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“Integrating contracting into intelligence, plans and operations can serve as a force multiplier in obtaining our campaign objectives.”

—Gen. John R. Allen, U.S. Marine Corps  
 “Counterinsurgency (COIN) Contracting Guidance”  
 September 18, 2011

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# Operational Contract Support Planning: Evolution to the Next Level

Embedding operational contract support planning capability into each Army service component command may be the key to filling contracting gaps in the current force structure.

■ By Lt. Col. John M. Cooper

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with smaller operations, took a little known and often overlooked Army support function and placed tremendous responsibility on its shoulders. Over the past decade, Army contracting, along with its joint siblings, has played a more prominent role in the way the Army plans and conducts military operations and logistics support.

In 2007, more than half of U.S. personnel in Iraq were contractors.

The proportion of contractors supporting U.S. forces in Afghanistan is nearly identical. The Army has become reliant on contractors and that reliance may grow as the Army downsizes and stresses its already lean sustainment capabilities.

## Operational Contract Support

The Army responded to the influx of contractors by establishing, growing, and maturing its contract management capability and implementing the operational contract support

(OCS) concept within units. While the OCS concept takes the Army in the right direction, additional organizational solutions may be required to better integrate contract planning, build contracting as a core capability, and bridge the gap between the supporter and the supported.

The Army's present force structure and approach to OCS continues to overlook significant capability gaps and key tasks at the broader operational level. The Defense Department's Initial Capabilities Doc-

ument for Operational Contract Support, dated July 19, 2011, provides a detailed list of OCS shortfalls above the tactical level. Included in that list are several operational capability gaps that the Army is challenged to correct with the current force structure:

- A lack of OCS integration into capability and task planning, operational assessments, force development, and lessons learned.
- A lack of synchronized OCS planning across all operational phases and among joint, multinational, and governmental and nongovernmental agency partners.
- Insufficient assessment of regional contract capacity, the extent of existing contracts, and common-user contract support for key commodities and services.
- A lack of centralized oversight to identify risk and recommend policies to control and monitor contractors on the battlefield.
- Insufficient expertise among senior planning staffs to enable the generation of synchronized, acquisition-ready requirements documents.
- Insufficient awareness and appreciation of OCS significance and complexity, hampering the ability to make full use of OCS in the operational environment.

### Formal OCS Implementation

The Army implemented OCS in doctrine, such as Army Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures 4–10, Operational Contract Support Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, with a strong emphasis on execution at the tactical, rather than operational, level. One Army OCS solution included creating a non-acquisition force structure to support requiring-activity functions, such as developing contract requirements, preparing performance work statements, and contracting officer representative management. Positions that perform those functions have the additional skill identifier (ASI) 3C.

Similarly, military occupational specialty (MOS) 51C contingency contracting officers (CCOs) are tasked to provide unit-level training and contracting support, execution, and management for the supported element. Despite education efforts, confusion lingers regarding the delineated roles and responsibilities of ASI 3C and MOS 51C personnel, indicating that OCS is not fully understood as a concept or task within the operational or acquisition communities.

Regardless, this Army OCS solution focuses on tactical-level problems associated with the requirements development and contract management phases of the contract life cycle. Although the solution has tremendous value in ensuring taxpayer dollars are well spent, the current OCS concept does little to address OCS-related planning and effects at higher levels.

Within the last 10 years, the Army contracting community extracted itself from operational units to create separate contracting organizations. That structure currently includes 108 contingency contracting teams (CCTs) and 17 contingency contracting battalions (CCBNs) organized primarily to support tactical commanders at the division level and below. Seven contracting support brigades (CSBs) are committed to theater commanders and two additional rotational brigades are activating with alignment to corps headquarters.

### Contingency Contracting Teams

The foundational unit for contracting is the CCT, which is charged with supporting maneuver and sustainment brigades, the division and corps headquarters, and myriad other units operating within an assigned support area. The CCT comprises five CCOs awarding contracts under explicit written authority.

Most of the Army's deployable contract writing capacity resides within the CCTs. The team works hand in hand with the supported unit's ASI 3C-qualified personnel

and the supply or service end user throughout the full life cycle of a contract, including requirements development, training, monitoring, acceptance, and final payment.

The CCT leader engages the supported commander and staff to synchronize and leverage contracting within operations. Early and consistent involvement in the unit's planning and execution cycle ensures contracting maintains a proactive, solution-oriented posture to enhance the commander's mission. Ultimately, CCTs are concerned with satisfying immediate requirements, contract management, and providing tactical commanders with critical tools to expedite urgent, low-cost requirements, such as the field ordering officer program.

### Contingency Contracting Battalions

Contracting's initial level of command resides at the CCBN. Unlike the CCTs, the 13-person CCBNs are mission command headquarters, not contract-writing organizations. The CCBN is generally aligned with a supported division, directing approximately six CCTs supporting the division area. A CCBN is also aligned with each Army corps headquarters to provide equivalent command and control to subordinate CCTs within the corps area.

The CCBN implements, monitors, and assesses the effectiveness of higher-level contracting policies and procedures, ultimately providing feedback to commanders. Vested with greater authority and responsibility, the CCBN commander reviews select solicitations and contracts to ensure compliance with policies, guidance, and service regulations.

As contract administration is historically a high-risk and poorly performed task for the Army, the CCBN commander and staff provide critical contract management oversight within the CCTs, ensuring contracting officers and unit representatives are properly monitoring contractor performance, accepting supplies and services, and

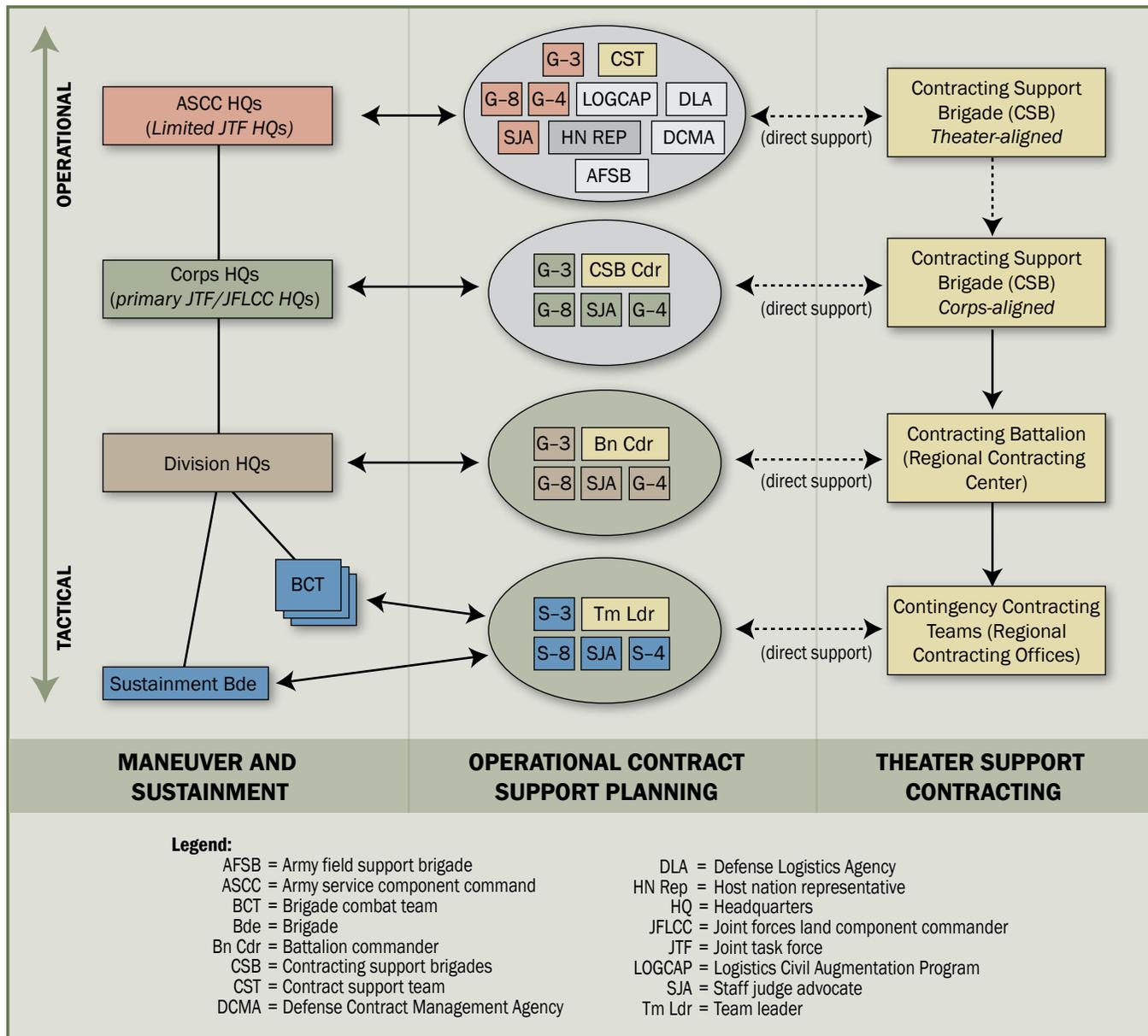


Figure 1: Operational contract support from the tactical to operational levels.

paying and closing contracts.

Finally, the CCBN commander must bridge many of the aforementioned capability gaps at the division level by directly engaging the division planning staff. This ensures that contracting is appropriately used and synchronized within tactical plans and that contracting officers within the CCTs have sufficient warning to act quickly on emerging requirements.

### Contracting Support Brigades

The next level of command is the CSB, which can be either the-

ater committed and aligned with an Army service component command (ASCC) or rotational and aligned with an Army corps headquarters. The CSB commander typically serves as the senior contracting official within a theater or Army corps area and, as such, the 24-person CSB's primary functions include the following:

- Plan and execute contract support for a supported theater or command.
- Establish and maintain contracting policies, procedures, and priorities

to support operational objectives.

- Train, develop, and warrant contracting officers.
- Ensure contracts and other transactions comply with applicable policies, regulations, and public law.

The CSB also provides mission command to subordinate CCBNs and CCTs as well as to joint contracting partners when the Army is designated as the lead service for contracting during an operation.

Like their subordinate leaders, CSB commanders must engage with

supported commanders and staffs. Understandably, consistent involvement in operational planning with any level of detail becomes a significant challenge at senior levels where mission complexity and the number of supported units increase dramatically. The CSB, particularly a theater-committed organization, can quickly become overtaxed, lacking sufficient depth to provide dedicated planning assistance to senior headquarters.

### An Organizational Solution

The Army requires a more robust

organizational evolution to address the identified capability gaps. Sufficient structure presently exists at the tactical level to provide sound OCS support and planning assistance to division and brigade staffs. Even within the Army corps area, there is sufficient redundancy among the CSB, CCBN, and CCT to enable OCS engagement for major units, such as the expeditionary sustainment command.

However, OCS capability erodes considerably at echelons above corps, where significant operational planning occurs, particularly with

respect to the development of theater-unique contingency plans, crisis action plans, and shaping or theater security cooperation missions. This decreased capability directly correlates to the six identified capability gaps; therefore, a solution is required to resolve gaps and capability shortfalls within the ASCC.

The Army should develop, activate, and resource a contract support team (CST) comprising three experienced contracting officers within each ASCC headquarters. This team would be assigned to a corre-

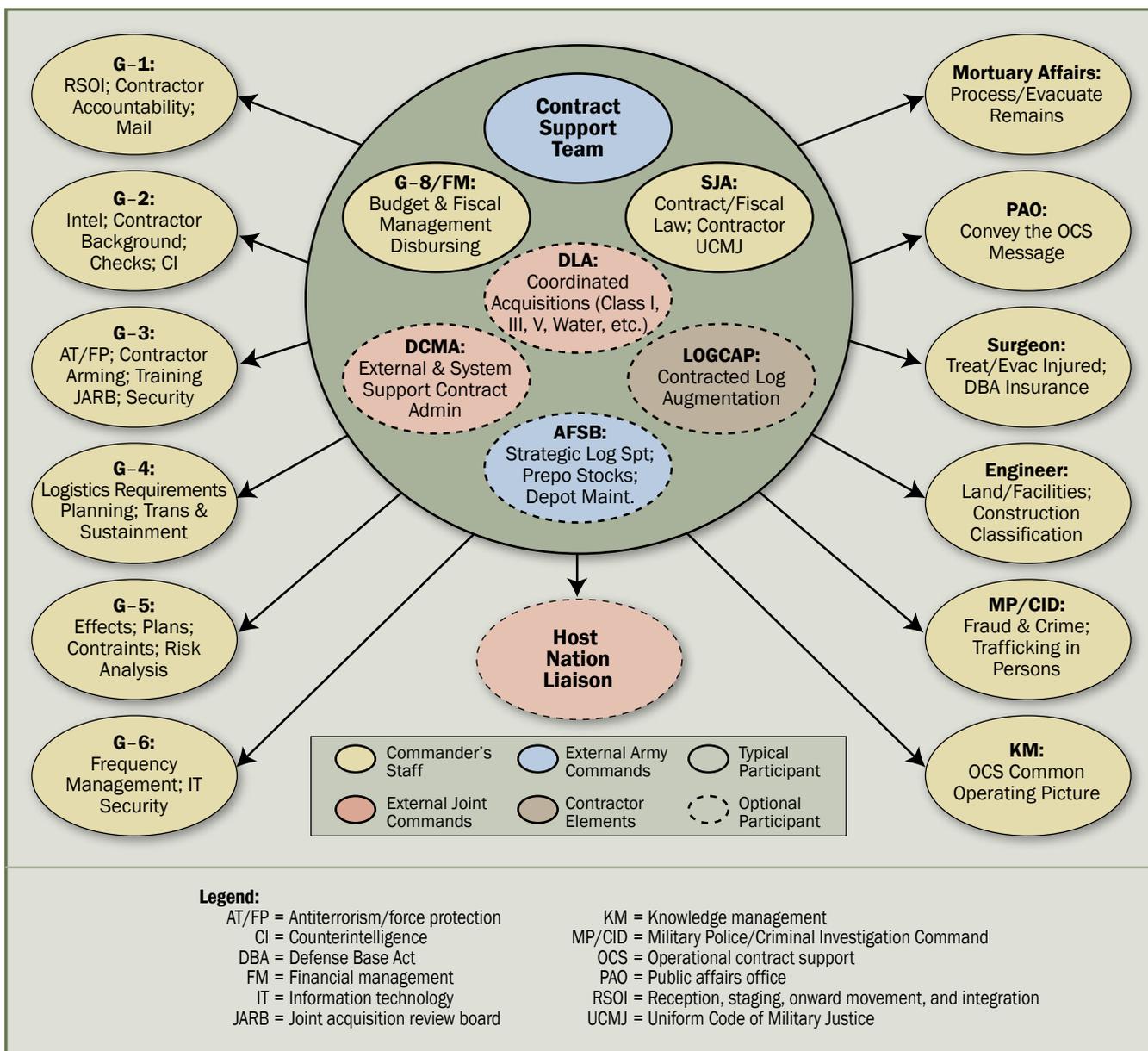


Figure 2: OCS planning team and staff responsibilities and interaction. (Image courtesy of retired Army Lt. Col. George Holland)

sponding CSB, which would allow the team to maintain a strong link to the contracting community and would permit the CSB commander to select the best-qualified officers for this assignment.

A three-person team would facilitate 24-hour contingency operations, with a senior field grade officer and senior noncommissioned officer during the day shift and a company grade officer monitoring activity during the night shift.

The team would become an integral part of the supported commander's headquarters, but its placement within that headquarters may be unconventional to many. The contracting function is historically associated with the G-4 section since it is considered a logistics enabler, particularly at the tactical level. However, placing the OCS planning team within the ASCC G-4 may not be the ideal solution.

Each staff section has some contracting equities and bears some responsibility for indoctrinating, managing, providing for, and interacting with contractors. Aligning the team within the G-3/5 rather than the G-4 provides the best vantage point for emerging operations as desired end states, branches, sequels, and requirements are developed. Ultimately, this allows the team to coordinate with other planners and eliminates functional stovepipes and situations where contracting is simply used to manage incomplete or untimely requirements.

The CST focuses on theater-wide, macro-level contracting issues, rather than tactical, micro-level contracting issues executed by CCT or CCBN leaders at the brigade or division level. The CST's mission is not to write or directly manage contracts. Instead, the team concentrates on six fundamental tasks:

- Establish a foothold within the ASCC planning staff to foster relationships and educate the supported organization.
- Actively participate in the ASCC's planning process to leverage and

integrate contracting, guide decision making, develop planning documents, and conduct OCS-related intelligence preparation of the operational environment.

- Develop contracting policies and procedures to enable the commander's mission.
- Act as the common link for various contracting activities within the theater.
- Identify operational problems and develop comprehensive contracted and noncontracted solutions.
- Articulate contract-related risk and develop mitigation strategies.

While the CST assists in plan development and addresses operational concerns at higher levels, the CCBN and CCT perform similar functions and provide technical advice locally to their supported commanders. This leads to the desired end state, with contracting collectively assessing operation feasibility, guiding decision making, and proactively finding solutions at all levels to support the commander's mission.

### The Six Tasks of the CST

Let us further explore the CST's six fundamental tasks.

**Establish a foothold within the ASCC planning staff.** The CST's first task is to establish itself within the ASCC planning staff to enable habitual interaction and greater education regarding contracting capabilities and challenges.

Presently, the ASCC staffs have insufficient OCS expertise and the aligned CSB is not sufficiently resourced to accommodate sudden activation and deployment of a contingency command post. Should a major contingency event occur, there would be a delay while the Army contracting community identified, organized, and placed experienced, capable contracting personnel in the operational headquarters.

This occurred in Iraq, where contract planning was only marginal until the ad hoc Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan (JCC-

I/A) was created, contracting unity of effort was established, and CCOs began engaging the various headquarters. Pre-positioning a CST within each ASCC eliminates any delays, establishes relationships, and overcomes the aforementioned capability gaps.

**Actively participate in the ASCC's planning process.** The CST's next task is to actively participate in operational planning. This enables the team to guide decision making, identify shortfalls early in the planning cycle, assist in developing appropriate contracted and noncontracted solutions, and then provide key intelligence to contracting leaders, enabling them to complete preparatory work to reduce acquisition lead times.

Active participation is particularly critical when operations drive major acquisitions, such as establishing forward operating bases. This was a challenge during the Iraq surge when JCC-I/A and the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) played critical roles. Contracting maintained a position on the fringe of operational planning, resulting in suboptimal advance notice, synchronization, and operational input.

Embedding the CST overcomes that challenge while permitting routine preplanning for region-specific contingencies, assessing local supply and service capabilities, and planning how to best employ high-demand, low-density contracting personnel.

**Develop contracting policies and procedures.** In some cases, the solution to an operational problem may be a change in policies or procedures. In coordination with the CSB commander and staff, the CST assists and guides the supported commander in establishing command-specific, contracting-related policies and procedures. The team provides subject-matter expertise to ensure those policies and procedures comply with acquisition regulations, do not conflict with CSB policies, support the operational end state, and are executable by CCOs in the field.

As an example, JCC-I/A and Multi-National Force-Iraq imple-

mented the Iraqi First program as policy, directing CCOs to give preference to Iraqi-owned businesses as a way of achieving the operational objective of improving local-national employment and reducing foreign business intrusion.

Alternatively, establishing acquisition boards, such as the Joint Acquisition Review Board, is a procedural option to ensure requirements are actionable, properly staffed and prioritized, and possibly consolidated to benefit from economies of scale.

*Act as the common link for various contracting activities within the theater.* The CST also serves as the headquarters' common link to external organizations and LOGCAP personnel to ensure that requirements and contract support are synchronized, feasible, and suitable.

External contracting activities might include the CSB, Army field support brigade, Defense Contract Management Agency, and Defense Logistics Agency. Host-nation civil or military representatives may also be consulted regarding acquisition and cross-servicing agreement options. Ultimately, the CST acts as the hub for synchronizing the contracting effort.

*Identify operational problems and develop comprehensive solutions.* After identifying an operational problem and building relationships among stakeholders, the CST can execute its next task of developing comprehensive contracted and non-contracted solutions. Positioned as the command's link to external contracting enablers, the team expands the number of options for the supported commander.

Deploying military sustainment or

engineer assets may be a more timely and cost-effective noncontracted solution for a short-duration mission. Activating LOGCAP to manage a seaport or to provide longer-term life support for U.S. forces may be a viable contracted option using U.S. or third-country nationals. While LOGCAP may be one solution for reasons of scale, scope, or complexity, deployed CCTs may be able to execute similar contracts using local nationals to achieve the same support, but with different operational effects.

The team can also tap into capabilities outside of the theater, such as the Army Materiel Command's Rock Island Contracting Center, which provides reach back support to purchase urgently required supplies for contingencies from the United States. Likewise, the General Services Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, and others maintain a contingency response capability. Fostering effective multi-agency communication to find suitable solutions to operational problems is an essential team function.

*Articulate contract-related risk and develop mitigation strategies.* Finally, regardless of the environment or mission, the CST identifies, assesses, and plans to mitigate contract-related risk at the operational level. Contract-related risk is associated with a sudden influx of U.S. military buying power in an immature or austere marketplace. This influx can lead to a false economy, cause rampant inflation, and create an economic dependency on U.S. spending—each of which can have a catastrophic impact on the local populace and the host-nation economy.

Another risk is that funds used to pay contracts will be channeled to fund insurgent or terrorist activity. This risk is especially high where cash is the primary payment method, as was the case in Iraq. A large contract workload, poor oversight, and high cash flow contribute to increases in fraud, corruption, collusion, and organized crime, which must all be mitigated during planning.

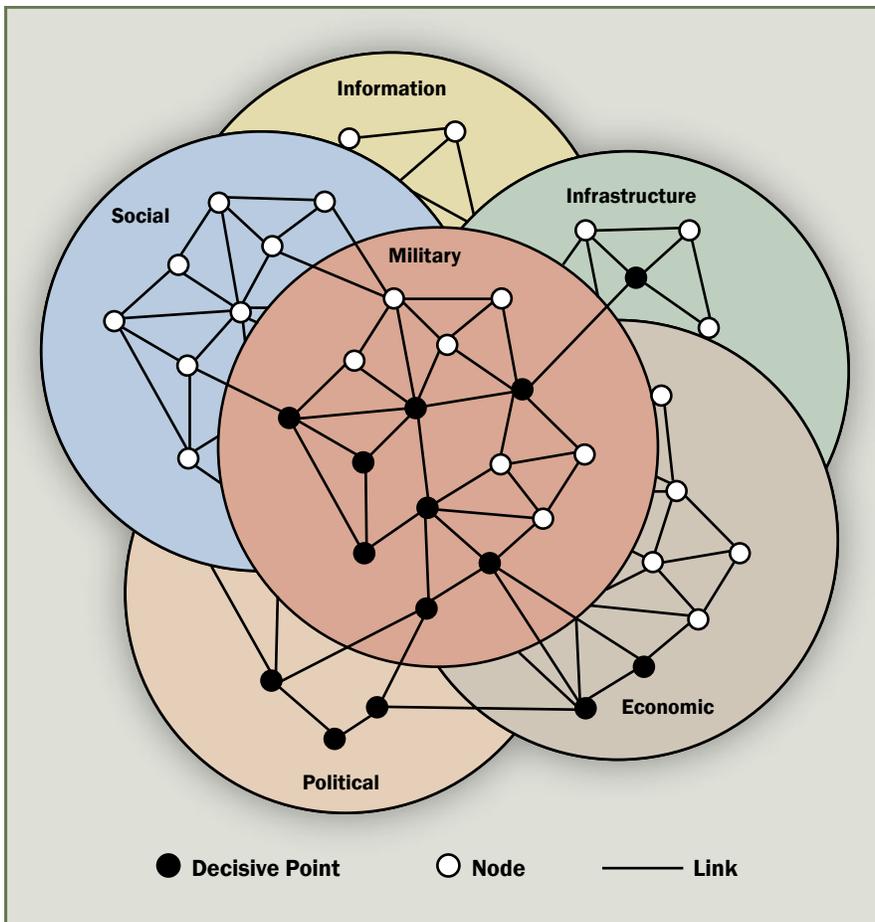


Figure 3: Political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure system analysis. (Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning)

Even currency selection for contract payments carries risk since using U.S. dollars exclusively may irreparably devalue a local currency. Risk will vary with every operation, but it must be balanced with potential outcomes or payoffs. Ultimately, the CST must consider contract-related risks and integrate mitigation strategies into plans, policies, and procedures.

### **Employment on the Battlefield**

The collective effort of the commander's planning staff and an actively engaged CST performing its key tasks has the potential to positively influence the tactical and operational environments. The team remains involved throughout all phases of an operation to enable various lines of effort, creating positive effects to achieve desired outcomes.

On the battlefield, minor changes to the economic system can and will influence the political, social, military, infrastructure, and other systems. The CST must understand the secondary and tertiary effects of each decision along the economic lines of effort in order to develop plans, policies, and procedures that enable contracting to help shape the environment, rather than fall victim to it.

Decisions made at all levels will influence the operational environment. All CCOs, not just the CST, must understand that contracting's influence goes beyond fulfilling a short-term requirement, particularly when a contract does not support or is actually counter to the operational end state. A simple decision to hire a small group of third-country nationals for a janitorial contract fulfills a unit's requirement, but it does so by possibly displacing employable local nationals.

While that single contract may have been negligible, the social and political systems can be affected, particularly at the local level. Accordingly, the CST must consider the tactical and operational environment and take a "whole of government" approach, whether planning

operations on the Joint Task Force staff or considering contracting policies or procedures at the CCT level.

### **OCS Tasks by Phase**

The assorted OCS tasks, effects, and focus will vary with the different phases of an operation, which are described in Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations. During Phase 0 (shape), the military focuses on theater campaign and contingency planning. OCS planners strive to identify contracting shortfalls as plans are developed, assess marketplace capabilities throughout the region, and ensure contracting force structure is included in the early and overall deployment plan.

Additionally, Phase 0 is the military's opportunity to improve multinational relationships, interoperability, and cooperation among foreign partners and allies. This is accomplished, in part, through recurring multinational exercises, such as Cobra Gold, and command post exercises, such as Yama Sakura. Contracting personnel are heavily involved in these events, spanning the tactical-to-operational range, providing critical planning input, and executing contract support on the ground.

As the operation moves into Phases I through III (deter, seize initiative, and dominate), the CST strives to enable combat operations. The team continues to engage the planning staff as various plans are updated, implemented, and executed. While monitoring current operations, the team focuses on planning future operations.

Accordingly, the CST examines each branch and sequel to determine how and where to leverage contracting to support and enable mission accomplishment. While the CST fulfills its mission at the operational level, most CCT personnel at the division-level and below perform "muddy boots" contracting, fulfilling urgent requirements to support reception, staging, onward

movement, integration, other sustainment functions, and maneuver.

With the transition to Phases IV and V (stabilize and enable civil authority) and the curtailment of sustained combat operations, the CST focuses on long-term tasks and effects along the economic lines of effort. The team continues to provide key inputs to the planning process, identifies contracting requirements early on, and liaises between the supported commander and contracting stakeholders.

In conjunction with the CSB commander, the team also assists in formulating long-term policies and procedures to improve the operational environment. Meanwhile, tactical-level contracting personnel implement CSB and ASCC policies and procedures locally while continuing to fulfill sustainment, reconstruction, and redeployment requirements.

### **Creating Favorable Effects**

Along with phase-specific tasks, the CST continues to be involved across the spectrum of conflict and range of military operations to create favorable operational effects. As JP 3-0 explains, the range varies with the size, purpose, and intensity of the operation.

At one end of the spectrum are shaping operations and activities, such as military-to-military engagements, civil assistance projects, and theater security cooperation programs. Toward the center of the spectrum lie crisis response and small-scale, limited-duration contingencies. At the far end of the spectrum are major combat operations and campaigns generally associated with declared war.

Within the range of military operations are two types of missions for which contracting is well-suited to create favorable operational effects, particularly with early and active CST engagement: stability/counterinsurgency (COIN) and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR).

## Stability/COIN Missions

Iraq and Afghanistan are familiar examples of the stability/COIN environment. The increased force presence during the surge was instrumental in stabilizing Iraq; however, contracting also played a role in the overall success by engaging Multi-National Force–Iraq leaders and mirroring the CST's duties within the ASCC. Analyzing the situation in Iraq helped identify root causes of the insurgency, such as large-scale unemployment.

Senior leaders within the operational and contracting commands then developed strategies to treat the disease, rather than symptoms, of the insurgency. The result was the Money as a Weapons System manual and the Iraqi First policy. These innovative concepts used contracting to target an economic problem with clear social and political repercussions.

JCC–I/A implemented policies and procedures to achieve favorable OCS effects, such as increasing Iraqi employment and injecting capital-building funds into the economy, so as to enable the maneuver commander's stability/COIN strategy and end state. JCC–I/A restricted competition and gave preference to Iraqi businesses, thereby increasing contracting opportunities for those entities while decreasing intrusion by Kuwaiti, Turkish, or U.S. businesses operating within or adjacent to Iraq.

To build Iraqi businesses, JCC–I/A and the civil-military operations centers hosted business development seminars, required vendor registration, mentored business owners, and engaged local leaders to encourage participation in the contracting process.

Using Iraqi businesses to fulfill U.S. and host-nation requirements increased Iraqi employment directly and indirectly, improved the nation's gross domestic product and currency, reduced U.S. and third-country national presence, and stabilized wages. In the end, properly developed and employed OCS effects helped to marginalize the insurgents' influ-

ence, improve Iraq's domestic security, and enable the transition to a legitimate Iraqi government.

## HA/DR Missions

The CST's approach to an international HA/DR environment may be considerably different. Stability/COIN OCS assets strive to bolster the economy through contracts with local businesses, but comparable HA/DR assets may prefer to avoid local purchases.

CCOs tend to deploy as far forward as possible to work directly with the supported unit. This can be counterproductive in a decimated or austere marketplace incapable of supporting U.S. demand or where U.S. forces are vying for the same critical commodities and services as the impoverished civilian populace, the host-nation government, or relief agencies.

For example, during the 2010 Haiti earthquake response, forward-deployed CCOs quickly learned that few supplies or services were available in Port-au-Prince and that the limited quantities that did exist were in high demand. Because of the operational environment, contracting had to change its approach and procure most supplies in the Dominican Republic or the United States. This helped to maintain good relations with Haiti while fulfilling the mandate of providing HA/DR assistance to the region.

In an HA/DR scenario, the number of key stakeholders—both governmental and nongovernmental—increases significantly and each stakeholder will have a different objective and willingness to cooperate with military leaders. The CST and deployed CCOs must remember their mission is to support U.S. forces, not to contract on behalf of the affected civilian population.

Support to the local populace is best provided by the large assortment of nongovernmental organizations, other government agencies, and international government organizations, such as the International Federation of the Red Cross, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Unit-

ed Nations World Food Program.

The CST works hand in hand with the military operational staff to develop mission-enabling effects, identify critical logistics or infrastructure capability gaps, and select appropriate contracted and noncontracted solutions that consider the many military and nonmilitary stakeholders.

The Army contracting community has positively evolved using lessons learned in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, and elsewhere, including a number of joint and multinational exercises. Nonetheless, the recurring theme from numerous after-action reviews, comments from field commanders, and the Initial Capabilities Document for Operational Contract Support is this: OCS planning must be an integrated component of the operational-level planning staff.

Though ultimately successful, the Iraqi First program and the Haiti response are examples of where embedded OCS planners could have leveraged contracting much earlier to achieve positive outcomes sooner. To an extent, they reveal the historically reactive nature of contracting.

Embedding a small, but experienced, OCS planning capability within each ASCC headquarters would significantly improve the Army's ability to leverage contracting during operations, reduce the U.S. military footprint in a foreign nation, and develop contracting plans, policies, and procedures to achieve the maneuver commander's desired end state. The CST will be a superb return on investment for each dollar spent supporting the joint force.

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Lt. Col. John M. Cooper is the Headquarters, Department of the Army, acquisition, logistics, and technology organizational integrator. He is Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act level III certified and holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Tulane University and a master's degree in engineering management from Saint Martin's University.