

**CHIEF OF ARMY SPEECH  
LOWY INSTITUTE**

**21 OCTOBER 2008**

Thank you for inviting me here today. The Lowy Institute plays an important role in the strategic debate on national security issues in this country. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk to you on such an important issue.

Late last year I addressed a seminar in Canberra on the conduct of reconstruction operations. This was not a military conference, but one that focussed on reconstruction in a whole of government construct. This point is particularly important because we understand that the reconstruction problems facing us in the contemporary security environment cannot be solved purely through the application of military force. Last week we publicly released the proceedings of this conference, in partnership with Engineers Australia.

Today I would like to use that seminar and its outcomes as a foundation to discuss the rationale for a more robust whole of government approach to reconstruction and to also discuss some of the ways we can ensure a better orchestration of national capabilities in the conduct of these operations.

Reconstruction is about rebuilding societies. Regardless of the location or culture involved, societies are inherently complex entities which are comprised of people involved in the huge span of endeavours that humans like to undertake. Banking, town planning, healthcare, education, community policing, sewerage, water, power, roads, business and governance are but a few of the activities which need to be fostered and, in many cases, built from the ground up as part of reconstruction operations.

In recent weeks, Brig Mark Carleton-Smith, the commander of British forces in Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan made one point very clear: counter-insurgency and the accompanying reconstruction operations cannot be successful through the conduct of military operations alone. Nation-building – or reconstruction – activities are a **national or multi national** undertaking. And unless a nation or a group of nations are truly committed to such an undertaking, and commit resources and people for a significant period of time, the chances of success are poor. Reconstruction (and in some cases construction) undertakings are long-term projects and must be approached with a view to long-term commitment.

So with this in mind, I would like to discuss my views on how reconstruction activities could be better implemented, and how a whole of nation approach is likely to offer a more comprehensive approach to achieving desired national objectives in the rebuilding of disrupted societies.

### **Strategic Objectives and Reconstruction Activities**

In 1972, a professor of Design at UC Berkeley, Horst Rittel, described the characteristics of socially complex problems, which he called “wicked problems”. These wicked problems rarely have a single cause, and different stakeholders will see the relationships between the causes and their importance differently. This is an important observation, because reconstruction operations are among the most wicked of challenges that we face in the contemporary security environment (leaving aside the current economic difficulties of course). So, it follows

that because of the range of different agencies that will need to be involved in reconstruction and the different viewpoints that they bring with them, the development of clear objectives will be difficult.

However, we should never launch into **any** type of reconstruction operation without a clear view of what comprises our nation's strategic objectives. While this may sound like a statement of the obvious, examination of recent operations of this type would indicate that the strategic goals have often been quite opaque and difficult to comprehend by the broader population of contributing nations. An obvious example of this is Afghanistan. European nations in particular have had difficulty in convincing their people of the necessity of contributing their young men and women to a campaign in a far-off piece of the world with a long history of resisting outsiders.

Despite the challenge of communicating the rationale for committing to reconstruction operations, it's an essential element of such operations. Indeed, if we can't present a rational case to our people for committing forces we should question the very basis for the proposed operation.

### **A More Robust 'Whole of Nation' Approach**

The rehabilitation of societies that have been disrupted by war involves - in military terms - the synchronisation of separate lines of operations such as security, governance, law and order, finance, education and politics. We have recognised the need to consider the wider societal needs within our operational concepts, and in December 2006 we adopted the doctrinal publication of *Adaptive Campaigning*.

This doctrine addresses these competing needs with a standard structured military approach to confronting a challenging problem. It integrates the conduct of military operations with: protection of the population; support for that population to relieve suffering; the building of indigenous capacity across a range of societal endeavours; and what we call information actions – the shaping of perceptions and countering enemy propaganda.

For us, this not only represents the latest in thinking about the conduct of contemporary operations. It also provides us a framework for engaging with the range of disparate agencies and organisations that are required for the successful conduct of reconstruction operations.

Think tanks in the United States, such as RAND and the Brookings Institution, have conducted detailed studies of nation-building since the end of the Second World War. These studies have uniformly found that successful nation-building requires unity of effort across multiple government departments and, often, across multiple governments. The complete enterprise of national security needs to be engaged. This is not a task that any single department of government can be responsible for. Thus a whole of government effort is essential.

The reality is however that not all agencies see themselves as having an external responsibility. More importantly, most government agencies are not structured or funded for external activities of the type required in contemporary reconstruction operations. It is this reality which makes inter-agency work more challenging than the common-sense whole-of-government rhetoric indicates.

But other agency players must be an integral part of any reconstruction effort. They need to play an essential role in the planning phase, as well as during execution, in order to provide the broadest professional advice to military commanders. This type of integration means that civilian agencies may be required to give advice on military plans. This will undoubtedly be challenging; however, advice does not equal final authority; serious disputes will have to be aired and resolved by senior leaders. It is better that disputes be addressed before reconstruction begins rather than during its conduct.

Of particular importance in this process will be lateral communication. We may wish to help achieve this with ongoing exchanges of personnel - military personnel could have assignments with other government departments, and vice-versa. Indeed, my predecessor directed the establishment of short, medium and long term exchanges for Army personnel with other Government departments to facilitate better interagency understanding and coordination. This a practice I intend to maintain. Development of informal networks between military and civilian personnel through programs such as this would add markedly to the quality of planning for, and execution of, reconstruction missions.

### **Industry Participation**

Of course the problem is compounded by the addition of non-government organisations (NGOs) and industry to create the whole-of-nation approach.

The issue of industry supporting Australia's national interest as well as the interests of the nation being rebuilt poses some interesting questions. Some Australian companies have made a decision not to offer their services in this field because the risk is not acceptable. This has been a conscious decision, at board level in most cases, which balances potential return against very real commercial risks. However, should government and the tax payer bear all the risk in the conduct of reconstruction? I would be interested in your thoughts.

A legitimate question which must also be raised in this debate is: what is the industrial capacity in Australia to support reconstruction efforts during conflict? This question needs to be framed in the context of the current skills shortage and the credit crisis. Given recent events, it possible the Australian economy will contract and then naturally, with some pain, industry will also contract. This may have a flow-on effect for reconstruction operations. Industrial capacity will not simply be sitting on the shelf just waiting for a call to support Australian interests in reconstruction operations. Paradoxically, economic contraction might turn out to be be a handy lever in kick starting engagement by private enterprise.

### **Reconstruction and Non-government Organizations**

By necessity, the military contribution to reconstruction operations has spilled over into what was traditionally the domain of non-government organizations. This has not been without some resistance from other aid organisations. I would like to make clear that nothing I say today is about a deliberate attempt to seize additional responsibility by the military organisations contributing to reconstruction. It is, however, a pragmatic realization that regardless of the security situation, the local population requires rapid humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. This often can only be provided by the military in the first instance.

Some NGOs accept the security umbrella provided by the military, while others refuse to cooperate based on their organizational culture or fear of reprisal by financial or ideological backers. While this reticence towards working with the military is based on a range of factors, non-government organizations may need to re-examine their cultures and relationships with the military if they are to be effective in rebuilding societies – especially those impacted by insurgencies.

NGOs have the essential skills and resources critical to the successful conduct of reconstruction operations. In some respects, there is already a shared ethos between the military and NGOs: they share a willingness to go to difficult and austere environments, and endure all types of hardships in order to help people. We should build on this to enhance the trust and cooperation between NGOs and the military (among other actors) in the conduct of reconstruction operations.

### **Developing the Whole of Government Reconstruction Capability**

Up to this point, I have spoken generally about developing our whole of government, and whole of nation, approaches to reconstruction. What I would like to do now is to detail some of the action we are taking to improve the situation and help foster better synchronisation of reconstruction activities.

I would like to make clear that I am not advocating Defence setting the national agenda for reconstruction; nor is Defence telling other organisations what their business is or what it should be. But given our experiences of the last decade, we have learned many lessons that hold insights for other agencies and industry in the conduct of reconstruction.

In November last year, after the Reconstruction Seminar, we developed six action items to further develop a better whole of government approach. Using these six action items as a framework, I would like to give you an update on some current and future initiatives.

**First**, we aim to establish a better 'Whole of Government Reconstruction' dialogue that includes industry, government, academia and professional bodies. The ADF already has a dialogue with other agencies, as well as professional bodies such as Engineers Australia. We have also recently signed an agreement on interoperability between the ADF and the Australian Federal Police. And, we have also established liaison positions within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to help foster a whole of government approach in a range of issues, including reconstruction.

But there is more to be done to deepen mutual understanding and trust. The ADF will shortly commence the production of a military strategic concept for reconstruction operations which could act as an initial 'Unifying Strategy' for this interaction.

**Second**, to complement the whole of government dialogue, we are establishing a whole of nation engineering forum. Engineers Australia is leading this effort and it is supported by industry and non-government organisations. We aim that this will also involve engagement with overseas organisations with similar goals, such as the American Society of Civil Engineers.

**Third**, we will continue the generation and maintenance of ADF capabilities for reconstruction operations. The lead for this is the Vice Chief of the Defence Force and a key element will be balancing the roles of our regular and reserve forces in the conduct of reconstruction operations.

The nascent Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence being established in Queanbeyan will also play an important role in examining the coordination of Government agencies, including advice on integrating the civil and military components of operations, capturing lessons learned from past experience on operations overseas and feeding this into doctrine and training.

The Centre's work will be based on the philosophy of a whole-of-government approach. Although being administered by Defence, the Centre will have representation from, initially DFAT, AusAID, A-Gs and AFP. As the Centre matures it will also embrace a whole of nation approach, working with NGOs and the business community.

Our **fourth** action item is the development and exchange of ideas, both within our organisation, in Australia and internationally. Our allocation of a fellow here at Lowy is part of this. We also have Army officers instructing in the coalition Counter Insurgency Academies in Iraq and in Afghanistan. This provides us with the opportunity to draw back lessons in best practice for reconstruction and the range of other activities conducted in counterinsurgency operations.

We have a small team of Army trainers on constant rotation in California helping to train United States Marines who are about to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan. Not only are we helping to train US personnel in counter insurgency methodologies, but we are very much learning from them on a day to day basis.

We maintain Australian students at the US Army and US Marine Corps Schools of Advanced Warfighting, which is a one-year long follow-on from those Service's staff colleges. The contemporary focus of these schools, and the education they provide, ensures we have officers with terrific understanding of the exploitation of the operational art in the conduct of reconstruction and counter insurgency operations.

Our Centre for Army Lessons plays an important role in gaining access to the lessons from Australian forces and those of other nations in the conduct of reconstruction operations. They have a good process for the dissemination of these lessons which we continually seek to improve.

My recently announced initiative of the *Adaptive Army* aims to better inculcate a learning and adaptive culture in the Army. Indeed, we are restructuring the Army around our different learning cycles to ensure we are able to learn lessons, and incorporate them into training, more quickly.

So we have made some headway. But, there remains more to be done. We need formal and common **interagency** mechanisms for learning lessons, retaining those lessons and changing our processes, organisations or approach accordingly. We also need to properly consider force structure effects and the ADF's ability to provide an adaptive, effective, reconstruction capability in a complex environment.

Our **fifth** action item is the continued engagement with stakeholders to ensure ongoing exchange of information and ideas. My being here today is a part of this. So was the public launch last week of the proceedings of the 2007 Reconstruction Seminar.

Our partnership with Engineers Australia is another element of this. It is already contributing to a better dialogue among those with an interest in the development of whole of government and whole of nation reconstruction. We also have a very good relationship with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Kokoda Foundation – organisations that are in the business of examining contemporary and future national security activities. In the near future, we look forward to engagement with the new National Security Institute that will be established under my predecessor, Lieutenant General Leahy at the University of Canberra.

I remain a strong advocate of our program to enhance interaction with other government agencies. I look forward to improving our ability to plan and work along side the other elements of our government, and intend investing in this capacity where possible.

So I think that we are off to a good start, but we remain keen to engage other stakeholders, and facilitate interaction in any forum that results in a more synchronised approach to these operations.

The **sixth** and final action item is to audit current capabilities with the Australian Defence Force and wider government organisations, in order to identify where there are capability gaps.

In Army, we have already identified a shortfall in our own doctrine for the conduct of counterinsurgency and reconstruction operations. Late last year we commenced the redevelopment of our doctrine for these operations, and I am happy to announce that it is largely complete and will be released in the next month.

We have also focussed our professional journal – The Australian Army Journal - on identifying capability gaps and have published numerous papers on the topic. We are reviewing the Army Training Continuum and including training that is more relevant to contemporary operations.

This will assist in filling some of our capability gaps. But there is some way to go. We have much to do with other arms of government, and industry, in addressing shortfalls in the whole of government approach to reconstruction. But for our part we understand fully that we must continue to review our force structure, and posture, in Army to enable our contributions to these operations into the future.

## **Conclusion**

We have learned much in our conduct of reconstruction operations over the last decade. But I hope that I have been able to convey that, while Defence has a critical role to play in meeting the demands of these operations, we are not a sole source organisation. We provide niche capabilities in what must only be a wider whole of government and whole of nation effort.

We have found our collaboration with other agencies in places such as The Solomon Islands, Sumatra and East Timor to be challenging yet very rewarding. We stand ready to continue our contribution to whole of

nation reconstruction operations and will seek every opportunity to develop a better understanding of the other agencies with whom we will need to work. Greater understanding will build increased trust, and this will be the essential foundation for a more robust whole of nation approach to rebuilding the disrupted societies.

I would like to conclude by stating that I am so very proud of the great work our soldiers have done in activities such as those undertaken by the Reconstruction Task Force in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan will only be a success when the full scale effects of national and international elements of power are applied under whole-of-nation strategies. It is not easy work. But if we get it right, effective and responsive reconstruction that aligns with local requirements and expectations will have a much more profound effect in shaping the future than any decisive act of conventional war.

I would now be happy to take any questions you may have.