

**Abstract:** Interagency coordination processes have expanded over the last several decades. However, the U.S. government still lacks a formal framework to coordinate interagency responses to overseas contingencies at the country and regional levels. This paper argues that mechanisms for domestic interagency cooperation provide useful analogies for frameworks that could be applied to overseas contingency planning and coordination. The literature review finds that successful domestic interagency contingency response frameworks share the following qualities: (1) clear lines of command during crises, (2) clear mechanisms for directing federal resources to local authorities on the ground, and (3) consistent understanding of the framework among relevant practitioners. In particular, USG should develop a new Interagency Overseas Response Framework (IORF) that draws from lessons learned from domestic analogues (specifically, the National Response Framework and National Incident Management System from FEMA) and past efforts by the Department of State and others to create interagency contingency response frameworks, particularly State's rescinded Interagency Management Framework (IMF). Such an IORF could fill the obvious need for improved interagency crisis response planning and become a bridging strategy for any future reforms to the USG's broader interagency processes that many argue are needed to address the long term security challenges the US will face in the foreseeable future.

## **Tale of Three Systems: Establishing an Interagency Overseas Response Process**

In the last thirty years, the United States has conducted no less than twenty major overseas contingency response missions to address unforeseen natural and manmade security challenges that include and go beyond what many have considered traditional causes of conflict or threats to America's national security. The scope and success of each of these responses have all varied, but some consistent issues common among them all are that (1) each administration has had to rely on ad hoc interagency processes to both formulate and manage the responses, (2) they have required the increased use of military forces beyond their primary purpose for armed conflict to carry them out, and (3) each response required creating new mechanisms to integrate civilian and military functions in order to unify their efforts.<sup>1</sup> There are an array of meta-reasons that might help explain these issues, but for the purposes of this study, the principal cause of concern is that these issues exist because there is no enduring mandate or overarching doctrine that transcends each executive agency's unique

institutional practices or guides how any one agency should integrate the efforts of others when developing or carrying out overseas response operations in support of a government-wide policy the President has elected to pursue in order to protect the national security interests of the country.

While there are formalized (and some may even add evolving) interagency collaborative processes in place to assist the executive branch with its long-term national strategic planning and development of foreign policy objectives, it is the lack of an overarching doctrine for *contingency* responses that leaves regional- and field-level interagency practitioners starting anew to develop methodologies to work with one another each time there is a need to convene for any type of international crisis in which the US chooses to involve itself.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the effectiveness of their planning and capacity to achieve unity of effort and whole of government responses is diminished.

The US has decades of historical lessons learned that demonstrate these issues, but the difficulties in developing whole of government responses for contingencies in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo during the 1990s or Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Liberia and Syria in the 2000s are but just a few contemporary examples. And to suggest that the need to create institutional mechanisms to better integrate civilian and military functions for contingency responses is *not* novel is a monumental understatement. There is a veritable wealth of government, academic, professional and military literature dedicated to the subject.<sup>3</sup> The debates on how to fix these issues are also rich and complicated with many suggesting comprehensive reforms to the entire national security process including major organizational changes ranging from the National Security Council down through regional bureaus, military combatant commands and even embassy country

teams to bring about greater unity of effort across the interagency.<sup>4</sup> While discussing these approaches would be useful, they speak to much larger interagency process issues concerning the broader formulation and execution of US security policies and are beyond the scope of this study. However, a common issue found among these larger discussions is that the lack of an overarching doctrine that integrates the distinct planning cultures of each USG agency has been and will continue to be a major impediment for civilian and military practitioners to plan and conduct integrated responses at regional and country levels however, whenever or wherever they may be organized.<sup>5</sup>

This does not mean to suggest that there have not been any collaborative interagency approaches undertaken for planning and executing overseas contingency responses out in the field. To the contrary, there have been many, and some are even considered successful. But because there is no formalized and commonly understood interagency management process that outlines roles, responsibilities or guidelines for how interagency planning and execution should be conducted for contingency responses, all of these approaches face major challenges: (1) they are all temporary; (2) they all vary; (3) they remain informal, some even voluntary; (4) they are really only common to the lead agency that developed them or only applicable to the situation from which they originated; (5) none of them necessarily unifies the collective objectives and efforts of involved agencies; and (6) they all require strong interpersonal relationships and leaders dedicated to overcoming bureaucratic restraints.<sup>6</sup> In short, the ad hoc processes that the USG follows to develop whole of government overseas responses

are not as efficient as they need to be to respond to crisis situations. Historical trends reflect that these efforts have not been entirely successful as well.

To date, the most notable effort that reflects any tangible progress made by the USG toward resolving these issues was the development of the Interagency Management System (IMS) that originated in the State Department's former Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). By directive of President Bush in 2004, the S/CRS led an interagency effort during the mid-2000s to develop the IMS and intended it to become an institutionalized framework for planning and coordinating stabilization and reconstruction response efforts across the interagency before, during and after US interventions overseas. S/CRS' efforts to develop the IMS met with much bureaucratic resistance from State's regional bureaus and offices under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) due to perceived conflicts that the S/CRS and the IMS posed to their traditional interagency coordination mandates and responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> Despite the bureaucratic resistance and lack of budgetary support from Congress, much progress was made on the development of the IMS through 2008. However, the mandate to advance the IMS was largely ignored by the Obama Administration, and Congressional support remained lackluster as well. Some analysts believe this was due to (1) the perception that major US reconstruction and stabilization responses were going to be highly unlikely in the future and (2) current interagency processes seemed adequate to manage limited interventions.<sup>8</sup> In 2010, the State Department rescinded the IMS and re-organized the S/CRS into a new office known as the State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO).<sup>9</sup> Since that time, there is no evidence of the State

Department or CSO advancing a new or improved planning and coordination response system or other overarching doctrine to replace the IMS.

Interestingly, another notable effort by the USG involves its success with developing and indoctrinating an interagency planning and operational framework for domestic emergency response operations. Also produced under the Bush administration in 2004 in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) manages the National Response Framework (NRF) and National Incident Management System (NIMS)—two frameworks which provide civilian and military agencies, at all levels of government, with commonly understood and agreed upon approaches to guide and organize their interagency coordination efforts for domestic emergency responses.<sup>10</sup> Many contend that because of both its standardization and flexible organizational methodologies, the framework provides common terminology and agreed upon collaborative processes understood across the interagency at the strategic level down to local jurisdictions; this has fostered effective integrated planning and deployment of resources at all levels of government to "...attack a common problem."<sup>11</sup>

So why do USG interagency partners share a commonly understood planning and operations doctrine for *domestic* response operations but not for *overseas* crisis situations? And would overseas response operations benefit from having such a common doctrine? By way of extensive literature reviews of official government and military publications, academic works, scholarly journals and written books relating to the topic, this paper seeks to answer these questions and also build upon similar

studies to determine if a formal overseas planning and coordination framework could be and should be instituted at regional or country levels, and, if so, what it might look like. Following the introduction, the literature review provides insights for the overviews of the IMS, NRF and NIMS that may help the reader in determining why the NRF and NIMS have become indoctrinated interagency planning and coordination frameworks and why the IMS did not. The paper will then highlight similarities between the doctrines to tease out how a hybrid form of the IMS and NIMS could be the basis for developing a new Interagency Overseas Response Framework that is needed for regional and country level interagency organizations to employ in the future.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the study concludes with some recommendations for policy decision makers that the author believes could help institutionalize an IORF across the interagency.

### **Literature Review**

Much of the frustration interagency partners experience when coming together for implementation planning for overseas response operations stems from the confusion involving the scope of purpose for these new types of missions as well as divided support among government decision makers for conducting them. In the early 1990s, many of these missions were described as nation building operations, peacekeeping and stabilization operations or complex contingency operations.<sup>13</sup> Later in the 2000s, they have also been described as security operations, stability operations and reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) operations. And despite the various descriptions, many government decision makers have questioned the utility that these missions provide to protect US national security interests and the suitability of the military (acting beyond its purpose for armed conflict) to carry them out.<sup>14</sup> This might help explain why

there is simply no common definition for what these new types of missions are called among USG agencies or in US law.

For example, Section 1031 of the 2009 National Defense Authorization Act states the following: “The term ‘complex operation’ means an operation as follows: (A) A stability operation. (B) A security operation. (C) A transition and reconstruction operation. (D) A counterinsurgency operation. (E) An operation consisting of irregular warfare.”<sup>15</sup> And later within the same act, Section 1054 defines stability operations as: “The term stability operations means stability and reconstruction operations conducted by departments or agencies of the Federal Government described by Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, National Security Presidential Directive 1, or National Security Presidential Directive 44.”<sup>16</sup> Then if one reviews Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 to gain further clarity on what stability operations are, it defines stability operations as “...an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.”<sup>17</sup>

So at first glimpse, by law all these types of response missions are all considered complex operations and encompass a very wide spectrum of situations and types of civilian and military responses. Yet the directive that calls for building the IMS framework to improve civilian and military collaboration mechanisms for conducting them only mentions the word “complex” once in its entirety. Rather NSPD-44 describes the new framework being necessary for reconstruction and stabilization operations and

is equally ambiguous in describing what reconstruction and stabilization operations include as well as the situations to conduct them.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the US has conducted no less than twenty of these types of operations over the last 30 years with each of them being a crisis response to a situation the President believes threatens US national security interests. Further, they include the increased use of military forces to conduct them and call for better mechanisms to integrate civilian and military functions to accomplish them. Therefore, the reader will see many of the terms listed above used interchangeably throughout and for the purposes of this study should consider their meaning to be consistent.

Researchers and analysts within the national security field also believe that any successful interagency response operation requires that the efforts of the three tools of US foreign policy (diplomacy, defense and development) must be complementary and mutually reinforcing and that the bureaucratic nature of each agency that wield these tools prevents them from effectively doing so.<sup>19</sup> In a comprehensive study on this subject, James Locher finds that the rigid hierarchal structures of these agencies as well as their institutions being the principal cause for limiting their cooperation.<sup>20</sup> While civilian and military practitioners may come together for a temporary interagency grouping, lacking any mandate or incentive that fosters collaboration, they will be seeking first to protect the equities of the agency they represent or else be penalized. They also all come from separate and distinct planning cultures that make cooperative planning and coordination extremely difficult. Locher, as well as Jeffrey Bialos in another similar review of the national security system, also found that there is no commonly agreed upon process that has prepared civilian and military practitioners to

work with one another for missions that fall outside their organization's traditional competencies. Therefore, lacking any agreed upon or commonly understood interagency coordination, planning or budgeting processes, they will all tend to plan and carry out operations their own way or the only way they know how.<sup>21</sup> Both Locher and Bialos also identify that civilian agencies have lacked the depth of trained expert personnel they need to meet the additional demands that interagency planning and coordination requires at regional and country levels. While they have many trained personnel, though nowhere equal to the DOD, the majority of them are engaged in daily operations important to their agencies missions and are not immediately available to be used in interagency groupings when the need arises. It is difficult to effect interagency planning, coordination and management if regional or country level teams do not have the needed functional civilian expertise on hand to do so. This also speaks to having a common lexicon to communicate ideas or processes among civilian and military partners. In another study by Mary Habeck, an Associate Professor of Strategic Studies at the Johns Hopkins University, she points out that the even the word "planning" has divergent meanings among the interagency ranging from "...long-range or contingency to strategic or policy to operational planning, all depending on the circumstances."<sup>22</sup> So when interagency partners believe they are talking about the same topic, they may in fact be talking about different things. Habeck highlights this dilemma by describing the lead up to the Iraq War in 2003 and how there was no government wide standard procedure to guide planning across the interagency or common understanding among the different agencies of how their planning processes differed making it difficult to coordinate and integrate the diverse planning outputs of each agency into a general

plan that every agency could understand and would follow.<sup>23</sup> All this helps explain why current ad hoc planning processes for response operations exist today and why there is a need for an overarching doctrine to address these issues.

In a similar study to this one by Benjamin Cabana, a member of the US National Response Coordination Staff, he finds that there have been historically two schools of thought when it comes to achieving cooperation across the interagency: 1) build trust and familiarity across independent partners to increase their willingness and ability to work together; 2) merge independent partners and remove the separateness altogether.<sup>24</sup> He argues that neither approach is useful in that the first solely rests on all parties' willingness to cooperate, and if they don't, the approach will fail. The second is equally flawed in that managing the entire conduct of complex contingency operations is not the primary function of any one agency. And just because unity of effort is what must be achieved, it does not change the function of any one agency in that it must still carry on with its daily missions. The conclusion he draws is that some sort of hybrid management system that provides strong integrating mechanisms for operational coordination but still respects each agencies organizational autonomy is needed. He offers that the NRF and NIMS is such a doctrine and has proven effective for integrating interagency planning and coordination for domestic complex contingency operations and could be applied to overseas contingency operations.<sup>25</sup> His argument is interesting, but as will be discussed later, it does not take into account the extensive amount of legislation supporting the application of the domestic framework when triggered for use for domestic crises nor the need for similar type of legislation to apply this framework for overseas response operations. It also does not take into account the enormous amount

of resources provided to FEMA to develop and manage the implementation of the framework across the interagency. But what is extremely useful is that the doctrine is binding across the interagency and provides consistent and commonly understood civilian and military integration mechanisms that are lacking for overseas response operations.

There is very little social science or other academic study on the NRF of NIMS but one such study conducted in California in 2001 by Gregory Bigley and Karlene Roberts found the Incident Command System, which the NRF and NIMS are based, to be a highly reliable temporal organization when formed and exhibits many of the hallmarks of Max Weber's bureaucratic management system.<sup>26</sup> They found that the system is highly formalized, characterized by extensive procedures and instructions, standardized routines, positions are arranged hierarchically, objectives and plans are established at the top at or near the top of the hierarchy and used for decisions and behaviors at lower levels. But unlike traditional bureaucratic structures, Bigley and Roberts claim that the interoperable organizational processes built into the system provides the ICS with the flexibility and reliability to operate in turbulent conditions.

And there are very few in the field who currently oppose or make arguments against the NRF and NIMS. Most arguments date back to the application of the NRF (at the time called the National Response Plan or NRP) and NIMS in response to the relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Critics cited the system as being too complicated, outside state and federal agencies had difficulties integrating into the local systems, inconsistency in communications systems among different agencies, management of information flow was slow due to reports flowing among multiple command posts and

that many jurisdictions were not applying the management principles appropriately.<sup>27</sup> Advocates of the framework were quick to respond that of many of the inefficiencies were not inherent with the NRP and NIMS but rather were related to inadequate implementation – as a nationwide framework, both the NRP and NIMS had only been in existence for one year. Many of the issues would be improved upon with fuller implementation across all agencies and better familiarity with the application of the system from experience gained through further application and future training exercises. And as will be discussed later in the overview of the NRF and NIMS, these claims have proven mostly true and attribute to several successful major response efforts including Hurricanes Ike and Gustav 2008 as well as Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

### **Tale of the Interagency Management System**

The Interagency Management System (IMS) is an interagency planning and coordination framework developed by Department of State's former Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). National Security Presidential Directive-44 (NSPD-44), *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, directs the S/CRS to create the framework in conjunction with the Department of Defense. Three of the directive's key concepts include the IMS; the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF); and the Draft Integrated Planning for Conflict Prevention, Response and Transformation Process (IPPCPRT).<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this framework is to provide policymakers in Washington, Chiefs of Missions (COMs) and military commanders with a flexible response system to manage complex reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) engagements and to ensure coordination among the interagency at the strategic, operational and field levels.<sup>29</sup>

According to the IMS guide, the system's design lays out a whole of government R&S strategic and implementation planning process that is intended to facilitate and support: integrated planning processes for unified USG strategic and operational implementation plans, including funding requests; joint interagency field deployments; and joint civilian operations requiring shared communication and information management.<sup>30</sup> Before the IMS framework was rescinded in 2010, two of the three concepts from NSPD-44 had been approved and adopted by the National Security Council. The IPPCPRT was still under revision and had not been approved by the NSC before the IMS was rescinded and work was stopped on its development. According to a 2007 report to Congress, the S/CRS did not require the NSC's approval on the IPPCPRT but sought its approval, because without it, they believed it would not have the standing and authority needed among the interagency for its use.<sup>31</sup>

The roots of the IMS can be traced back to May 1997 when the Clinton Administration issued Presidential Decision Directive 56 (PDD-56), entitled *The Clinton Administration's Policy on Managing Complex Contingency Operations*.<sup>32</sup> Immediately prior to and during the Clinton administration, the US had been increasingly engaging in a number of new types of missions to address national security challenges stemming from failed or failing states across the globe in places like Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti and Kosovo. These new types of missions primarily involved pre and post-conflict security and nation building operations, and they required increased coordination between military and civilian agencies to accomplish them. The Clinton administration forecasted that these types of missions would continue in the future and that a policy was needed to resolve the ad hoc interagency responses that had been taken place for these types

of missions and perceived to be degrading the government's effectiveness in achieving them.<sup>33</sup>

PDD-56 aimed to establish a more integrated interagency consensus and planning framework for use by the National Security Council. Unlike the IMS, PDD-56 did not specifically look to remedy conditions needed for improving upon interagency cooperative mechanisms in the field. Many of PDD-56's provisions were never fully implemented due to bureaucratic resistance from opponents skeptical of the policy and a lack of need for these reforms. The most prominent issues many had with the policy, which included the next President, stem from arguments against the utility of reconstruction and stability missions and the increased use of US military forces in non-traditional roles that many believed exceeded the scope of the military's mandate or purpose to accomplish them.<sup>34</sup>

None of PDD-56 provisions were ever legislated into law, and the Bush administration essentially ignored PDD-56 through to late 2003 until it recognized that interagency reconstruction and stability efforts in both Afghanistan and Iraq were not progressing well. Internal State Department reviews as well as several prominent think tanks concluded that the USG lacked the capacity of civilian experts it needed to manage the ongoing R&S efforts in both countries and that the lack of collaborative interagency planning and execution mechanisms in the field was making it difficult for civilian and military agencies to manage their efforts.<sup>35</sup> Recommendations to the White House and Congress included: establish an office in the State Department to provide a centralized structure to develop and lead planning for civilian stability and reconstruction operations across the interagency; provide State and USAID with the mission to

develop a civilian response corps of civilian experts to surge and carry out R&S activities when situations require; create a reserve fund to support such operations; and develop a curriculum for use in civilian and military training institutions to prepare civilian and military practitioners on the use of the new R&S planning doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

The recommendations motivated Senators Richard Lugar (Republican) and Joe Biden (Democrat) to push legislation through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2004 that would help resolve the interagency bureaucracy.<sup>37</sup> The bill adopted many of the recommendations but lacked full consensus for it in the Senate, so it never came to a full vote. In July 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell also responded to the recommendations and created the new office called the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). The new office would be under his direct authority and would be responsible for coordinating US efforts across the interagency for preparing, planning and resourcing responses to failing or failed states or post-conflict stability and reconstruction operations. With the new office being under his direct authority, Powell believed it would have the weight it needed to coordinate within the State Department and across the interagency. The S/CRS would gain its statutory authorization later that year in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005*, but the new law lacked most of the authorities that were included in the earlier bill proposed by Senators Lugar and Biden.<sup>38</sup> The law essentially authorized the office to exist and provided very vague responsibilities to (1) coordinate amongst the interagency to identify and plan for the types of civilian resources that might be needed for a US response to countries or regions in crisis and (2) to *coordinate* amongst the interagency to train personnel that would be called upon to conduct R&S operations.

A year after the new law, President Bush then issued NSPD-44 in December 2005. The new directive built upon PDD-56 and added additional measures from the Lugar-Biden bill that empowered the Secretary of State to be the lead across the interagency for improving the government's efforts to coordinate, plan for and conduct (R&S) operations and build the civilian response corps. Additionally, the directive provided the Secretary of State with the authority to appoint a coordinator to assist with the new responsibilities.<sup>39</sup> The Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization would have the responsibility to lead all US government R&S activities for the Secretary of State but was required to work closely with the Department of Defense to develop a framework to harmonize civilian and military R&S operations across the spectrum of conflict at all levels. Finally, the directive provided mechanisms to establish a National Security Council special policy coordination committee when needed to provide decision makers with detailed options for an integrated US response for a country or region facing major R&S challenges.

But from the onset of its formation in 2004 through to eventual reorganization in 2010, the S/CRS met with significant bureaucratic resistance and significant budget obstacles. The language in NSPD-44 never clearly defined what all government activities were included in the spectrum of R&S operations and the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005* never mentions the word "lead" for any of S/CRS responsibilities. This induced USAID, State's regional bureaus and many U.S. Ambassadors abroad to perceive many of S/CRS's new coordination functions to conflict with their own, especially concerning overseeing or leading interagency pre-crisis R&S efforts in countries that were considered failing. Even the State Department's

*Foreign Affairs Manual* (its official document that outlines all its bureaus' and offices' functions and responsibilities) never made clear what S/CRS functions were or the scope of its *leading* or *coordination* authorities (emphasis mine).<sup>40</sup> This lack of clarity caused much confusion among the interagency partners as to with whom and when to coordinate with on matters that might or might not fall into the category of an R&S operation. And while NSPD-44 seemed to formalize S/CRS's lead agency responsibility across the executive branch, it did not provide S/CRS with any specific authorities to override pre-existing mandates, interagency coordination processes or budgets belonging to the other civilian offices, which created extremely tough turf wars.<sup>41</sup>

By late 2008, after four years of consecutive attempts by members of Congress to pass the *Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act* (the bill originally introduced by Biden and Lugar in 2004), a reduced version of the bill was passed as part of the *Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009*.<sup>42</sup> It provided a more detailed mandate for the S/CRS's mission and funding needed to begin building the civilian response corps.<sup>43</sup> The new law still did not mandate S/CRS to be the lead agency for R&S operations, but rather its mandate was to continue to plan and coordinate with the other agencies associated with these types of operations. But by that same year, in accordance with its mandate in NSPD-44, S/CRS had worked closely with the DOD and developed a draft framework to organize and guide interagency efforts for conducting integrated planning and coordinated responses for R&S operations for use at all levels of government. The new framework was the Interagency Management System.

As mentioned earlier, the IMS framework consists of three key concepts that include the IMS, the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF), and the Draft Integrated Planning for Conflict Prevention, Response and Transformation Process (IPPCPRT). The first concept of the IMS framework, the IMS, provides the organizational principles and initiating procedures for applying the framework. The triggers to initiate the use of the framework are when agencies are responding to an actual or imminent crisis, or it may be used for long-term R&S scenario based planning as well. According to the guide, crises include the potential for a significant US military action in the near term; actual or imminent state failure; significant events that undermine regional stability such as economic collapse, severe natural disaster; impending or actual genocide; and large-scale displacement of people. Authority to begin initiating the framework is directed by either the NSC or by direct request from the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense.

The organizational principles in the IMS provide how the interagency forms and deploys experts from the civilian response corps when the framework is initiated. The corps of civilian expert personnel are organized into three types of teams, operating at the strategic level in Washington down to the embassy or field level and are all responsible for integrating interagency efforts during all forms of planning and execution for R&S response operations.<sup>44</sup> At the strategic level, select members of the National Security Council Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) will form a team called the Country R&S Group (CRSG) who are responsible for developing the R&S Strategic Plan that includes the interagency strategic objectives, major government tasks and resources to carry out the President's policy efforts. The plan is then forwarded for

decision to the NSC Deputies' or Principals' Committee for approval. The CRSG does not replace the Regional Policy Coordination Committee associated with the region in which the crisis is occurring or is pending, but the CRSG does include members of that committee.

At the theater or operational level, a team of civilian interagency experts form an Integrated Planning Cell (IPC) who deploy to and integrate with a military Geographic Combatant Command to synchronize civilian-military efforts. The IPC leadership is headed by a civilian with an appropriate rank as the military command which it intends to integrate and plan, but reports to the CRSG, not the military commander. IPCs are also neither designed for nor designated to create any R&S operations or implementation plans. Because civilian regional bureaus and military regional commands are significantly separated geographically, the IPC's purpose is to enhance GCC staff civil-military cooperation capacities by assisting in synchronizing civil-military planning efforts between the CRSG, GCCs and Chiefs of Mission (COMs). GCCs currently have what are known as Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) that consist of civilian interagency experts permanently integrated with the GCC staff. The JIACGs staff are there to assist with coordinating daily civil-military interagency operations in the region where they are located. IPCs do not replace JIACGs but will have direct interface with them. The JIACGs remain detailed to the GCC commander and maintain their direct advisory responsibilities.

For field level operations, an Advance Civilian Team (ACT) consisting of varying civilian expertise are deployed to an embassy and overseen by a Chief of Mission to ensure interagency efforts are synchronized at the local or provincial level. The ACT

deploys only when executing the R&S Strategic Mission Plan is beyond the civilian capacity of the COM country team. It may co-locate with a Joint Interagency Task Force (the military) if conditions require, but the ACT still remains under the direct authority of the COM. The team integrates with the embassy country team to assist with the planning and managing the execution of the COMs R&S country plan. ACTs play the integral role for providing the link between the CRSG, IPC and the military force HQs with the COMs R&S country plan. An interesting feature of the ACT is that the guide state's its composition or size, as well as the type/number of experts on the team which will vary dependent upon the situation. But the structure and their relationships remain constant. The basic ACT structure includes: a leadership office, functional offices, an integration team and agency representation positions. While not specific, it implies that functional teams are where embassy country team expertise are integrated with the associated expertise in the ACT. Once integrated the team may form a basic structure that includes: a leadership section, planning section, resource section, operations section, strategic communications section, situation analysis section and an administrative support section.

The second key concept of the IMS framework is the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF). Once the IMS is triggered and the CRSG forms, the ICAF provides interagency partners with a common iterative methodology to formulate mutual understanding and agreement about the drivers creating the security challenges involved and requiring change for the country in crisis or pending crisis. The results of the ICAF are used to develop the situational analysis needed to help develop the policy options for senior officials to consider and to inform ensuing planning processes that

may follow. The ICAF is iterative and used throughout the entire R&S operation. In this context, the methodology is also used by the IPC assisting the GCC as well as the COM and ACT at the field level. The results of the ICAF in the field should help inform the COM and assist him/her with the development of the country implementation plan.

The third key concept is the USG Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation (IPPCPRT). According to the doctrine, though still in draft and not complete, the planning framework is designed to address crisis response planning (CRP) but can be used for R&S contingency based planning as well. CRP addresses imminent or existing crisis and R&S contingency based planning considers how to address potential crisis in a country or region over a 2 to 3 year period. Again, the initiation of the framework begins by a directive from NSC or from either the Secretary of State or Defense. Regardless of the situation, the IPPCPRT divides planning efforts into three levels and is managed at the national level by the CRSG. The first level provides detailed processes that the CRSG follows to determine the overall policy objectives for the R&S operation to gain approval by senior policy decision makers. At the second level, the CRSG develop the overall R&S strategy and the R&S Strategic Plan that include the major mission objectives, essential tasks and necessary resources to achieve the overarching R&S policy objectives. Following the approval of the R&S Strategic Plan, the third level is where the COM becomes responsible for implementation planning at the field our country level with assistance from the ACT when requested. The COM (or the Deputy Chief of Mission [DCM]) leads the embassy country team and/or augmented ACT through the process that synchronizes diplomatic, development and defense programs and tasks needed to

develop the R&S Country Plan as well the processes to monitor progress towards the goal of accomplishing the R&S Strategic Plan.

As a supporting tool of the IPPCPRT, planners at all levels use the R&S Essential Task Matrix for identifying the relevant tasks that may be necessary to achieve the strategic goals as well as prioritizing and sequencing activities within the R&S operation.<sup>45</sup> The matrix is divided into five broad technical areas (Security, Justice Reconciliation, Economic Stability and Infrastructure, Humanitarian and Social Well-Being, Governance and Participation) that provide the foundation for the CRSG and COM to think systematically about the R&S operation and establish goals. The five broad technical areas and their related supporting tasks provides civilian and military planners with visual means to conceptualize a diverse number of tasks specific to any one sector and/or how those sectors may be interrelated. This is what enables the CRSG and COM to prioritize and determine assignment of specific tasks. At present, as well for previous contingency response operations, these are the operational civilian and military integrating mechanisms that are lacking at regional and field levels for any type of contingency or crisis response.

As mentioned earlier, the entire IMS framework had never been fully implemented but each of the key concepts had been exercised or applied in some degree over a 4 year period during many training exercises or for some real world situations before it was discontinued. The majority concerns involving the IMS centered on four key issues that principally came from regional bureau staffs, USAID staffs, and COMs.<sup>46</sup> First, S/CRS's role for leading interagency planning and coordination for preventing conflict or a pending crisis was perceived to conflict with the responsibilities

of State's regional bureaus and COMs who are responsible by law for providing overall direction, coordination and supervision of all US foreign activities in a region or country.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, it was the guidance in NSPD-44 giving S/CRS the responsibility to lead and coordinate "prevention" R&S operations in countries pending conflict or crisis that fostered the most resistance or objections to the framework. Further, opponents of the framework would point out that while NSPD-44 mandated S/CRS to lead interagency planning for prevention R&S operations the 2008 RCSMA, the law mandating S/CRS' responsibilities, does not.<sup>48</sup> The second issue manifests as a result of the first. Neither NSPD-44, the 2008 RCSMA nor the IMS provides a common definition or understanding among the interagency that extricates traditional civilian and military foreign assistance activities aimed to mitigate instability in failing states from prevention based R&S operations.<sup>49</sup> Lacking a clear definition that separates R&S prevention operations from traditional foreign or military assistance operations that are continuously ongoing creates confusion among the interagency on when the framework should be initiated and/or feel that it disrupts on-going operations if or when the transition occurs. The third was that many believed the IPPCPRT processes were too complicated and in many instances duplicated interagency planning and coordination processes that were already in place.<sup>50</sup> These are fair criticisms, however, it also important to point out that many of the current civilian and military planning and coordination processes discussed here began anew when they were first developed years prior and most likely subject to change if or when the operations from which they originated cease and/or shift to another crisis in a different country or region in the world. Further, the IPPCPRT was not intended to replace the long-term planning and coordination processes among the

different agencies but rather it takes these best practices in order to provide civilian and military practitioners with enduring operational planning and coordination capacities that most civilian agencies lack or never fully practice or understand beyond limited planning for evacuating embassies abroad.<sup>51</sup>

Advocates of the IMS highlight that the additional surge of civilian expertise at the regional and field levels (IPCs and ACTs) significantly improved their capacities to plan and coordinate interagency R&S response efforts, especially at the field level. Additionally, the ICAF and IPPRCT had both been successfully applied in various degrees over the course of their development that included their use to support development of the US strategic plan in Haiti (2005-2006), the Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan in Afghanistan, scenario-based contingency planning efforts in Sudan, US plans to support the UN led effort in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the development of Mission Strategic Resource Plans for the US Embassy in Bangladesh.<sup>52</sup> Many noted that they believed that both the ICAF and IPPRCT provided a good start for forming a common systematic planning process that improved their efforts in identifying interagency goals, responsibilities and resources as well providing mechanisms for sequencing their implementation efforts.<sup>53</sup>

Abruptly in 2010 the efforts to continue developing the IMS ceased and in the DOS 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), it officially disclosed that it would be re-organizing the S/CRS into a new one known as the State Department Bureau of Conflict Stabilization (CSO). And differently from the S/CRS, the CSO would no longer operate as a direct office under the Secretary of State, but would fall under the authority of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and

Human Rights.<sup>54</sup> Though the QDDR did not specifically indicate why the new office was necessary nor why the IMS was rescinded. It does mention that the change was a component of a larger strategy by State to consolidate its capabilities under one Under Secretary that would "...strengthen its ability to lead the U.S. government responses to political and security contingencies."<sup>55</sup> Further, the QDDR also stated that the new office was going to develop and institutionalize a new International Operations Framework (IORF) for crisis response that would "...improve upon its IMS predecessor and include applicable elements from FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS) as well as other similar international frameworks."<sup>56</sup> But as of the time of this study, no components of an IORF have materialized nor did the most recent DoS QDDR published in 2015 make any mention of it. Further there are indications that the CSO may in fact no longer be involved with this effort and its responsibilities have been reduced to concentrating on developing the civilian response corps and providing their expertise to regional bureaus and embassies upon request to assist with analysis and planning for missions relating to conflict prevention or crisis mitigation.<sup>57</sup>

Again, there are no clear or precise explanations as to why the State Department rescinded the IMS or why it re-organized the S/CRS into a new office. Informed speculation by the author points to a "perfect bureaucratic storm" as cause and not necessarily any fault with the framework or the S/CRS. First, the resistance to S/CRS by regional bureaus and USAID only grew stronger when senior advocates of the S/CRS and the IMS left with the Bush administration in 2008. This left the S/CRS and the new framework without powerful sponsors to promote the programs across the interagency and in Congress. Second, the Iraq Status Forces Agreement in 2008

signaled the withdrawal of US forces and when the last combat brigades departed the country in 2010, with them so did the principal motivation and reminder to create the S/CRS and the IMS. Third, the US economy was in recession in 2010 and Congress was reducing State's size and budgets. And lacking any powerful sponsors, Congress nor State were interested in bolstering programs that many felt had yet to produce strong results or replicated ones already in place. Lastly, just as Bush had disagreed with Clinton's reconstruction and stabilization policies so did Obama with Bush's'. The Obama administration was focused on strengthening the economy and the US' withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. Many analysts believe that this signaled that the President would revert back to more traditional targeted based diplomatic and development strategies to prevent crisis and that in any event, large-scale reconstruction and stabilization interventions would be highly unlikely in the future.<sup>58</sup>

This review identifies some observations that may be useful in answering the primary research questions. It appears that the majority of issues were not necessarily within the key concepts of the IMS' framework but rather are within the leading and coordinating responsibilities of the S/CRS provided in NSPD-44. In this context and for the purposes of this study, it is important to point out that for either of the planning scenarios the IMS was designed to be used (contingency planning or crisis response planning), the doctrine makes it clear that it is a response tool and only initiated upon directive by the appropriate decision makers or requested by a COM, not the S/CRS. The IMS was intended to provide a temporal common operational planning and coordination framework that is clearly lacking across the interagency at regional and field levels. Whether or not inherent long-term planning processes or operations

regional bureaus, USAID or even the DOD carry out daily renders an overall effective whole of government prevention or stabilization based strategy for any particular country or region are part of larger arguments discussed earlier and beyond the scope of this study – but it appears that agencies resistant to the framework perceived that the S/CRS and the IMS were on a path that threatened these bureaucratic independences.

The incomplete nature of the framework makes it difficult to assess. This nascence is also most likely why there are some components that are still lacking or why improvement is needed. Though the organizational and planning concepts it does provide are useful. The organizational structures it provides for the field level create standardization across the interagency where currently none exists. For example, no embassy country team is organized the same way nor are they equipped to manage operations. The structure of the ACTs brings both the additional capacity for any COM to manage response operations while also providing civilian and military partners with a common methodology to organize for work. The concepts for producing an R&S Strategic Plan and Country R&S Plan are beneficial in that they offer State, USAID and DOD with common planning objectives and expected outputs that requires them to adopt an integrated civil-military decision making process in order to produce them. It is well understood that each agency has its own distinct planning purposes, culture and approaches, but as a response tool, the temporary use of the IMS framework provides each agency with a common language and planning constructs they can share while still maintaining the autonomies of their current long-range planning systems.

### **Tale of the National Response Framework and Incident Management System**

Developed and managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) former Office of National Preparedness (now the National Preparedness Directorate), the National Response Framework (NRF) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) form a nationwide interagency domestic emergency response planning and coordination framework. The NRF describes specific authorities and methodologies to structure and integrate federal, state and local efforts for incident management while the NIMS provides interagency partners with common doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology and organizational processes that are necessary to conduct the collaborative responses prescribed in the NRF. Both are the end products of a long history of collaboration between federal, state and local governments spanning over forty years and the authority for their creation and use today emanates from numerous sources.<sup>59</sup> But the principal authorities establishing them across the interagency and at all levels of government are found in the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (HSA) and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, *Management of Domestic Incidents* (HSPD-5) issued in 2003 (NRF Authorities).

The HSA and HSPD-5 were among many reforms taken by the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress and President George W. Bush to improve upon domestic national security processes in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001. The new law called for a number of reforms including combining 20 existing federal agencies (FEMA being among them) under a new cabinet level department called the Department of Homeland Security. The HSA also statutorily required the new DHS Secretary to lead USG efforts to work with state and local governments to develop and administer a unified National Response Plan (now the NRF) and National Incident Management System to strengthen USG

preparations, responses and recovery from terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies within the United States.<sup>60</sup> HSPD-5 echoed these responsibilities and directed all executive agencies to cooperate with the DHS to develop the NRP as well as adopting NIMS within their departments and agencies and use the system in all their domestic incident management and emergency prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities, as well as those actions taken in support of State or local entities.<sup>61</sup> And to ensure NIMS was to become a nationwide standard, HSPD-5 requires states to adopt NIMS in order to receive federal preparedness assistance grants provided for in earlier legislation and in the HSA.

The reasoning for Congress and the White House to call for the NRP and NIMS was because prior to 9/11 terrorist attacks, US national crisis response measures had resided in 5 separate plans which led the USG to be unprepared for and extremely inefficient in coordinating its response among federal, state and local agencies.<sup>62</sup> DHS was successful in its efforts and on October 10, 2003 produced the NRP which consolidated all 5 separate response plans into a “single, integrated and coordinated response plan.”<sup>63</sup> Further, on March 1, 2004 DHS released the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to be incorporated with the NRP and provides a common national preparedness and response management doctrine to be applied by interagency partners, from the strategic level down to local jurisdictions, to work more efficiently and effectively with one another.<sup>64</sup>

Producing a single national response plan and interagency management framework to facilitate its use among the entire interagency is quite a monumental task for any agency let alone a brand new one. But fortunately, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA), one of the federal agencies consolidated under the DHS, had been working towards these efforts across the interagency for over a decade prior to the 9/11 attacks. In 1988 the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (Stafford Act) was passed and made FEMA the lead USG agency responsible for manmade and natural disaster preparation, mitigation response and recovery.<sup>65</sup> The law provided definitions and authorities to enable FEMA to devise systematic processes for federal agencies to provide financial or physical aid to state and local governments with incidents meeting criteria for major disasters or emergencies. The result was FEMA producing the Federal Response Plan (FRP) in April 1992 which provided a comprehensive framework across the interagency for maximizing the use of federal resources in support of state and local emergency response and recovery efforts.

Under the DHS, FEMA would maintain its authority to administer the provisions of the Stafford Act and was delegated to continue as the lead agency for developing the new national response plan and interagency management framework pursuant to the directives in HSPD-5 and the HSA. With the requirements outlined in the 2002 HSA and HSPD-5, FEMA was able to build upon the FRP and synchronize it with the other existing federal emergency response plans to produce the 2003 National Response Plan.<sup>66</sup> The NRP, in conjunction with the NIMS, was extremely useful because for the first time, the USG now had a unifying doctrine that provided a framework across the interagency, and at levels of government, that outlined roles and responsibilities and statutory authorities to facilitate organizing and integrating their efforts for responding to

incidents “that ranged from the serious but purely local to large-scale terrorist attacks or catastrophic natural disasters.”<sup>67</sup>

FEMA also drew from decades of experience in coordinating the interagency to devise the National Incident Management System which provides interagency partners with the common doctrine, concepts, principles, terminology and organizational processes that are necessary to conduct the collaborative responses prescribed in the NRP. At its core, NIMS is built upon the Incident Command System (ICS) and Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS), which civilian, state and national level emergency responders developed over nearly thirty years.<sup>68</sup>

Both the ICS and MACS originated from a 1970 congressional commission that mandated that the US Forest Service (USFS) work with California fire protection agencies to devise a new interagency management system.<sup>69</sup> In 1970, wildfires devastated Southern California, where responders had numerous setbacks due to interagency communication and management problems.<sup>70</sup> The USFS and its California fire protection agency partners formed the commission known as FIRESCOPE (Firefighting RESources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies). FIRESCOPE produced the ICS and MACS from organizational management science and best practices from around the nation.<sup>71</sup> ICS provided common terminology, response procedures, and a flexible command hierarchy for local jurisdictions. MACS provided the same for state and federal resources.

Throughout the 1980s, the success of these systems spread. Numerous states voluntarily adopted FIRESCOPE and held ICS/MACRS trainings.<sup>72</sup> As the systems evolved and spread throughout the US, the public safety community recognized that the

flexibility and continuity the ICS/MACS provided may also be effective for incident management operations for other emergency situations.

This prompted FEMA, in close collaboration with other agencies, to research and produce a new all-hazard system known as the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). While the nature of each incident may differ, the overall management approach was found to be inherently the same. NIIMS combined the ICS/MAC into one single management system which included slightly modified terminology and scalable operational protocols. The NIIMS became the cornerstone of FEMA's emergency management system and the framework undergirding the FRP and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Upon the NRP and NIMS release in March 2004, DHS had high confidence that compliance across the interagency and throughout states would move quickly. Primarily because most federal agencies were already familiar with many of the coordination processes in the NRP which were built upon from the FRP. Further, many state and local governments already had working knowledge of the ICS which is the foundation of the NIMS. But soon after the release of the NRP and NIMS, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in August 2005 and response efforts were not as effective or successful as anticipated. This prompted a number of studies that identified numerous issues that ranged from high-level policy and planning issues to operational matters to pre-disaster preparedness among all levels of government.<sup>73</sup>

While there were many issues, one of the most prominent challenges for the response was that the NRP did not adequately anticipate the Federal government needing to be prepared to assume many of the local and state government functions

during such a catastrophic event. The NIMS is built upon expanding command and control architectures from the local level up and expands as more agencies, jurisdictions or levels of government become involved. In the case of Katrina, many local and state government response capabilities were either incapacitated or so rapidly overwhelmed that they were unable to perform their roles under NIMS ICS architecture. This led to confusing organizational structures in the field which further made it unclear on roles and responsibilities for response efforts.

Another key finding was that DHS did not establish its NRP specified disaster site multi-agency coordination center (a Joint Field Office) until several days after the Katrina struck. It also was not located as near the disaster site as should have been. The Joint Field Office (JFO) provides the single location for all federal departments and agencies to acquire situational awareness, direction and interface with other agencies. Additionally there was some confusion as well in regards to the unified command structure within the JFO once it was established that also led to responses not being well coordinated. The confusion came from the two lead federal officers under the DHS trying to direct operations. The Federal Coordinating Office (FCO) by law determines the types of relief most urgently needed, establishes the field office and coordinates federal relief efforts. The other officer, the Principle Federal Officer (PFO) was not a legislatively authorized position but rather was created by DHS in the NRP. The PFO is designated by and represents the DHS Secretary as the leading federal official and according to the NRP serves as the primary point of contact for state and local officials.<sup>74</sup>

Again, there were numerous issues but at the most fundamental level, a major reason why the response to Katrina did not go as planned is that many at the local, state and even federal level were simply just not familiar with the NRP or NIMS. This lack of understanding resulted in failure to apply the coordination mechanisms needed to sequence the responses required. This also resulted in local, state and federal agencies implementing responses blindly without any guidelines or chains of command.<sup>75</sup>

These and the many other findings led Congress to pass the *Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006* in order to provide FEMA with the additional structure and means to reform the NRP and to oversee implementation of the NRP and NIMS nationwide. Many of the studies also cited the NRP as being too cumbersome, which prompted FEMA to revise the NRP and re-publish it as the National Response Framework (NRF) in January 2008. The statute also codified the creation of regional FEMA headquarters throughout the US to work more closely with states to assist with the development of their preparedness plans as well as put the necessary mechanisms in place to quickly organize a federal interagency operations center (the JFO) to assist with response operations if or when the situation required. Since the Katrina Act, the NRF and NIMS have been significantly improved and successfully employed almost daily for routine emergency responses and for a few major crises such as Hurricanes Ike and Gustav in 2008 as well as Hurricane Sandy in 2012. They have become an institutionalized interagency process that integrates multiple different agencies and disciplines, to include the military, for domestic disaster contingency planning and/or emergency operational responses.

## **Analysis and Tale of the International Operational Response Framework**

The distinctions between the executive and legislative actions taken to institutionalize the two frameworks is stark and vast as well as their intended purposes (or lack thereof). The NRF/NIMS are organized upon interagency efforts and statutory requirements spanning nearly 40 years while efforts taken to develop the IMS started completely anew and are based on one executive directive and two ad hoc pieces of legislation spanning four years. Further, there are laws that establish criteria to initiate temporary interagency federal responses for emergency situations, but no such policy or legislation exists, short of declaring war, for overseas operations. This still leaves a very important needs gap making the development and institutionalization for an international response framework very difficult to accomplish. However, this does not mean that such a framework could exist for overseas missions.

An instrumental component undergirding the NRF/NIMS are the Stafford Act's statutory definitions and agency responsibilities to provide assistance by the Federal Government to State and local governments. Domestic agencies are armed with the definitions of what emergencies are and/or what constitutes major disasters as well as their responsibilities for providing assistance for these situations. The law does not prescribe how to organize and coordinate their efforts when these situations occur but the NRF and NIMS do. Because a "type" of pre-determined response will be needed, domestic agencies are able to "bundle and manage resources" to deliver core capabilities in anyone of these types of emergencies or disasters, despite its size, scope or complexity. This is done by way of the NRF Essential Support Functions Annex. Having a baseline of response requirements are what allow the NRF/NIMS to provide

the consistent coordinating structures for building and employing these core capabilities as the situation requires. The flexibility the NRF/NIMS provides is found in applying common approaches to coordinate different core capabilities whenever they are employed. More simply, how agencies can coordinate does not change but which agencies (core capabilities) are involved in the process will most certainly always be different.

In many ways, overseas contingency planning presents more difficulties than domestic response planning for several reasons. First, U.S. contingency operations in foreign settings have less clear lines of authority. This results from the lack of a statutory hierarchy among cabinet agencies. In domestic operations, localities submit to their states, and states ultimately submit to federal authorities for assistance in most circumstances. In contrast, federal agencies compete for authority and resources. The lack of a natural interagency hierarchy at the federal level presents both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because the President can mandate continuity among federal policies; in contrast, states can pursue different frameworks than federal counterparts in some circumstances, which can impede coordination. However, the horizontal authorities at the federal level also present a curse, because executive agencies strive to avoid having their activities commanded by others. This creates difficulties for any one agency (such as S/CRS or CSO) charged with managing activities from other agencies.

Additionally, interagency planning for overseas contingencies faces budgetary constraints that affect domestic processes much less. Congressional and bureaucratic hurdles limit budgetary fungibility in international contingency responses. In

emergencies, federal authorities need to direct resources to regional and local authorities rapidly. Domestic contingency response mechanisms have mature methods to financially achieve this. FEMA federal coordination officers (appointed by the President) have clear jurisdiction over rapidly deployable emergency federal resources, including Stafford Act funds—which Congress authorizes in advance.

In contrast, no similar framework exists for overseas contingencies for two main reasons: (1) the specificity of Congressional appropriations and (2) bureaucratic parochialism. Because no overseas Stafford Act fund exists, transferring funds to an overseas contingency operation would potentially require Congressional authorization to move funds away from their designated purpose. Creating a Stafford Act-like fund for overseas contingencies would help mitigate this, but parochialism would still persist. Federal agencies tend to guard their budgets, and they could potentially be unlikely to disperse funds to regional or local actors operating under other agencies. By nature, interagency activities would involve multiple U.S. actors interoperating in the crisis zone. This creates tension between (1) the benefits of centralizing contingency coordination through a single actor (such as CSO) and (2) the necessity of rapidly moving funds from the coordinating authorities to other agencies with elements on the ground.

An additional factor that has delayed the development of overseas contingency plans is the lack of standardization of the definitions of what constitutes a “crisis” or “contingency.” One potential explanation for this comes from the variation in presidents’ perceptions of what international situations merit U.S. response. Some presidents only react to events that affect a high threshold of U.S. interests, while others have a lower threshold for action. Presidents have greater latitude to respond

selectively to international crises because they have less direct effects on U.S. citizens than would domestic crises such as hurricanes. Thus, presidents' tend to display less variation in their willingness to respond to domestic crises. This has made it easier for administrations and lawmakers to standardize what domestic crises require response.

Although this lack of clarity has hampered the development of an IORF, it does not diminish the need for it. Difficulty standardizing triggers for international contingency operations does not imply that the administration does not need a pre-existing response framework. Presidents can determine which crises deserve a response on an ad hoc basis. But regardless of their doctrine, they would benefit from a pre-existing framework to guide U.S. response when the President does decide to act.

Overseas stabilization and reconstruction processes have many structural parallels to domestic contingency processes. However, the overseas operations lacks some critical components. The table below compares the analogues (or lack thereof) between the overseas and domestic actors in their respective contingency processes.

**Table 1: Comparison of IMS and NRF**

IMS		NRF	
President		President	
Principals Committee / Secretary State and Defense		Principals Committee / Secretary Homeland Security and Defense	
CRSG	R&S Strategic Plan	NRCC	National Incident Action Plan
Unified Command		Unified Area Command	
COM / ACT / JTF*	R&S Country Plan	JFO / JTF*	Joint Incident Action Plan
* COM or ACT Leader "could" act as the FCO; JTF CDR or designated representative acts as the Defense Coordination Officer for military oversight and mission assignments.		* FCO appointed by President to coordinate federal response; JTF CDR or Defense Coordination Officer for military oversight and mission assignments.	
		Governor	
		State EOC	State Incident Action Plan
		Local Mayor	
FACT / MIL TF	Operations Plan	Local EOC	Local Incident Action Plan

Overseas S&R response operations lack two major capabilities that domestic operations have. First, although the Embassy is the statutory nerve center of contingency operations, it lacks the relevant expertise that EOCs (or JFOs) have. EOCs (JFOs) specialize in contingency operations, whereas Embassies and the COM have a much more diverse mission set and do not continuously focus on contingencies. In this context, the ACT provides this additional planning and coordination capacity for the Embassy.

The second factor missing from the S&R operations hierarchy is an analogue to the Field Coordinating Officer (FCO). The FCO operates as the expert liaison between state and federal entities involved in the incident response. Embassy teams do not seem to include a designated or trained staffer with expertise in coordinating federal

and in-theater contingency operations. The FCO improves continuity of effort across spatial scales and helps direct federal resources to in-theater actors. Without a similar capacity, Embassies cannot deliver as much continuity or targeted action. And COMs naturally do not have the training or experience that FCOs have in implementing contingency responses. This could be addressed as suggested by the IMS with the COM delegating the FCO responsibility to the DCM or ACT leader should such situations arise and the President deem a major response is warranted.

The IMS, while incomplete in some capacities, demonstrates that it shares many of the useful interagency integration principles the NRF and NIMS have proven to be successful. Both frameworks provide standardization, clear lines of authority, and autonomy to the agencies involved the process. While it does provide consistent planning requirements (the R&S Strategic Plan and Country R&S Plan), the IPPRCT will require more detail on the rational decision making process interagency teams should employ to meet those requirements as well outlining roles and responsibilities of sub-teams (or agencies) to provide how they to contribute to the process and are linked to achieving the overall objectives of the mission. Here too, IPPCPRT can draw on the planning process found in the NRF and NIMS to form the framework of the decision making process and correlate it against the team constructs for the CRSG, IPC and ACTs at the country field level.

## **Conclusion**

Since the 1990s, the USG has called for improved interagency integration mechanisms to accomplish new types of domestic and overseas response missions that address new and potentially unforeseen national security challenges. It has conducted no less than twenty of these major overseas contingency responses over the last thirty years. However, each response has relied on ad hoc interagency processes to both formulate and manage these operations. As discussed above, the ad hoc nature of these responses has limited their effectiveness, and it has reduced the USG's ability to build institutional capacity and knowledge over time. Implementing a standardized interagency response framework would give USG a higher level of readiness and a latent capacity to respond rapidly to crises when the President chooses to do so.

This paper has reviewed past efforts to create interagency frameworks for responding to overseas contingencies, and it has shown that domestic frameworks provide useful parallels for how to design processes for overseas operations. Debates about when to respond to overseas contingencies should not preclude national security professionals from having the tools they need to effectively plan and carry them out when called upon to do so. A catastrophic disaster or crisis in the US will demand a coordinated USG response, which is why the necessary reforms to develop and indoctrinate these coordination tools across the domestic interagency have materialized effectively. Although there is less consensus about when to respond to contingencies abroad, the NRF and NIMS can still be useful in mirroring efforts to produce an overseas interagency operational response framework.

A much larger debate surrounds whether the broader national security system and interagency process can adequately address long term security challenges that face the US. Bureaucratic institutions seem to have posed the greatest obstacles to solving this broader issue, which was perhaps why Congress has not provided the resources needed for this reform. While NSPD-44 certainly provided a good first step, the mandate was very broad and looked to solve both the narrower interagency issue discussed in this paper and the much larger issue of reforming national interagency strategic processes writ large. The paper's analysis suggests that early efforts to create the IMF within the State Department failed to take off for several reasons. First, creating a new office to create IMF that lacked the operational experience and resources to establish a cross-cutting capability might not have been the best approach, but it was certainly understandable given the divergent cultures among State, USAID and the DOD. And second, the office proved to be ill-equipped to overcome the powerful bureaucratic turfs that opposed it inside the State Department and USAID, which resulted in IMF's abbreviated history.

Could IMF provide a basis to address long-term interagency planning and programming reforms many seek? Perhaps, but as a first step, the immediate need is for a response tool that the interagency can deploy to coordinate responses to contingencies or crises overseas. The good news is that the IMF shares many attributes of a proven domestic interagency response framework (the NRF/NIMS integrated system), and IMF includes common terminologies, a common interagency concept of operations and a set of interagency roles and responsibilities that could eliminate barriers currently diminishing effective interagency responses overseas. Just

as it did with the domestic framework, it will take time to indoctrinate this framework across the interagency. Many have said domestic response mechanisms did not provide sufficient preparation for the first major natural disaster (Hurricane Katrina) that occurred after they were developed. However, domestic agencies demonstrated how such mechanisms can be refined over time and how the interagency's ability to implement such processes can be enhanced through capacity building and training.

This experience from domestic situations demonstrates why an office should be charged with maintaining and improving doctrine and processes for overseas contingency responses. Policy makers should consider updating NSPD-44 and clarify the intended purpose of the framework in lieu of centralizing contingency operations. Centralizing interagency *leadership* in one agency—as opposed to appointing an office to *maintain* the doctrine—would exacerbate the bureaucratic frictions that hampered reform in the past. Maintaining the doctrine would involve ensuring other agencies receive sufficient training on it and updating the doctrine with lessons learned from domestic and international experiences. Further, instead of creating a new institution, the office that manages an IORF should be in a setting (like USAID) that is more established and has more institutional operational planning capacity and experience. Alternatively, perhaps it could be a joint office that incorporates resources of State's CSO and the Office of Civil-Military Cooperation in USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning or Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. This would be similar to the Office of Foreign Assistance created when USAID came under oversight of the State Department in 2006.

Additionally, a budgeting and funding structure for overseas contingency operations should be created much like domestic programs have the Stafford Act emergency fund. The funding process must be designed to direct rapidly resources from central authorities to actors in-theater. Emergency funds for overseas contingencies should be pre-allocated by Congress in order to avoid time-consuming bureaucratic and procedural hurdles that would slow reallocations of funds in the middle of a crisis abroad. Domestic operations have clear lines of authority which direct funds and other resources from federal to local authorities, and a similar disbursement process would substantially benefit overseas operations.

Training on interagency processes for overseas contingencies should be conducted through a central integration center, much like FEMA's National Integration Center under its Office of Protection and National Preparedness. This office would facilitate an interagency process to refine and disseminate relevant doctrine, and it would provide training and capacity building to other agencies so that the doctrine can be effectively implemented. One component of this mission should include the creation of a stabilization and reconstruction curriculum for use in programs of the Foreign Service Institute, the National Defense University, and the United States Army War College. As discussed previously, the horizontal nature of federal agencies' authorities could complicate interagency activities abroad, because rarely will one agency want to take orders from another or have its funding controlled by another executive agency. This source of bureaucratic tension can be mitigated in part by creating this central coordination center with a mandate to collaborate, train, and build buy-in among stakeholder agencies.

History shows us that the US has found itself consistently responding to contingencies or crises over the past thirty years, and the likelihood that the US will find itself doing so again in the future—whether in post-conflict Syria, Ukraine, the Korean peninsula, the Middle East, or elsewhere—is highly probable. The tale of a new overseas response system should begin today to prepare for the inevitable contingencies of tomorrow.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey P. Bialos, *Ideas for America's Future: Core Elements of a New National Security Strategy*. Center for Transatlantic Relations, (2008), 326.

<sup>2</sup> Clark A. Murdock, Michele A. Flournoy, and Mac Bollman. *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (2005), 7.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Clark A. Murdock, Michele A. Flournoy, and Mac Bollman. *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (2005) or James R. Locher III, "Forging a New Shield" (Washington, DC: Project on National Security Reform, November 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> James R. Locher III, "Forging a New Shield" (Washington, DC: Project on National Security Reform, November 2008), 279.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Lederman. "National Security Reform for the Twenty-first Century: A New National Security Act and Reflections on Legislation's Role in Organizational Change." *J. Nat'l Sec. L. & Pol'y* 3 (2009), 371.

<sup>7</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *In Brief: State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)*. Congressional Research Service, (2012), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10 – 11.

<sup>9</sup> Hillary Rodham Clinton, *First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Leading through Civilian Power*, (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2010), 135.

<sup>10</sup> *National Incident Management System, Online* (Washington, DC: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2008), 6, <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> 2010 QDDR states the IMS will be replaced with a new International Operational Response Framework (IORF). Since no new IORF has been published, the author uses the term to describe the new framework being proposed in this study. For more background see 2010 QDDR, 140-141.

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- <sup>13</sup> Bialos, *Ideas for America's Future: Core Elements of a New National Security Strategy*, 322.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> *Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009*, Public Law 110-417, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., (October 14, 2008), 234.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 251.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, September 16, 2009, 1.
- <sup>18</sup> George W. Bush, National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*. Washington, DC: The White House, 2005, 5.
- <sup>19</sup> Benjamin Cabana, "Losing Lessons at the Water's Edge: Applying FEMA's Interagency Coordination Doctrine to International Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations," *InterAgency Journal* 5-2 (Summer 2014), 3.
- <sup>20</sup> Locher, "Forging a New Shield," 159-160.
- <sup>21</sup> Bialos, *Ideas for America's Future: Core Elements of a New National Security Strategy*, 325-326.
- <sup>22</sup> Mary R. Habeck, "The Puzzle of National Security Planning for the Whole of Government," *Conflict Management and Whole of Government: Useful Tools for US National Security Strategy*, ed. Volker C. Franke, Volker C. and Robert H. Dorff (Carlisle Barrack, PA, 2012), 70.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 67.
- <sup>24</sup> Cabana, "Losing Lessons at the Water's Edge," 3.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>26</sup> Gregory A. Bigley and Karlene H. Roberts, "The Incident Command System: High-Reliability Organizing for Complex and Volatile Task Environments." *Academy of Management Journal* 44, no. 6 (2001), 1281-1299.
- <sup>27</sup> Dick A. Buck, Joseph E. Trainor, and Benigno E. Aguirre. "A Critical Evaluation of the Incident Command System and NIMS." *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management* 3, no. 3 *Online* (2006), 3 – 4.
- <sup>28</sup> George W. Bush, "National Security Presidential Directive- 44, Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization" (2005), 5.
- <sup>29</sup> National Security Council R&S Policy Coordination Committee, *Interagency Management System for R&S*, (Washington DC, March 9, 2007), 1.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Stabilization and Reconstruction: Report to Congressional Committees*, GAO 08-09 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, November 2007), 10.

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- <sup>32</sup> George W. Bush, "National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44." *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning R&S* (2005), 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Nina M. Serafino, Catherine Dale, Pat Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, January 23, 2012), 3.
- <sup>34</sup> Brendan Ballou, "Why America's Nation Building Office Failed and What Congress Had to Do With It." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 3, no. 1 *Online* (2014), 3.
- <sup>35</sup> GAO Report 08-9, *Stabilization and Reconstruction*, 10.
- <sup>36</sup> Ballou, "Why America's Nation Building Office Failed and What Congress Had to Do With It," 4.
- <sup>37</sup> *Reconstruction and Stabilization Act of 2004*, Bill S.2127, 108th Congress (March 18, 2004).
- <sup>38</sup> *Consolidated Appropriations Act*, Public Law 108-447 sec. 408, 108th Congress, (December 8, 2004).
- <sup>39</sup> George W. Bush, "National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44." *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning R&S* (2005), 2.
- <sup>40</sup> GAO Report, *R&S*, 13.
- <sup>41</sup> Serafino, Dale, Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad*, 2.
- <sup>42</sup> *Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Title XVI R&S Civilian Management Act*, Law 110-417 sec. 1605, 110th Congress (May 12, 2008), 291.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Interagency Management System for Reconstruction and Stabilization*, Reconstruction and Stabilization Policy Coordination Committee (Washington, DC, March 9, 2007).
- <sup>45</sup> Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, *Post Conflict Essentials Tasks Matrix*, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/crs/rls/52959.htm> (last accessed February 1, 2016).
- <sup>46</sup> GAO Report 08-09, 12.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>51</sup> Habeck, "The Puzzle of National Security Planning for the Whole of Government," 72.
- <sup>52</sup> Caroine R. Earle, "Taking Stock: Interagency Integration in Stability Operations." *Prism: a Journal of the Center for Complex Operations* 3, no. 2 *Online* (2012): 41.

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<sup>53</sup> GAO Report 08-09, 16.

<sup>54</sup> Ballou, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> QDDR (2010), p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *In Brief: State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, October 10, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Response Framework List of Authorities and References*, Departmental Paper, (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011), <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-authorities.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> *Homeland Security Act 2002*, Public Law 107-296, 107th Congress (November 25, 2002), 57.

<sup>61</sup> George W. Bush, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, *Management of Domestic Incidents* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 28, 2003), Section 15.

<sup>62</sup> Bruce R. Lindsay, *The National Response Framework: Overview and Possible Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service (2008), p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Title 42 U.S. Code 5196 (b), *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (1988), Title 42 U.S. Code 5196(b), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/5196>.

<sup>66</sup> Lindsay, "The National Response Framework," 5.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency, *National Response Framework, Second Edition*, (Washington, D.C. : Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency, *NIMS and the Incident Command System*, Departmental Paper (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2004). [http://www.fema.gov/txt/nims/nims\\_ics\\_position\\_paper.txt](http://www.fema.gov/txt/nims/nims_ics_position_paper.txt).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Richard A. Chase, "FIRESCOPE: A New Concept in Multiagency Fire Suppression Coordination." (1980), p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency, *NIMS and the Incident Command System*, Departmental Paper (Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2004), p. 3. [http://www.fema.gov/txt/nims/nims\\_ics\\_position\\_paper.txt](http://www.fema.gov/txt/nims/nims_ics_position_paper.txt).

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<sup>73</sup> Frances Fragos Townsend, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons learned." (*Washington, DC: The White House* (2006), 51.

<sup>74</sup> Lindsay, "The National Response Framework," 10.

<sup>75</sup> Townsend, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons learned," 61.