

**PROJECT ON NATIONAL SECURITY REFORM
STRUCTURES WORKING GROUP
Country-Level Issue Team**



**Structures in Steady-State Environments
Statement of Problems**

Robert B. Oakley
Mike Casey
Peter Lohman
Franz-Stefan Gady

October 2008

Introduction

The “era of globalization” has created a new set of challenges for the making and implementation of US national security policy – including the Country Team. At the same time the US ambassadors and department and agency representatives who form the country team lack the codified authority to carry out their duties effectively. The huge increase in global communication and the rapidity of movement of goods, services, money and people is taking place in a period when US power is in relative decline. The influence and relative power, particularly economic – of other states is increasing (e.g. China, India, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States, Brazil).

The importance of what has been seen as lower priority non security related issues are now posing a severe threat to statehood, power and stability (e.g. shortage of food and water, famine and civil wars, income gaps within countries, global warming). Inter Alia this means that the Ambassador and Country Team must be well informed on a much broader range of issues. The influence, however, that the Ambassador historically held has been sharply reduced in many countries due to progress in communication technology, closer supervision from home and a shrinking time span to react to crises and emergencies. Better trained personal, greatly enlarged capacities and integration of resources are essential for the country team to adapt to an ever faster changing environment.

General

The global environment in which Embassies/Country Teams operate produces numerous complex challenges.¹ The National Security Strategy asserts, “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”² The multifarious challenges of failing states can include such issues as peacekeeping, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, reconstruction, social and economic development, health and the environment. As the Task Force on State Department Reform points out: “As societies benefit from greater freedom, more information, and greater interaction with the rest of the world, they are also changing at a much faster pace. Diplomacy now requires more than just good contacts with foreign regimes. Effective foreign policy is increasingly dependent upon improved and more intimate interaction with civil societies.”³ This requires a much broader approach to the functioning of the Country Team. The Bush Administration’s “Transformational Diplomacy” emphasizes “supporting changes within states” in helping other states meet these challenges. All of this means a much greater degree of interagency unity of effort, wide contacts with the local society, and a deep knowledge of how it functions. Yet increased emphasis upon security restricts such contacts and shorter tours in many posts make it more difficult to accumulate the required knowledge.

In smaller posts under steady-state conditions, the current structure works relatively well – though it is subject to the personalities, training, and experience of the Ambassador and agency heads. In larger embassies, or when there are man-made or natural emergencies, important programs involving a number of different agencies, or a sizeable military role, there is a clear requirement for a different management structure to promote greater unity of effort.

In this regard, while the problems and needs of Country Teams vary greatly, our research has identified a core problem:

¹ For a good overview of the increasingly complex global environment in which the Country Team operates, consult Frank Carlucci and Ian Brzezinski’s, “State Department Reform,” Report of an Independent Task Force Cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001. In addition to the suggestions quoted herein, the report calls for a change in the State Department’s culture towards embracing Public Diplomacy.

² *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2002. Pg. 1. Available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>>.

³ Frank Carlucci and Ian Brzezinski, “State Department Reform,” Report of an Independent Task Force Cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001, pg. 7.

- The ambassador is often seen not as the President’s representative, but as a Department of State representative. When the ambassador attempts to integrate the work of various agencies, he is sometimes seen to be asserting authority he does not have and is often not backed up by higher powers in Washington (despite the de jure authority of the ambassador as the President’s representative). As a result, lacking de-facto authority, ambassadors often adopt a “laissez-faire” approach to management, an approach that only reinforces the specific State Department perception and negates the de jure powers he/she was granted.

Corollary to this core problem are a clear need at all embassies for establishing outcome-based objectives which all agencies approve at the country and national levels; for continuous interagency backup, but less micromanagement from the national level; and for much greater, rapid availability of additional material and human resources in the event of a crisis, with greater ambassadorial authority to use them, cutting across agency lines. At the national level, a critical problem is that policy makers in Washington tend to neglect country teams and the knowledge they bring to making and implementing policy. These two papers try to address these problems and provide suggested solutions.

Issues of Authority

Ambassadors do not have adequate authority to unify the efforts of the Country Team and often do not use that which they have. As the 2001 Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on State Department Reform asserts (and the situation has only gotten worse):

The fact that some thirty U.S. government agencies today have personnel operating overseas reflects the increasingly interdisciplinary character of foreign policy. These non-State Department personnel often outnumber State Department personnel [in country teams]. Having little control over the former, ambassadors find it difficult to develop within their own missions the country teams and esprit de corps so essential to delivering an integrated and coherent U.S. foreign policy.⁴

The White House, and to some degree the Department of State, pays insufficient attention to the ambassador’s role. Moreover, career ambassadors do not usually receive the same strong support from the President and the NSC that is often accorded to political appointees who are close to the President. In many cases, support for the ambassador from the Department of State depends largely on the

⁴ Ibid, pg. 9.

importance of the post and the critical nature of the issue, rather than the role of the ambassador as the President's representative.

Despite the existence of a Presidential letter which outlines the authority of the ambassador (Annex I), he/she often has trouble providing effective oversight and coordination for the activities which different Country Team agencies undertake. Ambassadors do not always represent or are not seen to represent the views/interests of all agencies, and are often seen as agents of the Department of State, which causes other agencies to take lightly their guidance or even ignore it. The ambassador is left with the responsibility, but not the authority, to coordinate the activities and address the often competing needs of the mission.”⁵

There is not enough specificity of authority. The Presidential letter lays out ambassadorial authorities, but does not provide for true unity of effort by spelling out responsibilities of other agencies vis-à-vis the ambassador. Other agencies often fail to provide adequate guidance to their representatives in the field on relationships with the ambassador and other agencies, and do not ensure that their representatives receive thorough briefings on the Presidential letter and its intent. This is particularly true of DOD and CIA.

U.S. Government contractors, businessmen, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other private citizens are not under the ambassador's authority. Government contractors and subcontractors are not even counted in the Mission's complement of U.S. personnel in country, except for security purposes and non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO). The ambassador, as a result, is very limited in his ability to monitor or oversee the operations of these personnel while in country. This is sometimes the case with temporary duty government personnel. Neither business, nor NGOs, nor the Country Team have developed adequate mechanisms of coordination to compensate for these inherent problems. Excessive reliance upon contractors to implement U.S. Government activities and inadequate numbers of well-trained career staff have led to a serious diminution in the effectiveness, timeliness, and accountability of these activities (e.g. police training in Iraq and Afghanistan). At one point in Afghanistan, the Country Team had only a single INL representative responsible for a program involving hundreds of millions of dollars, hundreds of civilian contract personnel, and hundreds of U.S. military personnel. It was almost totally reliant upon contractors; contractors who had little or no supervision.

⁵ See the Report of the Overseas Presence Advisory Panel entitled, “America's Overseas Presence in the 21st Century,” November 1999, pg. 64.

Selection and Training

The selection process for ambassadors does not insist that individuals selected – career or non-career – have proven track records of successful involvement in foreign affairs, and management experience, nor does it require prior experience of service abroad with a proven track record of management and of effectively representing U.S. interests. The same care and due diligence is often lacking in the selection of agency heads. The primacy of political or collegial contacts or even length of service must not be the principal criteria for selection of such individuals.

The Ambassador's job is becoming much more complicated. Pre-deployment training for Ambassadors-designate is inadequate, especially for non-career appointees, but also career personnel. Current training regimes for agency heads, and other senior embassy officers are also inadequate, particularly interagency training. This means that agency heads often do not understand the others' needs and capabilities. This is also true of agency personnel at a lower level, although less important than agency heads. Language and cultural training also need to be greatly improved. Tours of duty tend to be too short to enable trained personnel to put their strengths to best use.

Unifying Plans

Prior to the new Mission Strategic Plan (MSP), there has not been an agreed interagency statement at the Washington level of overall US objectives and priorities, with input from the Country Team initiating such a document for Washington's consideration. It remains to be seen whether the MSP will work in practice. There is still an inadequate recognition of the critical Country Team role in integrating and prioritizing various elements of U.S. policy (counterterrorism, internal and regional stability, democratization, etc.).

The new MSP finally provides for an agreed policy document. However, it is unclear whether this will result in continuous, Washington-level oversight, feedback, or support for the ambassador and Country Team in implementing agreed policy. There is too much micro-management, as opposed to oversight and support for Country Team implementation of policy. Ambassadors do not have an adequate voice in the performance assessment of agency leads and vice versa. Without an adequate voice in the performance assessment of agency leads and vice versa, there are no built-in disincentives

to putting the priorities of individual agencies above those of the Country Team. The ambassador usually does not use existing authorities to remove representatives of other agencies to ensure unity of effort.

Communications

Country Team communication procedures fail to account for individual agency communication procedures, or informal reporting chains. The result is the isolation of some ambassadors from the operations of other agencies, and the growing *de facto* autonomy of other agencies (e.g. DOD, Justice, and Treasury). The reporting system does not facilitate transparency. Unfettered agency access to communications without any Chief of Mission (COM)/Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) oversight process acutely strains the credibility of the ambassador's authority.

The current Country Team system lacks a shared collaborative communication system. This inhibits information sharing, common awareness of mission activities, and undermines unity of effort. Coordination is important but unification of policy is even more important. There is usually neither an agreed public information plan nor a control point for ensuring that it is followed by all agencies.

Civil-Military Cooperation

There is not always a clear delineation of authorities nor a mechanism for cooperation upon which civilian and military personnel may draw when responding to crises. This is particularly true with respect to emergencies, conflict, or failed state situations. Each agency in Washington has its own office or offices to respond to such issues, often without adequate coordination (see *Resources*). The observation below on Defense often applies to other agencies, particularly CIA and Justice:

The number of military personnel and Defense Department activities in non-combat countries is increasing significantly. Left unclear, blurred lines of authority between the State Department and the Defense Department could lead to interagency turf wars that undermine the effectiveness of the overall U.S. effort against terrorism. It is in the embassies rather than in Washington where interagency differences on strategies, tactics and divisions of labor are increasingly adjudicated.⁶

⁶ Senate Foreign Relations Committee Report, "Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign," 15 December 2006, pg. 1.

Civilian policy and civil-military coordination at the regional level is underpowered, which means that country-level programs are not properly aligned for unity of effort nor coordinated with other countries in the region. The regional commanders are unable to interface with State or other civilian agencies on a regional basis and officers of the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) can only facilitate communication, but not formally effect coordination. Different embassies in the same region have no agreed mechanism for coordination amongst themselves, nor is there usually an agreed regional strategy.

Resources

Different agencies have different surge capacities (State – refugees, USAID – disaster assistance, Treasury – financial crises, DOD – military contingencies), but these are not well-coordinated in Washington and most civilian agencies do not have either an expeditionary culture or resources. Nor does the ambassador have the authority to meld them to respond best to the country’s problems. Moreover, the resources under the control of the Department of Defense simply overwhelm the coordinating agencies, in practical terms weakening seriously ambassadorial authority and interagency coordination. “The increases of funding streams, self-assigned missions, and realigned authorities for the Secretary of Defense and the combatant commanders are placing new stresses on interagency coordination in the field.”⁷ This is true of all agencies. The ambassador is unable to call upon everyone and all available resources, particularly in response to exigencies where there is no agreement on objectives. There is no single individual or office in Washington with both the requisite knowledge and authority to assist the ambassador in managing surge resources – even for USAID. Resources often reside in many different programs in many different agencies, both civilian and military (Food for Peace, IDFA, ERMA, CERP, ESF, FMF, etc.). The USAID director is usually not fully knowledgeable of other programs (DOD, DEA, etc.). Some agencies have significant shortages of personnel, particularly those with experience and cultural skills, to provide Country Teams with the resources they need to deal effectively with the increased challenges they face. This is particularly true of State and USAID. The Secretary of State, in an attempt to remedy this, has requested Congressional approval in 2008 for 1,100 additional positions for the Foreign Service – over and above the 6,500 existing positions. She has also requested an additional 300 positions for USAID.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 2.

Moreover, policy is conducted in one place, while resources are located in others. This problem, which permeates the State Department as a whole, inhibits “the synchronization of [administration and budget] with the priorities and initiatives of U.S. foreign policy. The bifurcation of policymaking and budget management within the department has rendered it administratively and financially less responsive to the changing realities of international affairs.”⁸ This greatly handicaps the Country Team. Resource disbursement is an ad hoc process, and there is tremendous difficulty in allocating funds to priorities. There is no flexibility in budget authority to redistribute funds when needed. Ambassadorial authority does not extend to control of all available resources, not only the Department of Defense but even to some of those belonging to the State budget due to the cumbersome Washington-level approval process. Congress has not created adequately-sized emergency funds, and Congressional restrictions in department and agency appropriations as well as many of the provisions of Title 31 severely hamper a unified approach to the use of operational funds by different agencies, as do agency internal bureaucratic restrictions.

Most agencies lack the funds and people for a surge capacity. Trained personnel are a bigger problem even than funding. Despite the efforts of S/CRS to develop a roster of capable civilian personnel, active duty and retired, the inability of agencies to compel individuals to accept certain assignments or to be called up and assigned on a timely basis remains a major problem. Security restrictions upon movement of civilian personnel in combat or other dangerous situations, which are more restrictive than for military personnel, are a severe obstacle to their effectiveness in the field. Given the inherent support by Congress for our men and women in uniform and the ambivalence of these same representatives toward the State Department, the defense supplemental is an easier avenue than State’s budget process.

All of this means that the ambassador can not marshal resources for objectives in a timely manner, or adapt the allocation of resources to changing conditions on the ground. This often results with the agency which has the resources assuming the dominant role, even if it is not the most suitable. “As a result of inadequate funding for civilian programs...U.S. defense agencies are increasingly being granted authority and funding to fill perceived gaps. Such bleeding of civilian responsibilities overseas

⁸ Frank Carlucci and Ian Brzezinski, “State Department Reform,” Report of an Independent Task Force Cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2001, pg. 9.

from civilian to military agencies risks weakening the Secretary of State's primacy in setting the agenda for U.S. relations with foreign countries and the Secretary of Defense's focus on war fighting."⁹

Antiquated Structure of the Embassy

The complexity and number of demands facing the Country Team often outstrips the capacity of the existing Embassy structure to deal with them. The United States requires a new structure that facilitates a comprehensive approach, incorporating all elements of national power (State, USAID, DOD, Intelligence, Treasury, Justice, etc.). The current structure encourages individual agencies to go their own way rather than to strive for unity of effort. The traditional construct of viewing the world through political and economic lenses is insufficient and detrimental to U.S. policy objectives. Counterterrorism often overwhelms other issues. "New" issues such as health and the environment do not receive adequate attention, and embassies are usually not staffed to deal with transnational issues of this nature.

The exchange of information and views among different agencies in Embassies is often inadequate. Likewise, coordination between and among clusters of agency representatives with common or complementary programs (e.g. political, military, intelligence, law enforcement) is insufficient. Embassies are not adequately structured or resourced to deal with unique indigenous challenges in the absence of an agreed country plan.

Mission Strategic Plan (MSP)

Successful restructuring of the embassy along functional lines is unfeasible without first ensuring unity of effort with the MSP. In the past, the MSP has lacked credibility because it was overly bureaucratized and failed to focus adequately on the key issues of matching resources to policies, and the objectives of other U.S. Government agencies. Nor has it effectively addressed the priorities and resources required for its implementation. Resource management technicians had to exercise undue influence over the Plan in an effort to deal with their particular technical information needs. In doing so, they have complicated the creation of sustainable programs abroad. The new MSP is meant to be an

⁹ Senate Foreign Relations Committee Report, "Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign," 15 December 2006, pg. 2.

agreed interagency policy basic document, initiated by the Country Team for Washington review. If implemented this would correct major weaknesses which have hampered the work of the Country Team.

Regional Structures¹⁰

State and DOD authorities at the regional level are out of alignment. Embassy coordination with the COCOM at the regional level remains a problem. Ambassadors are not bonded together by regional plans and therefore frequently fail to coordinate and collaborate on issues. At the same time, Washington fails to provide interagency coordination. A consequence of this is an inability to create integrated regional strategies and policies, which may then be elevated to higher levels for decisions on competing courses of action.

National Structures

The National Security Council and the DCC/PCC system is dysfunctional. The failure of NSPD-56 highlights the difficulty of affecting true interagency coordination and cooperation. The reorganization of the NSC process in 2001 was designed to remedy this situation, but has not produced the expected results. All too often, neither the White House (Executive Office of the President) nor the NSC enforces existing ambassadorial authorities, nor do they oversee or support unity of effort by all agencies. “Currently, overlapping missions and inter-agency frictions are, for the most part, refereed by the U.S. ambassador and other State Department leadership in the embassy with intermittent referral to headquarters for guidance.”¹¹ This is often unsatisfactory since Washington-level agencies may not support in-country State Department decisions. Attempts to remedy this problem, such as appointing a senior coordinator on the NSC staff for Iraq and Afghanistan, have not succeeded in full. As a result of the broken embassy structure and the lack of interagency acceptance of the ambassador’s clear presidential authority over the interagency effort at the Country Team level, the ambassador is unable to communicate interagency concerns effectively to the White House via the State Department or, if need be, directly.

Finally, Congress receives disparate agency budget requests that are not integrated or filtered into a unified foreign policy plan by OMB as part of the federal budget process. As a result,

¹⁰ See PNSR Regional Structures Paper for more information.

¹¹ Ibid, pg. 2.

Congressional oversight resides in a very large number of committees where, in many cases, each agency's domestic concerns overshadow its national security commitments abroad.

Evolution of the Country Team¹²

The struggle to gain control over unwieldy interagency activities at the country level is not of recent vintage. As the United States emerged from World War II, it engaged in massive nation-building and foreign assistance efforts to rebuild European states and to counter Soviet influence. To undertake this commitment, U.S. Government agencies, such as the Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and Treasury, and the Economic Cooperation Administration, dispatched personnel overseas to accomplish U.S. objectives. With the proliferation of agencies and personnel overseas, the execution of U.S. foreign policy – heretofore led by the Department of State – became more complex.

Among the first instances in which one can find the problem of interagency coordination in the field is President Harry S. Truman's declaration of economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey in 1947. Interestingly, the State Department – to which President Truman delegated authority of the programs – administered the program differently for each country. In Turkey, the U.S. Ambassador also served as the Chief of the American Mission for Aid to Turkey. In Greece, however, "Dwight P. Griswold was appointed...to be Chief of the American Mission for aid to Greece, and his mission was outside and independent of the embassy at Athens and of Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh."¹³ Inevitably, the Greeks observed that Griswold controlled the resources, so they bypassed the Ambassador and dealt directly with him. The Ambassador's authority diminished and a conflict within the embassy emerged. Rather than reconfirming the Ambassador's authority in the matter, the State Department recalled both Mr. Griswold and Ambassador MacVeagh, and then deployed a new ambassador who also served as chief of the aid mission. This course of action revealed two long-standing Department of State tendencies: the assumption that effective diplomats can avoid such contretemps, and the default position that the ambassador is ultimately responsible for all embassy activities.

¹² The authors point interested readers to Ambassador Alexis Johnson's speech, "The Country Team in Operation," presented to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces on 14 November 1963, available at the National Defense University library, as well as <<http://www.ndu.edu/library/ic4/L64-066.pdf>>.

¹³ See *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination*, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, 88th Congress, September 13, 1963, p. 8.

By 1951, with Defense Department and economic aid programs expanding overseas, President Truman saw the need to specify mechanisms for coordination at the country and regional levels. General Lucius Clay, who served as Military Governor in post-war Germany and helped create the Marshall Plan, undertook negotiations among the government agencies to identify the best means to achieve coordination overseas. Along with establishing the concept of the “Country Team,” the resulting Memorandum of Understanding between the Departments of State and Defense and the Economic Cooperation Administration – commonly referred to as the “Clay Paper” – concluded:

To insure the full coordination of the U.S. effort, U.S. representatives at the country level shall constitute a team under the leadership of the Ambassador...The Ambassador’s responsibility for coordination, general direction, and leadership shall be given *renewed* emphasis, and all United States elements shall be *reindoctrinated* with respect to the Ambassador’s role as senior representative for the United States in the country.¹⁴ (Emphasis added)

The Country Team concept, mentioned first in the Clay Paper, is a construct not codified in law. It is an executive measure to grant the ambassador the means to coordinate all U.S. Government activities to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy in the country to which s/he is assigned.

Despite the efforts of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower through Executive Orders and memoranda such as the Clay Paper, over time interagency coordination at the country level remained elusive. Shortly after arriving in the White House, President John F. Kennedy decided to solve the problem decisively by dispatching a letter to all ambassadors in which he outlined his expectations for the Country Team, as well as the authorities at the ambassadors’ disposal. President Kennedy wrote:

You are in charge of the entire United States Diplomatic Mission, and I shall expect you to supervise all of its operations. The Mission includes not only the personnel of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, but also the representatives of all other United States agencies which have programs or activities in [name of country]. I shall give you full support and backing in carrying out your assignment.¹⁵

President Kennedy also granted ambassadors complete authority over the composition of the Country Team, with the proviso that employees of every agency had the right to appeal to Washington if they found themselves in disagreement with the Ambassador. Additionally, President Kennedy addressed the issue of military forces engaged in military operations. In such instances, Kennedy

¹⁴ See extract of the “Clay Paper,” found in *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination*, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, 88th Congress, September 13, 1963, pgs. 60-61.

¹⁵ A copy of President Kennedy’s letter to Chiefs of Mission, dated May 29, 1961, may be found in *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination*, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, 88th Congress, September 13, 1963, pgs. 155-156.

declared that the ambassador “should work closely with the appropriate area military commander to assure the full exchange of information.” If the ambassador felt “that activities by the United States military forces may adversely affect our overall relations with the people or government of [country],” Kennedy instructed that the ambassador “should promptly discuss the matter with the military commander and, if necessary, request a decision by higher authority.”¹⁶ In contrast, to this day the military is not routinely enjoined to work with ambassadors or to elevate differences of opinion to higher levels. For example, the Unified Command Plan of 2006, signed by President Bush, makes no mention of the Combatant Commander’s responsibilities to work in concert with the local U.S. ambassador(s).

Vignettes

As the brief overview of the Country Team concept illustrates, Presidents repeatedly have reasserted the ambassador’s authority, which suggests a recurring problem with the ambassador’s ability to generate integrated interagency support for U.S. objectives and interests. A closer look at a historical vignette suggests some reasons for why this is so.

South Africa – Transition from Apartheid

In South Africa, during the transition period from apartheid in 1992-1994, the Country Team had functional cross-agency committees (e.g. democracy, security, etc.), chaired by the Political Counselor, and there was flexibility of funding as a result (USAID transferred \$1 million each year to USIS to enable the latter to do more short-term visitor training programs that were needed, something USAID was less equipped to do). Attachés went beyond their normal responsibilities to liaison (with Washington's permission) with the African National Congress "armed forces" leadership to help the latter plan for integration into a national army. Other government agencies got permission to liaison (as recommended by the Ambassador) with the ANC's intelligence chiefs. The agricultural attaché (while continuing to sell American farm products, his primary job) became an extremely valuable resource to the Ambassador on the attitude of the farming community toward the transition, etc. In sum, everyone got focused on the primary U.S. objective: To help see a successful, relatively peaceful transition out of apartheid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The vignettes illustrate that coordination is difficult even when the stakes are high enough to merit use of force. Counter-intuitively, some might wonder if interagency coordination is better when there are less compelling reasons for it. The answer is no. As the case of aid in Greece and innumerable other anecdotes could illustrate, tensions among ambassadors and CIA station chiefs, USAID directors, and representatives from the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and other agencies are commonplace when the Ambassador tries to lead in anything other than a *laissez-faire* manner. The fact is, representatives from different agencies pursue their organizational interests at the expense of a broader, integrated approach for reasons that must be identified and corrected if reasonable remedies are to be found.

EL Salvador – The Civil War

The Salvadoran Civil War lasted from 1979 to 1992. Beginning in 1981, the United States started to supply military aid to the right-wing Revolutionary Government Junta. The 55-man US Military Group (MILGROUP) oversaw the expansion and training of the El Salvador Armed Forces (ESAF) who fought a loose conglomerate of five leftist guerilla groups known as the *Farabundo Marti para Liberacion Nacional* (FLMN).¹⁷

At the outset of US assistance efforts, there were frictions between USSOUTHCOM and the country team. U.S. Ambassador Bob White openly disagreed with General Wallace H. Nutting, Commander in Chief of U.S. Southern Command (1979 to 1983) over the utility of military assistance to the right-wing Revolutionary government and the issue of authority emerged. The Ambassador thought that USSOUTHCOM headquarters was seeking to take over the El Salvadoran War. General Nutting considered Ambassador White as representing parochial State Department views.¹⁸ In 1983 General Wallace H. Nutting put forward the idea of a “National Plan” (campaign plan) to encompass all political-military objectives of the El Salvador Government. The Ambassador, however, was reluctant to

¹⁷ Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, “El Salvador at War – An Oral History”, (National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 1988), pg. 32.

¹⁸ “He echoed the State Department’s position... The State Department people felt that there were individuals and groups so bad that we should refuse to have anything to do with them, either on a personal or professional basis... the State Department was not truly convinced that it was a major problem or that it was amenable to military assistance...” pp. 71-72.

allow the military to undertake that effort and refused to allow USSOUTHCOM to participate in the planning process, leaving it to MILGROUP under the command of Colonel John D. Waghelstein.¹⁹

MILGROUP, in cooperation with the U.S. Country Team, the El Salvadoran Ministry of Defense and key Salvadoran military leaders came up with an overall plan of action. The result was a presidential directive to the civilian and military ministries to establish a joint military- civilian entity to plan execute and coordinate the war effort of the El Salvadoran government. The plan worked relatively well. Despite occasionally setbacks, the government slowly gained legitimacy in the eyes of the people of El Salvador and the El Salvadoran military became more efficient.

The U.S. support effort, however, was severely inhibited by the lack of cooperation on the national, regional and country levels between the military and civilian agencies which led to difficulties in formulating policy. There was no intermediary on the regional level to coordinate communication between the NSC and the Country Team and no regional State Department representative for Central America present in the region. The POLAD (representative of Department of State) had no senior authority at SOUTHCOM. In addition, the absence of common U.S. objectives was critical. MILGROUP under the command of USSOUTHCOM was instructed to win the war against the guerillas, while U.S. Ambassador Hinton received guidelines from the State Department to just maintain the status quo in the country.²⁰ As a result, the US was unable to provide any form of consistent assistance to the El Salvadoran government. In the words of Ambassador Thomas Pickering (Ambassador, 1983-85): “We had neither the doctrine nor the support nor the coordination in the U.S. Government that would really be required to deal effectively with that kind of operation...We understand, intrinsically the need for an integrated approach, but we haven’t yet developed the facilities to keep all tracks running smoothly”²¹

In the end the U.S. effort was successful in part due to the personal relationship between the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief USSOUTHCOM, General John R. Galvin, and Ambassador Thomas Pickering’s successor- Ed Corr - who had a military background. They agreed on a country-wide strategy and coordinated their efforts with the El Salvadoran government and military. The result was a military stalemate which opened up the path for peace accords that were signed in 1992.

¹⁹ Ibid. Pg.222

²⁰ Max G. Manwaring and Court Prisk, “El Salvador at War – An Oral History”, (National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 1988), pg. 240.

²¹Ibid. pg. 485.

The Vignettes illustrates the need for a multi-agency coordinating mechanism in prosecuting this kind of an effort, stating clear objectives and clear delineations of responsibility. In addition, it shows the need for regional senior level intermediaries- apart from the Assistant secretaries- cooperating with COCOM and the Country Team. Last, it reiterates the problem of the Ambassador being seen as a State Department representative rather than the President's.

APPENDIX A

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S 1961 LETTER TO CHIEFS OF MISSION

**Memorandum from the President (Kennedy) to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies
May 27, 1961**

There is attached a copy of a letter which I have sent to each American Ambassador abroad. The fourth and fifth paragraphs on page three were omitted from the letter sent to countries where we do not have military forces.

On page three of this letter I state:

I have informed all heads of departments and agencies of the Government of the responsibilities of the chiefs of American Diplomatic Missions for our combined operations abroad and I have asked them to instruct their representatives in the field accordingly.

I shall appreciate your instructing representatives you may have in the field in accordance with the attached letter.

JOHN F. KENNEDY
May 20, 1961

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Please accept my best wishes for the successful accomplishment of your mission. As the personal representative of the President of the United States in ----- you are part of a memorable tradition which began with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, and which has included many of our most distinguished citizens.

We are living in a critical moment in history. Powerful destructive forces are challenging the universal values which, for centuries, have inspired men of good will in all parts of the world.

If we are to make progress toward a prosperous community of nations in a world of peace, the United States must exercise the most affirmative and responsible leadership. Beyond our shores, this leadership, in large measure, must be provided by our ambassadors and their staffs.

I have asked you to represent our Government in ----- because I am confident you have the ability, dedication and experience, The purpose of this letter is to define guidelines which I hope may be helpful to you.

The practice of modern diplomacy requires a close understanding not only of governments, but also of people, their cultures and institutions. Therefore, I hope you will plan your work so that you will have the time to travel extensively outside the nation's capitol. Only in this way can you develop the close, personal associations that go beyond official diplomatic circles and maintain a sympathetic and accurate understanding of all segments of the country.

Moreover, the improved understanding which is so essential to a more peaceful and rational world is a two-way street. It is our task not only to understand what motivates others, but to give them a better understanding of what motivates us.

Many persons in ----- who have never visited the United States, receive their principal impressions of our nation through their contacts with Americans who come to their country either as private citizens or as government employees.

Therefore, the manner in which you and your staff personally conduct yourselves is of the utmost importance. This applies to the way in which you carry out your official duties and to the attitudes you and they bring to day-to-day contacts and associations.

It is an essential part of your task to create a climate of dignified, dedicated understanding, cooperation and service in and around the Embassy.

In regard to your personal authority and responsibility, I shall count on you to oversee and coordinate all the activities of the United States Government in -----.

You are in charge of the entire United States Diplomatic Mission, and I shall expect you to supervise all of its operations. The mission includes not only the personnel of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, but also the representatives of all other United States agencies which have programs or activities in -----
----- . I shall give you full support and backing in carrying out your assignment.

Needless to say, the representatives of other agencies are expected to communicate directly with their offices here in Washington, and in the event of a decision by you which they do not concur, they may ask to have the decision reviewed by a higher authority in Washington.

However, it is their responsibility to keep you fully informed of their views and activities and to abide by your decisions unless in some particular instance you and they are notified to the contrary.

If in your judgment individual members of the Mission are not functioning effectively, you should take whatever action you feel may be required, reporting the circumstances of course to the Department of State.

In case the departure from ----- of any individual member of the Mission is indicated in your judgment, I shall expect you to make the decision and see that it is carried into effect. Such instances I am confident will be rare.

Now one word about your relations to the military. As you know, the United States Diplomatic Mission includes Service Attaches, Military Assistance Advisory Groups and other Military components attached to the Mission. It does not, however, include United States military forces operating in the field where such forces are under the command of a United States area military commander. The line of authority runs from me, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington and to the area commander in the field.

Although this means that the chief of the American Diplomatic Mission is not in the line of military command, nevertheless as Chief of Mission you should work closely with the appropriate area military commander to insure the full exchange of information. If it is your opinion that the activities by the United States military forces may adversely affect our over-all relations with the people or government of ----- , you should promptly discuss the matter with the military commander and, if necessary, request a decision by higher authority.

I have informed all heads of departments and agencies of the Government of the responsibilities of the chiefs of American Diplomatic Missions for our combined operations abroad, and I have asked them to instruct their representatives in the field accordingly.

As you know, your own lines of communications as Chief of Mission run through the Department of State.

Let me close with an expression of confidence in you personally and in the earnest hope that your efforts may help strengthen our relations with both the Government and the people of ----- . I am sure that you will make a major contribution to the cause of world peace and understanding.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

APPENDIX B

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S LETTER TO CHIEFS OF MISSION

Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador:

Thank you for your willingness to serve the American people as our country's representative to [country/international organization].

The great struggles of the 20th century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom -- and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled strength and influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our position to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom.

Our commitment to freedom is America's tradition. The advance of freedom is also the surest way to undermine terror and tyranny, and to promote peace and prosperity. Your task is to help in advancing this great cause by:

- waging a relentless global war against terrorism, to defeat those who seek to harm us and our friends;
- overcoming the faceless enemies of human dignity, including disease, starvation, and poverty; and
- assisting American citizens, institutions, and businesses as they pursue their charitable and commercial interests.

This letter contains your detailed instructions as my personal representative and the United States Chief of Mission. These instructions have been shared with relevant departments and agencies, and I have directed that they give you their full cooperation. I expect you to carry out your mission to the best of your ability and in full conformance with the law and the highest ethical standards. I am counting on your advice and leadership as Chief of Mission to help protect America's interests and to promote America's values.

Detailed Instructions

As Chief of Mission, you have full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all United States Government executive branch employees [in country/at international organization], regardless of their employment categories or location, except those under command of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization. Except for the activities of the personnel exempted above, you are in charge of all executive branch activities and operations in your [Mission/international organization.]

You will report to me through the Secretary of State. Under my direction, the Secretary of State is, to the fullest extent provided by the law, responsible for the overall coordination and supervision of all United States Government activities and operations abroad. The only authorized channel for instruction to you is from the Secretary or me unless the Secretary or I personally instruct you to use a different channel.

All executive branch agencies under your authority, and every element of your Mission, must keep you fully informed at all times of their current and planned activities. You have the right to see all communications to or from Mission elements, however transmitted, except those specifically exempted by law or Executive decision.

You have full responsibility for the direction, coordination and supervision of all Department of Defense personnel on official duty [in country/at international organization] except those under the command of a U.S. area military commander. You and the area military commander must keep each other currently and fully informed and cooperate on all matters of mutual interest. Any differences that cannot be resolved in the field will be reported to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense.

I expect you to take direct and full responsibility for the security of your Mission and all the personnel for whom you are responsible, whether inside or outside the chancery gate. Unless an interagency agreement provides otherwise, the Secretary of State and you as Chief of Mission must protect all United States Government personnel on official duty abroad other than those under the protection of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization and their accompanying dependents. You and the U.S. area military commander should consult and coordinate responses to common threats.

I ask that you review programs, personnel, and funding levels regularly, and ensure that all agencies attached to your Mission do likewise. Functions that can be performed by personnel based in the United States or at regional offices overseas should not be performed at post. In your reviews, should you find staffing to be either excessive or inadequate to the performance of priority Mission goals and objectives, I urge you to initiate staffing changes in accordance with established procedures.

Every executive branch agency under your authority must obtain your approval before changing the size, composition or mandate of its staff. If a Department head disagrees with you on staffing matters, that individual may appeal your decision to the Secretary of State. In the event the Secretary is unable to resolve the dispute, the Secretary and the respective Department head will present their differing views to me for decision.

All United States Government personnel other than those in country under the command of a U.S. area military commander or on the staff of an international organization must obtain country clearance before [entering country/visiting international organization] on official business. You may refuse country clearance or may place conditions or restrictions on visiting personnel as you determine necessary.

I expect you to discharge your responsibilities with professional excellence and in full conformance with the law and the highest standards of ethical conduct. You should ensure that there is equal opportunity at your Mission and no discrimination or harassment of any kind. Remember as you conduct your duties that you are not only representing me, but also the American people and America's values.