

Chapter 9

Challenges of Civil Military Cooperation / Coordination in Humanitarian Relief

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ABSTRACT

The term civil military coordination (CIMIC) suggests the seamless division of labor between aid workers and international military forces. The images of humanitarian organizations distributing food and medicines under the protection of military forces, or aid workers and military working together to construct refugee camps, set up field hospitals, provide emergency water and sanitation, et cetera, has become more frequent. The media coverage from crises such as New Orleans, Kosovo, the tsunami in Asia, Pakistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, and more recently Haiti and Japan, has heightened the expectation of a smooth interaction between humanitarian organizations and military forces. Due to fundamental differences between international military forces, humanitarian and development organizations (in terms of the principles and doctrines guiding their work, their agendas, operating styles, and roles), the area of civil military coordination in disaster relief has proven to be more difficult than other interagency relationships. This chapter will identify the many factors that render integration and collaboration problematic between diverse organizations, and especially so between civilian and military agencies. The chapter will conclude with proposals to improve CIMIC within disaster relief.

INTRODUCTION

The provision of aid by military forces is not a new phenomenon. From the Napoleonic Wars, the First and Second World Wars (particularly the Marshall Plan after World War II) the Berlin Airlift

(1948-9), and up until the present day, including the Congo, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Sudan, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Mozambique (Doel, 1995). It seems that when disasters, either natural or man-made occur, governments often turn to the military for help as the military have

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certain resources immediately to hand, such as food, medicine and fuel as well as logistical resources of transport, communications and human assets with which to distribute them (Weiss & Campbell, 1991).

The proliferation of conflict since the end of the Second World War and particularly the end of the Cold War in many parts of the developing world (Croft & Treacher, 1995) has led to new thinking regarding the provision of assistance by the military in humanitarian aid operations. The emergencies that now develop are usually characterized by a large media presence (the 'CNN' factor, e.g., Haiti), which increases the pressure on national decision makers to respond with a large international aid effort and in many cases, a large military presence to keep the peace (James, 1997). This sort of effort is usually targeted at the immediate saving of lives, requiring massive logistical and material support and the employment of considerable logistical assets.

However, the involvement of the military in such operations is not without challenges (e.g., different organizational cultures) and a balance must be sought in allowing the humanitarian aid agencies a free hand in utilizing the available military resources (Heaslip, 2010). The 'actors' (see section 'Crowded Stage') in humanitarian aid have differing management styles and administrative structures and whilst the supply chain appears straightforward, the complexities in the relationships that occur as well as the impact of having different structures and procedures may conspire to frustrate the establishment of collaborative supply chain strategies.

Cooperation, coordination and collaboration between the military and relief partners, particularly Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), is often uneven and uncertain (Heaslip *et al.*, 2007a). NGOs can be difficult partners, especially for the military. Although knowledge has grown in the last decade, military officers and NGO officials often have little understanding of each other's institutions and operating procedures. Many

military officials lack an understanding of the distinct charters and doctrines of NGOs, failing to recognize that what works with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) will not work with the International Committee of Red Cross's (ICRC) (Heaslip *et al.*, 2008a). In turn, humanitarian aid organizations criticize the military for not understanding their hierarchies. The military may not be familiar with important NGOs in the Area of Operations (AOR) and the reason for this lack of knowledge could be perceived as being institutional (Heaslip *et al.*, 2008a).

Practical realities on the ground have gradually necessitated various forms of civil military cooperation, coordination and collaboration for humanitarian operations (Whiting, 2009). These developments demand increased communication cooperation, coordination and collaboration between humanitarian actors and require improved knowledge of each others mandates, capacities and limitations (Whiting, 2009).

Civil military coordination essentially deals with two aspects of military support to civilians, namely the provision of security, e.g. a military escort for a humanitarian convoy, and secondly the provision of military assets, including skills, knowledge and manpower, e.g. equipment such as trucks or helicopters, and skills and knowledge such as medical and engineering expertise (Heaslip, 2010). In the field, the area of civil military coordination is even more difficult than other interagency relationships given fundamental differences between international military forces and humanitarian and development agencies in terms of their agendas, operating styles, roles, and the principles and doctrines guiding their work.

The trend in peace-building since Kosovo in 1999 is towards greater integration of international efforts and the necessity for collaboration between relief, development and security organizations (Olson & Gregorian, 2007). By the late 1990s, from key donor countries, to United Nations (UN) agencies, to Non Governmental Organization (NGO) networks, a common understanding

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