

Remarks by Dr. Janine Davidson

**Toward Unity of Effort: The What, Why, and How of the CCO**

CCO Kick Off Conference

April 28, 2008

Department of State, Washington D.C.

Thank you to Mac for that introduction --- and more importantly, for your tireless efforts and leadership on this project. You have been the rock keeping us all grounded and focused.

Good afternoon, I am absolutely thrilled to be addressing you today for the Kick Off this important project.

For the last two years, it has been my great pleasure to work with and learn from an amazing team of national security professionals across multiple agencies – all of us working together to turn a shared vision into a reality: The Consortium for Complex Operations - CCO.

Together with my Steering Committee colleagues: Donna Hopkins of State PM, Jon Benton, of S/CRS, Elisabeth Kvitashvili of USAID and Pat Shea, of the Joint Staff; and other dedicated partners – or “friends of the CCO” - such as John Agoglia of the Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, (pksoi); we have built on the efforts of people like Greg Hermsmeyer and Mike McNerney who under the leadership of Dr. Jeb Nadaner, Celeste Ward’s predecessor, laid the strategic, bureaucratic and financial framework for this project. And Ms. Ward has continued in that leadership role by ensuring the continued support of the

Department of Defense and encouraging high level cooperation among her interagency counterparts. Thank you – all of you.

Today we are expanding our efforts – and reaching out to the larger CCO community – that is, the real membership. You see we really can't do anything more without you. Sure, we are all pretty proud of ourselves for throwing this party and bringing you all together; but it is you in this audience who are actually the **most important people** in the national security community. Truly,-- as educators, trainers, and thought leaders, you are charged with making sure that the next batch of people deploying to some of the most dangerous and chaotic spots in the globe, understand their role and know what to do. We hope that the CCO project will be a resource for you as you continue this important work and that you will actively participate as members to mold the project and help it mature.

The CCO is an innovative, and, as I will explain in a few minutes, in some ways, radical, interagency experiment. Its goal is to enhance unity of effort for complex operations [stability ops, counterinsurgency, and Irregular warfare] by networking – both virtually and more traditionally – civilian and military educators and trainers dedicated to preparing people for the most likely operational challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

These so-called “irregular” challenges – as outlined in the military's Quadrennial Defense Review – stem from our significant overmatch in conventional military combat power combined with dramatic shifts in the international security environment. This military overmatch means that 21<sup>st</sup> century enemies are simply less likely to face us head-on in a traditional military-to-military engagement, but

will instead find other less conventional ways of challenging us. Additionally, as Dr. Cohen just discussed, the problems of failed and failing states; ethnic, tribal, and sectarian conflict; global warming, and other transnational threats and challenges in this increasingly interdependent world make it very likely that the United States and its allies will continue to engage abroad in complex and often chaotic environments where establishing stability and promoting the *human security* of civilians will be a primary objective.

In a recent speech at Kansas State University (which you can read on the CCO portal!) Defense Secretary Robert Gates outlined a similar list of challenges and he observed:

*“one of the most important lessons from our experience in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere has been the decisive role reconstruction, development, and governance plays in any meaningful, long-term success.”*

We also recognize that success in these “complex operations” requires an integrated, whole of government approach that allows multiple actors from myriad agencies and organizations to apply distinct skill sets toward a common objective.

Let me unpack this last point: It is one thing to have complementary expertise and skill-sets, but it is something entirely different – and potentially toxic – to have divergent perspectives on what the problem is. What we need is a cadre of civilian and military practitioners with distinct and complementary capabilities; but they must share a common view of the strategic objectives and have common operating principles.

To truly achieve such unity of effort, we need to work together *before* deployment, and, as General Petraeus indicated, before planning even begins. Ideally, unity of effort starts in the classroom and on the training grounds, where people develop these shared principles – before they arrive in theater or even meet for the first time. Moreover, by working, learning, and training, together, we realize where we as a community actually lack knowledge and where our assumptions about who can or should do what might need to be adjusted.

And this is where the CCO comes in.

## **II. A bit of CCO History:**

The CCO is actually a response to a demand signal from the civilian and military training and education community – from many of you.

Beginning in the 1990's and increasing in intensity with Iraq and Afghanistan, a number of you had called for increased attention on the problem of stability operations and counterinsurgency. Many had learned lessons from the myriad peace operations conducted in the 1990's and were actively leveraging their experience on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of this knowledge had filtered into the classroom and onto the training grounds. Meanwhile, web-based communities of practice, such as [companycommand.com](http://companycommand.com) were springing up to help young officers share their experience in real time. They were creating these site on their own and helping each other learn on the fly to cope with the complex challenges they were facing in the field – challenges for which **they** claimed **they** had not been adequately prepared.

Policy makers and senior leaders took note. As Ambassador Eric Edelman stated at the 2006 Counterinsurgency Conference, hosted by State PM and OSD: “Great progress has been made on the ground by our civilians and our military who have learned to work together and have adapted in innovative ways to meet these challenges. ...But for every ingenious adaptation we see in the field,” he said, “we should ask ourselves - what institutional failure were they trying to overcome? What tools did **we** fail to provide them?”

The CCO is a response to one of these “institutional failures” – it is an attempt to provide educators and trainers with better tools to do their jobs.

Over the past few years, each time we convened a group in this community, we heard similar things. These messages were further validated by the U.S. Institute of Peace CCO survey, in which many of you participated and which Jon Gundersen will review for us today:

1. First: There was a clear understanding that this stuff was inherently interagency; yet civilians and military were both frustrated by bureaucratic stovepipes and cultural barriers that made it difficult to train and operate together.
2. Second, and more broadly: Many felt like this complex and constantly-changing security environment required not only a clear view of history so we would not repeat mistakes of the past; but also new knowledge, new theories – or updates to our so-called classic theories, and, given the increased operational experience level of their students, new approaches to teaching in the classroom;

3. Third: Many understood that there was rapid information exchange happening in the field (companycommand.com; etc) and lessons being collected; but did not know how to tap into this experience to update their courses and help their students.

*In short, this community – educators and trainers across this civilian-military space – was asking for help: They wanted more dialogue; more debate; more information; more knowledge. They wanted help connecting with each other – and with thought leaders and outside academics as well as lessons learned professionals – in order to better prepare their students for complex ops .*

## II. So, what is the CCO and how does it work?

In short, the CCO is a DoD-led collaboration with State and USAID to enhance civilian and military training and education for complex operations (ops).\* It is described as an “information clearing house.” That is the key role – the bumper sticker, if you will; but there is much more to it than that,

To understand the core functions and methods of the CCO, it necessary to first break the CCO into its parts.

- First – the policy and governance for the CCO are directed by the CCO Executive Committee chaired by Stability Operations Capabilities. DASD Ward, along with her counterparts from AID, State PM, S/CRS and the Joint Staff J5. This committee is responsible for reviewing and approving the CCO’s strategic direction and investment plans; and for choosing the CCO’s director [that’s me 😊].

- As Director, I chair the Steering Committee which is made up of a group of my peers from these same agencies. The Steering Committee also reaches out to leading complex ops entities including PKSOI, FSI, NDU, Army Stab Ops, -- and we welcome others as we continue to grow.
- Our role is to support the Ex Com, develop the strategic plan, and shape the actions and events of the CCO.
- What is important to understand is that across this interagency governance structure, our intent is to collaborate and strive for interagency consensus in everything we do. So far, we are batting 1000 [“a thousand”] – thanks to the hard work and professionalism of CAPT Bollman, who is developing a black-belt in interagency bureaucratic politics -- and the shared vision of the members of the steering committee.
- This is part of what makes the CCO project unique. Nothing really operates in this interagency space like this. The “interagency” is not a noun – but if it were, the CCO comes closer to being “the interagency” than just about anything else.

Now we get to the engine behind the CCO Project, that is the **CCO Support Center**. That support center, located in Crystal City, is where I and a staff of currently 7 DoD and interagency full and part-timers do the heavy lifting.

- So far, that work has been about strategic vision and start up stuff: interagency bureaucratic coordination, budget and programming, studies, portal development, staffing up office spaces, and basically learning how to conduct business across this interagency space.
- *Now*, we are ready to shift to doing the work of the CCO. With a target staff of 11, we start to answer to that demand signal I just described:

What the CCO Support Center comes down to is a dynamic, full-time, rapid response team that will interact with you, in person, on the phone, by email and on the CCO Portal. The CCO web portal will be an enabler, but should be seen as much as a means of communication, as a repository of knowledge and information. The CCO is not a portal. The CCO has a portal, and the portal's functions, features and uses will evolve with the project – and, most importantly, in response to your needs. So, by whatever means, our team in the CCO Support Center will partner with you to accomplish the following four functions:

1. First, we will maintain a current and relevant membership directory for the Complex Operations community of practice, with a distinct emphasis on those actively influencing and responsible for education, training and lessons learned processes. So, people actually teaching and training; as well as those developing and validating curricula; developing doctrine and theory; or making policy for all of the above.
2. Second, the CCO has launched an on-line annotated events calendar, which allows for the most complete picture available of complex ops related conferences, workshops and events. The calendar allows you to add relevant agendas and other event materials to the listings, and will also archive your past events along with the after action reports.
3. Third, we will maintain, and post online, an ever-expanding and up to date **catalogue** of over 600 courses and training events relevant to Complex Operations. -- Jon Gundersen will review this in more detail later this

afternoon and you will have a chance to surf through this catalogue at our portal kiosks tomorrow. The CCO Support Center will partner with you to find the best ways to update and add to your listings. By having visibility on what courses are out there, we will all be able to identify what the shortfalls are; and assist you in finding – and in developing – the courses and course materials you need.

So, you see, we are not actually conducting courses here in the Support Center. In these activities, the Support Center will act as your broker – like Craig, in Craig’s list.

How many of you are familiar with Craig’s List?

Briefly - Craig is a guy from San Francisco who wanted to help people figure out what was going on in town. So he created a site where people could post local events – very quickly people also started to use it to sell their stuff to each other and find jobs [see in this social networking world, one never quite knows how ones project will evolve]. Craig simply responded to their needs by adapting his site. Today, with a small team of about 25 dedicated web-guys operating out of his town house in San Fran, he actively brokers over 30 million new postings a month. It’s not sexy; it is the most boring looking web site out there; it doesn’t turn a profit – but people dig it because it works.

Craigslist exploded because neighbors could open up their garage doors and sell their things or services, to their neighbors for a price, or for free. The key element was the ability to say “I’ve got this, anyone want it?” Same thing for his events list.

To this end, the CCO’s course catalogue lists availability of excess capacity in existing courses, as well as the terms and costs associated. We will mature the catalogue to list whether course can be added, taught off-site, or accessed via distributed or on line learning. So tell us what you have; and what you need. If you can’t find it, we will see if we can get it or get someone to develop it.

4. The fourth area of activity for the CCO is in the **exchange and development of ideas and knowledge**. So start, - and again, in response to your needs, we will use conferences, expert networks, blogs, member chat forums, a CCO journal, and support for academic, doctrinal and lessons learned efforts.
  - a. As an example, we have already invited a few experts in the field to advise us on what the greatest areas of debate and just plain confusion are in the field. We brought them together to start a discussion, then gave them space on the portal to continue the dialogue. This is in the “featured bloggers” section of the portal –where you are invited to log on and join the discussion, post your own discussion streams, or simply comment on what these so-called experts got right or wrong. The goal here is collaboration and learning through open dialogue.
  - b. We will use this space to help you collaborate on actual projects; or for you to get feedback on your projects – be it doctrine development; modeling and simulation; case studies; etc You can have a corner on the portal to work your project collaboratively with other members.

What I have just described is more innovative or radical than you may realize. In some ways this is a traditional consortium or community of practice, with traditional goals. In other ways – given the technology we are using and the national security focus – it is very different.

- We all know academics who are wary of sharing their ideas for fear someone will “steal” them. The same is true in the national security community. How much are we going to reveal about what we do or do not know? How open can our site and activities be? How much can we share about our new ideas and operating principles?
- There is new thinking on this – from business to academia, and now government - the emerging consensus is... “the risk is not as much as you might think, and oh by the way, sharing and vetting your ideas makes them better.” In fact, people may even be dissuaded from ‘stealing’ your original thought because you will have a community of practice who will remember that you were the one that planted the seed.
- This is why businesses like Sun Micro-systems are hosting similar networking programs – You can join the Sun Developer Network – for free! They call it “an all-access backstage pass inside Sun.” Now why would they do this? Far from locking up the recipe for your product- they are just throwing it out there, with a growing faith that it will give them an edge. Wisdom of the crowds.
- So there is clearly a risk-benefit trade off here – and we will see how we come out. But the operating idea – as with Sun and others – is that the government needs to be innovative and open in order to adapt, and learn, and compete.

In sum, the CCO-Support Center is not the CCO – the Consortium. The Support Center will not *conduct* education and training (that’s your job), but we’ll know what is out there and where it’s available. We will not write the CCO on-line journal, but we’ll fund, staff, edit and publish it. The support center staff will not write interagency complex operations doctrine, but we will track every event doing so, provide portal space to collaborate on the documents and host workshops to connect writers to thought leaders across the community to make those documents as accurate and up to date as we can. We won’t develop new program curricula or write course syllabi, but we’ll post yours online and tell you who to contact to help you improve yours.

- Our motto is to “leverage everything, and duplicate nothing.”
- The intent is to catalyze your activities and thought leadership, connect you to each other and to a broader community, and thus cultivate a culture of collaboration across this civilian and military divide. ***Catalyze, Connect, and Cultivate.***

Remember, CCO is demand-driven: We, this small team running this little conference here this week, we know we haven’t thought of everything. Let us know what we don’t know.

Where do YOU want to go? What do You need?

- Tomorrow we will get to work. We have a program that will allow the CCO members to start doing the work of the CCO; You will get to collaborate on common issues to develop solutions; and you will get to propose ideas and

activities for the CCO as a whole. And - it is in a beautiful place with views of the city. So I encourage you all to come on time and stay all day.

Finally, let me end with this reminder:

We all really do have **the most important job** in the national security community.

As Dr. Cohen and General Petraeus made perfectly clear, it is a complex and dangerous world. All of us in this room are charged with bringing up the next generation – even as we continue to deploy at a steady pace to Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond. You simply gotta get it right.

By coming here today – and by being members of this Consortium, you are answering that call and taking charge to get what you need to get this job done.

**So thank you. And welcome to the Consortium for Complex Operations.**

**Special thank you to CAPT Mac Bollman, CCO Support Center Director, for co-authorship of these remarks.**