



2024 Civil Affairs Roundtable Report

Roundtable Concludes Productive Year of Looking at “Campaigning and Civil Affairs”

by Christopher Holshek and Dennis J. Cahill

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Introduction

The 2024 Civil Affairs (CA) Roundtable on April 18th closed out another annual cycle of Civil Affairs Corps thematic discussions for CA force and professional development. As with all 15 Roundtables before it, this event’s look at “Campaigning and Civil Affairs” served to advance a more strategically coherent, comprehensive, and integrative understanding of civil-military capacities and capabilities. The Association’s annual thematic series fosters a learning organization beyond an extended Civil Affairs Corps of past and present multicomponent Army and Marine CA professionals, persons from allied and counterpart civil-military organizations, and interorganizational partners. It also promotes a unifying and universal narrative about Civil Affairs.

The Roundtable followed a similarly productive CA Conference held at Fort Liberty, NC, last December. This began with last spring’s Roundtable when Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD (SO/LIC)) Christopher Maier stressed campaigning as the way the CA Corps can best support integrated deterrence. He described it as “a deliberate leveraging, layering, and linking of all elements of power to achieve desired strategic effects” in which he sees a significant if not decisive role for CA across the entire competition continuum. What followed this event has been a chain of positive developments on how the CA Corps looks at itself and how others see Civil Affairs in this context. Among the observations captured in the Conference Report, posted in the 10th volume of the [Civil Affairs Issue Papers](#), were that:

- Civil Affairs capabilities and Civil Affairs Operations (CAO) are integral to campaigning.
- The theater-strategic and operational levels are critical for integration of CA forces.
- Campaigning at joint command and country team levels is inherently an interagency undertaking.
- Campaigning is not only the best way for Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) and Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) to leverage CA but also the best way for CA to support and integrate with these commands.
- Multicomponent CA and multidisciplinary information-related force teaming is the way forward to successful integration of CA forces in strategic competition, integrated deterrence, campaigning, and large-scale combat operations (LSCO).
- Army 38G Military Government Specialists are ideally suited for employment in campaigning and for multicomponent CA teaming.
- The need for dedicated maritime CA forces has once again become more obvious.
- The extended CA Corps needs to create an identifiable 21st century strategic narrative for Civil Affairs writ large.

The most impactful and far-reaching of these observations were on multicomponent CA teaming and the need to promote a universal and unifying narrative on Civil Affairs.

Every year, the Roundtable shifts the CA Corps' annual discussion towards how to best ready CA forces within the context of new strategic and policy guidance along the lines of the annual theme, with a closer look at the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) implications of the above findings. This year, the opening panel of the Roundtable provided updates from representatives of the Joint and Army CA Proponents, the [U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command \(Airborne\)](#), [95th Civil Affairs Brigade \(Special Operations\) \(Airborne\)](#), the [U.S. Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute](#) (PKSOI), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) [Civil-Military Cooperation Center of Excellence](#) (CCoE). Their insights are discussed in detail below.

Keynote speaker Dr. Ajit Maan, Founder & CEO of [Narrative Strategies](#), provided some context on what "narrative" is and why it matters to Civil Affairs. Her presentation helped set the stage for an in-progress report, directed at the December Conference, on "finding a Corps-wide narrative on the Civil Affairs value proposition." Last, as always, was the open discussion of the next annual theme for the *2024-25 Civil Affairs Issue Papers*.

In addition to its own convening role and platforms for multipoint CA-related dialogue, the Association is connected with numerous organizations facilitating the growth of a global network to enhance the value-added of the CA Corps. This includes the [Association of the United States Army \(AUSA\)](#), CCoE, [Reserve Organization of America](#) (ROA), [Foreign Area Officer Association \(FAOA\)](#), [International Stability Operations Association](#) (ISOA), [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#), and [U.S. Global Leadership Coalition](#). It also includes: the [Modern War Institute](#) and [Irregular Warfare Initiative](#) at West Point; the PKSOI at the Army War College, the [Joint Special Operations University](#); and, the [Joint Civil-Military Interaction Network](#). Its sponsors include: [The Patriot Fund](#); [Third Order Effects](#); [Civil Solutions International](#); [Valka-Mir Human Security](#); and [Conductrr](#).

Opening

Association president Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Hugh Van Roosen, in his opening remarks, recognized the accelerating service, joint, and Defense Department appreciation of CA values-added and growing demand signal for multicomponent CA activity among service and joint commands supporting integrated deterrence. As he re-capped the main findings of the Conference noted above, he pointed out how this remarkable rise in recognition of Civil Affairs presents an opportunity for the Corps to consolidate on these gains through a more coherent and visible narrative.

At the same time, he advised, it presents an opportunity for the Association to improve its own values-added to the CA Corps. The Association, as a CA Corps regimental organization peripheral to government and military institutions and organizations, is well positioned to assist Corps development along the above lines through its well-established array of collegial platforms and capacity to convene all parts of the Corps and other CA stakeholders. To better serve the widening and evolving interests of the Corps, the Association Board is undertaking numerous internal management reforms. Among these is a review of the Association's functional organization, a website overhaul, and an update of its by-laws. These improvements, he noted, should be completed over the summer and will be reported accordingly, at the latest, at the fall Symposium.

Civil Affairs Proponent and Command Responses and Updates

Following Maj. Gen, (Ret.) Van Roosen's remarks was a panel of representatives from various Civil Affairs proponents and commands that provided updates on the initiatives and activities of their organizations related to the theme of Campaigning and Civil Affairs as well as other topics they deemed important for the CA community of interest to know about. Col. (Ret.) Dennis J. Cahill, who facilitated this session, was joined by:

- Lt. Col. Matthew Ives, J39 Civil Affairs Branch and Proponent Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)
- Lt. Col. William R. Lesley, Civil Affairs Branch Proponent, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, and Mr. Dennis J. Cahill, Civil Affairs Capability Manager Division, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Force Modernization Center
- Col. David J. Kaczmarek, Commander, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne) (95th CA Bde (SO)(A))
- Lt. Col. Robert L. Donoghue, Deputy G-3/5/7, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) (USACAPOC(A))
- Col. Jay Liddick, Director, U.S. Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)
- Lt. Col. Peter Schaefer, Branch Chief, Concepts, Interoperability, and Capabilities, Civil-Military Cooperation [or CIMIC] Centre of Excellence (CCoE), The Hague.

Lt. Col. Matt Ives started out by stating that USSOCOM is directed by the Secretary of Defense as the coordinating authority for the total civil affairs force and civil affairs is designated as a special operations activity. While active component Army units within the total Civil Affairs force are designated as special operations forces and the remaining Army and U.S. Marine Corps units of active or reserve components are designated as conventional forces, the activities conducted by all CA Soldiers and Marines are currently considered special operations activities.

From the joint CA proponent (JCAP) perspective, he focused on the areas of personnel, doctrine, training and education, plans and programs, policy, and JCAP enterprise synchronization initiatives. While the JCAP continues to work towards developing civil affairs positions in critical staff areas within the Pentagon, USSOCOM will continue to support the temporary civil affairs officer position at the office of the ASD (SO/LIC), currently filled by Lt. Col. Diana Parzik, and backfill it this summer in order to ensure continued Civil Affairs representation at the policy level.

The long-awaited author's draft of the revision to Joint Publication (JP) 3-57, *Civil-Military Operations*, is being staffed to various CA-related institutions and commands for comments by the end of May and is expected to be completed and signed by October 2024. Lt. Col. Ives stated that JP 3-57 may not be the best place to capture all of what Civil Affairs forces do in campaigning, but he expects this to be better covered in the next revision of JP 3-05, *Special Operations*.

The JCAP is working with the Defense Personnel Analytics Center, using artificial intelligence and natural language processing, to develop a model of Civil Affairs skills requirements and compare the model to civil affairs duty positions and training programs to ensure we are producing the CA capabilities the joint force needs. The JCAP is also exploring opportunities for a joint credit or certification for the CA force, either through service school courses or developing a joint CA course through the Joint Special Operations University or another academic institution. He encouraged the audience to reach out if anyone had complementary initiatives or ideas on this.

In its plans and programs, the JCAP is using USSOCOM-level events and exercises to educate commanders and planners on total CA force capabilities to fill critical gaps in concepts of operation and joint force wargames. This highlights the need for a clear narrative on integrating CA into joint planning and execution. Similarly, the JCAP awaits the final release of the DoD Instruction (DoDI) on Civil Affairs (formerly DoD Directive 2000.13), which is still awaiting a flag officer level review. It is also working on an implementation plan for ASD (SO/LIC) to better align how USSOCOM can execute its responsibilities outlined in the 2009 Secretary of Defense memorandum. Lt. Col. Ives concluded by announcing that USSOCOM's annual Joint Civil Affairs Symposium and Workshop will be hosted at McDill Air Force Base from 4-6 June 2024. While there is limited seating capacity, the intent is to invite representatives from all major CA-related military organizations, other DoD entities, and interagency partners to discuss modernization challenges for CA forces.

Lt. Col. Will Leslie followed with an update on Army CA doctrine, training, leader development and education, and personnel management actions that are the responsibility of the Army CA branch proponent. Within doctrine development, the Army techniques publication (ATP) for civil network development and engagement (CNDE) is published and the proponent is awaiting publication of ATPs for CA planning and military governance operations support to transitional governance. The Doctrine Division is also working on multiple Army special operations forces CA ATPs, including one on civil-military integration about to kick off in the coming weeks.

For training development, with comprehensive reviews of all CA military occupational specialties (MOSs) and areas of concentration (AoC) finished last year, the Training Development Division (TDD) has been busy building individual critical task lists for each echelon and developing new courseware for active and reserve component training pathways. Course implementation will begin in FY25. In recent months, the TDD has also begun work with the newly established Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CPCoE) to develop civilian harm mitigation and response training.

For personnel management, the branch proponent is capturing Army Reserve (USAR) CA recruiting requirements in the Recruiting Assistance Management (RAM) system. This is to ensure that USAR recruiters understand CA recruiting requirements and receive credit for their work on USAR CA recruiting. The branch proponent is also working diligently through its divisions to put in place the doctrine, training, leader development and education, and personnel management initiatives required to generate 38G Military Government Specialists for the USAR CA force.

Finally, within leadership development and education, the branch proponent is collaborating with the University of North Carolina to establish advanced degree opportunities for all CA Soldiers. Much of this will take place by credentialing existing CA training courses and ensuring college credit recognition for all CA students.

Mr. Cahill then highlighted efforts in the CA Capability Manager Division's four primary areas: concept development, experimentation, policy development, and organizational design. Among these is a concept on how CA forces can integrate and synchronize all elements of national power with global and trans-theater-level operations by 2040. It outlines how CA forces integrate Irregular Warfare (IW) programs, missions, and activities into interagency strategies to anticipate and defeat threats in fragile environments to achieve U.S. objectives in a population-centric future operating environment. Three major roles for future CA forces for Army experimentation are: Special Operations Forces / Conventional Forces / Interagency Interdependence, Setting the Theater, and the Civil Affairs Task Force.

Within experimentation, the division participates in the Army's Future Studies Program and limited objective experimentation events led by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's centers of excellence. At those venues, participants ensure that ideas from the 2040 concept are integrated into discussions of future Army capability requirements. Within the area of policy development, the CA Capability Manager Division, like the JCAP, participated in reviewing and commenting on the draft DoDI for Civil Affairs and is eagerly awaiting the publication of the latest version.

Within organizational design, the USAR CA Force Design Update (FDU) has passed all of the Force Integration Functional Analysis gates at HQDA. The redesign required the inactivation of four USAR CA battalions to pay internal bills that give greater capability to the Army's conventional CA force. USACAPOC(A) is working through the process of identifying the battalions that will be inactivated and we expect to see the structure changes published in ARSTRUC 26-30 sometime in FY25.

Finally, within material development, the Division has been experimenting with the Advanced Reporting Tool (ART) TAK Plug-in, formerly the CKI-TAK (Civil Knowledge Integration-Team Awareness Kit). ART is a software package built into an Android device and integrated with the Android Team Awareness Kit (ATAK) system. It facilitates CA team tactical data collection, allows for data transmission, analysis, fusion, integration in the civil layer of the common operating picture, and disseminates to military and civilian partners. USSOCOM's Joint Acquisition Task Force is funding continued development through FY2025 as the capability manager works to make this a CA program of record available to the total CA force.

Col. David Kaczmarek brought the audience up to date on some major restructuring decisions regarding the Army's special operations CA forces in the 95th CA Bde (SO)(A), given that it is now the only source of active Army CA. With emphasis on achieving unity of effort through unity of command, some CA battalions are reflagging under Special Forces groups as part of a larger realignment to ensure a dedicated, focused command of CA, psychological operations (PO), and special forces (SF) capabilities for each GCC and Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). It also enhances the Brigade's capability to be more responsive, particularly during crisis and conflict.

The value of civil information to special operations and conventional force commanders is increasingly recognized in operationally-focused exercises. In response, the 95th CA Bde (SO)(A) is consolidating battalion level civil information capabilities into a Brigade level civil knowledge center (CKC). The CKC goes beyond team reporting by leveraging open-source information and integrating new technical capabilities to keep up with emerging technology. At least one Army experiment has tested the new capability for continued refinement in future exercises.

Another structural innovation is a newly built training readiness detachment to meet the Brigade's continued responsibility to provide training and readiness oversight of CA battalions under the SF groups. The detachment will assist with script writing at Combat Training Centers (CTCs), help maintain a common capability across the command, and support CA company certification and validation before deployment. The Brigade is expanding its planning capability for crisis response and standing plan updates to augment dwindling CA staffs across the Army and joint force.

It is also retaining the capability to deploy a CA company to provide crisis response and proactive CA support to conventional forces, filling gaps left by the shuttered 83rd CA Battalion. The Brigade anticipates that a lieutenant colonel will eventually lead this company-level capability.

Col. Kaczmarek concluded by reiterating the importance of 95th CA Bde (SO)(A) rebuilding and maintaining relationships and promoting unity of effort among all CA forces operating in GCC areas of responsibility (AoRs) across the competition continuum. Hence the recent growth in multicomponent CA teaming. The Brigade is doing this through events like Project Convergence 24 last winter and Warfighter Exercise (WFX) 24-5 with the XVIII Airborne Corps this coming August. It will also continue validating CA companies for deployment and working on certification of the new Brigade structure as a CA task force (CATF) in exercises like STALKHM and Pacific Sentry 25.

Next up was Lt. Col. Donoghue, who spoke about major activities and events throughout USACAPOC(A), including some senior leader moves. Expanding on Mr. Cahill's discussion of the USAR CA FDU, Lt. Col. Donoghue reported that USACAPOC(A) identified four CA battalions for inactivation as billpayers for the force redesign, but the final decision rests at a higher level of command and is pending at this time. Since another outcome of the FDU is the need for a Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) B for new CA second lieutenants, USACAPOC(A) is working with U.S. Army Reserve Command and U.S. Army Forces Command to finalize a billpayer plan so that development of the BOLC B can proceed.

Picking up on Col. Kaczmarek's discussion of exercises, Lt. Col. Donoghue provided a snapshot of the exercises USACAPOC(A) is supporting with CA, PO, and information operations (IO) capabilities. The list includes 17 CTC rotations, five WFXs, two command post exercises (CPXs), and 88 overseas deployments for training (ODTs) in support of GCC joint exercise programs (JEPs). CA unit participation ranges from CA team and company to battalion and brigade headquarters. Operational deployments to GCC AoRs, such as at the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), are increasingly being assigned to USAR CA units. Meanwhile, 38G officers are increasingly involved in initiatives such as teaching the Army Monuments Officer Training (AMOT) course at the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, Italy, and supporting 95th CA Bde (SO)(A) development of a civil layer to the common operating picture in Ukraine. All this reinforces Col. Kazmarek's comments about total force CA operational tempo in competition.

The final USACAPOC(A) initiative was the return of Operation Toy Drop in 2022 under commanding general, Maj. Gen. Isaac Johnson. The revised operation's focus is on interoperability and working with partners in key theaters. To that end, representatives from every GCC participated last year, and recent discussions with INDOPACOM to enhance partner capabilities at Ft. Liberty next year.

Lt. Col. Donoghue then announced upcoming changes in senior leadership within the Command. Maj. Gen. Johnson will be passing the colors to Brig. Gen. Andrée G. Carter, who currently commands the 351st Civil Affairs Command. Additionally, CW5 Michael A. Rich will be leaving his position as the USACAPOC(A) Command Chief Warrant Officer.

Col. Jay Liddick next discussed PKSOI's responsibilities and initiatives in stabilization and peace operations. PKSOI continues to be the joint proponent for stabilization, the joint proponent and Army lead for peacekeeping, the office of primary responsibility (OPR) for women, peace, and security (WPS), and the OPR for protection of civilians (PoC). In recent developments, proponentcy for Army security force assistance (SFA) and Army stability were transferred from the Mission Command Center of Excellence at Fort Leavenworth, KS, to PKSOI. He believes these moves provide an opportunity for the CA community and PKSOI to be well integrated with the Army and joint force in irregular warfare.

Col. Liddick discussed PKSOI stabilization efforts in advancing knowledge on resilience through its working group initiated in December 2023. Results from this and similar initiatives will help revise: the joint doctrine on stabilization, JP 3-07; the Army's next field manual on irregular warfare, on which PKSOI is working with the Special Operations Center of Excellence; and the Army's stability operations publications, which are very out of date. These will also enhance stability training and tools for the force, including the Guiding Principles manual update with the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), and building out a menu of training resources in coordination with the Special Operations community, the Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. Finally, PKSOI has or is participating in several stabilization-focused exercises this year, including *Justified Accord* in AFRICOM, *Regional Cooperation* in CENTCOM, and a Korea Tabletop Exercise (TTX) run by the Department of State's Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO). This latter exercise emphasized State's role as the lead agency for stabilization.

With regard to the way ahead for peace operations, Col. Liddick reported that PKSOI continues to be actively involved in DoD's WPS program and many Civil Affairs practitioners and units have taken advantage of PKSOI's WPS training courses. He also reported that JP 3.23, *Peace Operations*, will be published and available within the next two months.

The final presenter was Lt. Col. Peter Schaefer, calling in from The Hague. As the new Chief of the Concepts, Interoperability, and Capabilities Branch at the CCoE, he focused on its latest developments, including the return of Slovenia as a sponsoring nation and the continued effort to gain the United States as a sponsoring nation. He reported that the Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 3.19, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*, is close to final NATO ratification as part of its standard doctrine. Highlighting the new definition of CIMIC, he emphasized the fact that CIMIC is a joint function with two core activities: civil factor integration and civil-military interaction.

Lt. Col. Schaefer then discussed CA-CIMIC areas of overlap, including the relevance of each in every domain of multi-domain operations and the fact that both work within the civil environment. He sees the need for interoperability between CIMIC and CA forces and is planning a "road show" for AJP 3.19 at the 353rd Civil Affairs Command, the Center for the Study of Civil-Military Operations at West Point, and the Army CA proponent at Fort Liberty in June 2024. He also is very interested in hearing about the Association's work on a civil affairs narrative to inform a similar work for CIMIC.

Lt. Col. Schaefer concluded his remarks with a discussion of two conferences that the CCoE is conducting this year: the Annual Discipline Conference in June, where they will discuss training, education, and exercises; and the Annual CIMIC Foresight Conference, which will focus on the future of CIMIC's joint function and conducting a gap analysis.

During the question and answer period, panel members responded to questions concerning: the capabilities enhanced by the USAR CA FDU; the repercussions on training and unit readiness when civil affairs becomes an accessions branch for the USAR; the status of an initiative to expand additional skill identifiers (ASIs) for CA non-commissioned officers; the preservation of lineage and heritage of the USAR CA battalions that will be inactivated as a result of executing the USAR CA FDU; additional details on the unit structure changes in the 95th CA Bde (SO)(A); and a clarification of the purpose and focus of the upcoming USSOCOM Civil Affairs Symposium and Workshop. The panel then adjourned to provide a short break to participants in anticipation of the keynote speaker.

Keynote Speaker

Before coming to a “strategic narrative” for Civil Affairs, it is helpful to understand what a “narrative” is and why it is especially important for CA professionals. To set the table for the discussion to follow, the Association called on Dr. Ajit Maan, Founder & CEO of [Narrative Strategies](#) and one of the foremost scholars on narrative, narrative strategy, and narrative warfare. She holds a Professorship in Politics and Global Security, Center for the Future of War, and serves on the Brain Trust of the Weaponized Narrative Initiative at Arizona State University. Dr. Maan, who has also appeared in a [2020 OneCA podcast](#) and whose books and articles are cited in several of the *Civil Affairs Issue Papers*, is also an adjunct Professor at the Joint Special Operations University.

Facilitating the discussion of “What Is Narrative and Why Does It Matter to Civil Affairs?” was Association Vice President Col. (Ret.) Christopher Holshek. In his introduction, he noted that, as a colleague of Dr. Maan, he learned that the term “narrative” is often misunderstood and misused. He pointed, for example, to the common misconception in the term “strategic narrative” in the business community since all true narratives are inherently strategic. He also noted learning from Dr. Maan that a narrative is mostly a “strategic story.”

Dr. Maan picked up by pointing out a similar mistake military professionals make in talking about “distributing narratives,” conflating narratives with messages and messaging. Narrative, she explained, is a meta-thematic cognitive context for people to understand the sociocultural environment in which they live and find personal, as well as collective, meaning and identity. Narratives are not as much the words that people use to describe things as they are the psychology behind those words. While narratives are not immutable, they evolve slowly and are deeply embedded in the psyche to the point of being neuroimaged, as many recent studies show as proof of Plato’s concepts of human nature over two millennia ago. Narratives form the nearly subconscious scheme by which people perceive their world and the information it brings to them. “This cognitive scheme,” she added, “determines how information is received and given meaning.”

Stories, in turn, are the main way to capture, communicate, and continue a narrative. “We don’t tell narratives,” she pointed out, “but we do tell stories.” Stories exist more above the conscious level of narratives, as psychological terrain features on the “meaning map” that local people use to provide an understanding of the context for the exchange of information in a culture and society. “The context of a story reflects the context of the cultural narrative.” Messages, in turn, are normally found in stories. This is highly important for Civil Affairs professionals to know and understand.

When trying to understand civil context and gain insight on public and tribal attitudes, she advised CA professionals to seek out, listen to, and learn the meaning of popular stories, including jokes and other forms of humor and social commentary. As part of their mission preparation and actions upon arrival, CA practitioners should read the analyses of cultural anthropologists, social psychologists, historians, and others who can provide sociocultural context on societies in question—as well as help understand where and how, in narrative terms, the cultures in contact coincide as well as differ.

Civil Affairs, Dr. Maan noted, also has its own organizational culture and represents a narrative nested in the larger culture of both the U.S. military and U.S. society. She commended the Association and CA Corps’ initiative to identify the narrative on Civil Affairs. After all, the space where CA forces work most is between numerous cultures—civil and military, American and foreign, and so on.

Finding a Corps-wide Narrative on the Civil Affairs Value Proposition

To launch the discussion on “finding a Corps-wide narrative on the Civil Affairs value proposition,” Association president and discussion moderator Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Hugh Van Roosen began by summarizing the task outlined at the end of the December Conference. The Association, in coordination with institutional and command CA stakeholders, would draft a strategic narrative for members of the extended CA Corps that, once agreed upon, would be used to educate and explain to multiple audiences, in plain language, what Civil Affairs is and does, and what value it brings in all mission applications and at all levels of engagement and integration. This narrative would ultimately appear in the Association strategic briefing and summarized in a flyer to be distributed to units and used at public events. At the very least, these deliverables would provide a template for further development and refinement of a strategic narrative on Civil Affairs that is comprehensive and collaborative, ensuring maximum buy-in and usage among the wider community of interest.

The two senior Association members tasked with this project—Col. (Ret.) Dennis J. Cahill and Col. (Ret.) Christopher Holshek—briefed their progress since December, jointly discussing the creation of the initial draft of a capstone coordination document, “Finding a Corps-wide Narrative for Civil Affairs.” They described the non-official paper’s background, purpose, nature, and scope that “can serve as a stand-alone but is intended more as a source for organizational or personal use and to stimulate and capture the development of a strategic narrative that evolves from the bottom up as well as the top down.” While they also began work on revising the strategic communication briefing and flyer, these are slated for completion over the summer.

The initial draft was distributed to all CA Roundtable participants online and posted in the 2024 Roundtable folder in the Research Library on the Association website. The paper explains that, rather than providing recitable talking points of an “elevator speech” or simply quoting policy and doctrine, it serves as a more efficient means to gather feedback from numerous institutional and command stakeholders in Civil Affairs. These include: the Civil Affairs Association, as the regimental association for the CA Corps; the Army CA branch proponent at USAJFKSWCS; the CA Capability Manager at the USASOC Force Modernization Center; the U.S. Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School (MCCMOS), as the Marine Corps CA proponent; and the USSOCOM J-39, as the joint CA proponent, as well as numerous partner organizations such as PKSOI.

Cols. (Ret.) Cahill and Holshek requested comments and inputs on the paper by the end of May. They also explained the wide range of policy and doctrine documents that informed the answers to the four major questions that frame the narrative: what is CA; what does it do; why is it important; and what are the related issues going forward? Among these sources are the unpublished 2022 Civil Affairs Value Proposition, itself based heavily on Army CAO doctrine (FM 3-57) and Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 2000.13, Civil Affairs, which is in the process of being replaced as a DoD Instruction. However, some of the main takeaways in the paper emerged from a decade of discussion on Civil Affairs captured in the *Civil Affairs Issue Papers*. These include:

- CA is a national strategic and joint economy-of-force capability (Vol. 1).
- CA is the premier military capability for civil engagement and conflict prevention (Vol. 2).
- CA is best leveraged and integrated through geographic and Army service component commands (Vol. 3).

- CA is the joint force of choice to consolidate military and security gains into political and civilian outcomes (Vol. 4).
- CA must become a better learning organization in all four Army strategic roles (shape, prevent, win, and consolidate conflict) in both irregular and conventional settings (Vol. 5).
- CA is the premier national capability for operational interagency civil-military integration (Vol. 6).
- CA is a leading joint force capability for “strengthening alliances and attracting new partners” to win influence in strategic competition and multidomain operations (Vol. 7).
- CA contributes decisively to full-range positional advantage by building civil-military networks locally and regionally in joint, interorganizational, and multinational (JIM) settings through civil reconnaissance (CR), civil engagement (CE), and CKI (Vol. 8).
- CA is the premier U.S. force for winning without fighting – a maneuver force in the human and information environments that must be organized, managed, integrated, and resourced with the same institutional as well as operational seriousness as combat forces (Vol. 9).
- CA, CAO, and CMO must be integral to campaigning at all levels of command and across the full range of operations in support of strategic competition, integrated deterrence, and LSCO (Vol. 10).

Thanks in good part to Dr. Maan’s presentation, the discussion following the presentation was lively and productive in terms of project contextualization and advice and information from the audience. This included citation of additional sources in the chat room and reference to a recent workshop the Joint CA Proponent ran with Stanford University on a narrative for Civil Affairs. Moreover, in keeping with Dr. Maan’s advice, the paper (and other deliverables) was welcomed as a source to help members of the CA Corps and other advocates tell the Civil Affairs story in ways “more thematic and adaptable to the audience, situation at hand, and deliverer,” as the paper explains.

Telling the strategic story of Civil Affairs will help galvanize a narrative for this diverse force more effectively than “elevator speeches” or messaging. Albeit a more widely understood imperative, efforts to-date have been insufficient and uncoordinated among elements of the extended CA Corps and the Association. With platforms like the *Civil Affairs Issue Papers*, *Eunomia Journal*, and *OneCA* podcasts, and the Association’s ability to convene the CA Corps and its partners at annual thematic events for force and professional development, the Association is well positioned to assist with this critical self-campaigning requirement at a time of great transition, flux, and opportunity.

Conclusion

The Roundtable closed with a facilitated discussion for nominations on the theme for the fall Symposium and *2024-25 Civil Affairs Issue Papers*. Among the ideas considered was “teaming Civil Affairs” in the context of how multicomponent CA and multidisciplinary information-related force teaming is the way forward to successful integration of CA forces in strategic competition, integrated deterrence, campaigning, and LSCO. However, a fair number of participants added that the theme in any case ought to encourage more discussion of CA at operational and tactical levels than at the strategic level. This would solicit discussion of how CA would facilitate, e.g., stabilization—including by, with, and through bilateral and multilateral counterparts—and enable younger writers to leverage recent field experiences, which should attract more paper submissions.

The Association will continue to engage partners and CA stakeholders on next year's theme and, once a final decision is made, publish its call for papers due on 13 September 2024.

The Roundtable agenda, slide decks, narrative paper, and other documents related to the discussion are available in the "2024 Roundtable" folder in the Research Library on the Association website. The [2023-24 Civil Affairs Issue Papers](#) and this Roundtable Report are also available on the website. Videos of the discussions are available on the *Eunomia Journal* [YouTube channel](#).

Col. (Ret.) Holshek is a Civil Affairs Association Vice President, a 2017 Distinguished Member of the Civil Affairs Corps, and a 2021 CIMIC Centre of Excellence Award recipient. A Civil-Military Director at Narrative Strategies, LLC, he is the author of Travels with Harley: Journeys in Search of Personal and National Identity, the final chapter of "Warrior-Diplomats," and the recently revised Peace Operations Training Institute online course on "Civil-Military Coordination in Peace Operations."

Col. (Ret) Cahill is a Civil Affairs Association Board member, a 2014 Distinguished Member of the Civil Affairs Corps, and a past Honorary Colonel of the Civil Affairs Corps. He serves as the Deputy Civil Affairs Capability Manager at the USASOC Force Modernization Center at Fort Liberty, NC. He is the author of the 2003 Army/USMC Civil Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures Manual and numerous articles on Civil Affairs in multiple publications. His most recent article, "Revisiting Civil Affairs Operations in Operation Restore Hope," was published in the Eunomia Journal on October 1, 2023.



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