



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 (SPE) for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Brett McGurk to Raqqah, Syria, July 10, 2018. SPE McGurk's visit included a tour of critical infrastructure that would benefit from international support. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brigitte Morgan)

Operations to Consolidate Gains

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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 war as new terrorist organizations easily replace the defeated ones in destabilized countries. To ensure a productive victory, we must also 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 a stable environment, allowing for a transition of control to legitimate authorities.

Overview

There are two specific tasks that comprise the operations. 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, 2012, 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. These are all critical infrastructures needed to support a stable government which will then provide for its population.

Threats to the Consolidation of Gains

The threat to any military operation is a continuous and ever-growing adversary. It is here that NCOs must continuously evaluate, develop plans to overcome

threats, and reassess the threat to ensure that what was 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 identify 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).

So, where does the NCO come into play? NCOs are the *Be, Know, Do*. They are on the ground interacting with junior enlisted and are aware of their surroundings as well as enemy strategies and vulnerabilities. NCOs should talk with their Soldiers and see where the weaknesses to the enemy formations are. They can then build threat assessments and solutions that will assist in the fight.

Consolidation Area Framework

The Consolidation Area refers to an Area of Operations (AO) that extends from a higher echelon headquarters to the boundary of forces in the close area. This is where forces have established a level of control that allows the performance of tasks to consolidate gains. NCOs are not only expected to know the mission, but also their responsibility in the mission.



Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Velez, center, 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 credit: Sean Kimmons)

Consolidation of Gains Activities

Area Security

Security is the foundation to a successful operation. Security tasks are to 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*.

Search and Attack is a technique for conducting a movement to contact. It shares many of the characteristics of an area security mission. NCOs may be given the order to conduct a *Search and Attack* for one or more of the following purposes: Destroy an enemy, deny an area, protect the force, or to collect information.

Commanders will employ *Search and Attack* tactics when the enemy is operating in small, dispersed elements whose location cannot be determined to targetable accuracy. *Search and Attack* is conducted by dismounted infantry forces and often supported by armor, mechanized, and Stryker-equipped forces.

Cordon and Search is a technique of conducting a movement to contact that involves isolating a target area and searching suspected locations. 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, the *stability tasks* can begin. After operational security, and when the 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. This is initiated by first providing essential stability tasks such as food, water, security, shelter, and medical aid to the population. When conditions allow, this is the legal responsibility of the military until the foreign government is capable of conducting this operation on its own.

Establishing Civil Security

Civil Security is key to obtaining local support for military operations because it



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)

establishes a safe, secure, and stable environment for a country's citizens and state entities. Once the host nation can successfully perform this task, then the military force will transition the civil security responsibilities back to them.

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 own civil security once again.

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 on their own because of the lack of the host nation's capabilities. In the transformation phase, the Army unit develops the justice system, corrections system, and other legal fields that meet international human rights standards. The host nation then begins to take lead and the Army unit relinquishes security control while providing security force assistance, usually in the form of professionalizing the host nation's armed forces. 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 advisory role.

According to *FM 3-07: Stability*, there are eight 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 criminal justice system reform
- Support war crime courts and tribunals
- Support public outreach and community rebuilding programs

Restoring Essential Services

Restoring services is essential for the local expectation of a return to normalcy. This allows the population to return to their daily duties and prevents further destabilization. In the initial response, the Army unit provides for these essential services in order to prevent famine, refugee flows, dislocated civilians, and human trafficking, among other possible detrimental scenarios. In the transformation phase, once the immediate crisis is over, the Army unit creates foundations for long-term development.

In the final phase, fostering sustainability, the host nation makes efforts permanent by institutionalizing positive change ensuring sustained progress. When feasible, the host nation accepts all essential service responsibilities for their nation.

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. 1-14).

Governance is the activities conducted by a government or community organization to maintain societal order, define and enforce rights and obligations, and fairly allocate goods and services. 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 fosters 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.

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).

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



A member of the Raqqa Internal Security Force interacts with local villagers during a community engagement practical exercise near Raqqa, Syria, March 17, 2018. This Coalition-led training is critical to enabling local security forces secure their homeland from ISIS influence. CJTF-OIR is the global Coalition to defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Travis Jones)

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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