

The Commander's Emergency Response Program in Afghanistan: Five Practical Recommendations

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CGD Brief

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The U.S. military has become substantially engaged in economic development and stabilization and will likely continue to carry out these activities in in-conflict zones for some time to come. Since FY2002, nearly \$62 billion has been appropriated for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan.¹ The Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), which provides funds for projects to address urgent reconstruction and relief efforts, is one component of the military's development operations. In this analysis, we take U.S. military involvement in development as a given and concentrate on providing recommendations for it to operate more efficiently and effectively. By doing so, we are *not* advocating that the U.S. military become involved in all types of development activities or that CERP be used more broadly; rather, our recommendations address the military's capacity to carry out what it is already doing in Afghanistan and other in-conflict situations. They are, in short, the following:

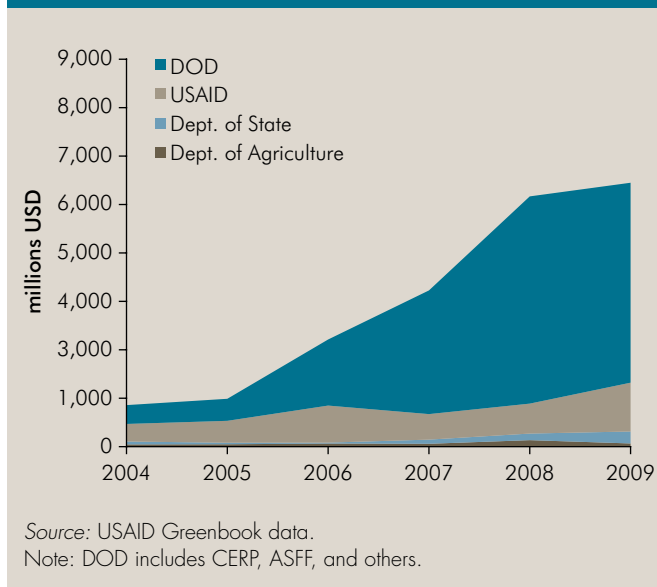
- Be aware of the unintended consequences of aid.
- Modernize education and training to reflect realities on the ground.
- Reform authorities, doctrine, and structure to define the use of CERP funds.
- Understand the dominant sectors in the economy to make interventions work better.
- Monitor outcomes to increase the efficiency of CERP.

Under the Stability Operations doctrine, the U.S. military is playing a significant role delivering development assistance in countries where security concerns are too great for other development-focused government entities to operate. The Stability Operations doctrine has emerged from the changing international dynamics that followed the end of the Cold War. U.S. operations radically shifted in the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the conclusion of major combat operations in the Gulf War. Since then, the U.S. military has become more and more engaged in "military operations other than war," which include peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, security assistance, counterdrug operations, and nation-assistance missions. The attacks of 9/11 led to a strategic security shift in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) in response to the threat from unstable, weak, and failing states. The 2002 NSS recognized development as a primary security mechanism, on par with defense and diplomacy. Aligning the three Ds of national security raised awareness of the potential for foreign development assistance to stabilize regions and mitigate terrorism and potential insurgencies.

As Stability Operations have become a critical part of U.S. military strategy, economic development and reconstruction efforts have taken center stage in Afghanistan. The U.S. military has become the leader in disbursing economic and security assistance in Afghanistan (figure

1. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," April 2011, 42. FY2011 appropriations reflect only amounts made available under continuing resolutions, not amounts made available under P.L. 112-10.

Figure 1: Foreign Assistance in Afghanistan by Agency, 2004–2009 (millions)



1). The funds are being used to isolate and reduce insurgency, provide employment to local Afghans, and support the campaign to “win hearts and minds.” One component of the assistance package is CERP, a congressionally appropriated fund for commanders to use for development and stabilization projects. It provides U.S. military commanders with “walking-around money” for projects to address urgent reconstruction and relief efforts. To date, Congress has appropriated \$2.64 billion for CERP in Afghanistan (figure 2).

CERP is by definition a development program, often operating in the same areas as traditional development actors such as USAID. A breakdown by sector shows CERP

Figure 2: CERP Appropriations by Fiscal Year to Afghanistan

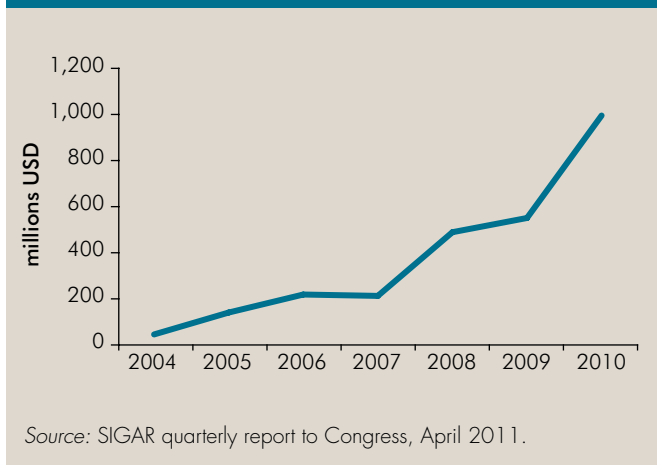
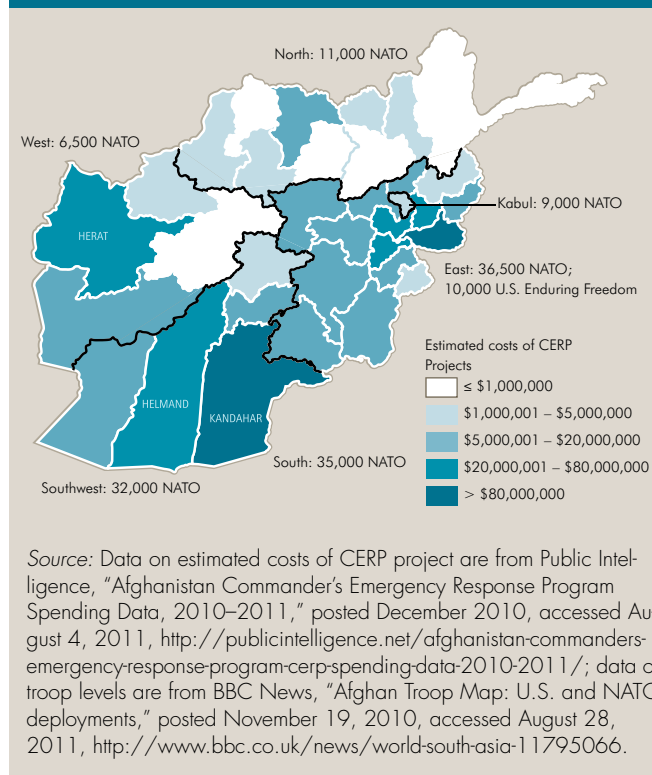


Figure 3: Estimated Costs of CERP Projects and Troop Levels



disbursements primarily in transportation, education, and reconstruction—all sectors traditionally under USAID’s mandate. Yet USAID cannot operate well in some of the most dangerous, but strategically important, areas of Afghanistan. A map of CERP spending in 2010 illustrates that the areas that were to receive the largest amounts of money were also the most insecure and violent areas with the highest concentration of troops (see figure 3).

Given current doctrine and ongoing involvement in Afghanistan, the U.S. military will likely be responsible for projects beyond the traditional security realm for some time to come. And as new players in development, the U.S. military has substantial room to make its involvement more effective and efficient.

Five Practical Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Be Aware of the Unintended Consequences of Aid

There are no easy answers in creating stability or economic development in in-conflict zones, and no standardized approach will work across regions. Practitioners must

understand local conditions and capacities at the most micro level and pay greater attention to unintended consequences. The U.S. military must understand that large flows of aid will affect social stability, power relationships, and social and cultural norms. Immediate relief efforts may undermine long-term development goals, and there are trade-offs and dynamics between goals of humanitarian assistance, stabilization, and economic development. Our first overall recommendation is to understand the potential for unintended consequences and undertake efforts to do no harm.

Recommendation 2: Modernize Education and Training to Reflect Realities on the Ground

The U.S. military should augment its educational and training programs so that officers can cope with the complexities and challenges of stability operations and in-conflict development.

- **Require economics, business, and development courses.** The military should require the study of economics, business, and development principles in its funded undergraduate civilian degree programs. Currently, economics, business, and development courses are not mandatory for the majority of military officers, and many may graduate from universities without any significant knowledge of these topics.
- **Revise U.S. military education courses.** More focus should be placed on preparing officers to operate in complex environments where understanding local social, economic, and political issues is paramount to mission success. Military education courses should expose officers to basic concepts in anthropology, conflict mitigation, negotiation, needs assessments, and project management. All are critical skills needed to navigate today's complex operating environment and to efficiently implement CERP authority.
- **Broaden assignment opportunities and experiences.** Programs that place officers in nonmilitary environments and other U.S. government agencies should be expanded to increase the number of officers involved and broaden the number of organizations that participate.
- **Enhance training scenarios at military training centers.** Combined Training Centers and formal military exercises should develop complex scenarios that test the U.S. military's competence in economic assessments and implementation of CERP projects.

- **Create Training Support Packages (TSPs).** The U.S. military should partner with other agencies, U.S. universities, and the private sector to develop a series of TSPs that can be utilized by units preparing to deploy. TSPs should also cover the fundamentals of project management, monitoring and evaluation techniques, outcomes versus inputs and outputs, the differences between stability and development outcomes, and economics and business principles as they relate to military operations.

Recommendation 3: Reform Authorities, Doctrine, and Structure to Define the Use of CERP Funds

To successfully revise training and education programs, the U.S. military must also change doctrine and obtain permanent authorities that clarify and support the continued use of CERP in military operations.

- **Revise CERP authority and guidelines.** CERP authorities need to be changed to allow the U.S. military a broad range of options to stimulate private business; supporting small firms is a crucial step to generate economic opportunities.
- **Revise Stability Operations and Counterinsurgency field manuals.** U.S. military doctrine should include more discussion of economic development principles and the drivers of economic growth. It should also explain how to foster business creation, perform sector assessments, and carry out effective project management.
- **Institutionalize Agribusiness Development Teams (ADTs).** The U.S. military should formalize the ADT structure in the U.S. Army National Guard and institute similar unit structures in reserve and active U.S. Army Civil Affairs units.

Recommendation 4: Understand the Dominant Sectors in the Economy to Make Interventions Work Better

The U.S. military should focus more on learning about and developing the tools necessary to understand the agriculture, manufacturing, processing and production, and construction sectors of the economy. The agriculture sector in Afghanistan constitutes 33 percent of the value-added GDP and employs approximately 80 percent of the Afghan workforce, yet CERP expenditures in agriculture from 2004 to 2009 constituted only 5 percent of the total executed during that period. Focusing on the dominant sectors will improve the effectiveness of CERP funding.

The Center for Global Development works to reduce global poverty and inequality through rigorous research and active engagement with the policy community to make the world a more prosperous, just, and safe place for us all. The policies and practices of the United States and other rich countries, the emerging powers, and international institutions and corporations have significant impacts on the developing world's poor people. We aim to improve these policies and practices through research and policy engagement to expand opportunities, reduce inequalities, and improve lives everywhere.

- **Conduct in-depth sector assessments.** Understanding the key components of sector activity will enable CERP funds to be used more efficiently.
- **Create an accessible knowledge bank of key economic information.** Key economic information should be based on assessments done by U.S. military units, U.S. government agencies, and other partners or organizations.
- **Long-term results** such as real unemployment, school enrollment and literacy rates, and growth of agricultural exports. The third set of outcomes may be beyond the time horizon and capabilities of the U.S. military; in such cases, collaboration with other agencies and NGOs is vital as they can continue to track results long after the military has concluded official engagement.

Recommendation 5: Monitor Outcomes to Increase the Efficiency of CERP

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial if the U.S. military is to continue to be substantially engaged in efforts beyond providing stability. There should be three types of results measurement for the following:

- **Short-run inputs** such as the purchase of good and services and better tracking of where CERP money is actually spent. This information also needs to be transferred internally as commanders rotate.
- **Intermediate outcomes** such as increased local government funds for social programs, successful construction of infrastructure projects, and local ownership.

Next Steps

Much can be learned from analyzing the U.S. military's use of CERP in Afghanistan. The Pentagon should undertake a broad survey of U.S. military members involved in executing CERP to determine the following: (1) commanders' intent for CERP funds and how projects were prioritized; (2) what assessment mechanisms were used to determine projects; (3) how monitoring and evaluation is taking place; and (4) what outcomes were identified for each project, and how monitoring and evaluation was linked to ensure desired effects.