

## ***Conclusion***

Although the Kuwait operation was unique and unlikely to be repeated, some lessons can be learned from the Army's experience. In addition to the specific lessons about operational planning, organizational structure, command and control, contracting strategy and regulations, and funding authorities are the broader, more important lessons about the contributions the U.S. Army can make in assisting other nations. What role is appropriate for the Army in a post-hostilities environment and how can it best prepare for that role?

Events in Kuwait illustrate the need to plan carefully for the period after hostilities end. How the Army handles the postwar period can be as important as the war itself when it comes to promoting the political and social stability and the economic well-being of the host nation.

When the short ground war against Iraq ended abruptly, the United States had no comprehensive, cohesive plan—as it does for responding to natural disasters—that encompassed the various federal agencies and provided a mechanism for those agencies to communicate and coordinate with each other. Outside the State Department and the Defense Department, there was no overall structure or direction for planning, coordinating, and executing the recovery effort. Other federal agencies might have been used more effectively if they had been included in the planning process. The deficiencies in planning and directing the recovery effort might have had a greater impact if the damage had been more extensive.

Neither the Defense Department nor the Army adequately planned for the postwar period. Missions, goals, and political constraints were not clearly defined. U.S. political leaders at times seemed to be pushing their own objectives. This was particularly true in the area of contracting strategy, specifically the strong emphasis on awarding contracts to small and small disadvantaged U.S. businesses. Pentagon officials responded to the challenges of the recovery operations in an ad hoc fashion, creating various organizations to execute the mission as the need arose. Planning in theater, at CENTCOM and ARCENT, was also inadequate. No detailed procedures existed for coordinating civil affairs activities. The civil affairs units arrived in the theater late, with the theater-level

civil affairs headquarters, the 352d Civil Affairs Command, deploying last. As a result, the civil affairs annexes to the theater's operations plans were tardy.

During the long months of Operation DESERT SHIELD, the Army understandably focused its attention on the conflict with Iraq rather than on plans for the aftermath. Task Force Freedom and the Combined Civil Affairs Task Force were provisional organizations quickly crafted to meet the specific circumstances and immediate needs in Kuwait.

The meticulous, detailed tactical planning that contributed to the Army's success in the ground war did not exist for the postwar period. In their after action report for Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, Army officials conceded that although the Army executed its missions successfully, the U.S. government did not have a cohesive plan for the recovery period after the war ended. It had no plan that delineated the responsibilities of all the federal agencies that should be involved or that provided a mechanism for organizations to communicate effectively with each other. "Unambiguous doctrine, approved by our Government and governments of nations which are our allies, to support transition to post-hostility nation support," the report concluded, "is not available to Army planners—or anyone else in the Government."<sup>1</sup>

Events further demonstrated that the post-hostilities plans must provide for adequate logistics support for units entering a disaster area. With power, food, and water supplies disrupted in Kuwait, Task Force Freedom and the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office had to be fully self-supporting in the first months. In addition, recovery operations require simple, clear organizational structures, good communications, leaders with vision and stamina, and an effective partnership with the host nation. Without such a partnership, the Kuwait operation could have easily gotten off course. Differences over costs and construction standards could have ended the program.

The Kuwait recovery operation also highlighted the need for doctrine concerning nation assistance. Although the U.S. Army had conducted nation assistance activities for many years, there was no doctrine at the time that specifically addressed it.<sup>2</sup> As one civil affairs officer noted, "If we think [of] our focus now as not large global warfare, but low-intensity conflicts or wars of liberation or at least situations where we are restoring a legitimate government, then the focus on restoring services, and the civil infrastructure, schools, so forth, really has to be a major focus for the Army because we're the ones that are going to be on the ground doing it."<sup>3</sup>

The Army, General Hatch insisted, must develop better doctrine and concepts for nation assistance rather than implementing nation assis-

tance on an ad hoc basis.<sup>4</sup> He emphasized the link between nation assistance and national security. The Army, Hatch warned, might have a mission to support and execute the government's national security efforts in ways that had not been given rigorous attention in the past. "We must be ready to 'promote peace' while we also 'deter war,'" he added. In peacetime operations, Hatch observed, the United States could focus on attaining enduring regional stability by addressing the root causes of instability such as poverty, social and economic strife, and environmental degradation.<sup>5</sup>

Hatch and others never lost sight of the fact that the purpose of nation assistance was to help the host nation develop its own capabilities and its own public and private institutions. "You don't do that," he explained, "by going in and just building projects; it is a training, imparting of information, a building of a capability in the country." Thus, integrating host country nationals was a key element of the Corps' concept of nation assistance.<sup>6</sup> By incorporating Kuwaiti engineers into its organization and giving them hands-on experience, the Corps was able to leave behind improved facilities, expanded engineering expertise, and stronger personal relationships.

One of the brightest aspects of the recovery operation was the bond of mutual respect forged between Corps members and Kuwaiti volunteers. "The humanitarian spirit of the participants easily bridged the cultural and professional differences and paved the way for close cooperation and good working relations," Locurcio noted. "What resulted from this cooperation," he added, "was the prospect of a long-term relationship—based on trust and good will—that is probably more important than the operation itself."<sup>7</sup>

Despite some successes in bridging cultural differences, the Army left room for improvement. Colonel Lackey conceded that he had not prepared his soldiers at Task Force Freedom to deal with the Arab culture as well as he could have.<sup>8</sup> Reflecting on his experience in Kuwait, General Frix conceded that the Army needed to improve its understanding of cultural differences when operating outside the United States. He noted that he and his staff quickly faced the challenges of dealing with the Arab culture. The lack of understanding caused strains initially, he noted, until the soldiers and the Kuwaitis "learned to get along with each other."<sup>9</sup>

An important lesson for any nation assistance effort is that U.S. forces must withdraw before the host government loses enthusiasm for their presence. From the beginning, U.S. policymakers recognized the need to hand over responsibility for the recovery to the Kuwaiti government and people as expeditiously as possible. Since their first meeting, Kelly had continually emphasized to Livingstone the need to leave

Kuwait as soon as the work had been completed successfully, a lesson he had learned from the Israeli air base program. Kelly, Livingstone, Hatch, and other officials recognized the importance of knowing when to move from a civil–military operation conducted by U.S. forces to one directed by the host nation.<sup>10</sup>

The Kuwait recovery operations highlighted the concept of the Total Army. The Army's recovery effort succeeded only through combining the diverse strengths of its active duty soldiers, reservists, and civilians. Except for a small active duty battalion, all Army civil affairs capabilities were in the Reserve components. The civil affairs reservists provided experience not generally found in the Active Army. Although traditionally some individuals in the Active Army have had a low opinion of them, the civil affairs reservists in Kuwait did much to overcome such bias. Drawing on a broad range of experience from their civilian jobs, they involved themselves in banking, currency, food distribution, health, water, and sanitation. Individual reservists worked closely with the Kuwaiti ministries to help them reconstruct their management structures. General Kelly praised the civil affairs soldiers for "an absolutely magnificent job." Their work in Kuwait, Secretary Cheney noted, was "exceptional" both for its speed and the depth of expertise.<sup>11</sup>

Equally important were the contributions of hundreds of Army Corps of Engineers members who served in Kuwait—most of whom were civilian volunteers—and their counterparts back in the States. Their engineering, project management, and contracting capabilities were critical to the success of the recovery operation. They completed nearly \$330 million worth of construction work in just 16 months, returning key elements of Kuwait's infrastructure to operation in record time.

Locurcio later observed that the Corps' ability to mobilize a group of Corps members in Kuwait and successfully execute such a large, complex mission in a hazardous environment with only one fatality and no other injuries to Corps personnel gave him "a tremendous sense of satisfaction." A Corps contracting specialist, Edward Slana, echoed this sentiment. "There is nothing in the annals of Corps history that even comes close to this kind of mission," he added. Another member of Locurcio's staff, Ben Wood, observed that, despite tremendous challenges, at the end of the operation the Corps would have "done the best that can be done and will have done it faster than people would have thought possible."<sup>12</sup>

After visiting Kelly, Locurcio, and their staffs in the summer of 1991, Assistant Secretary Livingstone reported that she had never been around such a highly motivated group of people. The soldiers and civilians she met said that "they would never have a job that would mean as much to

them.”<sup>13</sup> Senator Donald Mitchell, who visited Kuwait in the summer of 1992, called the Corps’ work there “an American success story.”<sup>14</sup> As the Corps completed its air base work in late 1993, Ambassador Gnehm told Col. Charles S. Cox, the Transatlantic Division commander at that time, “The contribution of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to the reconstruction of Kuwait is a source of pride to the entire U.S. mission here. The achievements of your engineers have won high praise from both the government of Kuwait and its people.”<sup>15</sup>

The success of the Kuwait recovery operation can be measured in several ways. Was the U.S. Army proud of the quantity and quality of its work? Were the Kuwaitis satisfied with the help they received? Were relations between the Americans and the Kuwaitis stronger than before? Was the Middle East more stable and secure? Livingstone had additional criteria: Did the Army follow its own guidelines and meet its internal controls? Could its work withstand public scrutiny? Was the Army fair in providing opportunity for American businesses? Were the Army’s actions consistent with implementing the President’s policy?<sup>16</sup>

Using these criteria, the Army measured up well. Army auditors were, for the most part, satisfied with the controls that Army officials had put in place. The results of congressional hearings and General Accounting Office investigations were generally favorable.

The Kuwaiti government and people very much appreciated the efforts of the U.S. Army, particularly the Corps’ efforts to repair the civil infrastructure. Except for the strains surrounding the air base work, the Kuwaitis were pleased with the scope and quality of the assistance they received. Without the work of civil affairs soldiers and Corps members, the Army would not have been able to transfer responsibility to the Kuwaiti government as quickly and smoothly as it did. The civil affairs soldiers, and Corps members in particular, not only played a critical role in planning and executing the recovery operations but also left behind an enduring spirit of goodwill. “We may not remember their names,” a grateful Dr. Shaheen observed, “but we will never forget what they did here.”<sup>17</sup>

By the end of the recovery period, the prewar political status quo and the flow of oil had been restored in Kuwait. The bond between the two nations was strong enough that the Kuwaiti government asked the United States to station a small force there temporarily and agreed to joint military exercises, something that would have been unheard of a year earlier.

In large part through the efforts of the U.S. Army, not a single Kuwaiti died from lack of food, water, or medical care. Within 30 days, primary power in Kuwait was restored and roads were cleared. Within 45 days, the water supplies were replenished. Within 90 days, the air-

port was reopened. The country's civil infrastructure was restored within nine months. The U.S. Army was able to make a rapid transition from offensive ground force to nation assistance. It successfully translated its victory on the battlefield into an environment of political and social stability and economic recovery.