

Human Terrain and Strategic Landpower

Improving the capabilities of the Joint Force

Clifton Green and Robert Hart

Civilians have historically deployed in support of operations during periods of conflict. The experiences during the counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown a clear need for skills and expertise in human terrain that resides in the private sector. As the Strategic Landpower concept will see the need for such expertise at work during the early phases of operations, the deployment process of government civilians needs to evolve to streamline to make it more efficient and effective in supporting Strategic Landpower. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's experience with the deployment of the civilians of the Human Terrain System is instructive.

Deploying government civilians to support overseas contingencies has become common and necessary. Army civilians with highly sought after skill sets, are advancing the application of Landpower across the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) experience with the Human Terrain System (HTS) is a viable case study exposing substantial limitations in the way the Army and the Department of Defense (DOD) acquires, deploys, and sustains civilian employees in a theater of operations.

Our examination displays these limitations which prevented

the Human Terrain System from effectively supporting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq during the early years of the wars, requiring significant efforts to resolve. Since making corrective measures, the HTS civilian deployment model has proven itself extremely capable. To enable better civilian support of Strategic Landpower, DOD must take advantage of these lessons learned in order to make existing civilian deployment capabilities smarter, more efficient, innovative and more agile.

One of the lessons U.S. forces learned in Afghanistan and Iraq was that cultural knowledge and understanding were crucial to suc-

cessfully fighting the counterinsurgencies in both countries. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, the U.S. military doctrine manual for fighting counterinsurgencies, discusses this need throughout the manual. The lack of such an understanding was evident in the operations prior to publication of FM 3-24. Army and Marine units conducted successful tactical operations without due regard for social and cultural factors, which led to negative operational effects and tactical backlash. Recognizing this knowledge gap, (TRADOC), in concert with the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), developed the concept of fielding Human Terrain

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Teams (HTTs) to provide social science experience to tactical and operational units on a large scale.

Social scientists from the academic world would provide units with a social framework for the local area and provide advice and recommendations to commanders and staffs. These HTTs would also reach back to subject matter experts in the United States. This formed

the basis of the Human Terrain System and has paid dividends during the later portions of these conflicts.

Civilian Deployment Process

Currently, DOD lacks a comprehensive civilian deployment support system. No program provides lifecycle assistance to deploy DOD civilians for overseas contingency

operations. As a result, the support deploying civilians receive from their parent and receiving organizations can be uneven or non-existent. The outgrowth of this problem is that deployed civilians sometimes face human resource issues, financial support problems, and poor oversight throughout the deployment that on most occasions, uniformed service members can easily resolve. These personnel issues and lack of leadership can potentially result in reduced organizational effectiveness and negatively impact morale. TRADOC experienced all of these failures during the Human Terrain System program's early years, and their cumulative impact was significant. HTS endured years of investigations, bad publici-

ty, and severely degraded employee performance.

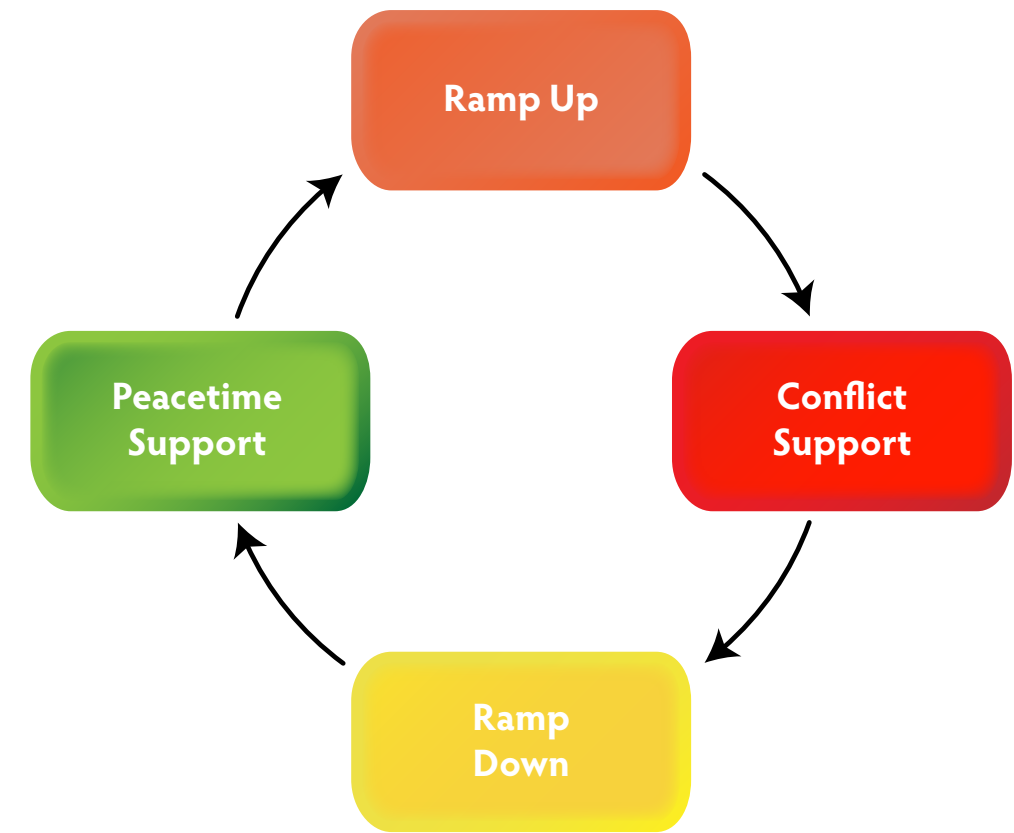
Establishing a dedicated program to recruit, train, deploy, and sustain civilians in deployed environments would resolve many of the issues. This would create a system which enables the rapid deployment of civilians in support of operations. Centralization would clearly delineate support requirements and responsibilities, resulting in more effective support, allowing receiving units to focus on their operational missions. Moreover, centralized administration of these functions would achieve efficiencies through scale and would ensure consistency of treatment for all deployed civilians.

The centralized DOD civilian deployment system would encompass the entire deployment process, from the time civilian personnel receive notification of deployment to their final redeployment home. For this to become a reality, a cultural change within the department is important. The focus on deployments should not be exclusively on uniformed personnel; more emphasis should be placed on civilians during deployment. In fact, the Department of Defense had never conducted an audit of the costs of deploying civilians until 2011.¹

This scope must expand to consider the federal civilians that also accompany uniformed service members, who also work to achieve the same objectives for the nation. The lack of consideration for deployed civilians limits their ability to be effective. Those civilian with prior military service may be able to work their way through the existing deployment system, however those unfamiliar endure great cost in time and effort to navigate through the deployment cycle.

Deployment Integration with Hiring

By centralizing these deployment and support functions, DOD could move toward a modular approach. Deploying civilians would simply "plug in" to this centralized civilian program which ensures civilian employees are managed across the entire deployment pro-



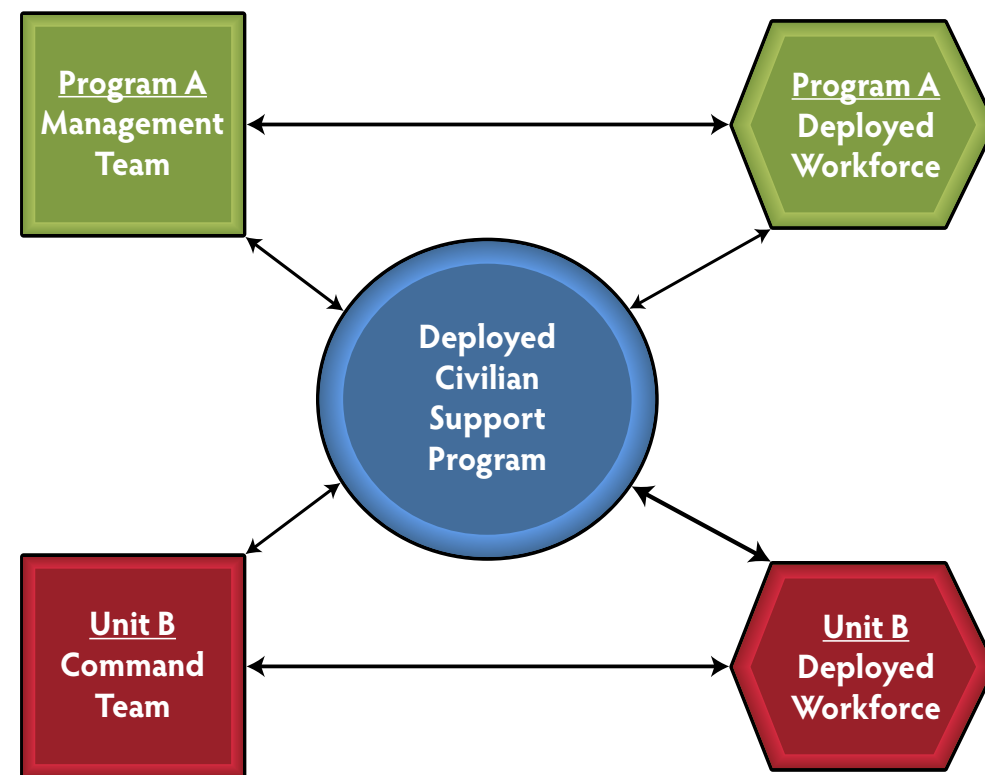
Civilian deployment operations would ramp up or ramp down based on DOD's current and future requirements.

cess, integrated with deployment centers and receiving units, accounted for and supported in the theater, and enjoy a smooth redeployment home. The program would take care of deployed civilians and, at the same time, ensure that they went where needed and succeed in the job they were hired to do.

The centralized approach offsets the need for individual deployment support infrastructures, foster greater efficiency, focusing on core tasks and reducing the administrative burden. Beyond that, the program sees additional benefits. Recruiters seeking private and non-profit expertise could quickly screen and hire qualified personnel

to be trained and sworn in as government civilian employees.

The option for government employees is preferable to contractor support in a number of cases, since salaries are generally lower, they fall under similar rules to the uniformed military, and they can perform inherently governmental functions. Normal government hiring is slow, but due to its large need for personnel, HTS perfected a hybrid contractor/government hiring process, which combined effective private sector hiring practices with the specific requirements of government hiring. Additionally, by using term limited appointments, these positions maintain managerial flexibility. The



The proposed civilian support program would act as a nexus of support for organizations that deploy civilians.



Feb. 9, 2013 — Soldiers and civilians in Farah, Afghanistan pass out toys and school supplies while visiting refugees.

Photo U.S. Army

government is never obligated to employ an individual beyond the term end date. The centralized civilian deployment system maintains visibility of civilians on these limited-term appointments until returned to the private sector.

When cost effectiveness is a significant consideration, this ap-

proach is justification for this kind of program. Centralized functions eliminate duplication across DOD yet allow expansion during times of need. Once in place, the deployment system supports the deployment of all government service civilians, whether deployed singly or as part of a large effort. Any future programs in future

conflicts would quickly and easily gain access to an infrastructure to support their deploying civilian workforce. Additionally, as responsible stewards of the government's money, the centralized deployment program ensures better control over pay and allowances, further cutting back on waste and fraud during deployments.

The Potential Solution

The Department has the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW) program. While limited in scope, CEW primarily matches talent to deployed jobs availabilities. However, in addition to its current roles, CEW could potentially take on these additional deployment support functions, making it the "one stop shop" for deploying DOD civilian personnel.

However, regardless of where the responsibility is placed, now is the time to act. With the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, DOD stands to lose a significant amount of institutional knowledge in the near future. A 2012 Government Accountability



Dec. 14, 2009 — Leaders from Task Force UTE, 405th CA BN, along with a Human Terrain Team member, meet with a village elder to discuss clean water and ways to improve the village's sanitation in Parwan Province, Afghanistan.

Photo U.S. Army

Office report entitled "Improvements Needed to Strengthen Management of U.S. Civilian Presence" pointed out how DOD had failed to learn from civilian deployment experiences in Bosnia, which directly led to problems in Iraq and Afghanistan several years later. We should not make the same mistake again.

Improving support to civilian employees is achievable and will pay large dividends, but only if senior leaders recognize the value in doing so. Since the role for civilians in Strategic Landpower is likely to only grow larger, DOD must prepare for the future and adopt a more intelligent approach. ■

NOTES

1. Lt. Gen. Walker's Feb 13 presentation at the Institute of Land Warfare, titled "The Nation's Strategic Hedge", emphasized how influence over the human domain was the critical element in achieving lasting peace, and a key role the U.S. Army will play in future joint operations.