



2017 Civil Affairs Roundtable Report

Regiment Must Come Together to Consolidate Gains

by Christopher Holshek

If one thing rang loud and clear at this spring’s Civil Affairs Roundtable, it was that the Civil Affairs Regiment needs to speak more with one voice, as a Joint as well as Army capability rather than in its own organizational stovepipes. But this now owes more to opportunities for Civil Affairs to consolidate significant gains in its strategic importance rather than bureaucratic impairments to its future. It also owes to the multipurpose nature of the Regiment – an advantage in today’s complex and uncertain security environment that includes Active and Reserve Component (AC/RC) and Special Operations and General Purpose Force (SOF/GPF) CA units and personnel in the Army and Marine Civil Affairs.

“We need to address the gaps among us, see our diversity as a strength and not a vulnerability, and pull the branch together to have a coherent Civil Affairs voice in larger Joint as well as Army force development discussions,” said keynote speaker Major General Hugh Van Roosen, currently Army Deputy G1. “CA has always been low on the order of Army priorities. That’s no different today, but now we’re more relevant than ever, for several reasons.”

As has happened before, threats to cut the Army CA force loom. Disbandment of the last two battalions of the 85th CA Brigade – the Joint Force’s only Active General Purpose Force CA units, critical to steady state, full-spectrum CA response to demand from Geographic, Service Component, and Joint Force Commands (GCCs, SCCs, and JFCs) – remains postponed from September 15th this year to March 15th 2018, pending finalization the Total Army Analysis (TAA) process. Meanwhile, Army Civil Affairs in general may see further losses, tangential to a possible 15% slice across certain Army structure.

Despite this, CA’s strategic importance continues to grow, as more in Washington realize the importance of the Regiment’s comparative capabilities – if not of CA itself. “Being the best warfighter in the world is not enough,” writes Center for Strategic and International Studies Strategy Chair Anthony H. Cordesman in the March edition of *Military Review*. “Neither is treating stability operations and civil-military affairs as a sideshow.” In addition to greater U.S. focus on “successful civil-military operations as being as important for success as combat,” he even calls for a “revolution in civil-military affairs if [the U.S.] is to be successful in fighting failed-state wars that involve major counterinsurgency campaigns and reliance on host-country forces.”

Even more than the “demand signal” for CA reflected in the Army’s assessment, CA figures prominently in the Chairman’s Joint Force Assessment and Defense Planning Guidance, explained members of the Roundtable’s afternoon panel. There may, in fact, be an opportunity in the new administration’s *Defense Strategic Review* (vice what has been called the *National Defense Strategy*) and *National Military Strategy* and *National Security Strategy* processes. Both retired Marine General

James Mattis, now Secretary of Defense, and Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, who spoke at the 2015 Civil Affairs Symposium and is now National Security Advisor, have talked consistently and repeatedly about the criticality of “consolidating gains” from military action to political outcomes.

Eminent Civil Affairs scholar Nadia Schadlow, whom McMaster has brought on to help write the next *National Security Strategy*, explains in her new book, *War and the Art of Governance*, how CA has been the Army’s under-resourced “neglected stepchildren,” as retired Major General Robert Scales put it in his *Wall Street Journal* review of the book posted after the DoD-approved conference.

“Civil Affairs,” the 2016 Symposium workshop report begins, “is increasingly understood as a national strategic capability to consolidate military into political gains during and from decisive action and in transition from war to peace and from military to civilian lead, as well as to engage partners and other players in the ‘human geography’ to effectively contribute to national interests and policy objectives.”

As its strategic relevance grows, the Regiment’s institutional strength, cohesiveness, and connectivity is improving, especially at the Civil Affairs Branch Proponent at the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). Elimination of the SOF/GPF and AC/RC divides in CA training, as the Association’s unofficial report recommends, is a high USAJFKSWCS priority, as are creation of a fuller branch proponent and its more forceful engagement of the Army staff in Washington. To overcome the incoherencies created by the Army’s diverse CA force, day-to-day contact between the proponent and CA commands as well as directly among them is improving, as members of the first panel noted. Marine CA Groups, at the same time, are now more fully regionally aligned.

Additionally, steady-state relations with interagency partners at especially the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are likewise improving, as for example in the large plurality of CA officers among military command and institution representatives at USAID’s Center for Civil-Military Cooperation.

Nearly 100 attended the National Defense University Center for Complex Operations event on April 4th to review the work captured in the freshly printed *2016-17 Civil Affairs Issue Papers*. In addition to the five finalist papers on the core subject presented at the Civil Affairs Symposium in November 2016, this third volume – co-written by the International Peace & Security Institute – contains a detailed report capturing a rich discussion on “Leveraging Civil Affairs for Full-Range Operations by Theater and Service Commands in the Joint, Interorganizational, and Multinational Environment.”

The report includes a summary of key findings and unofficial recommendations on policy, doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF-P) to inform and guide decisions and discussion on the future of CA as such. The first panel of key stakeholders in CA force development, included representatives from the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), U.S. Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute (PKSIO), 85th Civil Affairs Brigade, Marine 2nd Civil Affairs Group, USMC, and the Civil Affairs Branch Proponent at USAJFKSWCS and the Army Special Operations Center of Excellence.

Among the key findings of the report that most resonated with the panel was that the consolidation of military gains for political outcomes, during both decisive action and stabilization, at all levels and phases. This makes CA a full-spectrum rather than just post-conflict capability for multiple

engagements. Another was how U.S. Special Operations Command, as home to the Civil Affairs proponent, must be the four-star CA advocate to the Army Chief of Staff with respect to the TAA process. This reflects the growing understanding of CA as a Joint capability albeit largely supplied by the Army and the Regiment's performance of an inherently strategic mission even at tactical levels – in accordance with DoD Directive 3000.05 on stability operations and the Army Posture Statement.

In recognition of these insights, panel members agreed that the Army and Marine service staffs should ensure CA and CMO are embedded in Joint and service professional military education (PME) curriculum and major command exercises at all levels. Similarly, Civil Affairs PME and doctrine itself must catch up with the shifting balance between tactical and operational/strategic level CA.

With respect to major command leveraging of CA, they added a recommendation that the CA proponent must help GCCs, SCCs and JFCs form requests for CA forces along doctrinal lines – as coherent rather than ad hoc teams – from CA troop units that must generate them likewise. This long-abused practice has proven to kill leadership and cohesion of CA teams units are trying to build and maintain. They also noted that – in addition to permanent placement of CA planning officers at major commands – CA may also find good use in the Army Security Force Assistance Brigades (four AC; one National Guard).

Another important conclusion was that the emerging Civil Information Management (CIM) capability – a potentially powerful tool to promote all-force and partner agency common operational picture on the civil situation – must be pulled together as comprehensive to the Regiment, manage knowledge and not just information, and incorporate Army, Marine, and civilian partner best practices.

As did the second panel, the first panel found the report's key findings highly useful and was in agreement with many of its recommendations. Most of these recommendations are under consideration at the proponent level, if not for the new Army CA doctrine (FM 3-57) then for inclusion in the new Army Concept for Civil Affairs. Chief among those deemed of highest priority were:

- Organizational recommendations # 1 and 2, on the need for permanent CA staff presence at both the Joint and Army Staff and GCC, SCC, and JFC levels. Both panels had clear consensus that the re-set of CA focus between tactical and strategic/operations levels is best effected by populating Joint, Army and GCC, SCC, JFC staffs with CA at J9 or G9 directorates, with as much focus on stabilization as on combat operations. The last time there was a Civil Affairs Chief at the Army Staff, the first panel noted, was in 1962. The second panel agreed that CA should embrace more a culture of planning – in terms of the Joint Planning process rather than just service or functional command methodologies – at GCC, SCCs, and JFCs by qualifying more mid to senior level CA officers as Joint planners to fill Joint Manning Roster (vice Army) billets for CA planners in support of regional contingency planning.
- Policy recommendations # 2 and 3 with respect to more comprehensive and coherent use of Title 10 U.S.C. 12304B funding to enable a more robust, steady-state presence of CA at supported commands and – as a function of readiness to help close AC CA shortfalls by leveraging RC CA for full-spectrum mission command support (regardless of outcome of the TAA process and decision on the 85th CA Brigade) – as well as in recognition of the CA as the Joint Force's strategic capability to fill civil-military gaps with civilian unified action partners.

- Leadership and education recommendations # 2, 3, and 4 that advocate greater CA participation in mainstream Army and Joint PME courses and schools, greater CA/CMO content in these schools and courses, and more opportunities for civil-military education to promote unified action with especially civilian partners.

Although personnel recommendation # 1 had great support and a proponent-led review of CA as an accession branch is ongoing, the issue remains bureaucratically complicated and there is no clear consensus yet on the larger Army or military problem this initiative would resolve.

Following a 351st Civil Affairs Command luncheon presentation on an example of managing functional specialties was the second panel represented by policy-levels leaders the Joint Staff's J7 Joint Force Development Irregular Warfare Assessment & Integration directorate and the Joint Staff Peacekeeping and Stabilization directorate at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (Stability and Humanitarian Affairs), as well as the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC).

While it agreed with the report's major findings and recommendations, the panel noted the importance of quantifying CA's strategic and operational values-added as much as possible given today's policy and budgetary environment. As the luncheon discussion pointed out, Army Reserve Civil Affairs Commands (CACOMs) are the best laboratory for experimentation for change and improvement for CA, given their close association with GCCs, SCCs, and JFCs. Their regionally aligned extended command structures maintain the only strategic and operational CA capability and engage from the strategic to tactical levels, presenting the best opportunity for proof-of-concept to meet changing realities as a whole of force.

As the Roundtable went on, it identified a major due-out for the proponent to craft an updated CA capabilities report to Congress with respect to the latest CA Capabilities-Based Assessment.

Among the more universal consensus points was how the Association's unofficial, collegial platform of annual Symposium and Roundtables – resulting in the PKSOI-published Issue Papers and report – was proving ideal for enhancing the Regiment's development as a coherent learning organization by advancing a unified, whole-of-CA dialogue and narrative on professional and force development.

Another overarching theme was the need for the Regiment to be more introspective and self-critical, seeking some solutions to DOTMLPF-P issues within its own purview. It was noted that it takes at least three years between the proponent acceptance of a recommendation to program implementation. Yet, in view of its relative insularity with respect to especially multilateral and civilian partners, the Regiment needs to engage key actors in that wider Joint, Interorganizational, and Multilateral environment.

Along similar lines, the Regiment must also more deliberately engage Congress and the public. The USGLC's "Veterans for Smart Power" initiative is a momentous opportunity for members of the Regiment for outreach in their home states and districts and not just Washington. This not only supports the USGLC's goal of a more balanced and holistic U.S. foreign and national security policy approach, but will also raise awareness of CA as a national strategic capability for political-military consolidation.

"This is yet another reason why the Regiment must come together and speak with one voice on Civil Affairs," observed Association President Colonel (ret) Joe Kirlin. "The task is to consolidate our gains as a national institution and exploit the many opportunities now before us. This is the responsibility of every member of the Regiment – not just the Association or the commands. The Issue Paper report

provides a coherent and detailed outline for each of us to present this from standpoint of the roles and positions we are holding in the Regiment. This will enable us to move forward.”

“We have a strategic narrative, we need to use it,” he added.

Among the sound advice heard that day was from Dr. Laura Junor, Acting Director at NDU’s Institute for National Security Studies, who opened the Roundtable by noting that “a major challenge for the Civil Affairs community is to keep what has been built while growing new capabilities” as the regional focus moves from just the Middle East and North Africa to other theaters, from a tactical to operational/strategic mission set, and from unilateral/bilateral to multilateral frameworks.

As every year, the end of the Roundtable featured an open-floor entertainment of nominations for the theme and topic of the 2017-18 discussion beginning at the 2017 Symposium in Chicago from 2-4 November. This will be reflected in a new Issue Papers call for papers, for release in May.

For further information, go to the Association website at: www.civilaffairsassoc.org/