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INSIGHT

Military Installation Resilience: What Does It Mean?

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A misunderstanding that sometimes occurs when discussing military installations and *resilience* is the distinction between the Department of Defense's (DOD's) general responsibilities to ensure military installations are resilient and its statutory responsibility to provide "military installation resilience." This latter term is defined under 10 U.S.C. §101(e)(8) as

> the capability of a military installation to avoid, prepare for, minimize the effect of, adapt to, and recover **from extreme weather events, or from anticipated or unanticipated changes in environmental conditions**, that do, or have the potential to, adversely affect the military installation or essential transportation, logistical, or other necessary resources outside of the military installation that are necessary in order to maintain, improve, or rapidly reestablish installation mission assurance and mission-essential functions. (**Emphasis added**)

The statutory definition focuses exclusively on those environmental threats that can impact military installations. At the same time, DOD generally takes a more comprehensive approach to ensuring military installations are resilient. This difference in connotation can result in misconceptions of certain resilience-related statutory requirements for military installations.

What Is Resilience?

The term *resilience* can have multiple meanings and be applied to individuals and populations, networks and ecosystems, materials and structures, and other objects and human constructs. How someone understands resilience is often tied to the context in which it is applied, and the object of what is, or is to be, resilient (e.g., a person, a building). One definition for resilience asserts it's "the quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc." This largely figurative definition of resilience highlights the importance of clarifying the term's use within an organization or group, particularly where matters of policy and action are expected.

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Resilience Within DOD

Within DOD, a general interpretation of resilience may be applied to, and scoped for, specific defense matters. This can be observed in various DOD and military service (hereafter "service") policy, doctrine, guidance, and official websites.

For example, concerning the topic of "Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience" (DOD Directive 4715.21), DOD has defined resilience as the "ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions." This definition is associated explicitly with the impacts of climate change and applies to all aspects of DOD (e.g., installations; personnel; operations; transportation; supply chains; research, development, testing, and evaluation). In another example, the Army defines resilience for the Army Recovery Care Program—a program that serves wounded, ill, and injured soldiers—as "the mental, physical, emotional and behavioral ability to face and cope with adversity, adapt to change, recover, learn and grow from setbacks."

These examples show the differences in how resilience can be defined within DOD. To date, DOD has not provided a singular definition for resilience in its official Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, despite a previous proposal to do so.

Military Installation Resilience

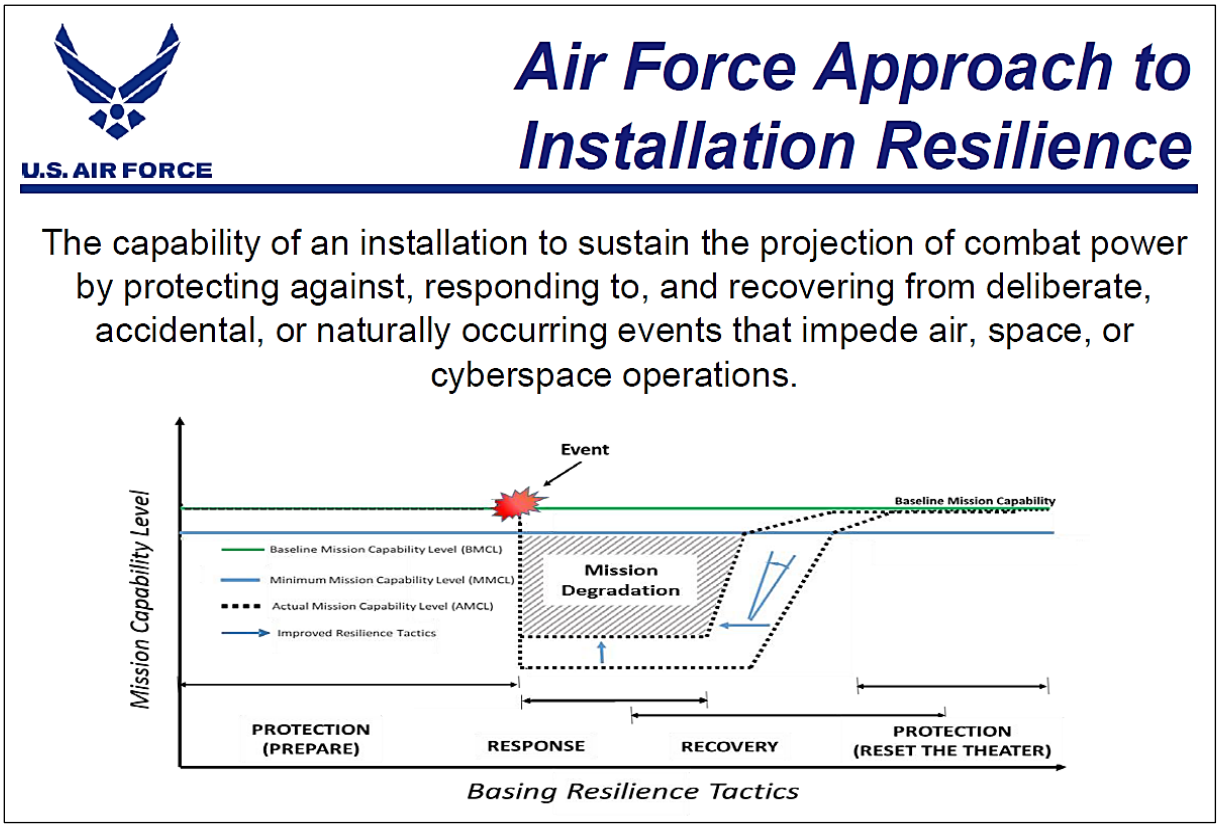
One defense management issue long overseen by Congress and DOD under the general concept of resilience is the effort to ensure the continual operation and rapid recovery of military installations, regardless of the threat posed (part of DOD's "Mission Assurance" construct; see DOD Directive 3020.40).

Military installations are congregations of physical infrastructure, people, and the support systems necessary for them to operate—which consequently makes them difficult to characterize in precise terms. However, statutory definitions are provided under 10 U.S.C. §670 and 10 U.S.C. §2801. 10 U.S.C. §2801 defines a military installation as

> a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of a military department or, in the case of an activity in a foreign country, under the operational control of the Secretary of a military department or the Secretary of Defense, without regard to the duration of operational control.

Under this relatively broad definition, DOD has addressed managing military installations and ensuring their resilience against a variety of threats also in a broad manner. For example, when examining one service's approach to installation resilience (**Figure 1**), it is apparent the Air Force means to assess and prepare for any event that could disrupt the operations of its installations—be they man-made accidents, attacks, or natural disasters. Accordingly, installation resilience ties into what DOD calls "risk management" or RM.

Figure 1. A Service Approach to Installation Resilience



Source: Provided to CRS by the United States Air Force (March 2020).

How a service determines which threats to assess, what types of operations or missions to review for vulnerabilities, or what the potential consequences would be if a threat were not thwarted or mitigated, generally follows a service's RM framework (see for example Department of the Army Pamphlet 385-30 or Air Force Instruction 90-802). In each service and the Office of the Secretary of Defense are also designated units and offices who oversee military installations and make these determinations according to their assigned responsibilities (see CRS In Focus IF11263, *Defense Primer: Military Installations Management*, by G. James Herrera). Nonetheless, military leaders at all levels of command contribute to the RM process by supporting the completion of risk assessments and studies that help inform decision-making, and by implementing policies and strategies that help reduce risk.

DOD efforts in installation resilience can take many forms, such as developing infrastructure investment strategies or supporting research projects that inform infrastructure investment plans. They can also be congressionally directed, such as the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 115-91) requirement for DOD to produce "a report on vulnerabilities to military installations and combatant commander requirements resulting from climate change over the next 20 years."

Considerations for Congress

Congress may consider the alignment of the definition of *military installation resilience* under 10 U.S.C. §101(e)(8) with DOD's current installation management approach. Alternatively, Congress could consider renaming the statutory term to directly identify that it's related to installation environmental resilience. Another option is for Congress to establish a definition for "environmental resilience" within Title 10 that could be applied to any military term (e.g., military installation, weapon system, personnel).

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