the United States needs to really think long and hard about what areas truly impact our national interests. If we are honest with ourselves, a former senior CT official said we would find out that the list of countries genuinely impacting our national interests is much smaller.
- A former senior CT official also felt that military and civilians need to understand where foreign leaders are coming from when they say things or make decisions that rub us the wrong way. An example from Afghanistan is former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who declared that he did not want to see any US-led night operations, especially raids. A former senior CT official said that although he initially protested this decision from Karzai, citing not wanting to give up a tremendous tactical advantage that we have over the enemy, that he changed his mind the more he thought about it, as night operations in small towns by perceived occupying forces ‘simply does sit well with the Afghans. A former senior CT official feels that even though the US did change its policy to accommodate President Karzai’s request in 2012, that looking back on it, the US should have been doing this 10 years earlier.

Interview Notes

Name: A Former USAID Official
Date: November 16, 2015
Location: Via Telephone

Direct Quotes:

- “OTI is a solid model, I’m somewhat familiar with the bullpen. Something like that needs to be explored more. But it’s not the same as the Afghanistan surge, the reason being that we were talking numbers like 387. I’m not sure how big the bullpen is, but this is a massive amount of people and costs. That’s a lot to maintain.”

Key Points:

- We should have taken more notes. We were doing “hair on fire” meetings and so we weren’t thinking about doing it again, but we should have made sure we were documenting what we were doing and then doing a lessons learned and “hot wash” afterwards – here’s what we did, here’s what went wrong.
- Agree civilian agencies are not set up to surge.
- FSL hiring authority was a critical mechanism for the surge: “Without that mechanism we would not have been able to do what we needed.”
- Was a problem that FSLs could not transition into permanent staff. We lost good people as a result.
- There is a tracking list of FSLs who participated so that the USG could call them up again.
- Two year tours were better than one year, but burnout was a real issue.
- Afghan Hands was a good program but unlike military we can’t compel people to go back, so we were always struggling to find people.
- OTI may be a good model to look at.
- Frequent summer turnover was a problem, but we just did not have the ability to do anything about it in the situation at the time.

Interview Notes

Name: A Former US Government Official

Date: September 21, 2015

Direct Quotes:

- “The unpredictability of tours is a huge challenge for civilian deployments. For example, the planned civilian drawdown from Afghanistan looked like a gradually declining hill. The actual civilian drawdown, following a more rapid ISAF troop withdrawal, effectively fell off a cliff.”
- “When then-President Karzai put off indefinitely his signing of the Status of Forces Agreement, and the decision was made to accelerate the ISAF drawdown, the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury and other civilian agencies either withdrew staff entirely or dramatically reduced their numbers. This created a void: which of the remaining civilian agencies would now take the lead on these issues? Hopefully in the future, we can better plan for these changes.”

Key Points:

- A key challenge of the surge was that it was driven by numbers of people deployed, rather than metrics of progress. This mirrored the surge process in Iraq. SRAP set a goal for USAID that represented 400 of approximately 1,000 (40 %) total USAID Foreign Service Officers worldwide and asked that they deploy immediately as part of the interagency civilian effort. A metrics-driven approach, designed to achieve objectives instead of merely to put bodies in seats, is far more rational, especially in a country with Afghanistan’s weak institutional capacity and severe underdevelopment. The surge exposed the extent to which U.S. civilian agency staffing processes are simply not structured for sudden, massive increases in civilian deployments to conflict zones.
- The unpredictability of tours in conflict zones is a huge challenge for civilian deployments. For example, the planned civilian drawdown from Afghanistan initially looked like a declining hill. The actual civilian drawdown effectively fell off a cliff. USAID assigns billets one year in advance. If a deployment gets shut down, what do you do with all of the officials assigned to that deployment who have either not yet deployed or are in the middle of their tours? Whereas the military has a mechanism to reabsorb or change orders on short timeframes, U.S. government civilian agencies need significantly more lead time to reassign personnel or deal with changed events.

Interview Notes

Name: A US Government Official

Key Points:

- Civilian reserve really a challenge, modeled on DOD, colossal failure. In military people understand they have to go when called. Civilian agencies totally different in that regard. 90% of Foreign Service never expected to serve in an active conflict. Real sea change.
- In 2008 we originally interviewed every person who applied, no screening because pressure to get people out was so large. We had a college intern who applied, was applying to position equal to a captain. Did get better as it went on, first round was not great. While surge people got better, it still wasn't great. Had people who weren't the right fit.
- Office of Civilian Surge Support in DCHA exists, in second generation, but not intended to be large civilian surge capacity, much smaller and targeted, global response for specific positions. Could look at the roster if needed for another Afghanistan, but that's not the goal.
- Internal debate inside AID about whether you can do development in a warzone or not.
- It is possible for civilians to work effectively with military...The military had good things to bring to the table, they just had to understand some of our concepts as a civilian agency like Do No Harm, community inclusion, making sure you are under shared operating principles. I don't tell military how to do midnight raid, I don't want them to tell me how to run a community meeting and decision-making process...No one claims it's easy.
- Military has more resources to throw for sure. But for actual projects, that's not necessarily the case, had smaller budgets than AID projects...But military is trained for action *now* and development knows behavior change takes time.
- Q – what if military starts learning to do development so it doesn't have to depend on civilians who may not show up in time? Having people in uniform talking about development can put development people at risk...I'm a firm believer in not blurring the lines.
- When I first started working in Afghanistan in 2004, people were energetic about the mission, saw it as an opportunity to help people who had a raw deal for a long time. We had people serve 2-3 years then. Were they burnt out? Totally. But we saw some amazing gains in those first years, and the reward of being a part of that was just. Our health officer served three years and got a medal from President Karzai because maternal and child mortality dropped significantly. That's an amazing thing to be a part. But as time went on, more active fighting, our ability to get out and see things changed, and the fatigue changed quite dramatically. Enthusiasm for work and ability to cope diminishes. I personally saw change in 2007, people deploying for money, family issues, etc.

- 100% correct that 3 months don't know anything, 6 months in you hit your stride, really miss your family, maybe have seen them once or twice if flexible family, when you leave at 12 months you are ready to get out but you don't see anything to completion so you have no sense of satisfaction and that's frustrating. They tried doing a fairly good R&R benefit, which is a benefit but also a problem because people planning their leave from the moment they arrive. So for a year tour, really only there for 7.5-8.5 months. But living on compound sucks! Food terrible.
- Safe Havening - we have tried that. The problem is it falls under Ambassador purview – and that can be a tough negotiation for an Ambassador - why do I need to give housing, maybe give spouse job, that takes away from someone serving in that country potentially. So there's a "what's in it for me" issue. I get very frustrated with that, sometimes you have to take one for the team. We had someone who was willing to do a third tour, three years in Afghanistan, he had a wife and four children, and wanted them to be in the Asia, there was a place they could have gone to, and the Ambassador kept pushing back. Was very rare to have someone sign up for three years, was a flight from Kabul to that country so person could see his family, and the Ambassador really pushed back. To me that was an unwillingness to support a mission bigger than you.
- Does everyone need to be in Kabul? Yes. If you talk to anyone when we reopened the mission in late 2001/early 2002 we were doing some administrative functions out of DC or Bangkok, contracts, hiring, etc. Were just doing project management and direct impact out of Kabul. And it sucked. It didn't work well. From DC to Kabul, when you wake up they are going to sleep, can't have real time conversations, can't do spur of the moment discussion, it's like the worst telework situation ever. And in Bangkok they had responsibilities for other missions as well, not fair to them, and even though only two-hour time difference, logistically it still took 1.5 days to get to Kabul so that's the same amount of time to come from DC. No efficiency there. Only efficiency is you could call your contracts officer. But USAID's interesting a lot of work done face to face, a lot of conflict resolution done that way. People tend to not confront problems on phone or email (this is a broad generalization) so if you can't be in a room to work things out, it doesn't work. My own theory...Facing similar problem now with Libya and Frankfurt.
- We played around with twinning idea in early days. The desk led by foreign service officer with counterpart at the mission, spend 6 months in each place, but we realized that while it seems jobs are similar they are really not, but I still think it's an interesting idea. But hard operationally to make it work HR wise.
- I don't think platooning would work. Need to be evaluated on a year long amount of time, if you are evaluated for only 6 months of work your evaluation would look bad, who wants to do that. Also, AID develops deep contacts in country and if you leave all the time that's hard to do. People are not interchangeable, their relationships matter.
- In some ways surge made sense, it showed we were serious. I think it was too little too late. Our ability to deeply change Afghanistan was in first four years because there was willingness from government and communities then. Iraq distracted us. If someone studies the surge later on, they will see some successes, but if we had done it in 2002-2003 it would have made a much bigger difference.

- Just because we work in development doesn't mean it's not a profession. You don't have a lot of development professionals sitting around waiting to deploy. Unless you're retired and then you have other constraints. So I think it can be useful, but it's not practical. Are we ready to do it in Syria? Should we be?
- Q - Conflict cone? A – It exists. We have a cone for project management/design – they do strategy policy, one on education, one on health, a few other technical areas. And then in my bureau we have a crisis and stabilization cone. They do three things – experts in countries in conflict; democracy, HR, and governance; and food assistance. Countries in conflict experts are OTI. CMM is there but doesn't deploy. In our lingo that's backstop 76, it's multi-faceted, sometimes good and sometimes confusing, but useful.

Interview Notes

Name: A Development Organization Advisor

Date: September 14, 2015

Key Points:

- Challenges to hiring (either old or young)
 - Limited ability to actually do development work because of security restrictions
 - Difficult to do training: 6/2 time in/time out, inexperienced staff
 - Deployments typically one year, but up to two
- Successes

Placement and Reviews: always do 360's, rewarded for saving money, a very rigorous program evaluation (peer reviewed, and assessed for quality control), invested in local staff, people were promoted or given permanent contracts for going to Afghanistan.
- Challenges
 - Compensation seemed high, huge issues with saving things (hard to know what was done before one arrives), political pressure to spend money.

Interview Notes

Name: A Former United Nations Official
Date: November 5, 2015
Location: Washington, D.C.

Key Points:

- Tour length: The tours of US officials in Afghanistan are too short. Now security is so restricted that officials mostly can't get out of the Embassy, and so the length of the tours doesn't really matter. But when they could, and were trying to develop personal relationships, it did matter.
- OTI has their bull-pen, the people on their roster expect to spend time during their career or a chunk of their career in an expeditionary role. In those cases, you can put in long-term incentives – i.e. for 10 years you are available to work in conflict areas, and when you are not in one, you are back training for similar situations or being deployed on short-term missions to other places within a cone of expertise.
 - Yes, you could also add a conflict cone to the US Foreign Service. It will take a certain kind of person. And it shouldn't be for an entire career. But you could have a ten-year conflict cone, where participants would get certain benefits for promotions. That way some officers who don't have families or are early in their careers can be captured without having to rely on officials who don't want to be there but think they can pay off debts or get promoted by doing a tour in a conflict zone. You want to dis-incentivize the people who don't want to be there.
- A conflict zone is a specific context with specific needs, so you might want to have a way to reach outside the Foreign Service and not use permanent staff but get people with the skills you need.
- The UN system in some ways paradoxically works better in terms of continuity because it's broken as a human resources system. Despite attempts, especially recently, to create a civil service and encourage mobility, there is no real career path. It's often difficult to get from the field to another post, so staff members are often stuck in the field for years, which has the benefit of providing continuity. They develop local contacts, local knowledge, gain trust, etc. They become highly reliable sources of knowledge.
- UNDP does have career tracks; it is not like peacekeeping missions. Tours are normally 2-3 years, including in places like Afghanistan. UNDP staff in difficult posts get extra benefits, danger pay, living allowance, home leave, R&R, and so forth.
- One thing that created problems in the UN was that conditions were very different between UN entities, DPKO staff would get different (often fewer) benefits than UNDP staff.
 - The UN system as a whole is now trying to harmonize these staffing issues as part of its promotion of mobility. I'm skeptical that they will succeed, but it could be worth looking at the reforms.

- Family is part of it. The idea is, for example, you are posted to Kabul, the UN will put your family in Dubai—the nearest secure area. That’s the thinking, but it’s very expensive and so far member states have balked at the cost.
 - My problem with the mobility framework is that there are some functions within the UN system where you don’t necessarily want new people coming in every few years. Sometimes you want someone who knows all the rules and traditions, etc. Also, some people don’t perform well in conflict areas. So there should be a track—and incentives— for people who want to be mobile, but those who don’t should not necessarily be forced. It’s a lonely, stressful, weird kind of existence that not everyone wants.
- The UN’s ability to surge is sclerotic. It needs to raise the resources from donors, and the hiring procedures are very slow. We could surge for the elections in Afghanistan in 2014, but that was because it was seen as especially important to the main donors. Under normal conditions, it’s very hard.
 - There are some workarounds. Staff can be hired as consultants, but according to the rules they have to wait 6 months after the end of the consultancy to apply for a job. So they can’t be hired as a consultant and then converted to a staff status.
- Something you should look at is the Civilian Technical Assistance Program (CTAP). This was at the tail end of the UN surge. Instead of paying contractors from mostly western countries the huge amounts of money that demanded, the UN tried to get experts e from the region (Tajikistan, India, etc.) who were likely to understand the context better anyway, and entice them with decent salaries but not exorbitant ones. It was a way of making the surge more permanent, relevant, and cheaper.
- Money doesn’t win hearts and minds. In unstable environments, if you’re not providing aid for aid’s sake, it’s probably not worth it.
- The post-9/11 period in Afghanistan was a very big culture shock for some aid workers. The humanitarian community never embraced working with the military. Instead you could say they had an attitude of militant neutrality. In some cases, they seemed far more willing to work in Taliban-held areas than to be seen to be working with the international military presence.
- By default, diplomats have been put in charge of state building, but this may not be the best approach. They don’t have a lot of expertise on building coal-fired electricity plants or election systems. The British in the age of the Raj had specially trained people for the colonial service. No one wants to think we’ll be doing this for a long time, but if we are, we need to look seriously at the problem of generalists doing technical jobs.
- There was also too much cutting and pasting of templates from other conflict zones. There was an insufficient analysis of the specifics of the local environment because at the beginning we expected to finish the job and be gone within a few years. The perceived time horizons were far too short to allow the necessary work of understanding and planning.

- There was a lack of trust of local knowledge. You can overdo trusting local sources, but at the same time nothing will work if it's against the grain of what's recognizable at local level. We trust what's familiar to us.
- I'm quite pessimistic about the situation in Afghanistan. The unity government not workable and there is no good way out of the impasse it finds itself in.

Interview Notes

Name: International Organization for Migration Official
Date: November 3, 2015
Location: Amman, Jordan

Direct Quotes:

- “In regards to how non-U.S. government agencies operated in Afghanistan and other conflict zones, we found a fairly wide-range of tour lengths. On the long-end of tour lengths, an official for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) commented that IOM typically conducts three-year tours in conflict zones. Following these three years, IOM officials are assigned a five-year tour in a non-conflict zone.”

Key Points:

- The IOM official talked about her personal experiences in Afghanistan from 2009-2014.
 - In regards to risk, the official noted that in 2009 Afghanistan appeared to be stabilizing. She believed the riskiest areas were actually the ones the international community declared safe, because this is where the Taliban liked to attack.
 - NGOs typically don’t have up armored vehicles, but there is some benefit in maintaining a low profile in smaller vehicles.
 - Concerning pre-deployment training, the official noted that almost all training was security focused.
 - IOM officials in Afghanistan are required to leave country every 6 weeks, normally for 2 weeks.
 - Following assignments in Afghanistan (and all conflict zones), IOM officials are required to undergo counseling debriefings
 - The official felt the counseling in Afghanistan was poor
 - There were far too many IOM consultants in Afghanistan in their 60s
 - In regards to staffing, the official felt that IOM was not understaffed, but lacked adequate staff capacity
- Incentives
 - R&R allowance
 - Home Leave allowance
 - Adds up to salary plus 40-60% in conflict zones
 - Education grants for children
 - Rates vary depending on number of children—i.e. those with children are essentially rewarded and compensated
- IOM assignments in conflict zones are normally 3 years, while assignments in non-conflict zones are 5 years.
 - IOM tries to alternate assignments, so if you serve in a conflict zone you then go to a non-conflict zone. In practice, this has proven much harder for HR staff to accomplish.
 - Volunteering to serve in a conflict zone is the easiest way to get an overseas posting.

- Concerning recruitment, the official felt that IOM does a poor job of screening for resilient personalities. There is a physical exam, but it has no ability to measure mental health.
- The official noted that IOM is working to increase transparency in the personnel assignments process. This effort has been around for about 5 years but has just recently begun to gain some traction within the organization.
- The official recommended review of Samuel Hall's research on displacement.

Interview Notes

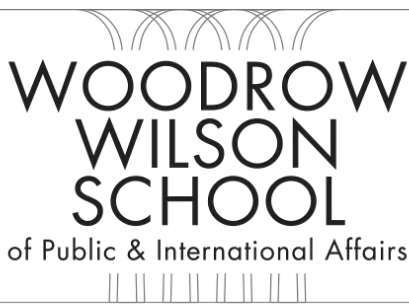
Name: Stabilization Unit (SU), United Kingdom
Date: November 6, 2015
Location: London, UK

Key Points:

- The SU is a civil-military operational unit set up by various UK governmental agencies namely the Department of Foreign and International Development (DFID), the Ministry of Defense (MoD), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). It came into operation in 2002 and is funded through the Conflict Stability and Security Fund—both of which are governed through the National Security Council that is hosted by the Prime Minister. SU currently has core staff members from ten government departments as well as serving military and police officers.⁷¹
- SU's mission is to support integrated coordination of government work in fragile and conflict-affected states, acting as a center of expertise on conflict, stabilization, security and justice. SU also supports government responses on crises like the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone by focusing on conflict, instability and security aspects that arise from these situations. SU mainly trains and deploy qualified and experienced civilian experts to support government work in conflict situations, either through the UK Embassy in an affected country or through multilateral missions (e.g. the UN in Haiti where the UK lacks an embassy), usually on behalf of the FCO.
- *Organization Make-Up.* The SU is currently composed of approximately 90 individuals; a mix of civil servants, military officers, and contractors (about 20 contractors) with an annual budget of £12 million. The SU's funding is augmented by departmental payments for undertaking each specific task. The SU is split into two main teams of roughly equal size: STAR and OPS. STAR is the academic side of SU that mainly focuses on research, publication of literature and other materials that informs the organization's approach and model, and conducting evaluations of SU projects; it is also the section that liaises with wider government on potential tasks before these become formal activities accepted by the SU. The OPS team is tasked with the operational aspects such as the recruitment, training, deployment, sustaining and recovering of individuals to conflict zones.
- *Operational Model.* A distinguishing feature of the SU is that UK civil servants are not deployed to the field. Instead, the SU relies on a civilian specialist group (CSG) to conduct its work in conflict zones or recruits people for multilateral missions on fixed-term contracts. The CSG is a standing list of 1300 experts; 300 of who are on the senior roster and are the regular, experienced, and frequently deployed. The CSG contractors are hired through an implementing partner and the implementing partner handles all the details regarding pay, tour length, and vacation. Tour lengths and compensation are, therefore, not dictated by UK civil service regulations.

⁷¹ For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/stabilisation-unit/about>

- The SU is in the process of re-evaluating its business model to see whether greater use can be made of deployable civil servants. However, due to conflicting departmental contracts across government and other legislative difficulties, any increased utilization of civil servants is likely to be some way off.
- Tour lengths are generally not more than six months, especially in the rare case that civil servants are deployed, but can be longer for CSG members as they are contractors. The SU unit is often called upon by other agencies, FCO, DFID, or MoD, to do stabilization in a conflict/post-conflict zone and then hand over to a different agency. In development, the projects are typically handed over to DFID. In this regard, the SU is akin to USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI).



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