



APCSS – GCMC SENIOR ALUMNI SEMINAR

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION MISSIONS

17 -24 October 2009, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

AFTER ACTION REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

The Directors of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies have begun annual Senior Alumni Seminars hosted alternately in Hawaii and Germany. The purpose of the seminars is to bring together senior alumni from both the Asia-Pacific and European–Eurasian regions to discuss a topic of strategic importance. This year’s seminar, held from 17 – 24 October 2009 in Germany, discussed *Stabilization and Reconstruction Missions*. The seminar was attended by 27 participants from 25 nations.

2. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- To improve understanding of the dimensions of stabilization and reconstruction missions.
- To share best practices and lessons learned about the obstacles to and opportunities for improved inter-agency and multinational cooperation in SSTaR missions.
- Strengthen the ability to develop an effective strategic design for a SSTaR mission.
- Identify current weaknesses and opportunities to improve assistance in SSTaR missions.
- To obtain a better understanding of partner nations views and concerns in a forum for multilateral communication

3. EVENT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The directors of the centers, Dr. Rose and General (ret.) Smith chaired the seminar. Dr. Ann Phillips (GCMC) and Mr. Herman F. Finley (APCSS) were the leading faculty members to prepare and conduct the seminar.

The seminar was structured to first set forth the challenges of stabilization and reconstruction missions and then to address them through four pillars: governance, economy, social well-being

and security. The centrality of strategic analysis and planning in conducting SSTaR missions was underscored. Participants considered the importance of the history, political and social dynamics and culture of the recipients of assistance in strategic design. The role of different institutional cultures among inter-agency participants, as well as the different cultures, interests and expectations of multinational participants in trying to create a coherent assistance strategy was also stressed. Remarks stressed that without comprehending and taking these differences into account in strategic planning, there would be little possibility for success.

At the end of the week, participants developed a strategic design for a future SSTaR mission in Sudan which built upon and integrated key principles and concepts from the previous discussions. The results were presented to Mr. Kolbow and Ambassador Greenlee, who provided comments

The presentations were followed by discussions in three facilitated break-out groups. External perspectives were provided by:

- LtGen Dutton, Deputy Commander ISAF
- Dr. Bourgade, Head of Unit for Social and Human Development and Migration, European Commission
- Dr. Holmes-Eber, Professor of Operational Culture, Marine Corps University
- Mr. Kolbow, former Parliamentary State Secretary of Defense, Bundestag
- Ambassador Greenlee, Coordinator's Office for Reconstruction and Stabilization, US Department of State

4. FINDINGS

Security and development are mutually reinforcing. There is no security without development and no development without security.

Strategic design in conducting SSTaR missions is a must; a central challenge is to identify priorities, rather than to try to respond to every need.

Joint analysis of SSTaR environments by donors and sharing of information will help improve strategic design as well as inter-agency and multinational coordination. A critical element often missing from situational analysis is a clear and consensus “framing” of the problem—i.e. agreement on what the core issues are that shape the environment.

Institutional cultural differences are structural impediments to inter-agency coordination, which is necessary for successful SSTaR missions. Joint assessments and joint exercises can help to break down some of the barriers. At the same time, different institutional cultures can provide an important corrective to missions that are dominated and directed by one ministry.

Recipient governments must strengthen their accountability and transparency. Therefore, institution building is a central feature of a successful stabilization and reconstruction mission.

“Local Ownership” is more than a fad slogan; it is at the heart of successful stabilization and reconstruction.

The global community must improve tools for measuring the development of good governance; failed states indices may not present an accepted and/or objective view of reality, but they provide a starting point for a more thorough assessment. A degree of subjectivity is present in the categories reviewed. Corruption, for example, takes on different meaning from nation to nation.

Fewer assumptions and more assessments are needed. (This is particularly important in Afghanistan and in Pakistan where the US sends its drones to bomb suspected insurgent sites—without eyes-on-the-ground confirmation. This can result in the unintentional killing of innocents.)

There exists an urgent need for the international community to invest in people who are to take part in the process of planning and executing SSTaR missions.

Exit strategies for SSTaR missions are a must.

Strategic communication and perception is more important and more powerful than reality. Example: Scenes of US Military Police searching burqa-clad women were spread across the internet. Although the MP, in fact, was also a woman, with the military protective gear, it was not apparent from a distance and the footage created uproar and a platform for jihadist propaganda. Participants clearly understood the power of Strategic Communication but differed significantly in maintaining a focus on desired communication outcomes/strategies as they worked through potential approaches to specific problems.

The soldiers sent on SSTaR missions must be well versed in customs, culture, etiquette, and norms of the region. Photos of unintentional insults to Islam such as wearing boots inside a mosque provide ample “ammunition” for the Taliban.

5. NEXT STEPS

The Directors agreed to continue this Senior Alumni Seminar series between the APCSS and the GCMC, noting the usefulness of sharing the different views assembled in the seminar. Participants agreed upon the positive impact of the seminar and requested follow-up events to deepen exchange of knowledge and experience in the complex field of SSTaR missions.

6. Contact

Major Enrico Mueller, Deputy Chief, Graduate Support Outreach Team, 440-333,
EnricoMueller@marshallCenter.org