Understanding the Risks Created by Reduced Civil Affairs Capacity

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Abstract

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I have three priorities. #1…Readiness is #1, and there is no other #1. #2. Future Army. We will do what it takes to build an agile, adaptive Army of the future. We need to listen and learn – first from the Army itself…

—General Mark A. Milley

Over the past ten years, the Army’s active component Civil Affairs (CA) force structure experienced rapid growth followed by severe reductions. The most recent development was the decision to cut the majority of active component CA forces not assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). This follows a trend, not necessarily unique to CA, of rapidly growing the force in times of crisis, followed by draconian cuts when resources are scarce. In the case of CA however, slashing this capability puts both military and diplomatic strategies at risk by eliminating a key strategic enabler that specializes in linking military operations to larger national security objectives.

The 2015 Total Army Analysis (TAA) 18-22, which directed the inactivation of the active component 85th Civil Affairs Brigade (CA BDE) Headquarters and four of its subordinate battalions, was predicated on increased reliance on reserve component CA. However, as currently assessed, trained, and employed, reserve component CA cannot replicate the capabilities the active component force structure provides. Furthermore, mobilization restrictions constrain reserve component support, negatively impacting Joint Force readiness and increasing the risk to the mission.

In February 2017, senior leaders in the Army recognized the error in the decision to reduce active component CA capacity. The Army Force Modernization Proponent for Civil Affairs categorized the decision as “High Risk” to a 1- 2-Star General Officer Steering Committee on January 17, 2017. Shortly thereafter, Major General James B.
Linder petitioned Lieutenant General Joseph Anderson, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army G-3/5/7, to retain CA force structure:

It is the assessment of this headquarters that the risk incurred in Total Army Analysis 18-22 is detrimental to the total Civil Affairs force and the future capability needs of the Army. We recommend no further reduction of this force and that the Army immediately cancel the FY17 scheduled force structure reductions in order to retain the critical, high demand capability provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense-directed active component general purpose force Civil Affairs units.3

One month later, Lieutenant General Anderson directed further inactivation be delayed 180 days to consider the request and “allow the TAA process to run its course.”4

Senior leader recognition of the consequences of the reduced active component CA capacity is encouraging, but it is also overdue. Actions to retain the 85th CA BDE should have been taken years before. The current situation points to one of the key structural failures in the swift expansion and sudden reduction in CA capability, a lack of institutionalized senior leadership positions within the CA community for active component CA General Officers.

This paper reviews the strategic significance of CA in bridging military success to enduring victory by first providing a brief historical overview of CA support to achieving national strategic objectives during past and current conflicts. Next, it demonstrates how the loss of active component CA capacity increases risk to the Joint Force and classifies U.S. Forces Command’s (FORSCOM) plan to rely on reserve component CA as a high-risk strategy. Finally, it argues that much of the predicament the Army finds itself in with respect to CA capacity stems from a systemic lack of strategic leadership in key positions. No matter what the future holds with respect to CA force structure, the leadership component must be addressed to lead this essential and increasingly scarce capability.
A Historical Overview of Civil Affairs Support to Achieving National Strategic Objectives

Civil-military operations (CMO) secure the victory through activities designed to “establish, maintain, influence or exploit relationships with indigenous populations” in conflict affected and fragile states.\textsuperscript{5,6} Though critical to the conduct of shaping operations, stabilization operations, and enabling civil authority, CA forces are strategic multipliers in supporting all phases of Joint operations.\textsuperscript{7}

CMO have been an integral part of military strategy for almost 200 years. Historians attribute General Winfield Scott as leading the military’s first efforts to provide governance in enemy territory in 1847 during the U.S.-Mexican War.\textsuperscript{8,9} In the early twentieth century, CMO were the foundation of President William McKinley’s strategy in the Philippines and were vital to successful reconstruction in Europe following both World Wars.\textsuperscript{10}

Recognizing the impact of CMO in achieving U.S. policy and military objectives, the War Department began to formalize the specialty. In 1940, it published the first field manual on military governance.\textsuperscript{11} Shortly thereafter, the Secretary of War authorized the training of officers to conduct military governance activities.\textsuperscript{12} By 1955, the Army established the Civil Affairs and Military Government Branch.\textsuperscript{13} Since then, CMO played an important role in almost every major conflict to include Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Global War on Terror.\textsuperscript{14}

In the contemporary era, there is an increased appreciation of the value of engagement in the human domain and, as CA forces specialize in this arena, the demand for CA forces remains high. CA supports the Army Operating Concept through activities designed to Shape the Security Environment, Project National Power, conduct
Wide Area Security, and conduct Special Operations, targeting America’s biggest threats. Specifically, CA forces are training European partners to build partner capacity and deter Russian aggression; they are engaged in the Pacific, operating by, with, and through political and military allies to maintain U.S. access and limit Chinese influence in the region; they conduct Joint Combined Exchange Training in South Korea and Southwest Asia to strengthen our allies and partners against North Korea and Iran; and they support counter-terrorism operations all over the world.

The Rapid Growth of Active Duty Civil Affairs

Active component CA experienced a massive transformation over the last decade. In 2005, force structure was limited to one battalion supporting the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). In 2008, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) directed the Army to increase its active component CA capacity to meet increased operational demands on the Joint Force. By 2011, the force had grown to two brigades providing support to both USASOC and FORSCOM, representing an increase in personnel of approximately 500%.

The transformation was successful. Civil Affairs’ newest capability, the 85th CA BDE remained constantly deployed, executing several named operations to include JUNIPER SHIELD and ATLANTIC RESOLVE, providing annual support to exercises such as PACIFIC PATHWAYS, and working alongside brigade combat teams as they executed their Regionally Aligned Forces missions to build partner capacity. In fewer than 5 years, the brigade provided direct support to Army, Air Force, and Special Operations component commands and deployed forces on 5 continents and in over 70 countries in support of 5 CONPLANs, 25 named operations, and 51 exercises and Combat Training Center rotations.
However, in the Army’s efforts to build units and rapidly field forces to impact the current fight, very little emphasis was given to developing a strategic vision for a CA branch that suddenly found itself much larger, more in demand, and more critical to success on the 21st century battlefield today and in the future. While two active component CA officers were promoted to the rank of Brigadier General during this decade of titanic change, they were not charged with leading this transformed capability. Instead, they were assigned to other strategic positions which provided only tangential opportunities to impact the branch. As a result, the opportunity to optimize this transformed capability and properly incorporate it into the Army Operating Concept was lost.

A Service Decision Creates Risk across the Joint Force

In 2014, the Department of Defense (DoD) experienced a period of sequestration and the Army had to make difficult decisions about its force structure. Despite OSD’s 2008 directive, FORSCOM chose to assume risk in its CA capacity and ordered the inactivation of the 85th CA BDE. This decision was not based on a reduced demand signal. Indeed, demand for CA had long been greater than the capacity of the CA force to provide it. Since the activation of the 85th CA BDE, for example, active component CA was unable to fill an average of 29 validated requirements per year.18

Nevertheless, ARSTRUC 18-22 directed the inactivation of the brigade headquarters and four battalions. “Rather than preserve human engagement capabilities that, dollar for dollar, do more to win the wars of today and the peace of the future, the Army is divesting itself of a large number of CA forces.”19 Similarly, the U.S. Navy cut Maritime Civil Affairs entirely from its force structure.20 As the United States Marine Corp maintains a very limited active component CA capability (194 active duty
personnel), the inactivation of this Army brigade signifies an enormous reduction in the Joint Force capability.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, a service decision is impacting Joint Force capacity and capability and the impact should be viewed through a Joint lens.\textsuperscript{22} Senator John McCain warned about the general risks associated with Services cutting Joint Force capabilities when he addressed the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 5, 2015. He stated, “There are serious questions about how to properly prioritize new and unconventional missions. We cannot afford for these vital functions to be orphaned within Services that will undercut and underfund them in favor of parochial priorities.”\textsuperscript{23}

The impact to the Joint Force remains significant. The decreased active component CA capability created gaps and seams in both Theater Campaign Strategies and Integrated Country Strategies at the Geographic Combatant Commands and U.S. diplomatic missions around the world. In an era where the DoD placed increased emphasis on conflict prevention, the Army eliminated one of the Combatant Commanders’ and U.S. Ambassadors’ key strategic enablers.\textsuperscript{24}

Understanding the Capability Gaps between Active and Reserve Component Civil Affairs

FORSCOM’s risk mitigation strategy is to increase reliance on reserve component CA and therefore, a frank assessment of the qualifications of this force must be considered. When comparing active and reserve component CA, it is clear that each component provides different and distinct capabilities, which are rooted in how they access, train, and employ their CA Soldiers.\textsuperscript{25}
Accessions

DA PAM 600-3 recognizes CA’s role in engagement and the human domain as “the differentiating factor that separates CA forces from all other military organizations” and subsequently, it requires that CA officers possess “unique attributes.” CA officers must be mature professionals, able to act independently with little or no supervision. They must be skilled in diplomacy, persuasion, negotiation, and international relations. Towards that end, CA recruiting efforts target candidates with those qualities.

CA candidates in the active component must first have attained the rank of promotable first lieutenant or promotable specialist. This requirement increases the likelihood that candidates have reached appropriate levels of maturity and responsibility (attained through various military and life experiences) to effectively operate independently in austere environments, understand the political dynamics and risk associated with conducting civil affairs operations (CAO), and competently communicate with U.S. Ambassadors and senior military officers.

Designated candidates advance to the Civil Affairs Assessment and Selection (CAAS) course. CAAS utilizes a rigorous, analytical process to evaluate a CA candidate’s mental, physical, and psychological make-up and objectively determine if they have the unique attributes and competencies to perform as a CA operator. Current selection rates demonstrate the difficulty in meeting the standards outlined in DA PAM 600-3. Only 68% of active component officers are selected while less than half of the noncommissioned officers and promotable specialists are selected (47%). Those selected continue on to CA training. Those not selected must return to their previous MOS or pursue other opportunities outside of CA.
In the reserve component, the accessions process is more subjective and lacks systematic, institutionalized processes to ensure CA candidates have the unique attributes outlined in DA PAM 600-3. There is no minimum rank required for assignment to an operational CA unit. Candidates do not attend CAAS. Instead, unit commanders recruit CA candidates and are empowered to autonomously decide if a candidate meets the requirements outlined in the DA PAM.29

Training

Another major distinction between active and reserve component CA is the different training standards at the Civil Affairs Qualification Course (CAQC). Officers in the active component must complete 43 weeks of resident CA and language training before they are MOS qualified and assigned to an operational unit.30

In the reserve component, CA candidates are assigned to operational units prior to MOS qualification.31 They must complete 29 days of resident CA training, but the bulk of their education is achieved through distance learning and they are not required to conduct foreign language training.32 Candidates have up to two years to complete MOS qualification.33

Between October 2016 and March 2017, MOS qualification rates for CA captains assigned to the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) (USACAPOC (A)), the reserve component CA headquarters, fluctuated between 36% and 43%.34 Remarkably, the lack of MOS qualification does not always preclude a reserve component CA officer from deploying to perform CAO. According to a 2017 After Action Review on the transition between Charlie Company, 82nd Civil Affairs Battalion (CA BN) and Charlie Company, 415th CA BN for Operation Atlantic Resolve, the reserve component team leader deployed to Hungary without completing
CAQC. The report states, this team “had significant issues...creating post mission products...conducting civil engagement, force protection, and understanding their environment while in Hungary.”

As it pertains to training at the unit level, active component CA Soldiers regularly conduct individual and collective training in support of pending operational requirements. Funding and time are in ample supply and do not typically constrain unit training readiness.

Within USACAPOC (A), fiscal constraints inhibit collective training. According to Christopher Holshek, senior civil-military advisor to the International Peace Security Institute and Alliance for Peacebuilding and retired U.S. Army Reserve Civil Affairs officer, “Funding for reserve component CA...has dwindled to individual readiness-related training. As a result, there is little left for reserve CA rotations at combat training centers and in overseas engagement operations.” Consequently, weekend drill and annual training primarily focus on completing Soldier readiness requirements (medical, dental, legal, etc.) and individual training, to the detriment of collective training.

**Tactical Employment**

Differences in foreign language and medical proficiencies result in distinct unit capabilities which affect the tactical employment of CA units. In the active component, the requirement for foreign language proficiency provides units with advanced communication skills, minimizing the need for interpreter support. Additionally, each active duty CA team has a medic with advanced medical training to include paramedic certifications. Many medics complete the Special Operations Forces Combat Medicine course. These advanced medical qualifications provide active duty CA teams with greater freedom of maneuver, allowing them to operate independently in austere, semi-
permissive environments without having to rely on medical treatment facilities (MTFs) for advanced medical care.

Foreign language capability is not required in reserve component CA and teams must rely on the availability of interpreters to conduct tactical operations. Furthermore, reserve component CA units provide reduced medical capacity and capability. In the reserve component, there is only one medic per CA Company. This medic typically does not have advanced medical training or qualifications and therefore the tactical CA teams are limited in both the scope of their operations and the distance in which they can operate from MTFs.

**Operational Limitations Incurred from Increased Reliance on Reserve Component CA**

Due to increased reliance on reserve component CA, Geographic Combatant Commanders and U.S. Ambassadors suffer limitations on operational flexibility and agility. According to a report published by Mr. Dale Walsh, CA Management Analyst in the CA Proponent’s office:

> U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) CA forces are constrained by mobilization authorities and policies that, at present, limit timely responsiveness and restrict ability to conduct persistent engagement, steady state shaping operations, disaster relief, foreign humanitarian assistance, foreign consequence management, and Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) activities in support of the Geographic Combatant Commander.\(^{38}\)

Active component CA does not suffer these constraints and the 85\(^{th}\) CA BDE frequently surged to support rapidly emerging, persistent engagement, Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) requirements in support of GCCs and U.S. Ambassadors in the Pacific, Southwest Asia, Europe, and Africa. However, the reduction of active component capability limits FORSCOM’s options and USACAPOC (A) will struggle to meet these requirements. The issue comes back to funding. Reserve component units
must fund TSC operations with readiness dollars. Thus, rotational support for TSC using USAR capabilities comes at the expense of readiness and is therefore “problematic in the long term.”

Perhaps the biggest gap created by the reduction in active component capability is that FORSCOM no longer has sufficient CA force structure to provide timely (and thereby effective) response to early entry operations, humanitarian crisis, and other contingency operations. Commanders require CA assets immediately to conduct assessments of the human and physical infrastructure, identify and prioritize responses, and facilitate interorganizational cooperation and unity of effort with U.S. agencies, the host nation government and military, and other nongovernmental and international organizations. Active component CA units demonstrated this responsiveness when they put boots on the ground in Haiti within twenty-four hours of the earthquake of 2010. Similarly, in 2014, the 82nd CA BN provided immediate response to unique FORSCOM training and Soldier readiness requirements prior to its unit deployment to Liberia following the outbreak of the Ebola virus.

With the decision to inactivate the 85th CA BDE, FORSCOM is jettisoning the bulk of the Joint Force’s immediate response capability. There no longer is an easy button. FORSCOM’s remaining active component capability, the 83rd CA BN, might be able to provide limited support, but it remains highly employed fulfilling validated operational requirements inherited from the 85th CA BDE, to include one company apportioned to the Global Response Force. The only other active component CA capability resides in USASOC. FORSCOM cannot task them.
FORSCOM can task USACAPOC (A), however mobilization restrictions and logistical limitations severely constrain its ability to provide a timely response to short notice operational requirements.\textsuperscript{44} To illustrate the point, a USACAPOC (A) company tasked to respond to a humanitarian crisis requires 30-45 days to mobilize after approval by the Secretary of Defense. This delayed response negatively impacts relief efforts as CA forces are critical in the early phases. General Joseph Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summarized the issue saying, “any contingency that requires responses on a timeline faster than that designated for reserve component mobilization will face risk from the lengthened timelines.”\textsuperscript{45}

The reserve component can provide immediate response for domestic national emergencies, threats involving weapons of mass destruction, and terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{46} However, authority to mobilize for other early entry requirements is restricted by Title 10 of the U.S. Code, section 12301(d) which prohibits Service secretaries from ordering USAR service members from deploying without the service member’s consent.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, deploying units must be comprised of individual volunteers. A FORSCOM strategy that relies on volunteerism clearly increases the risk to mission. Furthermore, these volunteers are sourced from units throughout USACAPOC (A) and never conducted collective training. This increases the risk to mission in permissive environments. In semi-permissive and hostile environments, it increases the risk to the force.

In certain instances, mobilization restrictions prevent USACAPOC (A) units from sourcing requirements, altogether. In October 2016, when Hurricane Matthew threatened the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean, USSOUTHCOM submitted a request for forces (RFF), asking for a brigade-level, Civil Military Operations Center to
run a Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center in Haiti. The Joint Chiefs of Staff validated the request and tasked FORSCOM to source the requirement. The 85th CA BDE, due to inactivation, was not available so FORSCOM’s only option was to task USACAPOC (A). However, the RFF contained a 72 hour Prepare to Deploy Order (PTDO) requirement and USAR forces cannot mobilize on the basis of a PTDO. Thus, FORSCOM was incapable of sourcing the requirement and we have a fundamental example of how the lack of agility created in FORSCOM negatively affected Joint Force readiness.

Besides the aforementioned mobilization issues, there are other concerns about increased reliance on USAR CA forces. A 2009 study by the RAND Arroyo Center discovered that the Army’s reliance on reserve CA personnel to serve as strategic planners constrained the Army and Joint Force’s ability to conduct strategic planning, as reserve component CA planners were not always available or arrived late into the planning process. This condition prevented CA from establishing critical working and personal relationships with others from agencies central to stability planning.

To be clear, reserve component CA provides a critical capability at a truly extraordinary return on investment and, in some ways, provides an advantage over active component CA. For example, while reserve CA accessions are less proscriptive, the process enables the reserve component to leverage officers and NCOs with real world experience in civil administration, banking, rule of law, and emergency services, all of which provide unique value to the Joint Force.

However, given the mobilization restrictions and the differences in accessions, training, and employment, "active and reserve component CA are not
interchangeable.” Reliance on reserve component CA forces negatively impacts Joint Force readiness and increases the risk to mission when compared to an active component CA unit. This requires supported commanders to allocate more resources to mitigate the constraints, limit the scope of their operations, or accept more risk.

Towards a Unified Civil Affairs Branch

The decision to inactivate the 85th CA BDE created an intolerable level of risk which Major General Linder articulated to the Army. However, it also provided an opportunity for the CA branch to incorporate the lessons learned, remove unnecessary risk factors, and make holistic improvements to the force. One approach is for the Civil Affairs Commandant to lead the branch to rectify the inconsistencies between the active and reserve components. It is in this area where the Commandant must be a powerful advocate for increased funding for RC training and MOS Qualification. Additionally, the Commandant could lead the components to redesign force structure and capabilities, aligning them more closely so that planners at GCCs and U.S. Embassies understand the capability available.

If standardization of capabilities is impractical or impossible, then the branch must codify the differences. It must do this first, by acknowledging that the variations in accessions and training between active and reserve component CA candidates result in different outputs and require the establishment of a new MOS. Second, it should rename its force structure to reflect that a CA team/company/battalion in the Regular Army provides a different capability than one in the USAR. This will enable GCCs and their components to accurately plan for and request the capability they require.
Leveraging the Strategic Leader Competencies of a Civil Affairs General Officer

Implementing these recommendations would be a monumental change in how CA is organized and must be led by a CA General Officer, a strategic leader with sufficient rank and influence to lead the effort and overcome the political, military, and organizational obstacles to change. Only a General Officer could best steward the branch, negotiate sensitive issues, build consensus among key stakeholders, and provide strategic communications to the Joint Force, FORSCOM, USASOC, and the U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC).\textsuperscript{52}

The Civil Affairs Commandant: Building the Future Army

The branch also needs a General Officer in the commandant’s position to define the role of CA in the future operational environment. The character of war is ever-changing and strategic planning guidance predicts that future threats will be increasingly transregional, multi-domain, and multifunctional. The 39\textsuperscript{th} Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark A. Milley, spoke at length about this at a recent AUSA convention stating,

There’s no doubt in my mind that the combination of geopolitical, societal, natural, economic and technological change is rapidly converging in time and space and will likely result in the most significant and profound change in the character of war we have ever witnessed throughout all recorded history and whatever overmatch we enjoyed militarily for the last 70 years is closing quickly and the United States will be, in fact we already are, challenged in every domain of warfare.\textsuperscript{53}

Given General Milley’s vision, CA must transform and it requires a General Officer to lead the force modernization effort. The branch must analyze the future environment and threats; identify gaps and seams across the current doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) construct; and implement meaningful and sustainable solutions that are interoperable with the Joint Force and interagency partners. A General Officer
is vital to providing the vision while simultaneously using his position and influence to obtain resources in a resource constrained environment.

General Milley also believes that future wars will be fought in mega-cities. He states that the world is “rapidly urbanizing” and envisions a future operating environment where over 80 percent of the world’s population will reside in urban areas.\textsuperscript{54} Said Milley,

\begin{quote}
   In the future, I can say with very high degrees of confidence, the American Army is probably going to be fighting in urban areas. We need to man, organize, train, and equip the force for operations in urban areas, highly dense urban areas, and that’s a different construct. We’re not organized like that right now.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

As experts on engagement and the human domain, CA will play a critical role in this operating environment. The branch must analyze mission command, communication, training, equipment and force structure. It must leverage new technology and examine ways to adjust to the increased speed and lethality of the future battlefield.

Additionally, the general complexity of the Civil Affairs Branch demands the position of CA Commandant be held by a General Officer. The Commandant oversees the training, education, and production of qualified Soldiers for active duty units in FORSCOM and USASOC and for USACAPOC (A) in the reserve component. Across these three commands, there are different requirements, different standards, and each command operationally employs its CA forces in distinctly different ways. Moreover, these commands possess separate authorities and funding sources which make interoperability challenging. A development for one command does not necessarily mean that capability can be employed by the other commands. Furthermore, each command has its own equities, advancing and protecting its own interests as it pertains to personnel, funding, power, and prestige. This unhealthy dynamic requires a General
Officer to provide a unifying vision and strategic direction to the force; an experienced strategic leader to oversee the development of all significant civil affairs initiatives with a mind towards equitably synthesizing the benefits towards FORSCOM, USASOC, and USACAPOC (A); and a General Officer who can communicate on a more level playing field with the commanders of FORSCOM, USASOC, and USACAPOC (A).

Almost every other branch in the Army recognizes that the Commandant position requires a General Officer. Of the 20 basic branches in the Army, 15 of them have either a Major General leading a Center of Excellence or a Brigadier General as its commandant (some have both). Those branches without general officer representation are Adjutant General, Finance, Cyber, Psychological Operations (PSYOP), and CA. Astoundingly, PSYOP and CA are the only two warfighting branches in the Operations Division (previously known as Combat Arms and Maneuver, Fire, and Effects) without a general officer in command of its school house. Yet, the responsibilities bestowed upon the CA Commandant are no less critical to Army readiness than those of the Armor or Field Artillery Commandants. The inequity is plainly depicted in Figure 1.
The Army has already approved the creation of a General Officer billet in the Civil Affairs Commandant’s Office. The 2009 Report to Congress on Civil Affairs recognized the challenges associated with civil affairs force structure and proponency and proposed the Army “may choose to reintegrate and organize [Civil Affairs] under a single active component headquarters and create a 1- to 2-star active duty General Officer position to oversee and advocate for all Army CA forces.” Following that, Decision Point 153 of the Army Campaign Plan directed the Army G-3/5/7 to identify an active duty General Officer billet for a CA Commandant. To date, that task is not complete and the position of CA Commandant remains an O6 position.
HQDA G-3/5/7: Balancing Joint Force Readiness with Risk Mitigation Strategies

The Army has a history of misusing or underutilizing its CA capability. In 1989, only a few hours prior to executing Operation Just Cause, Army officials canceled plans to deploy CA forces in support of stability and reconstruction efforts following the invasion of Panama. It only took a few days before the Commander-In-Chief of the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), General Max Thurman, realized he required those CA forces to deploy forward.⁵⁹

The following year, despite the backing of the OSD, Army officials strongly opposed the use of CA forces to plan and facilitate civil military operations following Operation Desert Storm. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) failed to develop a plan despite President George H.W. Bush explicitly stating that “restoring Kuwait’s legitimate government” was one of the four goals of the operation.⁶⁰ At the time, the Commander-In-Chief of CENTCOM prioritized the planning of major combat operations and officials on the CENTCOM staff, at Special Operations Command (SOCOM), and at HQDA would not tell “a regional commander – and especially not a strong-willed leader like General Norman Schwarzkopf – ‘how to suck eggs.’”⁶¹ Eventually senior leaders within the OSD convinced the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to approve a Civil Affairs Task Force.⁶²

Little changed in the next decade. Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, military officials failed to develop a suitable plan for stabilization and reconstruction operations following the fall of Baghdad. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld focused on the invasion and “talk of any post-invasion strategy was a waste of time.”⁶³ Thus, DoD was unprepared to conduct Stabilization Operations and Enable Civil Authority. As a result,
military operations continued in Iraq for over a decade, costing the nation the lives of over 4,000 servicemen and women, $2 trillion, and political will.64,65

During all three operations, the Army lacked a G-9 on its staff to inform the best military advice and range of options presented to senior decision-makers in Washington. This lack of strategic advice from senior Civil Affairs officers had a detrimental impact on our nation’s ability to conduct warfighting operations.

In 2017, the Army staff still does not have a G-9. Indeed, the last time defense officials created a Civil Affairs Division was in 1943 where “It quickly became an important staff division with authority to supervise all military government activities within the War Department” and in “coordinating civil affairs with other agencies.”66 While the Civil Affairs Division disbanded decades ago, the current need for this expertise has reemerged.

In the CSA’s Initial Message to the Army, General Milley clearly states, “We need to listen and learn – first from the Army itself…”67 Yet, in 2017, the responsibility to inform strategic decision-makers on CA and Military Support to Governance (MSG) fell on the shoulders of three lieutenant colonels. The Army still has not created a single billet on the Army staff for an active duty CA General Officer. Additionally, there are no Colonel positions, further exacerbating the situation. Clearly, this is insufficient. The CSA and the Secretary of the Army require a CA General Officer on the Army Staff to properly advise senior leaders on policy, plans, programming, budget, and force structure as it relates to CA and MSG, ensuring future Army decisions do not assume excessive risk as was the case when the Army cut the 85th CA BDE. It will also ensure
CA is better integrated into the Army Operating Concept and the Army is better prepared to fight in the future operating environment.

In that regard, General Milley’s Megacity Theory provides the perfect opportunity for the Army Staff to leverage CA knowledge and expertise. More than any other branch, CA is uniquely postured to operate in this environment. As noted in a brief from FORSCOM, CA “is the only military force organized and trained expressly to engage the civil component of the operational environment.” Thus, the Army would do well to select a CA General Officer to lead the transformation effort in preparation for the future operating environment.

Unfortunately, current force structure does not support this. “Unlike most branches, access to Army leadership is lacking for civil affairs,” says Major General Hugh Van Roosen, a CA officer in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Army Deputy G1. Other Army branches do not face this challenge. Indeed, CA is the only basic branch with a primary staff position at the Army Service Component Commands (ASCC), but not represented on the Army Staff or the Secretariat. Figure 2 shows this inequity.
Figure 2. Correlation of ASCC and HQDA / Secretariat Staff Positions

Short of creating its own staff section, CA must at least have General Officer representation within the Army G-3/5/7. This Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7 oversees Army strategy, plans, policy, and programs and provides strategic advice to the Secretary and the Chief of Staff of the Army. His purview spans a broad range of functions that cut across most Army activities. The role of the DA G-3/5/7 remains
essential and of such great consequence, it has rightly earned the colloquial title of, “the Center of the Universe.”

In lieu of a General Officer, active duty CA presently has two lieutenant colonel positions in the Army G-3/5/7. However, neither billet provides the officer with positional power. The officers do not make critical decisions. They are lieutenant colonels in an environment dominated by General Officers. As a result, they are unable to gain access to and influence some of the Army’s most critical decisions that affect the readiness of the force.

For example, one of the most powerful forums is the General Officer Steering Committee (GOSC). At the GOSC, general officers deliberate over critical strategic issues that support U.S. policy, prioritize initiatives, provide strategic direction to the force, and allocate resources. Another important meeting is the Deputy’s Management Action Group (DMAG) where general officers make programming and budgetary decisions in five-year increments. It is at the DMAG where meaningful decisions are made about how the Army will implement strategic guidance from the National Security Strategy, the Guidance for the Employment of the Force, the Unified Campaign Plans, and other strategic guidance. Two other general officer engagements critical to CA include the Chairman’s Joint Irregular Warfare Assessment and the Irregular Warfare Executive Steering Committee, sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict. Since CA does not have a general officer providing strategic leadership at HQDA, it lacks the ability to directly provide continuous feedback to senior decision-makers.
MG Van Roosen believes there is a viable alternative to placing an active duty General Officer on the Army Staff. "Secretary of the Army designation of the USASOC Commander as the advocate for the branches of civil affairs, psychological operations and special forces to the Army Staff would formalize this advisory role and facilitate a seat at the table for matters pertaining to branch policy."  

General Daniel B. Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA), is also comfortable going to the USASOC Commander for strategic advice on issues related to CA and MSG. He stated that not all subject matter experts need to be resident within the Pentagon and that the use of VTCs is sufficient. However, the USASOC commander only commands 15% of the total CA force. The majority of the CA force resides in FORSCOM (7% active component and 74% in the reserve component); there are also units assigned to U.S. Army Europe, and U.S. Army Pacific, which do not fall under USASOC’s purview.

Reliance on the use of proxies to articulate enterprise-level risk is inadequate. To provide the best military advice about readiness and requirements, one must be consistently immersed in HQDA affairs. One must work in the building, attend meetings, and listen directly to senior leaders to ascertain their true intent. Conducting this from a remote location leaves information gaps. Furthermore, the politics of decision-making at the highest levels in the Army require the support of key influencers. This support is achieved through demonstration of mutual trust, which is quickly gained through interpersonal relationships. It cannot be earned through episodic engagements over VTC.
Additionally, proxies do not possess the knowledge required to effectively communicate specialized issues, nor do they possess the passion or investment required to doggedly pursue issues when political opposition becomes an obstacle. Thus, a General Officer with a Special Forces background advocating for MSG will never be as effective as a General Officer who spent his career in CA. Furthermore, the advocate for CA must be assigned to HQDA and wear the Army unit patch. He cannot simultaneously represent another organization (such as USASOC or USACAPOC (A)) as he will be challenged to balance the equities of his respective command with the good of the entire CA force.

General Allyn’s approach towards receiving advice from remote sources works well when the Army knows it needs advice. However, the Army makes countless strategic decisions each year on programming, budget, force structure, operations and many other areas. Additionally, CA capabilities are often misunderstood when compared to more established branches which have multiple layers of representation on the Army staff. Gaps emerge when the Army requires advice and does not realize that it needs it. This causes the Army to make decisions with limited perspective and risks mission success.

The Misutilization of Active Component Civil Affairs General Officers

Looking towards the future, the Army must employ its active duty CA general officers in positions where they can best represent the branch as it supports the total Army mission – all 11,400 CA Soldiers working across the active component, U.S. Army Reserve, and the U.S. Army National Guard. Since 2011, the Army promoted two active component CA officers to the rank of Brigadier General and ultimately assigned them to USARC. This decision represents a misutilization of a strategic asset that enabled the
mismatch of CA force structure and negatively affected Army Readiness at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. While CA’s active duty General Officers were working at USARC, the Army made the decision to reduce its active component CA force structure, a decision that is now being reviewed due to the intolerable level of risk incurred on the Joint Force. Given their experience, the Army would have maximized their utility by placing them in strategic CA positions as the CA Commandant and on the Army Staff.

There remain several other strategic positions which would maximize the utility of a CA General Officer. A position on the Joint Staff or OSD would enable a CA General Officer to manage CA capabilities across multiple Services. A position at SOCOM, the Joint Proponent for CA, is also appropriate. However, given the recent mismanagement of CA force structure and the resultant risk to the Joint Force, the immediate requirements for CA General Officers are on the Army staff and as the Civil Affairs Commandant. It is in these assignments that a strategic leader will best support Army Readiness and build the Force of the Future, as per the CSA’s priorities.

Towards a Solution

Unfortunately, current force structure is inadequate. Presently, the commandant is an O6 position and the two active component billets on the Army staff are coded for lieutenant colonels. COL James C. Brown, former Civil Affairs Commandant and former Commander of the 95th CA BDE, recognizes the problem stating, “the Army and the Joint Force lack a position where a CA officer can provide Strategic direction, not just guidance or advice.”

Sequestration had a major impact on the size and structure of the DoD. As the government tightened the purse strings, one important change relevant to this
discussion is the 25 percent reduction in general and flag officer positions announced in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017.\footnote{78} However, this policy was published during the Obama administration. The current President of the United States made it clear that he believes the military is too small to accomplish its mission, stating he would increase the size of the active duty Army by about 70,000 soldiers.\footnote{79} Thus, it is reasonable to envision scenarios that would necessitate a change in military policy to restore some or all of the General Officer positions in next year’s NDAA.

Regardless, this proposal does not require the Army to increase the total number of General Officer billets. Rather, it suggests that the Army could achieve this by examining current billets and reprioritizing across the force. Currently, active component CA has roughly 22% of the total CA force but only one General Officer while reserve component CA has 16 General Officers.\footnote{80}

Conclusion

The lack of institutionalized senior leadership positions within the CA community for active component CA General Officers has been detrimental to both the Army and the CA branch. One of the clearest examples of this stems from the Army’s ill-advised decision to reduce its active component CA capacity. This decision had multiple negative impacts on Joint Force readiness, creating gaps and seams in Theater Campaign Strategies and Integrated Country Strategies at GCCs and U.S diplomatic missions around the world.

To mitigate the risk, FORSCOM increased its reliance on reserve component CA forces. However, active and reserve component CA are not interchangeable. Furthermore, mobilization constraints limit the flexibility and responsiveness of reserve
component CA. As such, FORSCOM no longer has sufficient capacity to deploy CA forces in support of early entry operational requirements. These limitations negatively impact Joint Force readiness and increase the risk to the Joint Force mission.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Army suspended the inactivation of the 85th CA BDE and is reviewing the decision to reduce active duty CA capacity. However, the Army might have avoided the situation altogether had it assigned its active component CA General Officers to strategic positions that leverage their experience and expertise as it pertains to CA and MSG.

Moving forward, the Army must examine the total CA force and employ its active component CA General Officers in positions that would preclude similar mistakes in the future. These positions are as the CA Commandant and on the Army Staff.

The CA Commandant must be a General Officer. Decision Point 153 already directed the creation of this position, but the task remains incomplete. This General Officer is necessary to provide the vision, power, and influence to lead the branch and to negotiate and build consensus among critical CA stakeholders across FORSCOM, USARC, USASOC, USACAPOC (A). He must either rectify or codify the inconsistencies between CA accessions, training, and employment; and he must lead force modernization efforts to enable CA forces to fight and win in the future environment.

The Army also requires a CA General Officer on the Army Staff. The Army’s history of misusing and underutilizing its CA capability demonstrates an urgent need for a CA strategic advisor to inform key decisions on policy, plans, force structure, programming, and budget as it relates to CA and MSG. This will enable the Army to make more informed decisions as it relates to readiness and risk. It will also eliminate
the inadequate practice of relying on proxies and will facilitate an approach that emphasizes the primacy of the Army's equities over the equities of its subordinate commands.

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