



CASE STUDY NO. 4  
COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

## **The Kuwait Task Force: Postconflict Planning and Interagency Coordination**

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## COMPLEX OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES SERIES

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Dr. Karen Guttieri at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) provided the research direction and overall leadership for this project.

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## **The Kuwait Task Force: Postconflict Planning and Interagency Coordination**

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### **THE POSTCONFLICT PLANNING DILEMMA**

Immediately after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces on August 2, 1990, three U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs (CA) staff officers in Washington, DC, were concerned that operational plans might ignore key civil-military considerations. These Army Reserve officers had been involved in developing civil-affairs plans for Operation Just Cause in Panama the year before and had seen those plans scuttled—to the detriment of the operation—just prior to the execution of the mission.

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Paul Mikesh of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict; LTC Dennis Barlow of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, J-3;<sup>1</sup> and Colonel (COL) Randy Elliott of the 352d U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs Command—and also chief of the Middle East Division of the State Department—were now poised to support the civil-military dimensions of Operation Desert Shield. A key civil-military issue had been framed by President George H.W. Bush, when he identified one of the four “simple” goals driving U.S. participation as “restoring Kuwait’s legitimate government in place of a puppet regime.”<sup>2</sup>

However, they knew that accomplishing that goal would be anything but simple. Some Kuwaiti officials had gone to ground while others had emigrated abroad to await the conclusion of the ground war. The puppet regime installed by Saddam Hussein would follow the Iraqi dictator’s every wish and could wreak havoc on the society and infrastructure of Kuwait. Trying to sort out, identify, and install a legitimate regime poised to revive a post-Saddam Kuwait seemed a daunting task. While the mission seemed to devolve on the State Department, recent operations in Panama suggested that aid from the State Department would not be available until well after hostilities had ceased. Who, if anyone, in the U.S. government would take on the mission until peace was restored? What these two officers feared was that war planners and strategists would again ignore or misuse the structure designed to support just such a mission.

### THE CIVIL AFFAIRS CAPABILITY

Toward the end of World War II, Army Civil Affairs units and forces were developed to provide the U.S. military with the capacity to minimize civilian interference with combat operations, thus helping the commander fulfill international requirements relating to the civilian populace in his area of operations and allowing him to take on military government roles. During the Cold War and after, Civil Affairs doctrine downplayed the military government role and added skill sets typically found in the civilian public and professional sectors. The doctrine also fostered cultural and linguistic knowledge of the countries in Civil Affairs' area of responsibility. The "new breed" of Civil Affairs officer was therefore oriented toward civic action, infrastructure-restoration efforts, and coordination with host-nation officials.

But the way ahead for Civil Affairs was rocky. U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs forces found themselves under attack in the mid-1980s—not by an armed enemy force but by the commander of the U.S. Training and Doctrine Command. General William R. Richardson and others believed that Civil Affairs forces were anachronisms and needed to be expunged from the army. The concept of recruiting soldiers with professional functional skills, such as city planners, public transportation specialists, and health and safety specialists, seemed unnecessary and wasteful. Richardson spoke for many when he attacked the concept of government support by U.S. military personnel as an outmoded and politically unacceptable idea. He felt that more mundane civil-military roles required of Civil Affairs units could readily be performed by other forces or agencies in lieu of Army Reserve units composed of rank-heavy citizen-soldiers.

After a heated debate, in which Senator Strom Thurmond (himself a former Civil Affairs officer) took strenuous part, Army Reserve Civil Affairs units were retained; but the memory of the political struggle left a bitter taste in the mouths of many on both sides of this issue. The debate immediately spawned a secondary question: Where did these units belong? After another hotly debated season, Civil Affairs in 1987 found a home under the command of the newly formed U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). In the process, the U.S. Army redesigned Reserve CA units to accomplish missions across the spectrum of operations (from foreign internal defense to conventional combat) and apportioned (designated) them to support most major maneuver and logistical units in specific regions of the world. This meant that the units were expected to recruit mostly field grade officers who possessed specified professional expertise (for example, public labor, public utilities, public health) and cultural and linguistic knowledge of the countries in their unit's area of responsibility. This force was structured and assigned on the premise that units that combined civilian professional skill sets—negotiating, diplomatic, and management prowess and would possess or acquire cultural and language knowledge—would be powerful assets for commanders dealing with foreign officials during operations.

**CIVIL MILITARY PLANNING AND CENTRAL COMMAND**

The late 1980s were a difficult time to be an Army Reserve Civil Affairs soldier on fulltime Active Guard and Reserve duty in the nation's capital. Not only was the acrimony born of the recent political battle over the survival of Reserve Civil Affairs forces still rife, but also the debate that accompanied the assignment of CA forces to USSOCOM gave rise to new debates that caused even more friction between, and among, various military constituencies.<sup>3</sup>

The three officers—Mikesh, Barlow, and Elliot—endured scores of discussions and proposals in Washington that cast doubt on the validity of the application of Reserve Civil Affairs forces. They also observed key decision points in which these forces—doctrinally required to support civil-military operations—were bypassed or misapplied. The officers were aware that, in spite of repeated recommendations that U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) develop a civil affairs plan relating to Iraq, none had been devised. Worse, the Civil Affairs officer billet at Third U.S. Army, the executive agent for Civil Affairs for USCENTCOM, was vacant.<sup>4</sup> Elliott, from his perspective as USCENTCOM team chief, and then as operations officer of the 352d Civil Affairs Command, knew that his unit, required by the Department of the Army and USSOCOM to support both the army component and the headquarters of the U.S. Central Command, had not been assigned the task to fulfill these key missions and had been excluded from the USCENTCOM planning process.<sup>5</sup> The Joint Staff was aware that USCENTCOM had not developed the required Annex G (Civil Affairs) to its operational plans, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense was given no assurances that any consideration would be given to postcombat missions.

Therefore, each of the three Civil Affairs officers had reason to fear that CA missions and forces would be given short shrift in war planning consideration, and each was determined to do everything possible to see that operations involving Kuwait and Iraq included a robust and effective civil-military element.

U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs assets, although not employed to their full potential in the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989, had received very positive reviews.<sup>6</sup> Civil Affairs plans, though thoroughly vetted and approved prior to the operations, were called off just hours before the insertion of U.S. combat forces there. It was only after days of lawlessness in Panama City that a variation of the original plan was reconstituted, and carried out by a CA volunteer task force rather than the units originally selected. The volunteers came from numerous units and suffered by operating under an ad hoc command and control structure in which they reported to a staff element of U.S. Southern Command.<sup>7</sup>

The impromptu CA task force was hurriedly deployed to Panama and given the name Civil Military Operations Task Force. Among other accomplishments, the task force supported host-government ministry offices; reestablished correctional facilities; jump-started the economy; produced a

national agriculture plan; reestablished customs and immigration procedures; and coordinated the restoration of sanitation, feeding, and medical services. However, the hasty formation of the task force, and its place within the command, created confusion and a lack of direction.<sup>8</sup> Afterward, the U.S. commander, General Max Thurmond, decried his own handling of the CA forces under his control: “It is a bad plan when the J-5 ends up commanding anything. . . . If you ask me why I did not catch this, I can only say that my primary focus was on [Operation] Just Cause.”<sup>9</sup>

It was in the aftermath of Operation Promote Liberty (the civil-military mission in Panama), and in the context of managing and overseeing an invigorated, yet untested, Civil Affairs system, that Mikesh and Barlow were assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, respectively.

#### NATIONAL POLICY AND POSTCONFLICT PLANNING

As Pentagon and Washington action officers and military planners, Mikesh, Barlow, and Elliott were well aware of the prerogatives of regional commanders to write plans, set requirements, and carry out operations. They were also aware of the responsibilities and authorities of the Department of the Army as the force provider, and the U.S. Special Operations Command as the trainer and peacetime commander, to prepare and deploy effective CA units. What worried them was that they knew of no mechanism to forge the linkage of the White House policy calling for the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait to operations nor how to drive civil affairs doctrine in support of that effort. While cautious not to override the system—a charge often leveled against Civil Affairs officers as a result of the contentious political debate of the ‘80s—they were ready to engage the CA force in what they saw as a classic civil-military mission.

On August 14, 1990, less than a week after President Bush demanded the immediate and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Mikesh and Barlow collaborated on a staff paper, which they submitted to Mikesh’s boss, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Jim Locher. It would be up to Locher to determine the paper’s usefulness. Given the civil affairs dilemma in Panama, and with awareness of the CA vacuum at USCENTCOM, this paper suggested that the Office of the Secretary of Defense consider raising the issue of postconflict planning. It recommended that the Department of Defense (1) consider its role in the “restoration of Kuwait;” (2) coordinate restoration plans with the State Department; and (3) activate the Joint Civil Affairs Committee, a board of senior advisors designed to provide advice to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on CA matters.<sup>10</sup> The Joint Civil Affairs Committee, which has never officially convened, has been ensconced in Department of Defense (DOD) policy guidance for over fifty years.

Locher concluded that the President's statements provided clear guidance to begin CA planning at once.<sup>11</sup> He crafted a memo that he coordinated with Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Henry Rowan and sent it to the director of the Joint Staff on August 22, requesting comments and approval to develop an approach to crafting a postconflict strategy.<sup>12</sup> Within a week, Locher received a handwritten note from the director of the Joint Staff, who rejected the idea from Locher and Rowan, noting that activation of the Joint Civil Affairs Committee would be inappropriate.<sup>13</sup> While no explanation accompanied this response, verbal discussions within the Joint Staff characterized the activation of the committee as being relatively unimportant compared to the urgent mission of preparing combat operations plans.<sup>14</sup>

During the next six weeks, neither USCENTCOM nor its army component took any significant action to develop civil-military or postconflict plans in conjunction with rapidly developing war plans, nor did it engage its CA-apportioned unit, the 352d Civil Affairs Command, with regard to contingency planning. Nor, for that matter, were there plans to request presidential authority to call up CA reservists and units. Message traffic was quite explicit in concluding that "CENTCOM was ill-prepared to conduct CA operations."<sup>15</sup> Discussion among action officers in the Pentagon continually centered on the point that planning must emphasize combat objectives and that other considerations—specifically postconflict or "mop-up" operations—must be attended to after the war-fighting was over.

Despite midlevel requests from LTC Barlow on the Joint Staff and LTC Mikesch in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Civil Affairs contacts in USCENTCOM, the Department of the Army, and USSOCOM did not promise any postconflict planning related to Operation Desert Shield.<sup>16</sup> A common response to these requests was that no one wanted to tell a regional commander—and especially not a strong-willed leader like General Norman Schwarzkopf—"how to suck eggs."

Jim Locher, nevertheless, decided that it was the right time to construct a policy directive on civil affairs that would benefit "the field."<sup>17</sup> He believed it would be the kind of guidance General Schwarzkopf would find helpful. Working with Mikesch, Barlow suggested that the Joint Staff was the proper avenue for requesting policy guidance from the Office of the Secretary of Defense for application in theater. To ensure the fullest participation in the process, the assistant secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict<sup>18</sup> invited representatives from the army, USSOCOM, and the Joint Staff to develop the directive. Accordingly, a draft version was completed around August 25. Over the next several weeks, however, the process slowed significantly as the army staff at the headquarters of the Department of the Army raised concerns with points in the paper and continually offered alternatives. First, the Department of the Army suggested that the twenty functional specialties identified in Civil Affairs doctrine be dealt with on a case-by-case basis; then, it asked to review the State Department's role. Additionally, the army asked to consider the Corps of Engineers as the

appropriate force to take on the mission. The process dragged on into early October when the project, which had slowed to a near stop, was ended. The commander in chief of U.S. Central Command, who had become aware of the effort within the Pentagon, declared that no policy guidance should be provided, because he required none.<sup>19</sup>

Locher persevered and aimed higher. In late summer he worked the Civil Affairs message up his chain of command to Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, as well as to senior officials of the army, USSOCOM, and the Joint Staff. There was very little response from these key organizations.<sup>20</sup> He was, however, able to bring the issue to the attention of many decisionmakers in the Pentagon and developed alliances with the like-minded assistant secretaries of Defense for International Security Affairs and Reserve Affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Mikesh and Barlow were assigned key roles within the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Crisis Coordination Center and the Joint Staff's National Military Command Center, respectively—both twenty-four-hour-a-day hubs—where they were able to stay abreast of the latest developments and coordinate quickly with each other. Their spirits were low, when a diplomatic lightning bolt struck.

## THE KUWAITIS COME TO TOWN

On September 20, 1990, an event occurred that set in motion a series of proceedings that not only ended the stalemate but also infused great energy into the process. It was a simple diplomatic event, which was accompanied by little fanfare and presaged no great results. The Kuwaiti government-in-exile dispatched twenty specialists to Washington to establish a reconstruction planning structure under the authority of Ambassador Saud Nasir Al-Sabah.

COL Elliott, as a result of his civilian position at the State Department, knew Ambassador-Designate to Kuwait Edward "Skip" Gnehm, who informed him about the newly arrived Kuwaiti team of specialists. Elliott told Gnehm that his Army Reserve CA unit possessed the kind of planning, cultural, and functional expertise that the Kuwaitis might find useful. Gnehm wasted no time in taking this information to the Kuwaitis, who wanted to hear more.<sup>22</sup>

Elliott called Barlow and Mikesh and informed them of an impending request from the State Department to brief the Kuwaitis on CA capabilities. Mikesh prepared the Office of the Secretary of Defense offices for the message, while Barlow informed the J-3 hierarchy. When the Kuwaiti government-in-exile sent a request to the director of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Michael P.C. Carns, via Assistant Secretary of Defense Rowan, for a State Department briefing, the request was quickly approved.

As the CA staff officer on the Joint Staff, Barlow was selected to prepare and deliver the brief—the army having declined the offer—as the executive

agent of Civil Affairs. During the briefing, the army representative sat silently, as he would in most subsequent meetings relating to the Kuwait Civil Affairs mission.<sup>23</sup>

On October 4, 1990, Barlow briefed the Kuwaiti contingent, now known as the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program in the Pentagon. Also present at the briefing were Ambassador Gnehm; the J-3 of the Joint Staff, Lieutenant General Tom Kelly; Headquarters of the Department of the Army and USCENTCOM representatives; and Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, including members of the Office of the General Counsel. At the conclusion of the presentation, the Kuwaitis showed considerable interest in obtaining CA support to help restore their country and asked how they could request it. This is the kind of question not often asked openly. Sam Routson of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict suggested they send a request in writing to the President. At the time, he did not think this idea would have much chance of success.<sup>24</sup> The letter was delivered to the President on October 9, 1990.<sup>25</sup>

A scant ten days later, Locher attended a Deputies Committee meeting in which the topic of support to the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program was on the agenda. The committee agreed to provide restoration and planning advice, in addition to assistance, to the government of Kuwait, when restored.<sup>26</sup>

#### **THE INTERAGENCY PROCESS FOCUSES ON POSTCONFLICT ACTIVITIES**

Even before the request from the Kuwait government-in-exile, members of several U.S. government departments were concerned about postconflict issues likely to surface in Kuwait. Not only were officials thinking about infrastructure destruction and the status of basic life-supporting services, but also there was enormous concern for the safety of those (especially third-country nationals) the Kuwaitis might see as Iraqi collaborators. Locher had been communicating with both Rowan and the assistant secretary for Reserve Affairs, who shared these concerns. As Iraqi control of Kuwait tightened, it was becoming evident that the scope of postcombat missions relating to the care of displaced civilians, restoration of order, and a return to normalcy—not only in Kuwait, but possibly in Saudi Arabia and Iraq—was likely to overwhelm the small, active duty Civil Affairs force assigned to the region.<sup>27</sup> Such possibilities appeared even more dire when considering that USCENTCOM had not yet requested support from its apportioned CA U.S. Army Reserve units. To Mikesh and Barlow, it presaged another ad hoc Civil Affairs mission.<sup>28</sup>

Various government officials saw the Kuwaiti request as a chance to stimulate the preparation of an appropriate postconflict plan and to prepare appropriate organizations, such as Army Reserve Civil Affairs, for the

challenges ahead. Immediately following Barlow's briefing to the Kuwaitis, CA action officers on the Joint Staff, in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and on the army staff created an ad hoc working group that met frequently during the next weeks to track developments relating to possible postconflict scenarios and to develop likely courses of action. When the Deputies Committee met on October 15 and approved CA support to the Kuwaitis, the group was then ready to react.

While awaiting official follow-on guidance from the Deputies Committee meeting, the Joint Staff was given the task of developing various courses of action to support it. The ad hoc Pentagon CA team devised considerations to guide the Joint Staff in developing guidelines for CA support to the Kuwaitis.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, senior leaders in the Pentagon were acting on decisions made at the October 19 Deputies Committee meeting. National Security Council member Robert Gates had recommended that the State Department, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Staff establish a steering group—with Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Rowan taking the lead—to make necessary arrangements to develop a plan in conjunction with the Kuwaitis.<sup>30</sup> Rowan and his deputy, Fred Smith, therefore developed and issued a draft set of Terms of Reference and circulated them for comment. Rowan requested that a military service act as executive agent and urged members of various agencies to provide qualified representatives to be assigned to a Kuwait restoration steering group.<sup>31</sup>

The Terms of Reference specified that the U.S. objective would be to assist the legitimate government of Kuwait in planning government restoration efforts. The State and Defense departments were to share joint responsibilities for developing a civic-restoration program, with other departments and agencies to be called upon when appropriate. The Steering Group Committee, chaired by the Department of State, was to oversee the planning effort along with members from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. Planning was to be based on the twenty professional CA skills. The government of Kuwait was expected to execute applicable contracts for services and equipment with civilian firms, and the U.S. government was to be allowed to request reimbursement for the cost of services rendered. Semimonthly reports were to be distributed to the State Department, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, and USCENTCOM.<sup>32</sup>

On October 22, a State Department official attending an interagency meeting hosted by Assistant Secretary Locher volunteered to draft a memorandum of understanding between the United States and the government of Kuwait. Meanwhile, at the bidding of General Thomas Kelley on the Joint Staff, LTC Barlow began staffing a message from the chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, asking the Department of the Army to create a task force to assist in planning with the Kuwaiti officials.

On November 1, the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program received an update briefing. The same day, the Deputies Committee confirmed the members of the Steering Group Committee, an impressive array of Washington expertise. Its members were Ambassador-Designate Gnehm; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near East and South Asian Affairs Hughes; Joint Staff J-33 Rear Admiral David Fitzgerald; the Deputy Director of Political-Military Affairs Rear Admiral Merrill Ruck; and Brigadier General Charles Wilhelm of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. The Steering Group authorized the establishment of a U.S.-Kuwait Civil Affairs Group, specifically to oversee Civil Affairs planning efforts, and endorsed working groups for each of the Civil Affairs functional areas. Within twenty-four hours, the Steering Group Committee approved the Terms of Reference.<sup>33</sup>

With a full head of steam and a high-level interagency engine, the mission appeared to be on an unstoppable course. The question seemed to devolve on *how* the CA task force would get its job done rather than *if* it would be done.<sup>34</sup> Elliott, Mikesh, and Barlow believed that the call-up, task organization, and deployment of the U.S.-Kuwait Civil Affairs Group were imminent. They were wrong.

#### **NOT SO FAST!**

Several key organizations were not about to jump on the bandwagon. During the nine-month period in which the Kuwait Task Force was conceived, activated, deployed, and redeployed, the Operations, Readiness, and Mobilization Directorate of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans was the headquarters of the Department of the Army's focal point for civil affairs actions relating to the army.<sup>35</sup> During that period, that office offered numerous objections to the formation and employment of the Kuwait Task Force.

The reasons for the army's reluctance to accede to the creation of a Kuwait Civil Affairs task force can be traced to several factors. The army's headquarters staff resented the speed and authority with which the interagency Steering Group Committee intervened in what was seen as army business. The Department of the Army felt it had been denied the opportunity to weigh in adequately or to provide alternate viewpoints. This argument stretches the point, however, since army representatives were invited to all meetings and given opportunities to comment on the Terms of Reference and other documents, despite generally declining to do so. There is also the necessity of timeliness in dealing with fast-moving operational imperatives during a time of imminent war.

Army headquarters also felt that the State Department and other civilian agencies should have been considered for the role that the CA Reserve

soldiers would have to assume; after all, the restoration of government dealt with traditional civilian, not military, matters.<sup>36</sup> While the concept of interagency involvement was very much in question, the fact remained that the army would play a crucial role as executive agent for Civil Affairs, and a vast amount of resources (personnel and money) earmarked for the headquarters of the Department of the Army and USSOCOM had been directed to the training, equipping, and employment of the CA force. Civil Affairs policy and doctrine have been developed specifically for civil-military roles to be undertaken by the U.S. Army's Civil Affairs force across the spectrum of conflict.

A third argument was that using army manpower and money to plan reconstruction activities would have diverted resources from other more important military operations. This case was never made strongly or consistently, since significant combat or logistical resources were not required to plan restoration activities nor were they diverted to support the Kuwait restoration mission.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps the most powerful argument made by the army for not advocating the Kuwait CA task force was that it was not required by USCENTCOM Commander General Schwarzkopf. Given the roles and missions of the regional commands and services, this made sense. If the commander did not require a force, he should not be saddled with one. However, USCENTCOM's actions with regard to civil affairs planning may lead one to conclude that postconflict considerations in the early portion of USCENTCOM planning processes were ignored.<sup>38</sup> Representatives of various U.S. government agencies considered such efforts necessary.

Nevertheless, the issue of army prerogatives in conflict with interagency actions calls attention to an evergreen topic in Washington: the primacy of policy guidance over organizational authorities. The issue was: How firm, and how binding, was the guidance of interagency representatives (the National Security Council, the Deputies Committee, the State Department, and Department of Defense officials), which called for the formation of a CA task force, on the army and the commander of USCENTCOM?

But the most pressing reason that the Department of the Army's Operations, Readiness, and Mobilization Directorate office did not support the Kuwaiti Task Force was that it wanted to avoid any controversy that might attach itself to the actions of the CA force. More than once, the senior civilian official in the army office confided to Barlow that he did not want to be personally humiliated by an Army Reserve Civil Affairs failure; and he was well aware of the skeptical view that many held of Reserve CA soldiers. Despite numerous conversations in which several of his protégés and Civil Affairs officers attested to the quality of the CA force<sup>39</sup> and tried to change this official's mind, he was unmoved. His position only was reinforced by a number of active duty officers on the army staff who generally distrusted the quality and dedication of Reserve soldiers.<sup>40</sup> This issue was never raised formally or officially, but provided a backdrop for the life of the mission.

From November 5 to 21, events slowed considerably. There was intense debate between the staff of the headquarters of the Department of the Army and elements of the Joint Staff as to whether the army was indeed the appropriate organization to lead the planning effort. Since the draft Joint Staff message authorizing activation required concurrence from army headquarters, the issue was again debated and centered on the army's argument that the State Department or other civilian agencies should have been given the mission. The arguments of the army, certain elements within the Joint Staff, and a silent USSOCOM<sup>41</sup> gave the director of the Joint Staff pause.<sup>42</sup>

The director, General Carns, had heard the debate within the Pentagon and among interagency players. He delayed the activation order for the selected Reserve members of the 352d CA Command pending other alternatives. He again considered the option of declaring the mission a State Department responsibility. However, the members of the unit had already alerted their spouses, bosses, and families that they might be called up to active duty and deployed to a war zone.<sup>43</sup> In an emotional roller-coaster ride for members of the unit, the unit was alerted for activation twice, and ordered to stand down twice, in a four-day period (November 17–20).<sup>44</sup>

On the evening of November 21, after an exasperating and frustrating week, Assistant Secretaries of Defense Locher and Rowan requested a meeting with Director of the Joint Staff Carns. Locher brought General Wilhelm with him, and together they argued that giving the mission to a U.S. Army Reserve CA element was not only doctrinally correct but also an effective way of bringing various agencies into the mix.<sup>45</sup> Carns grudgingly agreed and immediately summoned his staff, which included J-33 Rear Admiral Fitzgerald, the Psychological Operations and CA division chief, and CA staff officer LTC Barlow. General Carns, however, wanted personal assurances that, if activated, the Civil Affairs Reserve soldiers would not become glory hounds overcome with visions of "coming home to ticker-tape parades down Constitution Avenue." With that assurance, Carns gave the deployment package to Barlow and told him to "make it happen."

Barlow coordinated the package that night, and the next morning the message went out from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its subject was "Restoration of Kuwait," and it tasked the chief of staff of the army and the commander of USSOCOM to activate a CA task force to support the government of Kuwait in developing restoration plans in Washington, DC.<sup>46</sup>

### **THE KUWAIT TASK FORCE STANDS UP**

As the senior CA unit designated for support to USCENTCOM, the 352d CA Command was tagged for the job. Both the commander, Brigadier General Howard Mooney, and COL Elliott had not let the policy tug-of-war deter them from preparing for what they felt was inevitable. Mooney had a strong background in logistics and transportation; Elliott was the smooth

diplomat with an excellent understanding of the talent in his unit. It looked like the perfect fit.

Mooney and Elliott had been spending long hours at their Riverside, Maryland, armory, where they weighed and planned future actions. With the activation notice, key members of the CA Command worked tirelessly from November 25 to December 1, when the call-up was to take effect; Elliott had by then volunteered for active duty and was spending his days at the armory, no longer reporting to his civilian office at the State Department.<sup>47</sup>

At this time, Mooney met with numerous officials of the State and Defense departments and the Working Group Committee, establishing and clarifying guidelines and activities for his task force. On December 1, 1990, fifty-seven specially selected members of the 352d CA Command and the 354th CA brigade mustered at the armory and began processing. On December 3, they went to the Pentagon for meetings with various agency representatives and then to downtown Washington to meet with their Kuwaiti counterparts. It was an exhilarating day for General Mooney, until he was notified, immediately prior to a Pentagon briefing, that he had been relieved of command of the task force and was to have nothing further to do with it, even informally. The news was as embarrassing as it was stunning, and, at the time, inexplicable. Mooney was told only that “DA [the Department of the Army] won’t buy it [his command of a deployable task force].”<sup>48</sup> The activation of Reserve general officers was a sore point with army headquarters officials; many did not want to establish the precedent of having active duty officers reporting to a flag-rank Reserve officer.

While Mooney returned to Riverdale to resume command of the rest of his unit, the operational control of the newly dubbed Kuwait Task Force was passed to COL Elliott. He lost no time in setting up shop, which meant finding office space for his task force. Mikesch and Barlow, acting under the authority of the Working Group Committee, opened discussions with various agencies. The Army Corps of Engineers and the General Services Administration came forward and provided office space and equipment; office furniture was given by the army headquarters.<sup>49</sup> The choice of office space was inspired, as it was only three blocks from the Kuwait embassy and offered easy access to the Pentagon and other government agencies.<sup>50</sup>

COL Elliott had selected his team well. It consisted of members of his unit who had had experience in the Panama restoration effort the year before<sup>51</sup> and highly qualified members of the unit whose professional skills matched perceived shortfalls. His designated deputy was Major Andrew Natsios (in civilian life the director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID]).<sup>52</sup> The team assessed hot-button issues, such as due process of law regarding suspected Iraqi sympathizers, possible sabotage done by the Iraqis, the rebuilding of electrical grids, dealing with possible oil fires, and furnishing needed food and medicine).

The unit worked every day—including Christmas Day—between its activation and its eventual deployment date of January 26, 1991. Elliott put

into place an ambitious phased plan that culminated in the creation of the preliminary Annex G, Civilian Action Plan, designed to become part of the USCENTCOM operational plan.<sup>53</sup> The Kuwait Task Force developed these plans in coordination with twenty-seven different U.S. government agencies—a happy circumstance owing to operating in the nation’s capital. Elliott introduced the Kuwaitis to Army engineer personnel who were later to deliver critical support to Kuwait in the spring and summer of 1991. The Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program group also received briefings from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.<sup>54</sup> COL Elliott was making the most of his task force’s location in downtown Washington, DC.

The crucial work of the Kuwait Task Force was made possible by creating bonds of trust between its members and their Kuwaiti counterparts on the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program. While much of the planning support took the form of Kuwait Task Force members acting as “honest brokers” to identify reliable contractors and develop workable procedures, a great deal of effort was focused on the sequencing of postconflict actions and identifying agencies (both U.S. and Kuwaiti) that would support a comprehensive plan of action. Of particular import to the United States was ensuring the rights and safety of Palestinian and other third-party nationals after the liberation of Kuwait, since the region was rife with rumors of the collusion of these groups with Iraqis committing horrifying atrocities against Kuwaitis.<sup>55</sup> Colonel Ron Smith, a senior official of the Justice Department in civilian life, made it clear to all members of the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program that the protection of the rights of suspected collaborators immediately after cessation of hostilities would be the first global impression of Kuwaiti justice and due process.

## THE BALANCING ACT

Acutely aware that his command-and-control structure, which spanned the gap of military and civilian jurisdiction, was as sensitive as it was unusual, Elliott was precise and timely in delivering regular reports to the Steering Group Committee, the Joint Staff, the headquarters of the Department of the Army, USSOCOM, and USCENTCOM. He found that the USCENTCOM Civil Affairs staff was hungry for his reports, yet it did not share its plans with the Kuwait Task Force; nor, as it turns out, did USCENTCOM/ARCENT (U.S. Army Central Command) correlate the plans of the Kuwait Task Force with its CA plans. COL Elliott invited USCENTCOM to send a liaison officer to the Kuwait Task Force to obviate this deficiency, but the offer was declined.<sup>56</sup>

Several reasons have been advanced for the apparent lack of coordination between the two civil affairs plans, which common sense dictated should have been synchronized. One is that USCENTCOM, operating in a secure mode, was leery of sharing information with an organization (the

Kuwait Task Force) whose day-to-day operations were open to the scrutiny of foreign nationals.<sup>57</sup> While such misgivings could be understandable concerning combat operations, it is harder to comprehend how coordinating postconflict recovery actions would incur significant risks that would obviate the advantage of developing complementary plans.

A second reason is an observation that by dint of unfortunate timing, both ARCENT and USCENTCOM, at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, were bereft of appropriate Civil Affairs staff expertise.<sup>58</sup> This unfortunate circumstance was exacerbated by the reality that General Schwarzkopf, a very effective and direct communicator with extensive Middle East experience, tended to rely on his personal relationships with Kuwaiti and Saudi officials instead of relying on his CA staff.<sup>59</sup>

A third reason was that the Kuwait Task Force—having been created outside of USCENTCOM authority and reporting to interagency officials in Washington, DC—was an interagency group outside of its command, control, and communications scheme.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, COL Elliott persevered in sending reports to the USCENTCOM Civil Affairs staff (now designated as the CCJS), but he resisted any attempts to classify any work the Kuwait Task Force was doing so that he could maintain the clearest channels of communication with the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program, U.S. agencies, and potential contractors.

### THE KUWAIT TASK FORCE GOES TO WAR

Early in January 1991, the emir of Kuwait, apprised of the progress of the Kuwait Task Force, requested that it deploy to the area of operations. USCENTCOM concurred with this request. The Steering Group Committee and the undersecretary of State for Political Affairs coordinated this request with the Pentagon, and on January 29 LTC Barlow was asked to provide a decision briefing at the Pentagon. The briefing, entitled “The Kuwait Restoration Plan,” was accepted and approved with little discussion. On January 31, the Kuwait Task Force deployed to Saudi Arabia.<sup>61</sup>

The Kuwait Task Force acted quickly, continuing to coordinate with the Kuwaiti ministerial representatives who made up the Kuwait Emergency and Recovery Program organization. COL Elliott assumed that their long-term planning with Kuwaiti government officials would continue. However, when in theater, the Kuwait Task Force came under the control of the commander of Central Command. USCENTCOM, ARCENT, and the recently deployed 352d CA Command all expected the Kuwait Task Force to “fall in” under the regional commander’s chain of command and to accomplish its tasks in that context.<sup>62</sup>

This was a crucial moment. The Kuwait Task Force had been created to develop long-term and high-policy issues relating to the restoration of the society of Kuwait; USCENTCOM was more focused on the immediate

Civil Affairs missions of managing displaced civilians and assuring that life-preserving goods and services were delivered.

The solution was hammered out via a meeting between Ambassador Gnehm and General Schwarzkopf, in which it was decided that the Kuwait Task Force would continue its higher-level coordination while providing liaison duties for ARCENT and USCENTCOM. The focus of the Kuwait Task Force's work, however, was shifted from long-term to short-term (emergency) restoration projects.<sup>63</sup>

The situation was clarified with the deployment of Brigadier General Mooney to the area of operations. Mooney, the commander of the 352d, now assumed full control of the Kuwait Task Force, his unit, and other CA assets in the area and melded them into the Combined Civil Affairs Task Force. This allowed synchronization of all civil affairs plans and initiated integrated actions and results. In turn, the Combined Civil Affairs Task Force became part of Task Force Freedom, a composite service-support unit commanded by the deputy commanding general of ARCENT, Brigadier General Robert Frix. The authority and influence of Frix provided Mooney and the Kuwait Task Force a "home" within the USCENTCOM structure in which it could conduct its civil-military activities.<sup>64</sup>

The U.S.-led coalition ground war began on February 24, 1991; the Combined Civil Affairs Task Force was ordered to Kuwait City on March 1. The work of the Kuwait Task Force was accomplished within the context of Task Force Freedom's missions and continued until April 15 when General Mooney turned the job over to Major General Patrick Kelly, the head of the Defense Reconstruction Assistance Office, an agency of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although the government of Kuwait requested that the Kuwait Task Force remain until December 1991, it was redeployed with its parent unit, the 352d, on May 10 of that year.

#### **WHY NOT A TICKER-TAPE PARADE?**

In spite of the fact that much infrastructure damage was deliberately committed by the invading Iraqis and by subsequent plundering and vandalism, within one month after the end of the fighting 50 percent of the telecommunications and transportation systems in Kuwait was restored, and 30 percent of the devastated electrical grid was repaired.

More important was the fact that not one Kuwaiti died from thirst, starvation, or lack of medical attention after the liberation.<sup>65</sup> Civil rights were immediately restored and, astonishingly, there were virtually no acts of retribution or vigilantism directed against suspected collaborators.

The sheer volume of supplies coordinated by the Combined Civil Affairs Task Force in the first days was staggering: 2.8 million liters of diesel fuel, 1,250 tons of medicine, 12.9 million liters of water, 12,500 metric tons of food, 250 electric generators, and 750 vehicles.<sup>66</sup>

By the time the Kuwait Task Force departed, the Kuwaiti medical system was operating at 98 percent of its prewar capacity, the international airport was reopened, and the police force was fully operational. All major roads were opened—as was one port—while two others were being swept of mines.

The work of the Kuwait Task Force has been hailed almost universally. From the *New York Times*<sup>67</sup> to officials of the State Department and the Department of Defense<sup>68</sup> there is unstinting praise for both the levels of expertise and the passion and dedication the task force members brought to this task.

The members of the Kuwait Task Force must have been pleased when Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney said to them, “Your role in the U.S. government assistance to the Government of Kuwait in the reconstruction of that country was exceptional, both for its swiftness and the depth of expertise which you provided. The extraordinary skills resident only in the Reserve Component were absolutely essential to these successes.”<sup>69</sup> But they might be excused if they were more gratified to read the words of Secretary of the Army Michael Stone in describing their mission: “It is not an exaggeration to say that bringing Kuwait back to life in the early days following the Iraqi departure would not have been possible without the 352d.”<sup>70</sup>

#### GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ARCENT	U.S. Army Central Command
CA	Civil Affairs
DOD	Department of Defense
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
USSOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command

#### ENDNOTES

1. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff Web site, “The J-3 Operations Directorate is where all the joint staff’s planning, intelligence, manpower, communications and logistics functions are translated into action.”

2. *National Security Directive 45* (a report on U.S. policy in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, August 20, 1990), at [http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd\\_45.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd_45.htm).

3. The chief of the Army Reserves was concerned about reservists being commanded by a joint active duty headquarters; Special Forces advocates were leery of watering down their very robust force; army officials were uncertain about assigning units that had conventional application to a command with Special Operations as its focus; and Civil Affairs soldiers were uncertain as to who would be their proponent. These concerns remain today.

4. John R. Brinkerhoff, “Waging the War and Winning the Peace: Civil Affairs in the war with Iraq.” (report prepared for the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve, by the Andrulis Research Corporation, Arlington, VA, October 9, 1991), p. 48.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

6. Richard H. Shultz, Jr, "In the Aftermath of War: U.S. Support for Reconstruction and Nation-Building in Panama following Just Cause" (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, August 1993), p. 30.
7. Ibid., p. 28.
8. Shultz, "In the Aftermath of War," p. 30.
9. Ibid., p. 28.
10. Patrick W. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force: A Unique Solution to Kuwait's Reconstruction Problems" (Box 1, Carlton Papers), p. 5.
11. "Readahead for the Civil Affairs Symposium—October 25, 1991," *Civil Affairs in the Persian Gulf War: Proceedings* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, October 25–27, 1991), p. 211.
12. Ibid., p. 212.
13. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 5.
14. While the director of the Joint Staff was considering this request, the military options escalated, perhaps eclipsing the need for activating the Joint Civil Affairs Committee. The president authorized the call-up of reserves on August 22, and the United Nations authorized military interdiction in Kuwait on August 25.
15. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 8.
16. *Final Report to Congress on Conduct of the Persian Gulf War* (prepared by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz and signed by Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, April 1992), p. 625. The report confirms that early Civil Affairs planning for Operation Desert Shield was insufficient.
17. "Readahead," p. 212.
18. The assistant secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict is the interagency proponent for Civil Affairs.
19. Ibid., p. 212.
20. While it seems astounding that there was no traction on the CA issue at this time (fall 1990), it must be remembered that the United States was preparing for a massive combat operation that understandably was the focus of military planning. Nevertheless, this event came less than one year from an operation (Panama, Just Cause/Promote Liberty) that disclosed the dangers of not paying sufficient attention to postconflict issues.
21. "Readahead," p. 212.
22. The fact that Skip Gnehm was a former deputy assistant secretary of Defense was no doubt of great value in his ability to work the processes within the Pentagon.
23. Throughout late 1990, it became apparent that the Department of the Army and, to a lesser extent, USSOCOM was unenthusiastic about activating or deploying U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs personnel. This negative attitude persisted through subsequent operations in Kurdistan (Operation Provide Comfort).
24. John T. Fishel, "Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue: War Termination and Desert Storm" (report prepared at the request of the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, August 31, 1992), p. 18.
25. "Readahead," p. 213.
26. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 10.
27. Active duty Army Civil Affairs in 1990 consisted of one battalion (the 96th CA Battalion), which possessed no functional or professional expertise and whose mission was to engage in short-term, life-preserving, tactical civil-military actions.
28. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 8.
29. "Readahead," p. 214.
30. Ibid.
31. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 10.
32. Ibid., p. 11.
33. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 50.
34. Ibid.

35. Allan W. Keener, "Civil Affairs Operations in Southwest Asia: The Headquarters, Department of the Army, Perspective," *Civil Affairs in the Persian Gulf War: Proceedings* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, October 25–27, 1991), p. 226.
36. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 51.
37. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 12.
38. A view shared by many and affirmed in the Defense Department's Final Report to the Congress, April 1992.
39. To the contrary, a very stringent program for preparing and validating the qualifications of Army Reserve Civil Affairs soldiers and units was carried out during the Persian Gulf War operations at Fort Bragg, NC.
40. One senior USSOCOM officer, in providing a rationale for the exclusion of Reserve CA personnel from activation, blurted out in an open meeting that "the Reserves is just another name for waste, fraud, and abuse!"
41. USSOCOM generally remained silent as this issue developed. Several times when it had the opportunity to state a position, it took no stance or interposed no objection to actions contemplated by the Joint Staff and Office of the Secretary of Defense.
42. "Readahead," p. 214.
43. On November 8, President Bush had ordered additional deployments to bolster U.S. forces in the region.
44. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 52.
45. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 15.
46. Dennis C. Barlow, "Joint Staff Civil Affairs Actions During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm," *Civil Affairs in the Persian Gulf War: Proceedings* (Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center and School, October 25–27, 1991), p. 217.
47. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 53.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
49. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 13.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
51. Fishel, "Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue," p. 22.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 55
54. Fishel, "Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue," p. 22.
55. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 22.
56. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 55.
57. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 19.
58. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 20.
59. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 17.
60. Fishel, "Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue," p. 20.
61. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 25.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 26.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
65. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 56.
66. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 30.
67. John Kifner, "After the War; U.S. Army Doing the Work in Kuwait," *New York Times*, April 5, 1991, at <http://www.query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html> (accessed March 16, 2009).
68. Brinkerhoff, "Waging the War," p. 56.
69. Carlton, "The Kuwait Task Force," p. 31.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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