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2020 Civil Affairs Roundtable Report

Roundtable Goes Virtual – and Viral – in Response to Coronavirus

by Christopher Holshek

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Civil Affairs Association to hastily move its Roundtable from the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C., to cyberspace. Beyond maintaining momentum, it turned out more productive than originally anticipated. At least 300 participants logged in for the main tele-meeting alone, instead of the 100 or so who normally attend in person. The event, made possible by Defense Innovation Network's [HeySummit platform](#), centered around a virtual panel of military and civilian interagency guests to ensure the Civil Affairs Corps and its many partners heard the latest and greatest from around the table. The Civil Affairs Proponent at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center & School ([USAJFKSWCS](#)), U.S. civilian interagency partners, and the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) [Center of Excellence](#) provided live updates on changes and initiatives of impact or interest as the Corps deliberates its future in the 2020 Civil Affairs Force Modernization Assessment, due for completion this fall. In a highly effective and efficient manner, the virtual version of the annual force and professional development gathering also enabled CA-related policy and institutional leaders in Washington, and Ft. Bragg, NC, to gain informed feedback on critical related policy development and implementation. Beyond significant improvements in online services, such as the [Eunomia Journal](#), the Association tapped into powerful new ways and means to strengthen the Corps that secures the victory.

This year's Roundtable closed an annual discussion on "Integrating Civil Affairs" that resulted in a rich harvest of findings and recommendations related to DOTMLPF-P (doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy) for CA development from last fall's Symposium in Tampa, FL. The identified pathways help guide CA modernization and continuous Army and U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) investment in an innovative and adaptive force. These insights are captured and detailed in the sixth volume of the *Civil Affairs Issue Papers*, published by the Association of the United States Army's Institute for Land Warfare shortly before the Roundtable and on the [Association website](#).

Among this year's conclusions was the emerging realization that CA can find better integration as a force for influence, collaboration, and competition in a world of convergent threats and challenges for both multi-domain and information operations (MDO/IO). In other words, CA is vital to supporting civil-military integration of interagency stabilization at joint, inter-organizational, and multinational (JIM) levels. As the Nation's "warrior-diplomats," however, the CA Corps must modernize capacities for missions across the competition continuum and full range of military operations to meet and adapt to

changing service and Joint requirements as well as strategic imperatives. It must also foster a narrative of learning beyond as well as within military structures, including allies and JIM partners, as a major CA Corps force development goal. As U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) [[USACAPOC\(A\)](#)] Commanding General, Major General Darrel Guthrie, pinpointed: “We must become an adaptable, agile learning organization or we will be replaced by one that is.”

Meanwhile, civil information management (CIM) has too long been a major vulnerability and a significant challenge, as two of the *Issue Papers* took on. In addition to drawing on and reinforcing core competencies and capabilities better known and understood by supported commands at tactical and operational levels, the Corps must also seize opportunities to “harness collective influence” through national strategic initiatives such as the [Stabilization Assistance Review](#) and [Global Engagement Center](#). Since the Symposium, more CA officers are now representing or maintaining liaison at both the GEC and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) [Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation](#).

The Corps must also help grow an industrial base as a CA fore multiplier, especially with regard to functional specialists. “The Association concurs with *Issue Paper* authors Newsome, Hughes and Hurst on the expansion of the Association’s relations with private sector organizations to mutual benefit,” Association president Col. (Ret.) Joe Kirlin wrote in his foreword. “This would more than help build an industrial base to grow CA capabilities through applied sciences and technology.” As the Proponent acknowledged at the Roundtable, USACAPOC(A) has taken the lead in a seven-year strategy to better integrate CA/PSYOP/IO as well as to grow 38G functional specialist capabilities and other human capital through partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Prior to the main webinar, Atlantic Council Senior Fellow, Dr. Sean McFate, gave a riveting presentation on “Civil Affairs in a New Age of Durable Disorder,” based on his highly impactful book, *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder*. Dr. McFate, who is also featured in a [two-part OneCA Podcast](#), sees civil affairs as an ideal type of force for the post-conventional warfare era we have entered. “What you guys do works in warfare,” he observed that morning. Noting how the new era of great power competition in the *National Defense Strategy* is grossly misinterpreted, “because the information domain determines winners and losers, the best weapons do not fire bullets.”

The main virtual event was the “Proponent, Key Stakeholder, and Partner Updates and Discussion of the 2020 CA Force Modernization Assessment,” moderated by USAJFKSWCS CA Branch Proponent Director of Civil Affairs Force Modernization, Dennis J. Cahill, Colonel, U.S. Army Civil Affairs (Ret.). Colonel Jay Liddick, Civil Affairs Capability Manager, U.S. Army Special Operations Command Force Modernization Center, responded to the DOTMLPF-P findings and recommendations from the detailed Workshops Report in the *Issue Papers*. As of that day (7 April), he reported, the CA Functional Solutions Analysis (FSA, or the third and final phase) of the Force Modernization Assessment (FMA) process had been largely completed, with DOTMLPF-P solutions identified and mitigation of prioritized Army and Joint gaps in progress. A modification of the earlier Capabilities-Based Assessment process, the civil affairs FMA is on schedule for completion in October-November 2020.

Expressing the Proponent's appreciation of value of the Association's platforms for CA intellectual capitalization for force development, Col. Liddick summarized: "We did not accept or agree with some points made last fall, mainly because they didn't fit the FMA process, but there's broad consensus that shows we are really moving in the right direction." He then briefed the responses to Workshop I:

- Foster a learning organization within and beyond military command structures and the CA Corps, including allies and counterpart civil-military organizations and interorganizational partners – *general agreement but not actionable in the FMA; not included*.
- Stress "Return to Competition" as an operational and strategic outcome in the current CA concept for support to multi-domain operations (MDO)/information operations (IO) – *well taken and included, although the focus of MDO is currently on competition*.
- Grasp the transition management function of CA in MDO (a task for both Army and USMC CA proponents – *included in the FMA*).
- Recognize and correct information management as a major vulnerability at all echelons of planning and operations integrating civil affairs – *included in the FMA*.
- Re-examine operational command-and-control (C2) of civil affairs, whether in Army or USMC formations or Joint task forces – *included in the FMA*.

The responses to recommendations from Workshop II were:

- Develop DOTMLPF-P solutions for the operational integration (and appropriate force management) of CA, PSYOP, and IO forces – *not included in the FMA*.
- Support USACAPOC(A)'s "Harnessing Collective Influence" seven-year strategy for better integration of CA, PSYOP, and IO for coordinated Army impacts in civil, cognitive, and information environments in convergent MDO – *supported, but not included in the FMA*.
- In the Gray Zone between human and cyber domains, CA must be able to: shape the competition environment through persistent influence; achieve relative positional advantage; and maintain/advance U.S. foreign and national security interests – *included in the FMA*.
- Support USACAPOC(A) convergence of information-related capabilities through Collective Influence Detachments and Task Forces over the next three years, based on models such as: integration of USMC CAGs with IO capabilities under the MAGTF Information Group in the *2019 Marine Corps Concept for Civil Affairs*; 77th Brigade (U.K.) experience in integrating civil-military and IO capabilities under one command; and Canadian CIMIC's organizational and operational template used in Afghanistan – *supported but not included in the FMA*.
- Support USACAPOC(A) efforts to forge closer relations with the Army Futures Command; leverage the Army Research Lab's work on megacities and cultural biases; and, integrate USAJFKSWCS development of geospatial assets – *supported but not included in the FMA*.
- Better leverage the lessons being learned in the field and translate them into DOTMLPF-P improvements (a task to the CA Corps in general) – *included in the FMA*.
- Fix the inadequacy of pre- and post-deployment integration of active/reserve and special operations/conventional CA forces in order to realize the value-added of integrated civil affairs operations in the converging MDO/IO environment – *not included in the FMA*.

From Workshop III:

- Include a section on information-sharing across the components and commands (through CA Corps-wide CIM and lessons-learned systems) in rewrite of DoDD 2000.13 on Civil Affairs – *included in the FMA*.
- Include tactical skills mixed with CA core competencies into training plans and events of USAR CA units – *not included in the FMA; already a standing part of CA training guidance*.
- Provide advanced training on network analysis to 38B's to enable civil-military analytics to support MDO across the competition continuum; consider an MOS designator for tactical and operational CIM analysts (for both Army and USMC CA proponents) – *included in the FMA*.
- Promote Joint requests for CA teams written for “CA operational support” rather than specify the service source (Army or USMC) to enable cross-leveelling requests for CA forces between Army and USMC CA proponents – *not included in the FMA*.
- Standardize core competencies of tactical CA teams of all Army, USMC, active, and reserve commands and formations; train and equip to those standards – *not included in the FMA*.
- Develop: inter-service agreements that formalize CA support to other services; a “clearing house” to determine CA capabilities to apply to given problem sets; and interagency agreements that address the sharing of assessment results and civilian skill sets required for CA – *not included in the FMA; not appropriate for this format*.

In his comments, Col. (ret.) Cahill first reported a doctrinal update that the Army term “MDO” is being superseded by “Joint All-Domain Operations” (JADO) – which could play into CA’s favor, given it is an ideal force for employment in JIM environments. He also noted another update of the April 2019 version of FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations* is in the works, as are inputs to updates of Army FM 3-0, *Operations*, Joint Publication 3-57, *Joint Civil-Military Operations*, and DoD Directive (2000.13), *Civil Affairs*, as well as a revised Army Techniques Publication 3-57.50, *Civil Information Management*.

Mr. Kevin Melton, Senior Policy Advisor, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), USAID, then briefed updates on the implementation of the [Stabilization Assistance Review](#), including: the greater emphasis on engagements leading to closer work with CA and PSYOP, especially in transition among humanitarian and development responses; similar stress on prevention in competition, meaning strengthening civilian resilience through economic and information capacities at lower levels of governance, as done with CA in Syria; and opportunities for more systemic coordination in CIM and IO to promote a civil-military common operations picture.

And with the imminent establishment of the [Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization](#), Melton observed that the U.S. government was, in the context of a more inclusive definition of stabilization, “back in the peacebuilding business.” He also mentioned the opportunity for CA with the ascension of new [Deputy Assistant Administrator](#) Rob Jenkins at DCHA, given his high regard for civil affairs and keen interest in closer working relations between his bureau and the CA Corps.

Colonel Frank van Boxmeer, Director, NATO CIMIC Center of Excellence, reported from the CCoE in Den Haag that CA's European partners were facing many of the same challenges in integrating CIMIC in NATO operations on especially its eastern flank to respond to hybrid warfare threats and fostering civil preparedness and resilience in the face of influence operations. Parallel to the U.S. strategic redesign of civil affairs in *Civil Affairs 2025*, NATO is embarking on a similar effort in *CIMIC Vision 2025*, discussed at last fall's [CIMIC Key Leaders Conference](#). With regard to the U.S. Army Europe's recent decision to disband its 361st CA Brigade – an Army Reserve CA command with longstanding experience and solid working relations with CIMIC forces, the CCoE was unable to provide NATO's response to the elimination of a very sizeable portion of its ready CIMIC capability in-theater.

Among the discussants was Mr. Patrick M. Antonietti, Director for Peacekeeping and Stabilization at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy – Stability & Humanitarian Affairs. Mr. Antonietti urged listeners to maintain currency with rapidly evolving strategic documents shaping the future of CA. He stressed focusing relevance on competition through gray-zone Civil-Military Support Elements at U.S. country teams and CA engagement missions in Africa. He also discussed the importance of senior CA officers at senior staffs – the Army G9, for example, is actually focused on installation management. He also noted the work of MG Hugh Van Roosen, a CA officer serving as United Nations Deputy Military Advisor, in updating UN civil-military policy and creating UN-CIMIC certification requirements for troop contributing countries. In response to comments at last year's events, he reported DoD work on a declassified version of the Irregular Warfare annex to the *National Defense Strategy*.

Colonel Drew Jones, who heads up the USACAPOC(A) Strategic Initiatives Group, reported that MG Guthrie's command has extended for one year, giving him more time to institutionalize the substantive initiatives to modernize the Army's conventional CA, PSYOP, and IO capabilities, as reported in the *Issue Papers* and lined out in the Command's soon-to-be-published *MDO Roadmap*. In the meantime, BG Cooley, who commanded the 353rd CA Command, is the new Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army Reserve Command – the first CA general officer to take this post.

Mr. James Jabinal, Information Maneuver Division, Deputy Commandant for Information, Headquarters Marine Corps provided a status of Marine CA after completion of Future Force 2025, which divested all three active CA detachments and about half the reserve CA force. Given creation of MEF Information Groups (MIGs), the [Joint Concept](#) for Operating in the Information Environment (OIE), and Information as [the Marine 7th warfighting function](#), Marine CA has institutionalized CA within OIE by capitalizing on the informational aspects of civil reconnaissance, civil engagement, and the Marine Civil Information Management System to inform, influence, exploit networks, and provide battlespace awareness. Their aggressive narrative of CA in OIE have postured CA capabilities favorably within current Force Design 2030's focus on competition, expeditionary advanced base operations, and distributed operations. Marine OIE integration at the MIGs and the Marine Corps Information Operations Center may be instructive for the Army. In addition to tactical CA-PSYOP integration in brigade combat teams and corps, the Army could likewise embrace the gravitational pull toward the IO Joint function as laid out in the *National Defense Strategy* Irregular Warfare Annex.

Colonel Scot Storey, Director, U.S. Army Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI), reported that, with the publication of its [Lessons Learned Report on Consolidating Gains](#), PKSOI will focus on support to MDO (or JADO) in competition. He is currently looking at teaming up with the Association on this fall's Symposium with concentration on CA support to JADO in competition.

An interesting conversation ensued with respect to the current pandemic and the role of civil affairs in Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) [available on](#), such as the Center for Disease Control and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which, for example, coordinates Long-Term Community Recovery and Mitigation under [Emergency Support Function 14](#). Given the likelihood of protracted pandemics following COVID-19, civil affairs in general, and its functional specialists in particular, could not only provide valuable service in domestic responses, but gain valuable experience for CA support to civil-military integration of international pandemic responses under U.S. interagency direction, in order to mitigate the threat of pandemics originating overseas to the U.S.

This, it was suggested, could make for an interesting issue paper or article in the *Eunomia Journal*, the digital successor to the Association's Civil Affairs Journal and Newsletter, which now prominently features on the Association website. Named for the Greek goddess of law, governance, and good order, Eunomia is [published electronically](#) at the liberty of the editorial board, headed up by Association Vice President Lieutenant Colonel Arnel David. Complementary to the more academic Issue Papers, it serves as a forum for professional debate and discussion on contemporary issues within the Civil Affairs Corps and promotes the strategic use and understanding of CA by military commanders, policymakers, and partners through concise, innovative articles, podcasts, and forum discussions. Captain James P. Micciche, an Association Director who helped update the website, briefed on many other additions, upgrades, and initiatives, including a [Job Opportunities](#) page, submission guidelines for issue papers and articles, Learning Resources (under Education & Training), and a Research Library for writer research.

"While one goal is to mainstream CA into the larger discussions of the Army and Marines, the joint force and national security issues, the other is to help improve CA writing skills as a function of intellectual readiness and building human capital," Col. (Ret.) Kirlin wrote in the *Issue Papers*.

With the overwhelming success of the virtual version of the Roundtable having gone viral, the Association is contemplating hosting more online events for the benefit of its members, the CA Corps, and its partners. Later this spring, it will decide on this as well as the timing and location of the next Symposium under the topic of "Civil Affairs: A Force for Influence and Competition" for which the next call for papers will appear in mid-May.

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