

**HCFA –SFRC MAJORITY  
DISCUSSION PAPER ON PEACEBUILDING**

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**Goal:** Improve the U.S. ability to prevent and resolve conflict by establishing a unified civilian structure that:

- has a clear and comprehensive peacebuilding mandate;
- oversees and coordinates peacebuilding policy and programming, including crisis management, contingency operations, and training and supplying civilian response personnel;
- mobilizes and targets resources quickly and effectively;
- exercises meaningful leadership and participation in the interagency process;
- and
- conducts planning for early warning and conflict prevention before crises emerge.

Preventing armed conflict, stabilizing weak and fragile states, protecting civilians in war zones, mitigating crises, helping countries to rebuild and recover after conflict, and supporting transitions to peace, stability and democracy – the range of activities that encompass “peacebuilding” -- are not only moral imperatives, but also important national security objectives. It is from failed states that the greatest threats to U.S. security have emerged in the last 20 years, and in volatile and unstable situations, assistance must focus on improving the security of individuals and communities as well as strengthening the responsiveness and effectiveness of government institutions. Yet the organizational structures, technical capacities and budgetary resources of U.S. foreign affairs agencies are inadequate to achieve these objectives in a sustained, coherent manner. The civilian capacity of the U.S. Government (USG) to prevent conflict and conduct post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction is beset by fragmentation, gaps in coverage, lack of resources and training, coordination problems, unclear delineations of authority and responsibility, and policy inconsistency.

Many of the problems are structural. Research, monitoring and early warning efforts are not linked to systems for turning information into action. There is no single individual, office, bureau or agency charged with overseeing the full range of activities relating to peacebuilding; a variety of disparate units – such as USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM); the Department of State’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL); and the Department of Justice’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) -- handle specific aspects of the USG civilian response in conflict settings, and their work is not subject to a unified strategy or effective coordination. Regional bureaus have often resisted the involvement of functional bureaus, which lack the authority and stature to force action. Specialized offices have not always demonstrated their added value in responding to situations where the United States has a range of competing interests and objectives. Several critical aspects of peacebuilding, such as prevention, protection, police training, and

disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, have largely fallen through the cracks.

Other problems stem from a lack of human or technical capacity. Within the Foreign Service, conflict prevention is neither designated as a specialty nor emphasized as a path to career advancement. Field-based personnel who best understand the situation on the ground often lack the skills and training to prevent and mitigate conflict, while conflict experts based in Washington may not have the in-depth country background and language skills to adapt their knowledge to the situation at hand. Since crises are addressed in an ad hoc manner, there is no system for retaining experienced personnel, integrating lessons learned and planning for the future. Despite ambitious plans to create a centralized civilian reserve capacity, progress has been slow and performance untested. Lacking confidence and clarity over how the resources would be used, Congress has been reluctant to fund such a venture. After decades of shrinking personnel budgets, the State Department and USAID rely heavily on private contractors to carry out their missions in conflict-prone settings, yet in large-scale operations they lack the management capacity and the security protections to administer and oversee the activities of their implementing partners properly.

Finally, there are complex statutory and financial restraints. S/CRS, which was established to bring coherence to this area, has been hampered by a lack of clarity in mission and focus, inconsistent resources and hesitant political support, both inside and outside the Administration. In sharp contrast to their military counterparts, civilian experts deployed in conflict zones, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, lack the flexible resources and broad mandate to conduct effective operations. Partly as a result of these weaknesses, the U.S. armed forces have assumed responsibility for many functions that previously were under the purview of civilian foreign policy institutions. The Clinton and Bush Administrations attempted to address many of these issues in PDD-56 (the Clinton administration's directive on managing complex contingency operations) and NSPD-44 (the Bush administration's directive to improve interagency coordination, planning and implementation of reconstruction and stabilization assistance), respectively, but these initiatives either did not go far enough or were not fully implemented.

To remedy these problems, several competing objectives must be balanced:

Unity of purpose and a whole of government approach: While conflict prevention, management and response efforts should make use of all existing capacity and resources within the USG, they must also be conducted within a clear, coherent and coordinated structure that delineates responsibilities, rationalizes functions, closes gaps, promotes policy consistency, and ensures civilian leadership. When preventing conflict is, in essence, everyone's responsibility, no one is held accountable. "Whole of government" should not be a proxy for the continued proliferation and fragmentation of different USG departments and agencies involved in peacebuilding.

Capacity and resources. The ability to respond quickly to unanticipated contingencies presupposes a reserve corps of individuals who are well-trained, organized and ready to deploy at a moment's notice, as well as significant pools of flexible funding. While in principle, civilian agencies should be responsible for most peacebuilding functions, in practice it will be difficult for them to acquire and maintain anything like the sort of surge capacity, broad authorities and financial resources available to the armed forces.

Flexibility and accountability. Until the Administration has the systems in place to ensure that rapid response funds will be used in an effective and responsible manner, there is little desire in Congress to provide such flexible funding. Yet it is difficult to build transparent, responsive and accountable systems without commensurate resources. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and OTI stand out as examples of combining flexibility with transparency to achieve tangible results.

Quick impact and sustainability. To have maximum impact, conflict prevention and mitigation efforts must work quickly to reduce tensions before they escalate into violence. Yet the gains will be lost if programs are not designed to be sustainable over the long-term. There is a "missing middle" of medium-term programs to serve as a bridge between quick impact and long-term development.

Specialization and mainstreaming. Peacebuilding activities should be the central organizing component of USG strategy in failed, conflict-prone or fragile states. While this capacity must be mainstreamed in the context of the overall USG response, it must also be developed as a discrete specialization and area of expertise.

**We propose the following structural reform options to:**

- **establish coherent policy direction under civilian leadership while encouraging government-wide contributions;**
- **build capacity at the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) while strengthening partnerships with the Department of Defense (DOD);**
- **build confidence that flexible funding will be used responsibly by building on what works and making conflict mitigation efforts more systematic and strategic;**
- **improve planning and coordination so that short-term interventions will be linked with longer-term strategies; and**
- **ensure that peacebuilding is both developed as a specialization and mainstreamed into overall policies and programs.**

**1. Elevate Crisis Prevention and Response.** No peacebuilding effort will be successful without a unified interagency structure that has the mandate to establish policy, the authority to coordinate across agency lines, and the resources to fund and implement programs. Yet in order for the civilian agencies to exercise leadership in the interagency process, they must bring to the table a demonstrated capacity to act quickly and effectively on a large scale.

To create such capacity we recommend folding S/CRS into a joint State-USAID Crisis Prevention and Response structure (to be called a Council for the purposes of this paper), which

would be granted authority over the new account described below. The Council would be staffed by Foreign Service and Civil Service Officers from the Department of State and USAID, and would have the authority to hire outside experts. Each of the regional and functional bureaus at State and USAID, as well as other relevant departments and agencies (including DOD, Justice, and Treasury) would have representatives on the Council staff, whose responsibilities would be to bring the perspectives of their home offices to bear on the Council's work, and vice versa, and to serve as liaisons and conduits for information, coordination and planning.

The Council's mandate would be to foster a unified and clear peacebuilding approach within the State Department and USAID that will enable these agencies to assume meaningful responsibility for peacebuilding policy and programming, including crisis management, contingency operations and conflict prevention, and provide the capacity to effectively mobilize and target resources. Key activities include:

- working with regional bureaus, Embassies and USAID Missions to conduct conflict assessments, identify at-risk countries, regions and localities, and develop conflict prevention strategies for such areas;
- overseeing the full spectrum of conflict-related policies and programs, ensuring that there are no gaps in coverage and that policies are consistent and coherent;
- engaging in strategic planning and budgeting and allocating funding for conflict-related activities to relevant offices in any agency or department;
- conducting monitoring and evaluation activities that assess program performance and impact and identify and disseminate best practices and lessons learned;
- coordinating with other departments and agencies to ensure integration of activities;
- distributing funds to appropriate offices, bureaus and agencies to implement activities; and
- overseeing and directing the Civilian Response Corps.

**2. Raise visibility and political support for the Council and its work.** Ultimately, the success or failure of this capability and the proposed structure is contingent upon strong, capable, dynamic and empowered leadership. The Director of this Council would be nominated by the President, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, and would report directly to the Secretary of State. Without an explicit political commitment from senior leadership at the Department to support this capacity, any reform efforts will be short-lived.

**3. Authorize a new peacebuilding account.** The new Crisis Prevention and Response Council would be given control over a new budget account that would replace the current "section 1207" authority. This new account would be called the "Complex Crisis, Stabilization and Prevention Fund" and would provide programmatic support for contingency operations and deployments by the Civilian Response Corps, as well as security-related programming by State and USAID, such as police training, security sector reform, humanitarian demining operations, and disarmament-demobilization-reintegration (DDR) activities. Consistent with the State Department budget request for 2011, the Fund would be given explicit statutory definition and authority to support contingency operations and activities with a reconstruction or stabilization focus, such as quick impact development and infrastructure projects, conflict mitigation activities, community capacity building and youth workforce opportunities. In addition, a specific amount of money

within this fund would be set aside for conflict prevention activities such as local and community initiatives for dispute management and resolution, ethnic and political reconciliation, and other measures designed to reduce and prevent hostilities and promote peaceful cooperation. The fund would have authorities allowing it to be used quickly and flexibly, without earmarks, but in close consultation with Congress. The new Fund would be in addition to the current Transition Initiatives account, which would continue to be controlled by USAID.

**4. Require conflict assessments and strategies.** The new Council would be charged with conducting regional conflict and risk assessments on an annual basis, in coordination with relevant agencies (including intelligence agencies), which would be reported to Congress (in classified form as necessary). In countries or regions deemed to be at significant risk of armed conflict, or currently engaged in or emerging from conflict, the Council would oversee the production of a conflict mitigation strategy. Such assessments and strategies would be designed in consultation with the regional bureaus, U.S. Embassies and USAID Missions, multilateral institutions, other bilateral donors, international NGOs, local civil society organizations, and wherever appropriate, affected governments.

**5. Institutionalize the use of conflict assessments and strategies.** The State and Defense Departments would be required to consider the conflict assessments and strategies issued by the Council in all major arms sales and military assistance decisions. Embassies and USAID Missions would be required to factor the results of such conflict assessments and strategies into the country development strategies and Mission Strategic Plans. These conflict assessments and strategies should also be aggregated and shared with appropriate congressional committees so that the Congress is able to provide its own judgment on those arms sales that must be notified.

**6. Build capacity within the Department of State.** Training in conflict prevention and mitigation would be required for certain Foreign Service Officers. The Crisis Prevention and Response Council would be tasked with recommending options for sharing best practices and lessons learned, improving conflict sensitivity among political and program officers, and creating structural incentives to specialize in and prioritize peacebuilding among Foreign Service Officers. Opportunities would be provided for staff development through fellowships, details and exchanges with relevant departments, international agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, including the Center for Complex Operations.

**7. Remove legislative barriers to effective police training.** Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act would be rewritten to explicitly authorize police training and security sector reform activities, consistent with principles of human rights, good governance, transparency and accountability.

**8. Expanded peacebuilding focus in USAID.** USAID's mandate would be expanded to include designing, developing and implementing programs in areas such as police training, DDR, security sector reform, civilian protection, and peace and reconciliation. These activities could be carried out by a new Office of Prevention and Protection, or added to the responsibilities of the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation or the Office of Transition Initiatives. If requested by the Council, USAID could also take over the function of training and preparing the Civilian Response Corps.

**9. Create a standing interagency mechanism for conflict prevention.** All too often, interagency coordination takes place in an ad hoc manner and only begins after a situation has reached the crisis stage. The President would be directed to establish a standing interagency coordination mechanism specifically to address early action and preventive measures. The mechanism would integrate early-warning systems of the various government agencies, conduct regular, government-wide gaming and contingency planning exercises, and coordinate policies and programs to reduce the likelihood of conflict.

**10. Build and leverage international capacity.** United States efforts to prevent and mitigate conflict are much more effective when they are coordinated with those of the international community. To improve such coordination, representatives of the International Organizations Bureau of the State Department (which oversees relationships with United Nations agencies) and the Office of International Affairs of the Treasury Department (which oversees relationships with the multilateral development banks) would be included both in the Crisis Prevention and Response Council and in the interagency mechanism for conflict prevention. Multilateral organizations must play a strong and leading role in conflict mitigation, yet like the USG, the international system is beset by incoherence, fragmentation and poor coordination. While the UN, for example, has built a strong peacekeeping capacity, there is a sharp policy and capacity drop-off once peacekeeping operations cease. The U.S. would be encouraged to lead international efforts to reexamine and strengthen the multilateral framework for peacebuilding activities and to develop a proposal, in coordination with key donors and UN stakeholders, on how to reform and strengthen the capacity of the UN system in this area, including providing conceptual clarity of the role, responsibilities and strategy of the UN peacebuilding commission and peacebuilding fund.

#### Key Changes to S/CRS

- The council would have a clear and comprehensive peacebuilding mandate and would bring together policy, program and resource coordination.
- The head of the council would be Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed.
- The council would be a joint State-USAID entity, and would conduct integrated planning for conflict prevention on behalf of State and USAID.
- The council would have a new fund at its disposal to execute its mission.
- The council would include staff from other offices, bureaus, departments and agencies, who would perform a representative function.
- The council would coordinate its activities with other departments and agencies, but would not be expected to convene or direct the interagency process.
- The council would have directional authority over the CRC.