

## **Interagency Interoperability and Effectiveness**

“Collect, Combine, Consolidate Expertise”

Tom Timberman and Reid Lohr – December 2012

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### Introduction

The concept of Civilian and Military cooperation and collaboration via joint teams is not new - it dates back directly to the Civil War. However, despite its history, particularly during WWII, it is being viewed today as the new wave everyone is trying to catch. From S/CRS' attempt to develop a civilian force to the hyper-discussions in think tanks, conference rooms of government, academia and in every major US military headquarters, Whole of Government (WOG) and Smart Power are the talk du jour.

In the 'text-book sense' the interagency theory is rational but in reality it is an attractive mirage. Whenever it is attempted and confronts the USG bureaucracy, it eventually fails when the individuals pushing it, are reassigned. No established process or organization exists with a WOG or Interagency mission. It is simply a reasonable approach that can only work with robots. WOG and Interagency are impossible to create beyond ad hoc arrangements based on personalities. The human and organizational dynamics won't permit institutionalizing any such attempt. There are too many special interests, conflicting agendas and isolated reporting structures, blocking serious progress. Not to mention, the additional budgetary and legislative complications.

There have been times during the history of the United States when grave national threats have forced a near-abandonment of self-interest in favor of a collective fight for political and economic survival. These events called upon the country and its institutions as a whole, not just government. However, within the Executive Branch this goal, which few government bureaucrats actually want to reach, has rarely been realized. In fact, the course of political or economic events during the last 10+ years which fostered the coining of the 3D's (defense, diplomacy and development) appear to have triggered the opposite effect, further fracturing rather than uniting the bodies politic or bureaucratic. There is often talk of 'collaboration and cooperation' but the concept must come closer to 'integration of effort "if the country, will be able to maximize its assets at hand.

Currently the State Department (DOS) is charged with leading the USG effort to create a workable CIVMIL interagency model. DOS, however, is neither culturally or structurally capable of doing so. This does not mean the 'will' is not there, although some question its presence, but 'will' alone will not be able to forge a successful MILCIV mechanism able to address and resolve the problems of today and tomorrow. (*CIVMIL vs. MIL CIV denotes the lead entity*)

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There are other hesitations within the Foreign Service about building stronger relationships between the US Army and DOS. While numerous examples of good DOS and Army personal working relationships exist, countervailing influences discourage deepening them. At the mid and senior Foreign Service ranks, there is a creeping anti-military bias that seeps out from time to time. Furthermore, there is a pervasive consensus forming at State, that development work, particularly in conflict environments, is not something “we” do. “We are diplomats not developers or soldiers.” The fact that in November 2007, the Foreign Service eliminated its sixty-year old political-military specialization is not encouraging.

With occasional exceptions, over the past ten years, separate, but unequal civilian and military lines of effort have developed in many places around the world. This has cost both the lethal and non-lethal programs, considerably in terms of more informed decisions, more effective plans and operations and the potential for the mutual-reinforcement such a close interaction can produce.

In nearly all cases, the focus has centered on counterinsurgency or COIN operations or adjusting Vietnam’s CORDS organization for use in today’s environment. However, in today’s world of hybrid threats and the emergence of non-state actors necessitates accessing and utilizing resources beyond interagency/WOG even if the concept could be realized. Scenarios demand a full spectrum of operations (FSO) and activities (FSA) be realized and engaged. This does not mean ‘larger and bigger’ but more targeted and diverse, and may differ between theaters and within a given theater of operations to shape conditions for success; however that may be defined.

The Army may, understandably, not want to assume this responsibility, but the fact remains there really is no acceptable alternative: both for the very practical reasons as well as the Army’s extensive experience dealing with mixed-issue problem sets in conflict or post conflict environments. Moreover, at West Point, Ft. Leavenworth and the Army War College, the “civilian” sides of COIN are continually discussed.

### **Nature and Origins of Future National Security Threats**

No informed 21<sup>st</sup> Century observer in or out of government seriously questions the likelihood that the non-state violence the United States has opposed over the past 30 years, is the shape of what’s to come as well. Whether called insurgencies or small wars or terrorism or limited intensity conflicts, their effect and content are the same, though the motivations vary. America’s national security policy-makers today must envisage and prepare for this kind of repeated hybrid engagement. And parallel to this reality, is the fact that protecting the country

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will involve even more convoluted challenges, the solutions to which can only come from a recipe that combines different ingredients and profits from them. The US Army has recognized the motley nature of modern threats, specifically by its use of “PMESII” (political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure) to describe the operational environments into which its units have been repeatedly deployed.

Global instability and threats to Americans, to American interests and to their way of life are and will continue to be, driven by intertwined and intricate global pressures. None of them can be relieved by the USG alone and none of them has a simple solution. The following are six examples.

- (1) **Population explosions** predicted to increase the world’s population to 8 billion by 2025. A parallel development is the continuing mass migrations into the cities, expected to account for more than 60% of the 2025 projection. The majority of this growth will occur in countries that are labeled ‘emerging’ or are en route to “failed state’ status.
- (2) **Resource Management** particularly food, water and energy supplies are finite and the world is reaching points of diminishing returns. Scarce water will be a major detriment to food production to match the expanding population. Potable water for humans and animals is another aspect of the water issue.
- (3) **Information and Knowledge Control** is critical today because human beings are being overwhelmed by good and bad data and instant communication capability. Clearly, there is a very positive side to the information age, but discrimination and filtering are serious drawbacks. Marginalized groups and violent extremists (terrorists, insurgents, state actors—Iran and N. Korea etc.) have found a global audience for grievances and propaganda. The decentralization and rapid proliferation of media platforms allows real time impact to be made on policy choices and provides America’s opponents multiple instruments to spin any event or statement to their own advantage. (Al Jazeera-Arab Service).
- (4) **Rise of the BRIC** (Brazil, Russia, India and China) will continue to challenge the traditional Euro-Atlantic dominance of the global economy. China is now the second largest, Japan the third and the US the largest economies in the world. The economic center of gravity will shift as these four countries’ (containing 40% of global population) redefine the market place and thereby exert influence from a new direction on international financial, economic and political affairs. China’s strong presence in Africa and other locales, e.g. Australia is already causing some erosion of automatic support for US strategic interests.

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- (5) **Exaggerated and widening Income gaps** in the US and elsewhere, will fuel protests and instability, most dangerously in underdeveloped or fragile societies. The strong anti-Wall Street, anti-USA mood among global actors (friend and foe) was a product of the perception the rich are getting richer and the rest are getting poorer. Anger is palpable in the US but is intense in areas of the world ranging from Pakistan to China to parts of Africa, and more, claiming we are trying to manipulate the world economies.
- (6) **A New shape to conflict** has emerged dramatically since Vietnam. It used to be described as unconventional warfare, but in fact has now become the new “conventional” thus demanding FSO. Non-state actors who are able to challenge dominant global military powers such as the United States by practicing guerilla tactics with deadly results characterize it. Because these largely indigenous fighters are members of local communities, countering them requires a broad understanding of the non-military context. Iraq and Afghanistan have provided different environments where these insurgents, terrorists, civil war fighters can hack away at the US and Allied forces with modern weapons and relatively small numbers of people. The threat of the suicide bombers, the IEDs and the visible efforts made at information warfare are just other manifestations of these asymmetrical conflicts where massive military capacity is not necessarily an advantage. After nine years, America has become more adept at fighting and defending against, these almost 19<sup>th</sup> Century Apache –like assaults, but the cost has been huge, and perhaps preventable.

### USG Reacts Rather than Anticipates Crises

Since 11 September 2001 the USG has been reacting to events, not leading them. Without an ability to engage in interagency strategic planning, inclusion of FSA, to have immediately available a multi-skill/experienced forum of collective expertise or even to have convinced CIV agencies essential to success, nothing was ready on 12 September 2001. The Pentagon, because of its tradition of and well-honed skill at, planning was much better prepared than their civilian agency counterparts. However, the military enemies in Afghanistan were quickly overcome, while the civilian competencies arrived in theater very late and to this day, have not been effectively integrated. In 2003, once again, the superb US Army and Marine Corps units quickly defeated the Iraqi forces. However, absent a Phase IV, i.e. MILCIV integrated post-hostilities plan including political, economic, development actions, extra time was wasted and opportunities missed. In both cases, the operational environment and conditions were not shaped and valuable resources unrealized.

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### Anticipating, Planning and Managing Crises: the Need

The common missing element through both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is not just the absence of a capacity within the US Government to combine civilian and military expertise within an established process that allows contingency planning and crisis management, at all levels, to take place. It also must reach-out beyond its own self-perceived and somewhat jaded expertise and resources. The USG really should have available to it structures and methodologies enabling it to draw on the entire government’s expertise, in addition to non-USG experience, to fully comprehend a complete spectrum of activities (FSA) and their synchronization within a specific operating environment.

Building a database holding a constantly updated file of people, coded by expertise and experience, readily available should be the first macro step. These individuals ideally would have received some training and exposure to the WOG-model working environment, shared processes, further exercised to familiarize them with a their FSA-like working environment, its processes and common products, i.e. preparations similar to those used earlier for continuity-of-government programs; along with socioeconomic viability.

Some senior political appointees over the past ten years have discussed establishing a National Security Reserve Corps (NCRC) with a small permanent staff, augmented by a volunteer, but carefully vetted group of active duty middle-grade civilian and military officers. The concept envisaged that during their tours with the NSRC, these officers would be subordinated to the NSC. However, none of these discussions were ever translated into reality.

### Anticipating, Planning and Managing Crises: the Problem

In 2010 there is broad recognition of two truths: (1) an interagency merger of skills to plan for and operate during, major national threats is essential, but (2) because of the organizational and human dynamics of agency politics, it has been impossible to develop anything sustainable within the USG. The possibility that a workable, internal USG WOG-like entity can be built and successfully serve decision-makers at all levels, seems slight.

During the decades since Vietnam, almost every CIVMIL emergency has led to the hasty introduction of some ad hoc interagency body to deal on-the-run with hurricanes, oil leaks, attacks on the homeland or overseas or long, drawn out conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan. These thrown-together task forces are inevitably unsatisfactory, difficult to manage and never last past the event that brought them into being. None has provided a usable model.

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“Interagency” and “whole-of-government” are simply short hand references to this as yet unrealized, essential USG capacity, i.e. a standard procedure and/or standing entity that offers decision-makers (at all levels) select knowledge and skills from MILCIV/CIVMIL organizations appropriate to the subject and task at hand. The mounting pressures on and threats to, the USG are not going to diminish or disappear; they demand such a standing resource be created.

Thus, somehow, all the bureaucratic and human roadblocks already reviewed must be overcome and a workable WOG model developed. The United States Government will need every advantage it can gain to preserve, against all assaults of whatever nature, wherever located, the unique reality that is America.

### Today’s Reality for US Military Leaders

Today’s uniformed decision-makers live in a world of ever increasing complexity and change that demands they continue to be resilient, flexible and possessed of good judgment. But, they must also have a capacity to understand and deal with civilian agencies’ substance intelligently; as well a host of international and indigenous players. The neatly segregated missions of the past are now blended into a multitude of considerations and cause-effect relationships where political, social, cultural norms have a direct bearing on kinetic actions – and vice-versa.

America’s military leadership today must play many roles: master of strategy and tactics on modern battlefields or in political minefields and foreign policy debates in Washington or in dozens of other countries and capitals. Senior general officers are now expected to be city managers, accomplished and sensitive diplomats, multi-culturally aware, politicians, economists, development experts, media stars and much more. Paradoxically, no comparable expectation is placed on more than the most senior echelons of the civilian bureaucracy.

As General Petraeus said, senior general officers “... must be ‘pent-athlete’ commanders.” General David Barno, former USF commander in Afghanistan, went further: “today to oversee a broad and expanding portfolio requires a theater commander to establish a wide range of relationships not demanded of previous officers”. Continuing, he said “... you can no longer rely on relationships inside the military .....he himself had to “tremendously expand his network to include other parts of the government – the embassy and senior players at USAID” .....”relationships with host governments” ..... plus “allies on Capitol Hill and in the media to get anything done”.

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The COIN Bible, FM24-3 is very clear in explaining why a successful counter-insurgency campaign requires equal participation of USG civilian agencies both in Washington and overseas. Additionally, counter-insurgency needs to bring into play FSO. A very large portion of this knowledge, experience and special background exists in depth in a relatively small number of key civilian agencies and non-USG entities.

Unfortunately, based on the past 10-20 years experience, it is unlikely to be available as quickly, or as robustly as the multiple conflict locales require. Moreover, when ‘interagency’ assistance is provided it is often from younger, less experienced staff (FSOs or otherwise), who have ‘drunk the Kool-Aid’ of their respective agencies and developed silo- attitudes formulated by the perceptions of their immediate supervisor. At a recent MRX the pervasive comments from senior officers was: “we asked for assistance and guidance from Civilian agencies and what we get are 20-30 year-olds with international masters degrees who know everything, will listen to nothing and have almost no ‘real-live’ or field experience to back it up”.

John Pendleton, Director of GAO’s research on force structure and defense planning issues, recognized these problems and listed the remedial government-wide steps that should be taken. They are equally valid at lower echelons of interaction.

- Implement overarching, *integrated strategies* to achieve national security objectives
- Creating *collaborative organizations* that facilitate integrated national security approaches
- Sharing and integrating *national security information* across agencies
- *Consistence of message* (at home and overseas) and leadership

At the same hearing (House Armed Services Oversight/Investigations Committee), Dr. Gordon Adams, former assistant OMB director for DOD budgets and current professor of international relations at American University, stated: “Interagency and the whole of government are buzz words that rose after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and in direct response to the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though there are internal USG efforts to bring about the ‘interagency’, in reality it is a myth and just by the nature of what the USG is – it will remain as such.”

### Anticipating, Planning and Managing Crises: A Possible Solution?

The US Army, for reasons mentioned earlier, is in a good position to provide excellent platforms upon which FSO/ FSA options could be developed, tested, adjusted and tried again. The ultimate goal would be to devise some flexible approaches that could, with tweaking of size, logistical support and composition, be adapted to support useful dialogues (interagency

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and others) in multiple venues from Washington to the battle space and everywhere in between.

Interagency Interoperability and Effectiveness (I2E) is a viable generic approach which will reach out to collect, combine and consolidate an array of experience and expertise. It is built on the premise that WOG effects can only be achieved through the intervention of a ‘disinterested third party’ that can transcend the ingrained self-interest, suspicion and bureaucratic back-biting present in the USG permanent bureaucracy. As a ‘trusted agent’, there will be an ability to help forge strategic partnerships between the US Army, international organizations, major NGOs and the private sector and assemble the critical mass needed to accomplish the mission at hand. None of these potential Army partners has any deep, selfish bureaucratic interest in the shape of outcomes, beyond collaborating to resolve difficult situations with more durable solutions.

Furthermore, this goal-oriented entity will have the added advantage of reporting only to the US Army during this gestation phase, rather than to a hydra-headed, bickering interagency committee. These ingredients will set the conditions to enable the establishment of a process with the potential to become self-sustainable. This possibility is increased if some members of the ‘trusted agent’-platform have relative experience participating in interagency conflicts at different levels; plus working with international platforms. So equipped, warning signals can be read and problems avoided. The following are a few specific areas where these efforts might be of most use to the Army:

1. Doctrine and Planning
2. Education and Training
3. Operational WOG Facilitation Teams (OWFT)
4. Field and CONUS Delivery Teams (WDT)
5. Integrated Reconstruction and Development Teams (IRDT)

Since in the crucible of combat, all policy and operational errors and weaknesses are most immediately visible, the initial focal point of the I2E Concept is MILCIV conflict and post conflict strategic planning and tactical operations for both suit and uniformed colleagues. Nowhere has this phenomenon been more acutely and amply demonstrated than before and during the Afghan and Iraq wars when very little CIV was present in the military planning. However, it needs to be kept in mind that the ‘interagency relational problems’ described earlier, are present in most major USG interactions.



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### Planning and Training – An Alternative Approach

The causes for the inability of different parts of the US Government to work productively with each other have been explored earlier. In general, they range from lackadaisical attitudes to noninterest to direct resistance.

The recent Special Skills Initiative (SSI) being piloted by the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division is an example of attempts to encompass a full spectrum of activities which has been endorsed by FORCOM, JFCOM, the Joint Chiefs and SECDEF. SSI’s goal is to optimize interagency capabilities to cooperate productively in support of ongoing operations in Afghanistan. Though the promise of the SSI program is to enhance the unity of MILCIV effort, and to a small degree may have done so, the overall program must be viewed as a valiant effort but not much more. The participating government agencies reflect the same prejudices and colliding agendas they always have and often seem to be competing with each other to stay relevant. Thus, the hoped for MILCIV integration of missions either at the tactical or decision-making levels, has not occurred.

In addition, these agencies either won’t or can’t maintain a quality embed capacity for preparation and/or deployment because they don’t have enough people with the requisite skills, background or interest in doing so. Efforts such as SSI will always remain a lower priority for their separate and autonomous home agencies.

In order to make the I2E (Trusted Agent) work well for the Army will require coherence of effort (a team concept), skill-sets customized to tasks and consistent, comparable training for both CIVs and MILs. A small nucleus of qualified, experienced people is all that is required.

Maintaining a quasi-interagency intervention team(s) able to insert itself wherever an interagency solution is essential would obviate the need for establishing a separate organization. For instance, when it is critically important to achieve a productive FSO/FSA outcome, the intervention team could be introduced at the early stages, and like a good wedding planner marry the strategic planning, to the policy decision-making and then following through the subsequent, early phase of implementation. Such an approach may have avoided serious problems in 2003?

In shaping any conditions it could jump-start and support collaboration among different MILCIV USG agencies. Further along, it could promote targeted focus sectors among the broad array of talent (Military and Civilian) available in the USG, host-countries, NGOs, international

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organizations and the domestic or international private sector in a planned and synergistic manner.

However, within the Army, as with any complex organization, this change process would have to be introduced at the top, and then be socialized to lower echelons of command (corps, division and brigade). Ignoring organizational cultures and accepted norms of procedure will destroy brilliant ideas and inventions.

### **The Path Forward**

#### **Translating a Concept into Operational Reality**

The following is a representation of ‘reality checks’ which we can use as ‘lessons learned’ enabling us to move forward in shaping the conditions in which full spectrum activities are engaged.

- The reactionary and isolated attempts to have meaningful and consistent CIVMIL or MILCIV integration of effort within the USG are not working today.
- “Interagency and the whole of government are buzz words that rose after the September <sup>11<sup>th</sup></sup> attacks and in direct response to the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though there are internal USG efforts to bring about the ‘interagency’ in reality it is a myth and just by the nature of what the USG is – it will remain as such.”
- As complicated as the needs for today are, they will pale to challenges to security, failed states and conflict resolution which will face the Military in the near-future. The conflicts that will drive current and future instability and impact national security will instead revolve around a diversity of new intertwined and morphing themes.
- Though future challenges may lie directly on the shoulders of the Civilian agencies, many will ultimately end up on in the lap of the Department of Defense where the US Army will need to be prepared take a leadership role.
- No government entity has produced an actionable ‘interagency’ package. Though FM24-3 is a guide, there has been little actual internalization – it needs to be modified to reach out to a wider and more diverse base of resources.
- The belief that the leadership and facilitation of such a process can only come from within the USG is both flawed and detrimental – it totally isolates the concept that the majority of the expertise lays outside of the government. No single internal USG organization is capable of managing such a process ---- when it tries our own ‘tribal’ nuisances raise their ugly heads. Too often solutions boil down to ‘throwing money and

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people at the problems’ as opposed to pulling upon a wide diversity of resources – be it in government or outside.

- Unfortunately, the great comic philosopher ‘Pogo’ is correct – [the enemy is us]

To turn around the current status quo and begin the difficult task of shaping conditions to address the demands a global response force will require solutions to be customize, not ‘off-the shelf’ with minor modifications as is currently happening. To address the hybrid threats we currently face as well as those of the near future, finding a workable FSO approach will require openness on both the MIL and CIV sides to try something outside their normal comfort zones. It will require the ability to collect, combine and consolidate experience and expertise not only from within the USG, but outside of it as well. The resources are available; they are just not being accessed or used in a cohesive manner. Such a sea-change in modus operandi including training and education curricula, existing planning and implementation models, and concepts of operations and oversight is beyond the inclinations and current capacities of the civilian agencies. Unfortunately, even within the Military it is not effectively occurring in training exercises or in theater.

The I2E concept of a ‘trusted agent’ without a host of conflicting agendas and answering to a single entity is the most comprehensive means to help shape the conditions for success and the desired sustainability. Based on demonstrated history in multiple ‘game-changing initiatives’, from cultural to organizational to technical, only one USG entity – the US Army – has consistently demonstrated leadership in reaching beyond the ‘norm’ and partnering for solutions. Furthermore, it has the resources, the discipline, the flexibility and the willingness to seek continual improvement and pilot new ideas. Through current operations, theater deployments, the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the Leavenworth complex of learning institutions, the Army War College and West Point all offer venues where I2E can be discussed in greater detail, probed and improved, and released for ground testing. The ultimate goal would be to introduce a refined, useful structure and process into the Army and eventually, possibly see it adopted by key national security agencies.

### Shaping Conditions

The full spectrum integration of Military and Civilian resources cannot be realistically expected to percolate up – it must be pushed down from the top with identifiable benchmarks and assigned accountability. Military strategy and training must encompass a fundamental CIVMIL ‘mindset’ in its design and implementation, which allows better cooperation of networks and utilization of resources.

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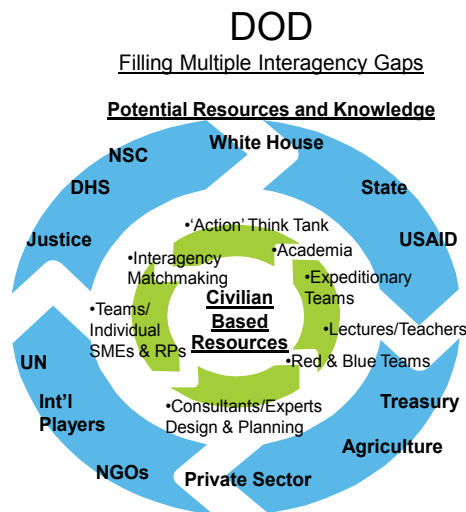
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In order for these concerns to be effectively and strategically addressed, they must be looked at from a holistic perspective. Emphasis placed on ensuring that the Corp, Division and Brigade leadership fully understands ‘real-world’ events and planning and how to incorporate that into their preparation consistently – both laterally and vertically.

The Army, working with and through a ‘trusted’ small but tactical third party agent with situational insights of critical government, non-state, and international institution, would be a single independent secure platform for ‘Global Ground Force Engagement’ to begin developing the capacity for integration of this MILCIV transformation and shaping engagement conditions. The dedicated team would work with small groups of broadly experienced geographic and functional global experts in non-lethal areas; which in turn could significantly negate the potential for lethal engagements. Not only would this enhance the concept of FSO but would also help minimize the need kinetic operations as a standalone activity.

Through collaborating with both planners and trainers, the joint team would develop concepts and strategies for meeting potential realities and problem sets. The group would also act as a resource for interagency issues in its planning and training, in addition to actually strategic non-lethal field engagements. An expeditionary force attached to a mobile command coordinating the intricacies of the interagency (CIVMIL) preparation and relationships would accomplish this goal. These units could actually follow a Corp or Division through training and deploy as appropriate. The program could be modeled to some degree after the Military’s own ‘Seven Minute Drill’ and begin with the identification and effective use of FSA resources.

The following graphic demonstrates a sampling of the possibilities.



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### Summary

There is no doubt the world has drastically changed and to deal with it requires incorporating numerous sets of expertise to formulate sound policy in Washington or on the ground in the various areas of operation US forces find themselves. Decades of experience have proven the impossibility of melding CIVMIL expertise from within the USG bureaucracy. The essential expertise exists in the civilian agencies, but like NATO forces, they have very different rules of engagement; none of them, with the possible exception of the CIA’s paramilitary force and the US military, works effectively with other departmental counterparts. Yet, to deal with today’s hybrid threats demand a new and innovative approach that reaches beyond the traditional norms of government.

The ultimate concept and realization of interagency must be expanded and the approached must be rethought – not to another bureaucratic entity but instead to a much smaller, highly focused ‘disinterested third party’ assisting with the leadership and ‘connecting the dots’ with all the resources available. I2E reaches not only within the USG but also outside of its ability to efficiently and effectively collect, combine and consolidate the practical experience and expertise to realize a full spectrum of resources operating in a cohesive and synergistic method.

A targeted group of dedicated ex Military, Department of State and USAID professionals has spent the past eighteen months developing I2E. It takes into account the individual and organizational impediments to cohesion, takes advantage of modern information/communications technology and offers a method to induce collaboration on a macro and micro level across diverse resources within the USG, academia, non-state actors, and the private sector. It is based on ‘flexible and needs’ and can be introduced in phases or by linking select elements of each phase, yet can be scaled through a controlled process.

Through collecting, combining and consolidating strategic and tactical experience and expertise, I2E can be effectively utilized available resources (domestic and global), customize to situational scenarios, and incorporated strategic planning, training and field operations.