



JFQ (David H. Gurney)

An Interview with

Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies of the Brookings Institution

Carlos Pascual

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JFQ: Why did the Department of State create the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization?

Ambassador Carlos Pascual: The office came out of the recognition that the U.S. Government needs to have the capacity to deal with issues relating to conflict: preparing for it ahead of time and responding to it afterward. The United States has been involved in major conflicts around the world for decades, but we have never institutionalized the capacity to deal with them. We've built forces up, and we've surged in specific situations—but we haven't paid attention to lessons learned, and we haven't retained experienced personnel. After the major conflict issues are over, we stand down, and then we have to learn it all over again. Too often, we not only relearn

the positive things, but we also repeat the mistakes. We haven't had the people prepared, trained, and exercised to be able to engage in these activities.

So the National Security Council (NSC)—at the principals committee level and particularly on the part of then-Secretary [Colin] Powell and Secretary [Donald] Rumsfeld—recognized that we needed to establish this kind of capability and institutionalize it in the State Department. This office had to be centrally tied with U.S. foreign policy objectives, but everyone involved also realized that it needed to be an interagency office that could draw on the capabilities across the civilian world and that has the capacity to work effectively with civilians and the military. So that really became the foundation for the NSC approving creation of this office in August 2004.

JFQ: As coordinator, your mandate was to lead, coordinate, and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for postconflict situations. Have we made much progress toward this institutionalized response?

AMB Pascual: We have made significant progress toward institutionalization. If we reflect back to where we were 18 months ago, we now have a Presidential directive that establishes the Secretary of State and the State Department as the coordinator for stabilization and reconstruction activities to bring together the entire interagency community. In the Department of Defense (DOD), there's a directive that explains how DOD will relate to that broader Presidential authority, and how its functions then can be integrated with the civilian world. USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] has developed a "fragile state" strategy that becomes the foundation for how they're going to operate, and they have now an office of military operations that will coordinate with the military parts of our government.

We have been able to put together a draft planning framework which is under

On March 2, 2006, Col David H. Gurney, USMC (Ret.), and Col Merrick E. Krause, USAF, of Joint Force Quarterly interviewed the Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies of the Brookings Institution, Ambassador Carlos Pascual, at his office in Washington, DC. Ambassador Pascual previously served as Director of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in the Department of State, which was created in July 2004.

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review and testing by both the civilian and military parts of our government. For the first time, we have a framework that allows us to look at stabilization and reconstruction and, within the military and civilian worlds, be able to have a common vocabulary about how to plan and talk about these issues. We are testing it now across the combatant commands and the civilian world on Sudan and Haiti.

I don't want to say that all of this works smoothly; we're learning, we're testing, and we're getting better. But we have the basic ideas on paper, we're actually working through them, and we're seeking to get resources for them. So, in comparison to where we were 18 months ago, we've come light years. In comparison to where we need to be, we're still years away from the goal that we should ultimately attain, but I think we're going in the right direction.

JFQ: *How has the role of the Department of Defense in postconflict resolution and reconstruction changed since the establishment of your office?*

AMB Pascual: What's changed most is the recognition that we have to have a comprehensive U.S. Government approach and that each individual agency has a role in that and has to build up its capabilities to undertake that role. We are still at an early stage in this, and in effect the individual agencies have been building up some capabilities, but we haven't been able to tie all of it together. That shouldn't be discouraging if we think back to the Goldwater-Nichols legislation creating jointness in the military. It was a good 15 years from the time of the passage of Goldwater-Nichols until the military started feeling like it was really getting jointness under its belt and understanding what it meant. And so we must have

a similar expectation on these sets of issues. We're going to have a similar kind of growing process, but we have to keep that vision in mind of the overall U.S. Government strategy of individual agencies cooperating. And that's where the Department of Defense, I think, is seeing the biggest change.

In the past, DOD was handed this universe because it was the principal agency that had the funding and the operational capability to be involved on the ground. We are now recognizing that, in order to succeed on the ground, there is a need, as some have said, to win the peace. And to win the peace is not necessarily a military function but a function that requires all aspects of U.S. power, all aspects of U.S. capability, and in particular civilian capabilities. So what we're trying to do is build up that civilian component that can stand together with the military to be able to achieve an overall U.S. Government strategy in any postconflict situation.

JFQ: *Other than U.S. Southern Command, what other regional combatant commands have involved the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and*

New Zealand soldier directing Afghans to U.S. Army doctors in Nayak



55th Signal Company (Michael Zuk)

Soldier distributes water in Gonaives, Haiti



U.S. Navy (Lt Cohen)

Stabilization in their exercise programs? Have there been lessons learned from the interactions?

AMB Pascual: By far, the deepest relationship with any of the regional combatant commands has been with Southern Command. I think that one of the things that both military and civilians who have participated in exercises with Southern Command have learned is that the process of stabilization and reconstruction is *always* a lot more complex than we expect it to be. It's going to take more time, it's going to take more resources, and that needs to be integrated not only into the civilian planning process but also the military planning process. If you don't take into account the time required for stabilization and reconstruction, then you're going to have a chaotic situation.

We've had extraordinarily deep relationships with Joint Forces Command. Currently, Joint Forces Command and my former office are engaged in an exercise called *Multinational*

Experiment 4, which involves a whole range of international partners to look at how we operate together on stabilization and reconstruction and how that gets linked up with military capabilities in a hypothetical situation in Afghanistan.

We've had contacts and good relations with European Command; we've been involved in some limited exercise activities with them, but this demonstrates one of the

limited your options as opposed to helping you see the possibilities of how you might do things in the future.

JFQ: *I'd like to follow up concerning the Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction. It is very much an interagency organization. From the initial staffing to now, how has the office transformed? Have you changed the makeup of the office based on experience?*

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fundamental issues we've been facing in the civilian world: we have a limited number of personnel. Generally, we have not trained personnel in the past. In many cases, planning was anathema to a civilian mentality, particularly to the State Department. For many State Department officers, they grew up with a culture that planning was something that

AMB Pascual: Fortunately, it's grown because it started with only one person—that was me. It now has a staff of about 60 people. It is an interagency staff that

has participation from various parts of the State Department and USAID; at times, the Department of the Treasury has provided personnel, as well as the Department of Justice and Department of Labor. In addition to that, there have been personnel from the Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Forces Command, and the

Central Intelligence Agency. Not only has that given us a team of people who have a wide set of skills and perspectives to the way that we plan and develop our capabilities, but it's also helped us to reach back more effectively to the range of agencies that need to participate in the process. And frankly, it's also helped us address basic cultural issues—sometimes even vocabulary, how we talk about similar kinds of topics.

As the office has evolved, it's developed into four organization blocks. There's a group that does early warning and conflict prevention, a second group that works on planning, a third group that works on technical lessons learned and technical capabilities, and a fourth group that works on resources and management. All of these teams need to work together effectively to be able to achieve the kinds of objectives that we might have in any given circumstance. So, for example, our conflict prevention team is working with our colleagues in regional bureaus on states of risk and instability and gaming through scenarios. They've brought in our technical staff and management staff to help them outline situations that might evolve on the ground and work through scenarios that could develop, and from that extract lessons that can be learned.

JFQ: *The State Department Web site says that your office has been working with the Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau on Cuba to develop a framework for U.S. strategy following the conclusion of the Castro regime. Should similar strategies be developed by regional combatant commands for repressive or failing regimes elsewhere? And have you suggested or proposed collaboration ahead of combatant command requests?*

AMB Pascual: Fortunately, Cuba's a unique situation. There aren't too many countries throughout the world that are headed by dictators. We also know that Fidel is old and that at some point there will be a transition in Cuba. And so it only behooves us to look ahead to that and to begin planning how that transitional process is going to work. There are going to be complicated issues; there have been in every single transition that has occurred around the world. There are real opportunities as well: how to take advantage, for example, of the

Cuban-American community in the United States. But all these things have to be thought through in advance so we can work in those environments in a way that is constructive and allows us to move forward in a concerted way as the U.S. Government, with a proper strategy to deal with a whole range of security

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and political and economic development issues that are going to confront us.

We have not had the same kind of forward planning exercise in regard to other countries. We've dedicated most planning capability to current situations. In Haiti, for example, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization is closely involved with the Western Hemisphere bureau to work through the whole range of election issues there in order to make the elections minimally acceptable.

JFQ: *What is the most important yet least understood capability or contribution that the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization affords national security?*

AMB Pascual: *Planning.* The military has understood the importance of planning for a long time, but we haven't understood the importance of it in the civilian world. The process of transition and transformation in any given country is extraordinarily complex. It's not just a question of postconflict operations, and indeed, one of the things that we've had an opportunity to discuss at great length with Joint Forces Command and with [Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] Admiral Giambastiani is that we should remove the concept of *phase four* (that is, postconflict operations) from our vocabulary. If nothing else, we should begin thinking of phase four as a combination of many other phases. There is always a period of stabilization, of trying to provide order and address humanitarian needs. But it's only a temporary situation in which the outside community can come in and do something to a country for the people of that country. It's not sustainable to just stay in that mode.

In addition, we have to deal with unraveling some of the problems and issues of the past. We have to deal with creating the institutions for law and democracy and what that means for an economic system, a political system, a court system, a judicial system, the military, and we have to deal with building a civil society. It doesn't mean we have to get all those pieces perfect, but if we're not conscious of the fact that all of those pieces have to come together at a certain level, then we simply cannot succeed.

Planning enforces a discipline for us to go back and have a reality check. Once we look at the resources and the institutional capabilities at our disposal, do we really still believe that our goals can actually be achieved? And if we can't make that reality check and have the confidence that we have the resources and capabilities to achieve success, then we have to do one of two things: either we have to redefine the mission or we have to do something radical to increase the resources that are necessary to achieve success. But certainly, the last thing we should do is go into that mission without addressing those fundamental points because it means that we're setting ourselves up for failure.

JFQ: *We have had an ongoing debate about the best way to establish interagency integrated operations. Should we keep all of the agencies separate and try to orchestrate consensus or cooperation, or should we have an overarching combatant command? What is your view on the best way to bring the instruments of national power together to face challenges?*

AMB Pascual: There is a reason why we distinguish the civilian and military parts of our government. Both are important, and both need to work together and operate with one another. But it's necessary for us as civilians to have the military participating in civilian structures, so we can have a better understanding of how the military works to coordinate more effectively with it. But it is critical that we maintain a civilian character to the nature of our operations. Similarly, for the military, it is important to have civilian participation in military operations and to provide insight into how civilian parts of our government function and operate. But we have separate chains of command, and there are political and historical reasons why it's

important to keep those separate. With our presence overseas, there's an understanding that there is civilian control over the military. There are too many countries that would love to have authoritarian control imposed by the military as a mechanism for governance internally within their countries. And if their perception of the United States at a decentralized level is that we have combatant commands run by the military where the civilians are simply part of that, and that is their perception of U.S. Government reality, I think it would be counterproductive.

I am a great believer in joint operations. The critical function of the Joint Staff—which is *not* to emasculate the importance of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, or the Marines—is to help the Services create the capability to be interoperable with one another so that within each of those Services, there are greater skill capabilities that can complement one another. It's the same thing with the civilian world: we have different agencies with different skills and capabilities. We've not always had the capability to integrate and work with each other in a unified

strategy. What we should continue to aim toward is to build up those individual agency capabilities but at the same time make clear that it has to be done in an environment of post-jointness and joint operations, where different aspects of the civilian world are functioning much more effectively together, and that we have a joint strategy that actually fits together.

JFQ: *Can you speak to your office's partnership with nongovernmental organizations [NGOs], private voluntary organizations [PVOs], and industry?*

AMB Pascual: It's absolutely critical that these partnerships exist and that they be developed. If we think realistically, NGOs, PVOs, and private industry are generally the implementers of programs on the ground. We need to have two types of skills or response capabilities in order to be effective. We need to build up capabilities in the government: individuals who can deploy quickly, who are trained, and who can design, develop, and manage programs. And we need capabilities outside of government with NGOs, PVOs, the

private sector, and the international community, who are the implementers of programs: the police, police trainers, rule of law experts, and economists.

In working with nongovernmental organizations, we have to be able to make them feel that their skills are being taken into account, that we're cataloguing them effectively, and that, over time, we would work with them to help them train and be able to establish a doctrine that allows them to work more effectively and to operate in the field.

JFQ: *Looking back on your term as coordinator and forward to emerging challenges on the national security horizon, what are the most important steps both DOD and State should take now in preparation?*

AMB Pascual: I would say three things: resources, continued work on planning and testing, and transitional security.

On resources, the people and funding that we have to support stabilization and reconstruction are still absolutely minuscule. This year, the administration requested \$121.4 million to support stabi-

Haitian and U.S. officials opening school in Gonaïves



Fleet Combat Camera, Atlantic (Shawn P. Eklund)

lization and reconstruction operations. \$21 million of that was for personnel and operational costs and \$100 million for a conflict response fund. The amount that will actually be available is about \$16 million. In fiscal year 2007, the administration has requested about \$20 million for operational costs and \$75 million for a conflict response fund for building a civilian reserve corps. In my view, the levels that we should probably be talking about are on the order of \$60 million for personnel and operational costs and for training and exercising, another \$50 million or so to create a civilian reserve corps eventually, and another \$200 million or so to have a conflict response fund. Relative to the overall defense budget, this is absolutely minuscule.

Relative to the foreign operations budget, it is a very significant debt, and it's difficult to break in. So I think it's going to be critical for DOD and the State Department to cooperate, to approach both defense and foreign operations appropriators to encourage them to hold joint hearings, and to recognize that we really want to make an investment in national security. We can't break ourselves into the traditional stovepipes of defense budgets and foreign affairs budgets. We need to look at what the resources are to be able to allow the United States to be effective overseas, to engage in effective military operations but also to win the peace.

On planning and testing, there's a lot we need to do to understand ourselves better on the part of the military and on the part of civilians. We've done a lot in developing the basic frameworks for operations, but we need to test and refine them to see what works and what doesn't. As the military has seen over time, the process of exercising has been an essential, critical tool that has been injected back into training programs and doctrine. We have to do that for stability operations. We simply haven't done it in the past, and we've never had the opportunities to do it in the past. Now we actually need to continue to create those opportunities and to feed that back into the training programs of DOD, the State Department, and USAID so that we build cadres of personnel who understand

these issues, who are schooled in them throughout their career, and who are better able to practice them over time.

And the third area that is key is transitional security. Again, it's not a panacea for effective stability operations. But the reality is that when there's been a military engagement and there's a tremendous amount of insecurity on the ground, there is only one entity on the ground that is able to maintain stability and order—and that is the military. If we don't step up to that responsibility, we will end up in chaos. And unfortunately, what we've seen is that if we do not exercise a monopoly on force from the beginning of a military operation and in the immediate aftermath of that military operation, it is a lot harder to get that monopoly when you get further down the road.

JFQ: *Increasingly, our readership is inter-agency and international, not just military. Do you have some final message for the readership?*

AMB Pascual: There are three key things that I would stress, and it's not because they haven't been recognized and addressed, but because the challenges are so big. The first is to operate internationally. The United States or any other country in the world cannot in and of itself be the sole responder. It requires multiple capabilities in order to bring the necessary skills on the ground. If we understand the length of transition that is involved in winning the peace, we have to understand as well that we need multiple partners in that process, and that together, we need to be able to operate in a way that creates an environment that empowers local communities so they can take responsibility for their future.

Secondly, success means not what the U.S. Government does on the ground or any other foreign government does on the ground, but whether the capabilities are created on the part of the host government to take over the situation and maintain stability and peace and facilitate a transition in which there are checks and balances in that political society, where there is democracy and rule of law. And if we don't ask



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ourselves, even before an operation, how that transition can be made to local ownership and local capability, and if we don't have the capability to invest in that transition, we can't succeed. So we must always, always ask ourselves how to build up the local capability.

Finally, we need to keep working toward a national security budget. We need to have greater flexibility to address some of those critical budget factors that are involved in effective and successful transformation and winning the peace to be able to advance our national security interests in the most effective way. So all of us need to hold hands and engage in an educational process with the U.S. public, with our own administration and bureaucracies, and with Congress to help us all understand that we need greater flexibility in how we invest our resources to support the emergence of functional and viable states as a critical component of any kind of operation overseas in order to be able to achieve success and allow our military to come home without the prospect of having to return if there is a collapse. **JFQ**

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