A U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk door gunner watches as another UH-60 Blackhawk flies over Syria during a visit by Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Brett McGurk to Raqqah, Syria, July 10, 2018. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brigitte Morgan)

Operations to Consolidate Gains

By Staff Sgt. Rogelio Hernandez

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There is more to modern warfare than just conquering territory. In today's global climate, winning battles (especially against terrorist organizations) and quickly leaving creates a perpetual breeding ground for new terrorist organizations to easily replace the defeated ones in destabilized countries. To ensure a productive victory, we must also assist in conjunction with national and international organizations, to rebuild the foreign community and government and hand it back to its citizens in a functional form. According to *FM 3-0: Operations,* operations to consolidate gains are activities that set the conditions for stabilization operations, allowing for a transition of control to legitimate authorities.

Overview

There are two specific tasks that comprise *Operations to Consolidate Gains*. They include: *Area Security* and *Stability Tasks*. *Area Security Operations* focus on protecting forces, installations, routes, and areas. It can be broken down even further into two types of methods to accomplish the objectives: *Search and Attack*, and *Cordon and Searches*. According to *ADP 3-07: Stability*, "Stability tasks focus on identifying and targeting the root causes of instability and by building the capacity of local institutions" (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1).

Specific *Stability Tasks* are: Establish civil security and control, restore essential services, support governance, support economic and infrastructure development, and

conduct security cooperation (Department of the Army, 2014). These are all critical infrastructures necessary to support a stable government.

Threats to the Consolidation of Gains

The threat to any military operation is a persistent and ever-evolving adversary. It is here that noncommissioned officers (NCOs) must continuously evaluate, develop plans to overcome threats, and reassess the threat to ensure that what is being implemented is working. But what is a threat and how is it assessed? And what is the NCO's role?

According to *Merriam-Webster*, a threat is "an expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage" ("Threat," 2019, para. 1). To assess threats we can implement risk management techniques such as identifying potential hazards that can lead to unnecessary operational risk, conduct risk assessments to identify the consequences and likelihood of each threat, prioritize risks using techniques such as a risk assessment matrix, and identify controls to either mitigate the consequences or reduce the likelihood of any unacceptable risk (Johnson, 2012).

NCOs are the *Be, Know, Do*. They are on the ground interacting with the local populace and are aware of their surroundings, as well as areas of responsibility, enemy strategies, and vulnerabilities. They can create up-to-date threat assessments and offer recommendations that will assist in the fight.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Velez, an advisor with the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade's 3rd Squadron, interacts with Afghan Command Sgt. Maj. Abdul Rahman Rangakhil, left, the senior enlisted leader of 1st Kandak, 4th Brigade, 203rd Corps, during a routine fly-to-advise mission at Forward Operating Base Altimur, Afghanistan, Sept. 19, 2018. (Photo by Sean Kimmons)

Consolidation Area Framework

The *Consolidation Area* refers to an Area of Operation (AO) "assigned to an organization which extends from its higher headquarters boundary to the boundary of forces in close operations...This is where forces have established a level of control that allows the performance of tasks to consolidate gains" (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 1-35). NCOs are expected to know the mission as well as their responsibilities in the mission.

Consolidation of Gains Activities

Area Security

Security is the foundation to a successful operation. Security tasks ensure proper protection of civilians, government institutions, and civilian infrastructure. *Area Security* also includes activities to protect friendly forces, installations, and routes within a specific area. There are two ways this task can be accomplished: *Search and Attack* and *Cordon and Search*. (Department of the Army, 2017).

"*Search and Attack* is a technique for conducting a movement to contact..." (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 8-9). NCOs may be given the order to conduct a *Search and Attack* for one or more of the following purposes: Destroy the enemy, deny an area, protect the force, or to collect information (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 8-9).

Commanders will employ *Search and Attack* tactics when the enemy is operating in small, dispersed elements whose location cannot be determined accurately.

"*Search and Attack* is conducted primarily by dismounted infantry forces and often supported by armored, mechanized, motorized and aviation forces" (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 8-9).

While *Search and Attack* is a blunt and direct technique to achieve superiority, *Cordon and Search* is much more methodical and involves sectioning off specific areas in order to search them thoroughly.

According to the Air Land Sea Application Center, "This type of combat operation involves isolating the target area and searching suspected buildings to capture or destroy possible insurgents and/or contraband" ("Cordon and Search," 2010, p. 5). An example of this technique in action was the *Cordon and Search* operations conducted to capture Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003.

Stability Tasks

Once security of the consolidation area is accomplished, *Stability Tasks* begin. After operational security, and when the

A Soldier assigned to the 38th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, shows LCA Kokusai Elementary School students a game on his cellphone while eating lunch during an Earth Day event, April 24, 2019, at Sagami General Depot, Japan. (U.S. Army photo by Noriko Kudo)

area environment allows, the force moves to execute the six *Stability Tasks*: "Establish civil security, establish civil control, restore essential services, support governance, support economic and infrastructure development, and conduct security cooperation" (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1-2). This is initiated by first providing essential stability tasks such as food, water, security, shelter, and medical aid to the local population.

When conditions allow, the primary operational stages are implemented by the military in conjunction with national and international units, until the host government is capable of conducting these operations on its own.

Establishing Civil Security

"Establishing a safe, secure, and stable environment is key to obtaining local support for military operations" (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1-2).

In the initial response, Army units perform this task due to the lack of host nation capabilities. In the next phase (the transformation phase), the host nation personnel and inter-organizational entities contribute. The unit providing *Civil Security* tasks then transitions to an assistance-based role and works towards professionalizing the host nation's security forces. Once this is complete, the host nation assumes responsibility for its *Civil Security* (Department of the Army, 2014).

Establishing Civil Control

No working government can function without the *Rule of Law*, which is described by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as:

> *A principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.* ("The rule of law," 2004, p. 4)

To establish *Civil Control*, Army units work to improve the host nation's judicial and correctional systems by training and supporting their law enforcement.

In the initial phase, the Army unit must facilitate *Civil Control* due to the lack of the host nation's capabilities. In the transformation phase, the Army unit develops the justice system, corrections system, etc., that meet international human rights standards. The host nation then takes the lead and the Army unit relinquishes security control while providing security force assistance. In the final phase, fostering sustainability, the Army unit transfers the judicial and correctional systems back to the host nation. The Army unit then continues to monitor and report and becomes an advi-

sory role (Department of the Army, 2014).

According to *FM 3-07: Stability*, there are nine sub-tasks that need to be performed:

- Establish public order and safety

- Establish an interim criminal justice system

- Support law enforcement and police reform

- Support judicial reform

- Support a civil property dispute resolution process

- Support justice system reform

- Support corrections reform

- Support war crime courts and tribunals

- Support public outreach programs
  (Department of the Army, 2014, pp. 3-6 - 3-9)

Restoring Essential Services

Restoring Services is essential for a return to normalcy. This allows the indigenous populace to return to their daily duties and helps prevent destabilization efforts by adversaries. In the initial response, according to *FM 3-07: Stability*, the Army unit provides for these essential services in order to prevent famine, refugee flows, dislocated civilians, and human trafficking. In the transformation phase, once the immediate crisis is over, the Army unit creates foundations for long-term development (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1-3)

In the final phase, fostering sustainability, "the host nation makes the efforts permanent by institutionalizing positive change in society and ensuring it has the means to sustain progress" (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1-3).

Support to Governance

According to *FM 3-0: Operations*, "The purpose is to help the civil authority regain its ability to govern and administer to the services and other needs of the population" (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 1-4).

In some cases, military support is necessary when the host nation's government or community organization cannot provide adequate control. According to *FM 3-0: Operations*, "In extreme cases, where the host nation's government or community organizations are dysfunctional or absent, international law requires military forces to provide basic civil administration"(Department of the Army, 2017, p. 8-12).

As the Army cultivates the foreign nation's sustainability, they focus on supporting the transitional administration, the development of the local governance, anti-corruption, and elections. These four main pillars allow the foreign nation's government to establish a foundation with which to work from in order to resume control in the future (Department of the Army, 2014).

Support to Economic and Infrastructure Development

The ultimate goal of the *Infrastructure Development* is to create long-term peace and stability for the host nation. According to *FM 3-0*, "The end state is the creation of a sustainable economy" (Department of the Army, 2017, p. 8-12).

Depending on the situation, *Economic and Infrastructure Development* has ten primary subtasks:

- Support economic generation and enterprise creation

- Support monetary institutions and programs

- Support national treasury operations

- Support public sector investment programs

- Support private sector development

- Support natural resources and environment

- Support agricultural development programs

- Restore transportation infrastructure

- Restore telecommunications infrastructure

- Support general infrastructure reconstruction
  (Department of the Army, 2014, p. 1-5)

Team members from U.S. Army Civil Affairs Team 8324, 83rd Civil Affairs Battalion, practice detainee operations with EcoGuards (the Gabonese equivalent of Park Rangers) during Counter Illicit Trafficking training at Loango National Park in Gabon, Africa, Sept. 25, 2018. The training is designed to enhance partner force counter-illicit trafficking capabilities in Gabon. (DOD Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist John M. Hageman)

Transition

The last and final step to the *Consolidation of Gains* is to give the AO back to the host nation. It relieves the land force of area security and stability tasks and represents the completion of the operation. This is completed only when adequate security is in place to protect the population, judicial and correctional systems are established to enforce the laws, essential services like food, water, shelter and security are in place, there is a functioning governing body, and the economic and infrastructure development is sustainable.

Ultimately, the Army's goal is to leave a foreign country in a better position than when they arrived. This can only be accomplished by setting a plan of action, assessing the threat, identifying the objective area, and knowing all aspects of the ongoing activities to consolidate gains. This gives a host nation a fighting chance to make their country sustainable and improve the living conditions for their population. ■

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