



COMPLEX CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS HANDBOOK



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Introduction.....	Page 1
Chapter 1: Background	Page 2
Chapter 2: Interagency Process	Page 5
Chapter 3: Coordinating Mechanisms and Planning Tools	Page 9
Chapter 4: Assessment Tools	Page 14
Chapter 5: Conclusion	Page 20

Appendices

A	White Paper: The Clinton Administration's Policy on Managing Complex Contingency Operations, Presidential Decision Directive-56
B	Generic Political-Military Implementation Plan
C	Lessons to be Learned for Interagency Management of Complex Contingency Operations
D	Background for Interagency Training Course
E	Quick Reference List of Key Agencies involved in Complex Contingency Operations
F	Operators Guide for U.S. Interagency Complex Contingency Operations Planning Decision Support System

Selected Reading

FOREWORD

In May 1997, the President signed Presidential Decision Directive-56, Managing Complex

Contingency Operations. This *Handbook for Interagency Management of Complex Contingency Operations* further explains the coordinating mechanisms and planning tools outlined in PDD-56 and articulates how they should be applied.

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, many regions of the world have been afflicted by violent intra-state or ethnic conflicts which have undermined regional stability, thwarted emerging democratic governments and brought about immense humanitarian suffering. Pursuant to our interests and those of the international community, the United States has selectively responded to a few of these complex emergencies. Most of these crises, including some resulting from natural disasters, require multi-dimensional responses composed of several components such as political, diplomatic, intelligence, humanitarian, economic, and security: hence the term "complex contingency operations."

Success in complex contingency operations requires the integration of political, military, economic and humanitarian objectives and the subsequent translation of these objectives into demonstrable action. The intent of PDD-56 is to institutionalize important lessons we have learned from our participation in previous complex contingency operations. Specifically, the PDD is designed to ensure that valuable and productive interagency coordinating mechanisms and planning tools will continue to be used in the future on a regular basis. These steps can help ensure unity of effort among U.S. government agencies and international organizations participating in these operations.

The Handbook, along with the professional education and training programs called for in PDD56, assists U.S. government officials, both civilian and military, in performing their management responsibilities. I encourage all government officials who may be involved in the planning and execution of complex contingency operations to become familiar with these mechanisms and tools, through reading this Handbook, participating in interagency training, and applying these lessons on a regular basis in anticipation of U.S. involvement in these operations in future.

Is' Sandy Berger, National Security Advisor

Introduction

This handbook is intended to institutionalize the mechanisms mandated by Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-56, Managing Complex Contingency Operations. These procedures were derived from lessons learned from past U.S. participation in complex contingency operations and subsequent improvements made in the interagency planning process. The handbook provides a guide for those in the interagency that are or will be involved in planning such operations. Specifically, this book:

- articulates an integrated interagency process for planning U.S. participation complex contingency operation.
- discusses the tools used as part of this planning process.

While it describes the integrated planning processes, *this handbook is not meant to serve as a guide for deciding whether or not the United States should support or participate in a given complex contingency operation.* Other policy documents, such as PDD-25, provide such guidance. The intent is rather to ensure that improved coordinating mechanisms and planning tools become standard, routine, and useful within the interagency community when senior policy-makers decide to undertake an operation.

There are five chapters in this handbook, followed by a series of appendices. Chapter 1 briefly discusses PDD-56 and its historical background. Chapter 2 outlines the integrated interagency planning process that should take place in preparation for U.S. involvement in a complex contingency operation. Chapter 3 discusses the tools available to assist interagency planning for U.S. intervention, and Chapter 4 reviews strategic-level lessons derived from past operations. Chapter 5 concludes by highlighting the critical process of institutionalizing the processes required by PDD-56.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

Historical Perspective

Recent U.S. engagements in northern Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti and Bosnia represent what are now commonly referred to as complex contingency operations. Such operations are conducted in response to complex emergencies that adversely affect U.S. interests. They are *complex* because they combine diplomatic, military, political, humanitarian, public security, social, and economic dimensions. Since 1989, there has been a jump in the number and intensity of complex emergencies worldwide. Once relegated to the strategic sidelines of the Cold War, preventing and responding to complex emergencies are now important components of U.S. strategy for protecting and advancing national interests in the world.

Operation Restore Democracy (1994) in Haiti was the genesis of the advanced interagency coordination mechanisms and planning tools outlined in PDD-56 “Managing Complex Contingency Operations”. During deliberations of the Principals Committee, senior policymakers observed that agencies had not sufficiently coordinated their planning efforts. More specifically, they found gaps in civil-military planning, disconnects in synchronization of agency efforts, and shortfalls in resources needed to support mission accomplishment. As a result, the Principals Committee directed the interagency to prepare what is now called a political-military implementation plan (pol-mil plan). Given the subsequent success of the operation, this innovative interagency planning effort proved its worth in achieving U.S. policy objectives through unity of effort at all levels.

In subsequent operations, including those in Bosnia, Eastern Slovenia, and Central Africa, interagency officials prepared pol-mil plans to guide U.S. activities during execution. They managed these operations using the new coordinating mechanisms and found them to be helpful in strengthening situational awareness, interagency planning and civil-military coordination. Experiences in these subsequent operations produced additional lessons for improved interagency management. As a result of these and other ongoing efforts, interagency management has been strengthened through continuous adaptation and improvement.

The PDD-56 Process

“Success” in complex contingency operations requires that the interagency address all aspects of a crisis -- diplomatic, political, security, humanitarian, economic -- in a coordinated fashion nearly simultaneously. Early operations, such as Restore Hope in Somalia, were plagued by the absence of any integrated planning and by communication and coordination difficulties that resulted from unclear lines of responsibility. These problems were exacerbated by the fact that some of the agencies involved were not

regular participants in the national security management structure and most civilian agencies were not organized to respond rapidly to crisis situations. Although the interagency process will never be free of these types of problems, we must find ways to minimize them. Failure to integrate planning early on can cause delays on the civilian side, increase pressure on the military to expand its involvement in non-military tasks, and jeopardize the overall success of an operation.

Nearly all participants in the interagency process recognize that coordination problems exist, and many have first hand experience of the difficulties that arise when these problems are not addressed. Many have also learned important lessons over the past several years and have developed innovative techniques to improve interagency coordination and accountability during these operations. The purpose of the Presidential Decision Directive on Managing Complex Contingency Operations (see Appendix A) is to make integrated political-military planning a formal part of the interagency process; this handbook explains and further codifies those planning procedures.

This handbook describes the integrated pol-mil planning process and mechanisms called for in PDD-56. The planning process is designed to yield strategic level guidance for the departments and agencies tasked to execute a complex contingency operation. As described in the PDD, the planning process can:

- accelerate planning and implementation of the civilian aspects of the operation
- intensify early action on critical preparatory requirements such as diplomatic efforts or funding
- integrate civilian, military, police, and aid functions at the policy level and facilitate the creation of coordination mechanisms at the operational level
- rapidly identify issues for senior policy makers and ensure expeditious implementation of decisions.

This effort involves a wide variety of agencies that engage in numerous activities, including diplomacy, military security, humanitarian assistance, political transition, public security, intelligence collection and analysis, human rights, social reconciliation, and economic restoration. The PDD goals for strengthening interagency management are comprehensive: gaining a complete situation assessment; formulating integrated United States Government (USG) policy guidance; making agency planning activities transparent to other agencies; increasing individual accountability for implementation of assigned agency responsibilities; and anticipating and keeping pace with events during operations. To accomplish these goals, PDD-56 addresses the following interagency coordinating mechanisms, planning tools, and preparedness activities:

- *Executive Committee (ExComm)* provides unified planning guidance and improves day-to-day crisis management.
- *Political-Military Implementation Plan (Pol-Mil Plan)* lays out a coordinated multi-dimensional strategy to achieve mission success.
- *Interagency Rehearsal* refines mission area plans to achieve unity of effort.

- *Interagency After-Action Review* assesses interagency planning efforts and captures lessons for dealing with future complex emergencies.
- *Interagency Training* creates a cadre of USG officials familiar with improved interagency management and establishes working relationships among key offices across the interagency to strengthen overall interagency readiness.

Complex contingency operations, by definition, involve many actors other than the United States government. In any situation there will likely be a number of international actors, including other nations, agencies of the United Nations, international organizations, regional organizations, neighboring states, private non-governmental organizations, and international organizations involved in the geographic area or planning to get involved in response to the crisis. We recognize that others will play critical roles in any response to a complex emergency and the United States will need to have effective coordination mechanisms with them. The process described in this handbook does not attempt to address these broader coordination issues. Nevertheless, the United States will be better able to cooperate with others if its own planning and operations are more effective.

The mechanisms and planning tools mandated by of PDD-56, which are described in the following pages, will not guarantee success in every operation that the United States undertakes. They will help, however, to ensure that when the President determines that it is in our national interest to participate in a complex contingency operation the interagency will be able to fashion coherent, coordinated guidance for the men and women who will be conducting the mission on the ground.

Chapter 2: Interagency Process

The purpose of the planning process described in this handbook is to create a system by which the interagency can effectively integrate the operations of all USG actors in a complex contingency operation. Although the day-to-day interagency process is generally effective in producing coordinated policy options and decisions, the process requires additional coordinating mechanisms and planning tools to cope with the demands of providing coordinated guidance for operations in response to a complex emergency.

Prior to integrated pol-mil planning, the interagency provided only general guidance to USG agencies involved in operations on the ground. This situation often resulted in U.S. agencies differently interpreting the overall mission and objectives. In addition, each agency developed and attempted to execute its own approach to an operation in relative isolation. For example, although military forces always have a detailed plan before deploying, Department of Defense (DoD) often did its planning in isolation, without allowing other agencies any insight into planned military operations. As a result of this isolation, actions in the field lacked coordination, resource issues were not adequately addressed, and major elements of the mission were often misunderstood until well after the operation was underway.

While integrated pol-mil planning does not guarantee success in a complex contingency operation, it does increase the likelihood of success by ensuring that:

- various U.S. agencies plan operations using the same purpose, mission and objectives
- all aspects of the operation are coordinated at the policy level
- key issues and requirements are identified and addressed early on in the planning process
- interagency planning process clearly assigns responsibility for distinct elements of an operation to specific senior administration officials
- critical decisions about priorities and allocation of resources are made early on

The Interagency Process

The interagency is not a formal structure but rather the established process for coordinating executive branch decision making when issues involve multiple agencies of the government. Each major issue area has different sets of actors and different sets of formal and informal guidelines that govern interagency activities.

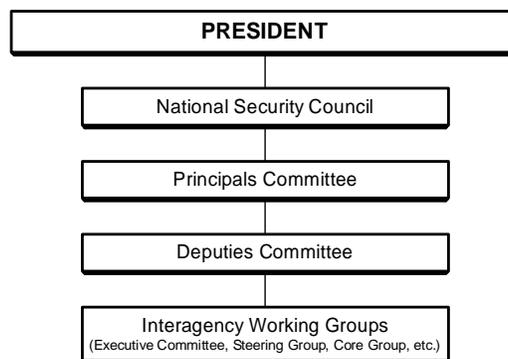
The most senior interagency organization is the National Security Council (NSC) and it includes four statutory members: the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Director of Central

Intelligence serve as advisors to the Council. In practice, each administration has chosen to include additional cabinet-level officials to participate in NSC deliberations in response to the President's expressed need for policy advice on national security affairs.

Under The National Security Act of 1947, the National Security Council administers the interagency process for national security matters. It emphasizes the need for integration of agency policy to improve overall effectiveness of national security decision-making:

The function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.

Reporting to the Council is a number of subordinate committees. Although each administration adjusts these structures as it sees fit, the structure described below has been fairly consistent through a number of administrations and will likely be similar to any structure put in place in the future. In the Clinton Administration, Presidential Decision Directive-2 set the structure of the groups that report to the Council as follows:



- *Principals Committee* (cabinet-level representatives): The senior interagency forum for considering national security issues.
- *Deputies Committee* (deputy/under secretary-level): The senior sub-cabinet group tasked with monitoring the work of the interagency process and identifying unresolved policy issues for the Principals Committee. The Deputies Committee is also responsible, in conjunction with sub-groups it may establish, for crisis management.
- *Interagency Working Groups* (assistant /deputy assistant secretary-level): Normally established by the Deputies Committee, there are a number of Interagency Working Groups -- some permanent, others ad hoc -- using various names: Executive Committee, Steering Group, or Core Group. These interagency working groups meet regularly to assess policy areas or crisis situations, build consensus for USG action,

frame policy issues for decision, and assume accountability for proper implementation of decisions.

Functions of the Interagency Process

Regardless of how an administration may choose to structure its NSC, the role of the interagency in the day-to-day management of national security issues remains fairly similar. The NSC-led interagency process:

- identifies policy issues and questions
- formulates options
- raises issues to the appropriate level for decision within the NSC structure
- makes decisions where appropriate
- oversees the implementation of policy decisions

The process involves extensive coordination within and among the agencies of the executive branch. The benefit of the process is that it is thorough and inclusive--each organization brings its own practices and skills to the interagency process. The drawback is that it can also be slow and cumbersome--each agency also brings its own culture, philosophy and bureaucratic interests.

For the majority of interagency managed policy issues, the benefits of involving all appropriate actors in the decision making process outweigh the inefficiencies. However, when the interagency has to manage the USG response to a crisis, the inefficiencies inherent in the normal workings of the interagency process can be crippling.

There are three characteristics of crisis management that distinguish it from the normal policy making process. First, the amount of time available for deliberation is comparatively short. Therefore, the interagency must have well-established procedures for producing timely policy direction. Second, decisions concerning the response to a complex emergency must be not only coordinated in Washington, but also, unlike most situations, coordinated and implemented in an integrated manner in the field. Consequently, the Washington interagency must not only decide policy direction, but also do the initial planning for the implementation of those decisions. Third, complex emergencies often involve agencies within the USG that are not normally part of the national security policy making structure. Any crisis procedures must not only include these agencies, but also ensure that their perspectives are adequately integrated into the overall USG response.

The planning process described below emerged from the experience of the past few years, but was developed and first implemented fully during the planning and execution of Restore Democracy in Haiti. Haiti provided an excellent test case for this type of integrated planning because: 1) most of the people involved in planning the intervention in Haiti had been involved in planning a previous complex contingency operation; and 2)

there was enough time prior to executing the operation to develop new planning tools and apply lessons learned from past operations.

Interagency Planning During a Crisis

When a complex emergency presents itself, the process begins with the interagency meeting in its usual structure. Information about the potential crisis, specifically an assessment of the situation to include ongoing U.S. actions, is provided to Interagency Working Groups generally by Assistant Secretary-level representatives of the appropriate agencies. Issues are then framed for discussion in the Deputies Committee. The Deputies Committee further refines the issues and prepares policy options for the Principals Committee. The Principals Committee then recommends appropriate action to the President. Although in some cases individuals may do initial planning for a complex contingency operation, official interagency planning does not begin until the Deputies authorize it. After authorization, the NSC charts the Executive Committee (ExComm), subordinate to the Deputies Committee, and integrated interagency planning begins in earnest. Developing coordinated, strategic guidance for a crisis operation requires adding mechanisms between the decision-making authorities at the Deputies level and the agencies tasked to execute the operation.

The ExComm oversees the integrated pol-mil planning and implementation procedures outlined in this handbook. The first task of the ExComm is to begin developing the pol-mil plan. The pol-mil plan forces the interagency to discuss and agree on the critical elements of the operation, including the mission, objectives and desired end state. The plan also articulates an overall concept of operations for U.S. participation. Pol-mil planning is not a substitute for the efforts of individual agencies. Rather, it is a mechanism for harmonizing agency plans and actions. It should be used whenever the resources of multiple U.S. agencies are called upon to support U.S. objectives in a complex contingency operation.

The assistant secretary-level members of the ExComm serve as “program managers” and use the overall guidance in the pol-mil plan to develop assigned mission area plans. The ExComm reviews these specific plans prior to the interagency rehearsal. Comments and guidance from the review are incorporated into the full draft of the pol-mil plan.

The Deputies Committee at the interagency rehearsal then reviews the complete pol-mil plan, with all of its component mission area plans. The objective of the rehearsal is to synchronize the individual mission area plans. After the rehearsal, the assistant secretary-level program managers revise their mission area plans as necessary, and the ExComm incorporates them into the final pol-mil plan.

As a result of this process, the interagency provides the President with a coherent strategy for his final approval and the interagency is able to transmit coordinated guidance to those tasked to conduct the operations.

After the ExComm promulgates the strategic-level guidance for the operation, the initial planning works of the Washington interagency is completed and focus shifts to the operational and tactical levels. Once the operation begins, the ExComm must monitor the operation's execution and continuously reassess the situation on the ground. The ExComm can recommend modifications to the strategy and implement changes as they are approved. This is especially important during the transition between phases of the operation and in preparing for the hand-off to either a follow-on operation or the host nation. This monitoring function is critical whether the operation appears to be going well or not. When lives of U.S. citizens are at risk and significant U.S. interests are involved, the interagency must provide vigilant oversight.

The ExComm is also responsible for conducting the after-action review, which analyzes the operation and distills lessons learned for future operations. This allows those planning for future operations to benefit from past USG experiences.

Chapter 3: Coordinating Mechanisms and Planning Tools

The following discussion provides greater detail on each coordinating mechanism and planning tool required under PDD-56, as well as others that have been successfully used in actual interagency planning efforts. These mechanisms and tools are to be used in developing an integrated pol-mil strategy for a successful complex contingency operation.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOMM)

Under the National Security System, the Deputies Committee is responsible for crisis management. In a complex emergency, PDD-56 calls upon the Deputies to establish an Executive Committee (ExComm) as the principle coordinating mechanism of interagency activities. It is tasked with day-to-day management of U.S. involvement in complex contingencies. As such, the ExComm is responsible for promulgating unified policy guidance for the operation and subsequent policy development, planning, oversight, and execution. Members of the ExComm are generally at the assistant secretary level and include representatives from all relevant U.S. agencies.

Under PDD-56 the ExComm is the primary coordinating mechanism for interagency management of complex contingency operations. Its purpose is to:

- provide unified policy guidance for agency planners of the operation
- develop a USG pol-mil plan for the operation
- integrate mission area plans within the overall USG pol-mil plan
- monitor the operation
- revise policy guidance, as needed
- update the pol-mil plan as necessary
- implement Deputies and Principals policy decisions
- oversee an after-action review at the conclusion of each operation
- disseminate lessons learned and improvements in interagency planning

The organizing principle of the ExComm is to hold assistant secretary representatives personally accountable to the President for designated portions of an operation. Most of the members of the ExComm not only represent their agencies, but also serve as “program managers” for specific mission areas within the USG pol-mil plan. In this role, individual ExComm members are directly responsible for the development and coordination of their part of the overall plan. This approach has been very successful in clarifying agency responsibilities, getting agency preparations underway, ensuring broad interagency coordination, and resolving policy issues early on in the Deputies Committee.

POLITICAL-MILITARY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Introduction

The pol-mil plan is a planning tool that articulates the critical elements of U.S. operations in response to a crisis situation—mission, objectives, desired endstate, key milestones, and the concept of operations. In addition, the final section of the pol-mil plan contains mission area plans for each of the critical mission areas that comprise the operation. Developing the pol-mil plan is in many ways the centerpiece of the integrated planning process.

The pol-mil plan the following purposes:

- helps build interagency consensus on the key elements of the overall operation
- assists in synchronizing individual agency efforts
- enhances the transparency of planning among different agencies
- helps ensure that all key issues are raised during planning

The process of developing a pol-mil plan brings a new level of analytical rigor to interagency planning. Specifically, it ensures that the United States develops coordinated policy guidance for the operation; significantly improves USG policy implementation and oversight; provides the interagency with an effective management tool to examine priorities and resource trade-off in a more systematic manner; and improves the transparency of interagency planning.

Writing the Plan

When the Deputies authorize the interagency to begin planning for U.S. participation in a complex contingency operation, the ExComm assembles the relevant participants and begins developing the initial sections of the pol-mil plan. The purpose of these meetings is to obtain interagency consensus on central elements of the plan. Although often laborious, the interagency discussion of key issues—national interests involved, mission statement, U.S. objectives and desired end state—is crucial to ensuring that each agency understands and agrees with the overall policy that will guide U.S. operations in theater. These opening sections must be completed before work can begin on the remainder of the pol-mil plan.

After the ExComm agrees on the opening sections of the plan, agencies can begin their specific planning as directed by their ExComm program manager. This initial planning will provide the input for the remainder of the pol-mil plan. As the plan takes shape and more details of the operation emerge, the ExComm reviews the plan in its entirety and updates it where appropriate. This iterative process continues until the ExComm agrees

on the final version of the pol-mil plan and the mission area plans that it will brief to the Deputies in the interagency rehearsal.

Elements of the Pol-Mil Plan

PDD-56 identifies 11 illustrative components of a pol-mil plan for complex contingency operations. They are:

- Situation Assessment
- U.S. Interests
- Mission Statement
- Objectives
- Desired Pol-Mil End State
- Concept of the Operation
- Lead Agency Responsibilities
- Transition/Exit Strategy
- Organizational Concept
- Preparatory Tasks
- Functional Element Plans

While any pol-mil plan must include all of these elements, each plan will need to be adapted to specific operations. Examples of generic pol-mil plans can be found in appendix B of this handbook but the major elements of the plan are further described here.

Assessments. The principal purpose of the first section is to provide a brief assessment of the situation on the ground. This part of the plan discusses the context for the U.S. operation and the problems it is meant to address.

Mission Statement. The centerpiece of the pol-mil plan is the mission statement. This section, which should be no longer than a paragraph or two, describes the overall purpose, mission, objectives and key elements of the U.S. operation—the who, what, when and how. All parts of the plan and the operation will reflect this statement. The ExComm must come to consensus on the mission statement before any other parts of the plan can be completed.

Objectives. Immediately after the mission statement, the pol-mil plan should list the key U.S. objectives for the operation. It is important that these objectives are both achievable and measurable—the achievement of all objectives should constitute accomplishment of the mission. The interagency may also find it helpful to include in this section a discussion of objectives that are *not* part of the operation.

Desired End state. The final part of the initial guidance lays out the desired end state. The purpose of this section is to identify the conditions that should exist before an operation transitions to a follow-on operation or is handed over to an international

organization, a regional organization, or the host nation. Those developing the pol-mil plan often have difficulty adequately defining what the “end” of an operation is because many individual USG efforts will likely continue far beyond any handoff. The ExComm will decide endstate on a case-by-case basis, though generally the end state conditions should apply to a political situation that leads to stability in the affected area.

Concept of Operations. The concept of operations describes how the operation will unfold by phase. This section should include a discussion of the priorities and key milestones within each phase of the operation. To ensure accountability and clear lines of responsibility, the concept of operations should be followed by a section that describes the USG organization for the operation, both in Washington and in theater.

Preparatory Tasks. This section highlights key issues that must be addressed prior to undertaking complex contingency operations. Success in each of these tasks—for example, funding, Congressional relations and public affairs—is critical to the overall success of any operation. Depending on the specific operation, there may be additional tasks that should be examined in this section as well.

Functional Element Plans. The final section of the integrated pol-mil plan contains the specific functional element or mission area plans. These plans articulate how a given assistant secretary level program manager intends to accomplish his or her portion of the pol-mil plan. The structure of the functional element plan should be similar to the structure of the overall pol-mil plan and must at a minimum include an assessment of the situation and an articulation of the mission, objectives, end state, and concept of operations. Examples of functional element plans include: diplomatic engagement; security and stability; civil law and order; internal political development; infrastructure restoration; economic development; and humanitarian assistance.

INTERAGENCY REHEARSAL

The ExComm briefs the completed draft of the pol-mil plan and its component functional element plans to the Deputies Committee during the interagency rehearsal. *The focus of the rehearsal is to identify problems and disconnects that could arise during execution.* By simultaneously reviewing all elements of the plan, differences over mission objectives, agency responsibilities, the timing of operations and resource allocation can be identified and resolved early. The interagency rehearsal also allows the Deputies to approve the overall mission and concept of operations and underscores the accountability of each agency representative in implementing his or her area of responsibility.

The interagency rehearsal is a decisive coordinating mechanism conducted near the end of the pol-mil planning process. Under PDD-56, the Deputies are charged to ensure that the pol-mil plan meets three important tests:

- *Effective*: Specific functional element plans should support the overall USG mission and achieve the pol-mil objectives according to planned milestones and timelines.
- *Integrated*: All agency efforts should be complementary and synchronized during each phase of the operation, according to an overall concept of operations.
- *Executable*: Agencies should meet all legal, resource, and financial requirements prior to the authorization for an operation.

If there is time and the Deputies determine it necessary, two rehearsals may be held.

The interagency rehearsal will almost certainly result in the modification of specific functional element plans or even the overall pol-mil plan. The rehearsal is *part* of the integrated planning process, not the final presentation of a completed plan. Rehearsals are intended to help identify and resolve potential problems an operation could encounter before they become actual problems on the ground.

The rehearsal begins with an introduction and an update on the crisis by representatives of the intelligence community. The NSC staff then provides a brief summary of the approved mission, objectives, end state, and overall concept of operations for the USG intervention. This information provides the context for the ExComm “program managers” to make presentations. Each presentation on the specific mission area plan should address the following questions:

- What is the overall purpose of the functional element plan?
- What is the current situation in the area of operations?
- What are the key entry conditions and assumptions for the mission area plan?
- What are the functional element plan’s purpose, mission, and operational objectives?
- How does the mission contribute to the overall USG pol-mil plan?
- What is the functional element plan’s concept of operations for accomplishing the mission?
- What are the timelines/milestones to accomplish the mission?
- How does the concept synchronize with the overall USG concept of operations?
- What are the organizational structure and the chain of authority for operations?
- Who are the key players, from both the U.S. and others, and what are their roles?
- What mechanisms are planned to effect civil-military coordination?
- What difficulties, obstacles or resource shortfalls currently exist?
- What constitutes success on the ground?
- What are the unresolved issues pending decision?

An important tool for the interagency rehearsal is a synchronization matrix. Successful operations generally require synchronization of many individual efforts. Unfortunately, guidance for synchronizing operations is nearly impossible to provide early in the planning process and is generally the most difficult element to rehearse. A matrix should display the functional elements on one side and the phases of the operation, or time, on

the other; it is filled in as the functional element plans are briefed. The completed matrix is then used as a guide for improving the integrated concept of operation and the individual functional plans.

Chapter 4: Assessment Tools

This chapter describes the procedures the Washington interagency should use to assess its performance during the planning, execution and transition phases of a complex contingency operation. The goal of the assessment is to identify strengths and weaknesses in interagency procedures so that those tasked with overseeing the next operation can build on previous successes and learn from previous mistakes.

The interagency assessment process has four components:

- collecting relevant information about what happened during the planning, execution, and transition phases of the operation
- analyzing the information and determining useful lessons to be learned
- distributing those lessons throughout the interagency;
- integrating critical lessons into policies and procedures so they can help improve interagency operations during the next crisis.

The first two steps—collecting and analyzing information—are undertaken as part of the ExComm-led after-action review. The insights gained through this process are codified in a statement of “lessons to be learned” from the specific operation. The ExComm then distributes this document widely among those who took part in either the planning or the execution of the operation and in the interagency.

Although distilling lessons from past operations is an important process, it is an incomplete one. The real value of determining what went right or wrong in a given operation comes from ensuring that the lessons are integrated into the policies and procedures that members of the interagency will use to plan, execute and monitor the next operation. Therefore, this chapter will conclude with a detailed discussion of the lessons that the interagency has derived from past operations in the hope that they may influence future operations.

INTERAGENCY AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

After each complex contingency operation, the Executive Committee will charter an after-action review (AAR). An AAR is a guided discussion of an operation that enables its participants to discover for themselves what went well, what did not, and why. Specifically, this forum provides:

- observations of agency officials concerning key events and how these events were interpreted by key players within the interagency
- judgments on the quality of information and intelligence provided to the interagency concerning the situation on the ground
- candid insights into specific organizational strengths and weaknesses from various perspectives

- feedback and insights on the procedures used in both planning and execution
- details beyond those available in normal reporting

This information can be used to either validate current procedures and lessons learned, modify them, or propose new ones.

The AAR should focus on the success and failure of both specific policies and planning techniques to determine what went well, what went poorly, and how the performance of the interagency could be improved. However, the after-action review does not grade success or failure; there are always weaknesses to improve and strengths to sustain. It is also important that the AAR not be used, or be seen as an instrument to lay credit or blame on individuals or agencies. The climate surrounding an AAR must be one in which everyone can openly and honestly discuss what actually happened in sufficient detail that everyone understands what did and did not occur and why. This is the only way that the lessons of these operations can be learned effectively and future performance improved.

The AAR should be run by the chair of the ExComm and should include at least all of the ExComm members. The key to the AAR is that everyone feels free to speak his/her mind, regardless of position, agency, or experience; no one person can see as much as the entire group. It may also be useful to include a small number of government experts who did not participate in the operation, but who are familiar with past contingency operations. These “outside” experts can often help identify strengths and weaknesses precisely because of their distance from the operation.

The ExComm will determine the structure of the specific AAR, but it should include the following key elements:

- introduction (ground rules and expectations)
- review of the pol-mil plan
- events in theater
- U.S. actions/responses
- specific lessons learned
- conclusions
- recommended changes to future implementation

The results of the AAR should be combined with other relevant reports and briefed to the Deputies. It is important that the briefing not only discuss weaknesses in the planning and execution of the operation, but also the strengths. Upon approval of the brief, it should be distributed widely among those who were involved in the operation and should be made available to the broader interagency.

LESSONS

The after-action review collects, analyzes, and distributes the lessons from the operation. However, the final step in the interagency assessment process is integrating appropriate lessons into the policies and procedures that will be used in the next operation. The AAR is only useful insofar as the lessons, both good and bad, of the past operation inform the planning and execution of the next one.

It is important to understand the distinction between a “lesson noted” and a “lesson learned.” The AAR identifies behaviors that should be repeated or modified. A lesson is not learned, however, until behavior changes. Obviously, one way to judge whether a behavior has changed is to observe the interagency in subsequent operations. However, it is preferable to disseminate and integrate the lessons before the interagency has to apply them in a real situation. This highlights the key role of interagency training, called for in PDD-56, which familiarizes members of the interagency with the lessons of past operations and provides them with an opportunity to “learn” these lessons before they have to plan and oversee an actual operation where lives are at stake.

There is a set of agreed upon lessons derived from interagency experiences of the past few years and vetted within much of the USG. Not all of these lessons directly relate to PDD-56 mechanisms and procedures, but they are all important to keep in mind as the interagency plans for a U.S. response to a complex emergency. The rest of this chapter will discuss these lessons in detail (a quick reference list of the lessons can be found in Appendix D). The lessons are listed somewhat chronologically, beginning with factors to be considered when making the decision to intervene and ending with guidelines on transitioning leadership of an operation to another actor.

Deciding to Intervene

Although many factors contribute to the initial decision to conduct or participate in a complex contingency operation, any decision to act must be based on the following considerations:

- realistic assessment of the situation (with input from personnel on the ground)—its magnitude causes, dynamics, status of ongoing operations and degree of danger
- assessment of the U.S. interests at stake
- assessment of response options and whether the costs and risks associated with different courses of action are commensurate with U.S. interests
- participation/contributions of other governments and organizations
- identification of clear objectives, end state conditions, and exit strategy
- acceptability of command, control, communication and intelligence arrangements
- prospects for gaining adequate political and financial support for the operation, both in the U.S. and from the international community

Each consideration will be given a different weight depending on the specific crisis; however, each should be considered during the deliberations that lead to a decision on whether and how the U.S. should become involved or increase its involvement.

Crafting an Integrated Strategy

Because complex contingency operations always involve more than just military operations, any successful strategy for achieving U.S. objectives in these operations must integrate all dimensions of the operation including, but not limited to, political, military, and humanitarian activities. Without integrated strategic guidance from Washington, there is little hope that the individual agencies of the USG in theater will be able to successfully coordinate their efforts.

This lesson led directly to the development of the integrated planning tools that are described in the previous chapter and were used in planning for U.S. operations in Haiti. This is an example of a lesson that clearly led to a change in behavior. Rather than a current weakness of the interagency, it reflects a strength on which to build.

Establishing Effective Integration Mechanisms

The tools and planning processes described in this handbook provide the mechanisms for integrating the efforts of disparate parts of the USG at the strategic level, but the Washington interagency must also ensure that similar integration mechanisms are established at the operational and tactical levels. Further, there must be procedures to ensure effective communication between these levels.

It is important for interagency members to understand the invaluable roles that specialized civilian and military assets can play in complex contingency operations. Coordinating mechanisms are needed at both the operational and the tactical level to ensure unity of effort. Success in complex contingency operations demands that all civilian and military organizations establish central coordinating mechanisms at all levels. Agencies need to establish these mechanisms before an operation to build effective civil-military relationships well ahead of an emergency.

Although this handbook is targeted only at developing appropriate strategic level mechanisms, lessons from past operations suggest that agency cooperation and policy integration must extend to lower levels, including field operations. While the full interagency structure need not be copied, it is crucial that integrating mechanisms exist at any level (operational, tactical) where key decisions are being made.

Determining Who Will Lead the Operation

One of the most difficult and important aspects of a complex contingency operation is coordinating the overall effort. The best way to ensure sufficient coordination is to assign leadership of the operation to one nation, international organization or alliance that has the requisite capabilities. This is especially true for operations in which there are significant military or security tasks. Identifying a lead actor also puts pressure on that actor to continually monitor and support the ongoing operation, or else risk being blamed for the operation's failure. Of equal importance is investing the lead actor with the requisite authority.

For an operation that involves the potential for combat, the United Nations will likely not be suitable to take the leadership role because it currently lacks the necessary military, financial, and organizational capabilities.

An important corollary to this lesson is that when the United States commits significant numbers of troops, especially combat troops, to an operation, the international community will look to us to lead the operation. Therefore, when we commit significant numbers of U.S. troops, we should be prepared to lead the operation, alone or as part of an established alliance, and be held accountable for the results. If our interests do not support such a leadership role, then we should reassess our contribution and consider other means of support to the operation.

Building a Cohesive and Effective Coalition

Critical to the success of a coalition operation is ensuring coordination among all the member nations. While tactical-level consultation will take place constantly, high-level consultation should take place before a nation is accepted into the coalition, during the planning phase, and during the operation at regular intervals or whenever the situation on the ground changes significantly.

Before including a nation in a coalition, the lead actor should assess the political will and military capability of the potential participant. If possible, when a prospective contributing nation does not possess the will or the capability to effectively contribute to the objectives of the operation it should not be included in the coalition. In cases where such nations are included despite these factors, the commander of the operation should be careful to assign tasks to that contingent commensurate with their will and capabilities.

Once a nation has joined the coalition, it is critical to obtain its agreement on the key elements of the operation. Specifically, the lead actor must ensure that there is advance agreement on:

- mandate, objectives, and concept of operations
- command and control arrangements
- civil-military contributions to the operation
- rules of engagement
- resource contributions of each participant

Not only must all coalition members agree on the major elements of the operation, but also there must be regular consultations to ensure that, as the situation changes, the coalition remains united in its course of action. Without this agreement, the effectiveness of the operation will decline, and in some cases the independent action or inaction of a coalition member could undermine the overall effort.

Gaining Political Support for the Operation

Securing and sustaining the support of Congress and the American people is critical to the success of U.S. participation in any complex contingency operation. Congressional and public affairs strategies are critical elements of any integrated strategy.

U.S. officials should consult with Congress on all aspects of the operation preferably before it begins and regularly once the operation is underway. Also, U.S. officials must

clearly explain to the American public the U.S. interests at stake in a given operation, the objectives sought, our strategy for achieving them, and the risks and costs associated with U.S. intervention. This must be done not only at the outset of an operation, but also whenever significant changes on the ground or in the strategy occur.

This is not to imply that the USG cannot act without the prior approval of the Congress or the American people. However, in the end, for any operation in which the U.S. sends its citizens into harm's way or expends significant U.S. resources, the American populace and their elected representatives need to understand why the United States is participating in the operation and what we expect to accomplish.

Continually Reassessing the Operation

Once the operation is underway, the interagency must continually reassess the operation to ensure that mission execution remains consistent with our overall objectives and strategy. There is a tendency within the Washington interagency to focus solely on the "crisis of the moment." Consequently, an operation that receives intense scrutiny in the planning phase and in the opening days of execution may receive only minimal oversight as soon as it appears to be proceeding smoothly. *This is not acceptable.*

Whenever U.S. citizens are put in harm's way, the USG must ensure that policy issues are surfaced and resolved in a timely manner and that the operation receives sustained, high-level oversight. This requires that operations on the ground be transparent to key policy makers, and that when conditions on the ground change significantly, the interagency fully assesses the impact of such changes on its overall objectives, strategy and means for implementing the strategy. In addition, if there are shifts in the strategic-level guidance for the operation, these changes must be communicated as clear decisions to those in the field through the appropriate chains of command. At the same time, the interagency must be aware of the limits of its oversight and avoid micromanaging the operation. Too much oversight can be as detrimental as inattention.

Active monitoring of the operation is in many ways the hardest task for the Washington interagency, given the competing demands placed on most of the high-level participants involved in overseeing the operation. However, active monitoring is critical to ensuring that the operation proceeds smoothly and that the inevitable changes in the operation receive appropriate attention.

Executing a Smooth and Seamless Transition

An operation is not complete until it has successfully transitioned its tasks to the host nation or a follow-on operation. Planning for the transition must be done simultaneously with planning for the overall operation.

When the operation completes its initial phases, the USG must focus on ensuring that any follow-on operation will be able to adequately perform its missions. Recruiting for the subsequent operation should begin as soon as possible, even while recruiting for the initial operation. At least the key headquarters staff for the follow-on operation need to

be identified early and should begin training as soon as possible. After training, this staff should work closely with the staff of the ongoing operation prior to the official handoff.

- There are special requirements for a transition to a UN operation. A smooth transition from a coalition operation to a UN operation requires:
- carefully worded UN Security Council resolution language governing the transition
- early selection of the Special Representative of the Secretary General and UN Force Commander
- commitment of significant time, effort and resources to help the UN plan for the follow-on operation

If the U.S. is contributing to a follow-on operation, then our contribution must be carefully tailored to ensure that we provide only what cannot be provided by other nations or contractors. The danger in staying on to contribute to the successor operation is that the U.S. may continue to be seen as the leader of the operation and be held accountable for its results.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This handbook described a framework for how the interagency should plan, monitor, and assess U.S. participation in complex contingency operations. These procedures will help ensure that the interagency is able to provide timely, integrated strategic guidance to those who are executing the operation on the ground. Without clear guidance from Washington, the job of those in the field is much more difficult, if not impossible.

This integrated planning process provides the interagency with a set of tools that can be used to overcome many of the difficulties that plague the Washington interagency process and surface in times of crisis. These procedures were developed in response to lessons from past operations and have, to a large extent, already been tested in some of the most recent U.S. operations.

Succinctly put, the chances that the U.S. response to a complex emergency will be successful are greatly increased if Washington can provide integrated guidance to the field. This guidance:

- Clearly states our purpose, mission, objectives, end state and concept of operations
- Integrates the planning and operations of all involved USG agencies
- Clarifies agency roles and responsibilities for each mission area
- Assigns accountability for specific functional element plans
- Raises key issues early on in planning an operation
- Captures lessons learned to aid planning for future operations

Although the pol-mil planning process has proven its worth in actual operations, it is not yet a universally accepted procedure. The knowledge of the process and the tools described above rests largely with those few who have used them in planning recent U.S. operations or those who have been exposed to them through interagency training simulation. The purpose of the PDD and this handbook is to assist in institutionalizing these successful procedures and policies.

Interagency Training

The final part of institutionalizing this integrated planning process is the training program called for in PDD-56 (see description of training at Appendix E). The training program familiarizes key members of the interagency, at the DAS- and Office Director-levels, with the lessons learned from previous operations and the most essential planning tools and procedures in the pol-mil planning process. It also gives them an opportunity to actually exercise these tools while planning and monitoring a simulated operation. The first of these training programs was very successful; those who participated gained: 1) a better collective understanding of interagency tasks, responsibilities and challenges; and 2) experience with the planning tools used in crafting integrated policy guidance for a complex contingency operation. This training will continue to be held on a regular basis,

as directed in PDD-56, by the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, the National Defense University, and the Army's Peacekeeping Institute at the U.S. Army War College.

Institutionalizing these processes is key to ensuring the effective performance of the interagency in complex contingency operations. Yet it is important that the processes discussed above not be written in stone—just as they were derived from the lessons of actual operations, so should future procedures be guided by future operations. This is why the interagency after-action review is a critical part of the process described. Obviously, the AAR does not influence the planning or monitoring of the operation it reviews, however, it can significantly improve interagency performance in a subsequent operation. Without constant feedback and updating, the pol-mil planning process described in this book will soon be outdated and will no longer provide for the effective interagency management of these operations. Each time the United States plays a significant role in a complex contingency operation, this handbook will need to be updated to include the experiences of those that planned and participated in the operation. New lessons must be incorporated into our thinking and disseminated widely. New tools may be used and, if effective, they too should have their place in an updated handbook.

The last few years have seen the United States engaged in a large number of significant complex contingency operations. Not only has the number of deployments increased, but the complexity of the issues that these operations attempt to tackle is increasing as well. The decision to participate in any of these emergencies will always be a difficult one, as it should be—the decision to commit the resources and citizens of the United States to an operation is among the most difficult and important decisions the President has to make. Having the mechanisms and tools that make the interagency more effective in planning and monitoring these operations will not make the decision to intervene any easier. They will increase the likelihood that any participation will achieve its objectives and further the interests of the United States.