

# **The Logistical Challenges of Coordinating Military and Civilian Agencies in Humanitarian Operations**

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## **Abstract**

It seems that when disasters, either natural or man-made occur, governments often turn to the military for help as the military have 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. Recent events in Haiti, Pakistan and more recently Australia showing relief agencies 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, has heightened the expectation of a smooth interaction.

Due to fundamental differences between international military forces, humanitarian and development agencies in terms of the principles and doctrines guiding their work, their agendas, operating styles and roles, the area of civil military logistical coordination in humanitarian relief has proven to be more difficult than other interagency relationships. This paper outlines the current challenges as they relate to the logistic aspects of disaster/emergency preparation and response, and to discuss the areas in which the development of closer civil-military cooperation could be of particular benefit. To achieve this, the first section will reflect on examples as illustrations of the challenges inherent in the achievement of successful civil-military cooperation. The subsequent sections will discuss the logistical challenges facing civil military cooperation in humanitarian relief operations. The paper will conclude with proposals to improve civil military logistical cooperation within humanitarian relief.

## **Keywords**

Humanitarian Logistics, Military, Aid agencies, Civil Military Cooperation, Challenges

## **Improving the civil military dimension in humanitarian logistics: The challenges**

### **Introduction**

It seems that when disasters, either natural or man-made occur, governments often turn to the military for help as the military have 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 and Campbell, 1991). Recent events in Haiti, Pakistan and more recently Australia showing relief agencies 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, has heightened the expectation of a smooth interaction.

Due to fundamental differences between international military forces, humanitarian and development agencies in terms of the principles and doctrines guiding their work, their agendas, operating styles and roles, the area of civil military logistical coordination in humanitarian relief has proven to be more difficult than other interagency relationships.

This paper outlines the current challenges as they relate to the logistic aspects of disaster/emergency preparation and response, and to discuss the areas in which the development of closer civil-military cooperation could be of particular benefit. To achieve this, the first section will reflect on examples as illustrations of successful civil-military cooperation engagement. The subsequent sections will discuss the logistical challenges facing civil military cooperation in humanitarian relief operations. The paper will conclude with proposals to improve civil military logistical cooperation within humanitarian relief.

### **Successful civil military logistic engagement**

The donation and delivery of hospital supplies during a storm in Haiti, the reconstruction of the power grid in Najaf, the distribution of blankets to orphans in Afghanistan, and the construction of a new maternity ward at a Basra hospital all represent humanitarian and reconstruction work that is conducted by the international community (Richards, 2005; Devenney, 2004 and O'Neill, 2004). Projects such as these are easily associated with the work of United Nations agencies, government development agencies like USAID, and NGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), CARE, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and Oxfam. However, these projects, and hundreds of others like them, were, and continue to be, delivered by American, Australian, British, Canadian, Dutch and many other militaries involved in humanitarian operations.

Barber (2011) describes some of the military logistics contribution to the Haitian earthquake disaster in 2010. The helicopter carrier USS Bataan and three large dock landing ships as well as two US survey/salvage vessels created a sea base for the rescue efforts. The French Navy provided the Navy ship, the Francis Garnier, and an amphibious transporter, the Siroco. The US hospital ship, USNS Comfort, was extensively used for emergency operations of over 600 casualties of the earthquake. The US Navy contribution to the Haiti disaster was 17 ships, 48 helicopters and 12 fixed-wing aircraft together with 10,000 sailors and Marines. The US Navy delivered 32,400 gallons of water and 532,440 bottles of water, over 100,000 meals and massive medical supplies after five days. A similar armada provided a floating hospital and recreation base around East Timor during 1999-2000.

There is relatively little philosophical objection to the engagement on military personnel, equipment in the aftermath of a natural or technological disaster (Wiharta, *et al*, 2008). Thus,

in recent years the SE Asia tsunami (2004), Pakistan earthquake (2005), Haiti earthquake (2010) and Pakistan flooding (2010) have all seen significant involvement of military personnel from countries other than those directly affected. The challenge of achieving civil-military engagement in the context of a complex emergency is unquestionably more difficult than in the disaster response space. In this scenario, NGOs need to balance their view of the inherent requirements of adherence to a policy of Humanity, Impartiality and Neutrality with the reality that a country's armed forces are a reflection of the government of that country and, hence, its view of the rights and wrongs of the complex emergency in question. However, even though military forces have a huge potential to make a difference in the logistic arena through their relatively ready availability of funding, trained manpower and appropriate equipment, sensitivities remain (Thompson, 2010).

### **Logistical challenges for civil military cooperation in humanitarian relief operations**

There has been a shift in military logistical roles over the last decade to incorporate their involvement in humanitarian logistics. Military involvement in humanitarian supply chains falls under the term, Military Involvement in Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). The parallels are striking between the military logistics and the humanitarian logistics. Weiss and Campbell (1991) discuss the historical context of military involvement in humanitarian aid. They suggest military responsibility should be used for rapid deployment of supplies and provisions but also questions the appropriateness of military involvement. Increasingly the military has become a key member of immediate disaster relief (Barber, 2011). It has expanded from rapid deployed transportation and logistical requirements and assets and is now involved with the more complex tasks of refugee protection, repatriation and peacekeeping. Military is also often involved in medical advancements, rehabilitations and reconstruction of facilities.

Delivering substance to the living in the immediate relief response stage is only the beginning of the situation. The safety, protection and health of the living; the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the aftermath and sustaining the security, continuity of the reconstruction and development of the region means that there are a number of different logistical challenges involved in humanitarian logistics.

Each of the following subsections presents issues that negatively impact civil military cooperation in logistics operations during humanitarian relief missions. Those in management/command appointments have to consider not only the effect the challenges listed below have on their agency, partners and beneficiaries, but as leaders they are challenged to direct and control logistical operations within their remit.

### *Coordination*

Despite its many advantages, military coordination with potential partners in a humanitarian crisis is often difficult (Heaslip, 2011). Particularly at the operational level, coordination among NGOs, International Organisations (IOs), donor governments, and military forces lacks control. This problem is compounded by the fact that many organisations do not have established and well-defined working relationships with one another (Olson and Gregorian, 2007).

To stage its response, the military and humanitarian organisations need to coordinate their activities with other humanitarian organisations and key stakeholders with a view to manage fit, flow and sharing resource dependencies (Kovacs and Tatham, 2009). As time is crucial during an emergency response, the military and humanitarian community need to avoid parallel efforts and duplications along the supply chain by combining their efforts and

activities with other stakeholders. Joint contingency planning helps reduce lead times and avoid reliance on expensive transport options (e.g. airlifting) or last-minute sourcing (Heaslip *et al*, 2007a; Balcik *et al*, 2010). This planning further helps in the development of alternative plans and ensures the mobilisation of the right range of relief items. During joint contingency planning sessions, implementation strategies such as prepositioning - strategic placement of food or Non Food Items (NFIs) throughout a country/area accessible for distribution to recipients - act as key coordination mechanisms.

Relief items differ in terms of their urgency (water), life saving contribution (medicine), volumes required (food), complementary (kitchen kits) or simple (clothing) function, continuous (food) or one-of-a-time (vaccines) usage, degree of substitutability, and need for specialised input (medical personnel for medicines and medical care). The different value and characteristics of relief items together with the mismatch between available transport and handling capacity and the volume of cargo moving into a region call for the prioritisation of relief item movements into the disaster theatre (Heaslip, 2011). Prioritisation – movement of food, NFIs and people in accordance with humanitarian priorities – helps overcome a sharing dependency. By participating in joint contingency planning (e.g., Kosovo, Haiti) the military and humanitarian organisations are able to identify potential problems associated with the movement of food and NFIs and the potential security threat to the movement of people (refugees, returnees, humanitarian and media operators) as well as providing the transportation and human resources to solve the problems.

### *Control*

Within the UN, CIMIC falls under the remit of OCHA as a section called Civil Military Coordination Section (CMCS). For the military, Civil Military Operations Centres (CMOC)

are usually established within the humanitarian space by the joint force commander (Barber, 2011). The CMOC assists the commander in coordination of military activities, host government agencies, NGOs and regional organisations. The structure varies to match the size and composition requirements of any given situation. The CMOCs are formed during complex humanitarian emergencies such as the Kurdistan situation in Iraq post Desert Storm and the genocide atrocities in Somalia and Rwanda. They were a response to situations where no host national government existed to manage the humanitarian relief activities (Barber, 2011). It is argued that these centres are not suitable where there are host governments with their own military forces to coordinate in conjunction with the UN agencies such as the UN-CMCoord (UN, 2007).

#### *Needs assessment*

From the perspective of the logistician, achieving a timely assessment of the needs of the affected population is key to building an efficient and effective supply network (Tatham, 2011). Inevitably, in the first instance much of the logistic response will be on a 'push' basis that reflects the experience of the organisation concerned and, where possible, is informed by their local staff (van Wassenhove *et al.*, 2010). However, such educated guesses will almost certainly be, at least in part, wrong. As a result, either too much materiel will be provided – which is clearly inefficient; or too little and/or the wrong materiel will be supplied leading to unnecessary loss of life or prolonged suffering. However, it is argued that there is significant merit in incorporating suitable military logisticians in the needs assessment process, not least because they will thereby be better placed to understand what support they might sensibly offer.

Immediately after a humanitarian emergency is declared humanitarian organisations regardless of their size or area of specialisation (refugees, children, food) face a number of logistical challenges. The first challenge facing a humanitarian organisation immediately after a humanitarian emergency is declared is how to bridge the relief resource and capability gap, in other words uncertainty, which is often significant. To stage a response and overcome this gap, military and humanitarian organisations depend on their supply network composed of a number of loose partnerships with a range of actors (Kovacs and Spens, 2007). Once in the operating theatre, humanitarian supply chains tend to compete over the same range of resources at exactly the same arch of time.

In humanitarian crises uncertainty can stem from many elements, such as the organisation itself, or the nature of demand. For example, uncertainty may arise from inherent characteristics such as what and how much material is demanded, product traits, process fluctuations, and supply problems (Van der Vorst and Beulens, 2002). Van der Vorst and Beulens also recognise how decision complexity, supply chain configuration and control structures, long forecast horizons, poor information reliability, and agency culture may create uncertainty (2002).

One of the most significant organisational capability resources of the humanitarian model is the local presence of a humanitarian organisation. Not only does this determine the focus of the organisation on particular activities (e.g. a focus on region-specific disasters), but also, impacts on the potential minimum speed of the organisation to respond to a particular disaster (Kovacs and Tatham, 2009). Humanitarian organisations with a local presence or “chapter” have access to local knowledge about beneficiaries and their needs and customs, something the military lack, and the humanitarian organisations are not dependent on the declaration of



a state of emergency before they can deliver aid to beneficiaries, unlike the military. On the opposite end of the humanitarian spectrum, international aid agencies and even the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC), which has a mandate to provide logistics information services during the immediate response to large-scale disruptions, can only start operating in a disaster-struck region upon the fulfilment of certain political criteria such as a declaration of emergency.

This problem (of uncertainty) is amplified by distance. Long and Wood (1995) observed that often the office coordinating the aid mission is far away from the actual disaster site and must make assumptions about the types and quantities of aid that should be supplied. The same is true for the military where national headquarters make assumptions as to the requirements for troops being deployed. Once response teams and advance military parties are in place at the disaster site, the supply pipeline can transition from a “push” system to a “pull” system based on more accurate needs assessments and communications back to headquarters and donors (Long and Wood, 1995). These assessments should also include anticipated needs (PAHO, 2000). If supplies are “pushed” through a system, quantities are dictated by an upstream authority with little or no input from the customer. In a “pull” system, quantities are determined at the point of consumption (Rodman, 2004).

### *Infrastructure degradation*

Even before a crisis situation has arisen, the quality of the infrastructure of a potential host country, its topography and its political situation are all factors that often conspire against efficient logistical operations. Inadequate transportation, housing, shelter and communications (see section below for further analysis) are further barriers to effective delivery of aid.

Rapid onset of a disaster may degrade the country's existing infrastructure to the point where delivery of aid is severely hampered, as in Haiti. As noted by Gooley (1999, p. 82), "Often...transportation infrastructure is in poor condition and cannot handle the huge numbers of refugees, military vehicles, and relief shipments that pour into these areas in times of disaster". System-wide, the military commanders and humanitarian managers could encounter delivery options ranging through ships, aircraft, rail, and trucks. At the same time, those routes may be closed or clogged (Moody, 2001) limiting distribution.

Previously, the shelter sector was understood mainly in terms of distributing tents or plastic sheeting: temporary shelter before the reconstruction of permanent housing. In Haiti many of the public buildings, residential housing and utilities were destroyed by the earthquake. There was severe damage to hospitals, schools and the Port-au-Prince's two seaports. This infrastructure damage resulted in large scale displacement of people from their homes, into makeshift and overcrowded shelters. In some areas, up to 50% of buildings were completely destroyed and most others damaged, but repairable. Shelter for the hundreds of thousands of survivors remained a desperate race against the clock as the rainy and hurricane seasons loomed (Heaslip, 2011).

In humanitarian crises not alone does the destruction affect private houses and social institutions: schools, hospitals, health centres, but in some cases (e.g., Afghanistan) water systems are heavily damaged and, as a consequence villages are without a water supply. Here the military and aid agencies (e.g., Oxfam) have an opportunity to collaborate to alleviate the suffering of the population. The obstacles mentioned above must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis due to the unpredictable effects of disasters and the vulnerability of the infrastructure.

### *Communications*

A major barrier to delivery of aid is poor communication. Not only are there obvious difficulties associated with speaking to someone using a different language, but as in Haiti the communications infrastructure may be crippled. Relief agencies may not be able to communicate upstream with headquarters or donors during a disaster. Military forces however, can supply specialised capabilities such as communications equipment and information technology and information sharing capabilities (Moore and Antill, 2002). Moreover the military possess the capability to establish a communication network from a green field site. With the priority being the completion of completing an accurate assessment in the immediate aftermath of a humanitarian crisis a fully functional communications and information systems network, plays an important role in delivering the right information regarding the right amount of aid to be delivered to the right people (Kovacs and Spens, 2007). In the humanitarian community United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is tasked with the role of coordinating the assessments, the dissemination of information regarding the affected areas and the appeals process, however sometimes it is not in a position to provide the communications infrastructure to deliver the necessary information (e.g., Haiti) and in these situations the military has a key role in filling the communications gap.

Technologies are indispensable tools for many essential mission tasks. Modern technologies can extend the range of observation and communication, improve the safety of personnel, and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission (Wheatley and Welch, 1999; Pettit and Beresford, 2005). Military organisations can have specialised divisions and units (e.g., the army, navy, logistics, and communications) which need to be interoperable, but they still belong to the same defence force. Humanitarian actors, on the other hand, can be quite

specialised even within the UN family (with World Food Programme (WFP) delivering food, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) shelter, World Health Organisation (WHO) medication). For civil-military cooperation, technologies of both organisations should be compatible. As noted by Rietjens (2006) the use of incompatible communications equipment (field phones, satellite phones, short wave radios) was a widespread problem in the former Yugoslavia. Some UN military contingents possessed more technically advanced equipment than that of NGOs or even other military contingents, making communications in the field difficult and often impossible (Beauregard, 1998; Kovacs and Tatham, 2009).

#### *Use of assets*

A key difference between UN and non-UN missions is, however, the confusion that arises as to what constitutes a military asset in a UN peace support operation. On the one end of the spectrum you have equipment that are owned by a troop contributing country (TCC) and deployed into a UN mission. On the other end of the spectrum you have equipment owned by the UN. One problem is that in most cases there is no visual distinction between the two because they are all painted white with UN markings in black. Equipment that is obviously military, such as an APC (Armoured Personnel Carrier) or an attack helicopter is probably less of a problem. In Liberia, United Nations Military in Liberia (UNMIL) transport trucks and general purpose helicopters, and engineering equipment were more difficult to identify as military or civilian. In some situations you may have a UN owned (civilian) asset, such as a commercially chartered transport helicopter, that is being used for military tactical purposes, such as placing or extracting soldiers into an operational, or even combat, situations, as in eastern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) where the UN mission (MONUC) is engaged in collaborative offensive operations (De Coning, 2007). It is thus not necessarily obvious in

UN peace operation context, from the perspective of a humanitarian actor, or the local civilian community, or even the soldiers in question, whether a specific UN asset is a civilian or military asset, and that makes the application of the UN humanitarian civil military coordination guidelines, that are designed around this distinction, problematic to apply.

### *Financial resources*

Unfortunately for many disaster-struck areas, such as Haiti and Pakistan, funding is often focused on short-term disaster relief (the immediate response phase). However, there is recognition that disaster preparedness enhances disaster response efficiency and effectiveness (Kovacs and Spens, 2007). Donors prefer to fund emergency activities and are often reluctant to cover core costs necessary to strengthen organisational capacity and capability. On the other hand, military organisations receive funding in order to be prepared for a disruption (i.e. the development of a capability), whilst in humanitarian organisations such funding is only received in response to a disruption (Kovacs and Tatham, 2009). Funding for organisational support and infrastructure is often neglected under donor demands that as much aid as possible is visibly pushed to victims. Thus, distribution channels may suffer as warehouses, equipment, communications infrastructure, and training remain unimproved or deteriorating. As a result, there may be aid available, but the humanitarian organisation may be incapable of effective delivery in a timely manner due to limiting factors in the distribution process.

Investing in disaster preparedness allows the military to focus on physical and manpower resources, i.e. training, but this is inherently lacking for humanitarian organisations (Kovacs and Tatham, 2009). Humanitarian organisations may, for example, be reluctant to spend money on a sophisticated information system that would actually improve their efficiency in the long run. Earmarking funds specifically for the affected population can also lead to a lack

of parts and service support for the truck and planes required to move material aid and lack of funding for un-allocatable costs such as headquarters expenses (Pettit and Beresford, 2005).

### *Performance management*

The “lack of universally accepted performance indicators” (Macrae, 2002, p. 5) makes gauging mission success and learning lessons from the operation difficult. The Sphere Project handbook, though accepted as a reference for performance measures in the humanitarian sector, lacks thorough detail, particularly on cooperation and coordination. The book advocates the integration of “many different players” (Sphere Project, 2004) in humanitarian relief but doesn’t state specific measures for evaluating performance of cooperation. Even in the United Nations humanitarian system, “evaluation and lessons learning is something that the IASC [Inter-Agency Standing Committee] has yet to tackle in a serious way” (Jones and Stoddard, 2003, p. 17). Without performance standards, employees have no means to gauge their success and no reference for making their operations better.

Sowinski states that a lack of funds at the end of a humanitarian action often limits recording of best practices and tracking of information on complex supply chain conditions. It thereby hampers learning opportunities and institutional memory regarding successes and failures (Sowinski, 2003). As the money runs low and the relief mission and its workers fade into the background, it is understandable that events could slip by unrecorded and knowledge lost. The military for their part record all aspects of their mission and debrief national headquarters on their return (Petit and Beresford, 2005) with a view to improving performance for the next operation.

### *Human resources*

In addition to financial resource mobilisation and management, another critical element of an effective humanitarian response is the mobilisation and deployment of material and human resources (Forman and Parhad, 1997). Poor or nonexistent training ultimately affects the quality of any operation, particularly a relief operation. The unpredictable nature of emergencies makes it difficult to retain well trained employees, and those who have been trained are often volunteers who can only work for short periods before they must return to their “real world” jobs. Humanitarian organisations may experience as high as 80% annual turnover in field logistics personnel (Thomas, 2003), further compounding personnel issues. This results in a constant influx of untrained personnel, inexperienced in the particulars of logistics within the organisation and relief as a whole.

The military has several virtually unique resources. They can both protect and defend themselves and break down the resistance of others with violence, they have rapid access to strategic and tactical transport resources, they can be self-sufficient for a longer period, and they have specialised aircraft capacities, maritime resources, reconnaissance, intelligence capacities, and an effective communications network (Eriksson, 2000). The military logistic network and machinery are extensive and speedy (claiming delivery in about five days from project approval, compared to five months for the EU and UN) (Pugh, 2001).

Thomas points out that there may be problems with employee reliability (2003) stemming from lack of training. There is a notable lack of employees who are knowledgeable in supply chain or logistics management compared to the military. In the logistics area, the challenges facing humanitarian organisations are the formal qualification of logistics staff (Oloruntoba & Gray, 2006), optimisation of their logistics activities and the integration of activities across

business functions. Recently however, the setting of standards and framework agreements, to the training and education of staff has improved (Kovacs and Tatham, 2009).

### *Personality*

Olson and Gregorian (2007) suggest that success in cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly in the realm of civil-military relations, often depends on the personalities of the field level personnel and the liaison structures that are established. Given the high rates of staff turnover in the field, particularly amongst the relief and development community, reliance on individuals becomes a risky business. Uncooperative attitudes are not uncommon within and across organisations. This may result from competition for resources, for power, and for notoriety, but it may also arise from personal likes and dislikes or stereotyping (Heaslip *et al*, 2007b).

Coordination between military forces and humanitarian organisations is found to be driven primarily by personalities rather than well-developed standard operating procedures (Brocades-Zaalberg, 2005). Since efforts are person-dependent, they vary within and between different military contingents. Beauregard (1998) in his study of civil-military activities during a number of disasters identifies six principal factors that hamper coordination and cooperation. These include differences in cultures and ideologies, differences in organisational structures and chain of command, communication breakdowns due to incompatible equipment or absence of communication procedures, refusal by humanitarian organisations of military assistance to protect independence and impartiality, and the threat or use of force by the military. He concludes by suggesting a range of solutions (training, better communication and consultation processes through events that improve mutual understanding, liaison teams) to improve the civil-military relationship.



### *Boundaries*

Despite their differences NGOs have joined together to agree on common principles and codes of practice for conduct of humanitarian operations where military forces are involved. In 2003, OCHA published a position paper (commonly referred to as the Oslo Guidelines), with the agreement of all UN agencies, NGO alliance and NATO, setting out the core humanitarian principles; humanity, impartiality and neutrality (UN, 2007).

Some humanitarian agencies argue that coordination is, by definition, a threat to humanitarian action because it undermines impartiality and represents a fundamental threat to the operational flexibility and physical safety of aid workers (Olson and Gregorian, 2007). The counter argument posits that humanitarian space can be better protected through integrated structures as opposed to a fragmented approach and that the humanitarian perspective will have a more effective voice when at the same table with other elements of an integrated mission. Recently in Chad the UN mission ensured clear delineation as the military focused its efforts on establishing security and resisted the temptation to promote its mission in humanitarian or development terms. This facilitated the establishment of ‘clear blue water’ between the military and humanitarian community otherwise boundaries become blurred, which could result in lives becoming endangered, particularly the beneficiaries and aid workers (Heaslip, 2011).

### *Culture*

It is easy to conceptualise civil military coordination as an effort by humanitarian and military organisations to synchronize their operations, and yet it has been described as a “contested concept with many different, competing definitions and doctrines that describe essentially the same activity...” (De Coning, 2007, p. 6). Military culture and civilian

cultures do not generally mesh seamlessly in relief settings. There are inherent stressors between them owing to differences in mandates, objectives, methods of operation and vocabulary. When the cultural differences confront each other on the ground, the inability to communicate effectively, caused by a lack of mutual understanding, creates tension. The tension manifests itself in five distinct areas – expectations, perceptions, resources, missions and values (Slim, 2006).

As personnel from humanitarian organisations interact more regularly with military personnel, culture clashes become apparent. Aid workers often distrust the military, and the military similarly are suspicious of aid workers. Such unfamiliarity between organisations inevitably encourages the dissemination of ill-informed stereotypes. The military is frequently characterised as an insensitive, ill-informed, controlling, and inflexible war-machine, while personnel of some humanitarian organisations are seen as sandal-wearing, undisciplined, and uncoordinated liberals (Duffey, 2000). Operationally, aid agencies tend to be flexible whereas the military functions in a top-down manner, the durations of stay of aid agencies can be for many years, the military, on the other hand, prefers well defined end states and exit strategies, aid agencies have a culture of independence while the military is hierarchical, and soldiers are armed when dealing with local actors while aid and development workers are not (Ferks and Klem, 2006). Recently researchers and practitioners, in addition to aid organisations, militaries and governments, have instigated different forms of cooperation (Kovács & Spens 2007), the Humanitarian and Emergency Logistics Programme (HELP) in the UK, and Humanitarian Logistics (HUMLOG) in Scandinavia are some of the forums encouraging dialogue.

With continuous and multiple points of interface, military personnel and humanitarians interpret the world through the lens of their own culture. Lack of familiarity with the differences embedded in the organisation cultures is a breeding ground for misunderstanding and poor coordination and cooperation (Siegel, 2003). In many circumstances the use of a different language and terminology further obscures understanding, compounded by different interpretations of the same terms of reference (Heaslip *et al*, 2008).

### **Solutions and Recommendations**

During humanitarian relief operations, strongly motivated people in both camps (i.e. civil and military) usually find ways to surmount barriers that they encounter, but valuable time is lost inventing and reinventing these solutions. At a philosophical level, it is noted that NGOs are uncomfortable with the military, but in the field there is often effective cooperation. As personnel security in relief operations becomes a growing concern for the relief community it follows that interaction with the military is set to grow. Enhanced civil military logistical cooperation requires a greater effort of all actors involved in humanitarian relief. The points discussed here are not in any way intended as the ultimate solution, but rather as a starting point for further discussions.

### *Models*

One avenue that can be pursued is to adopt models for cooperation between the military and the civilian actors (Currey, 2003; Gourlay, 2000, and Rietjens, 2006). These models can synthesise what has been accomplished in previous operations and can foster a theatre specific *modus vivendi* between military formations and the variety of civilian actors. For those involved in humanitarian relief, models can contribute to the development of checklists, an increased understanding of (potential) conflicts in the process of cooperation, and

elements for procedures to increase the performance of the cooperation (Rietjens, 2006). Models can provide guidance about how partners may foster and manage relationships that will achieve favourable outcomes (Tuten and Urban, 2001). By conducting further research in this area it offers researchers a framework for future empirical studies to confirm or refute the legitimacy of the model.

### *Planning*

The military have a very clear idea of what is meant by levels of strategic, operational and tactical planning, this is not necessarily true of the aid community. There are a number of reasons for this, the use of relatively flat organisational structures in the aid community do not promote hierarchical management as in the military. Reijtens *et al* (2007) argue conflicting objectives between military and humanitarian organizations often leads to resource wastage as relief agencies and military units undertake similar operations. This duplication is not only prevalent between military and NGOs but also between different NGOs. To ensure optimal resource usage they argue that the military involvements should adopt a subordinate role to the humanitarian lead agency. Nevertheless they acknowledge that the humanitarian agency needs to be present to provide appropriate guidance and this is often not possible as the military forces are the units first to reach the disaster area with air support and relief provisioning (Reijtens *et al*, 2007).

Collaboration can take place at different stages along the relief chain (Oloruntoba and Gray, 2006), e.g. during contingency planning, need assessment, appeals, transportation management, or last-mile distribution. While collaboration during an actual disaster (Thomas and Kopczak, 2007), especially at field level, seems to be more common, and has been enhanced through the setup of the UN Joint Logistics Centre (Heaslip, 2008; 2011), there is a

specific need for better, continuing collaboration after an operation, in preparation for the next one (Thomas and Kopczak, 2007). Particularly, only limited cooperation is reported or documented during the preparation phase of the disaster relief lifecycle. The continual change and inevitability of military involvement in humanitarian aid is due to the increase in natural disasters and complex emergencies (EM-DAT, 2010). NGOs are training more frequently with military forces and becoming acclimatised to military involvement in humanitarian aid (Tatham and Kovacs, 2010).

### *Communications*

To overcome this humanitarian organisations and military organisations should settle on a common language regarding relief missions (Barry and Jeffrys, 2002). In many cases, the use of different ‘language’ and terminology seem to obscure any understanding of common objectives between the actors. Indeed it is questionable whether the various actors even have common objectives; perhaps it is more correct to say that each organisation will have its own objectives, but that they should all work towards a common purpose or vision.

There needs to be mechanisms for collecting information (e.g. inventory requirements) but equally importantly, for producing useful knowledge from that information. There must be an expedient means of conveying knowledge to those who need it. To assist in the distribution of information, transparency needs to permeate across all organisations military and humanitarian which will provide answers rather than obscuring questions due to institutional resistance. Furthermore, as language and communication has proven to be a barrier it may prove beneficial to use neutral language when describing coordination meetings. This gesture would avoid misperceptions and mistrust.

### *Finance*

Funding structures can impede the humanitarian community in delivering aid in a timely and efficient manner. The military often have access to substantial discretionary funds, whilst the humanitarian relief community must go through much longer processes to secure funding. Mechanisms need to be developed to facilitate the swift transfer of funds from donors to NGOs that would allow NGOs to respond more quickly to urgent needs in areas where there is an international military presence and preclude the need or temptation for militaries to fill these roles themselves.

A more positive development has been the donors' insistence on receiving detailed plans from agencies they fund; this encourages aid agencies to plan more strategically, by outlining their objectives, outputs, impact, activities and outcomes. This approach encourages the organisations receiving funds to manage projects effectively and efficiently and work towards a strategic end that benefits the broader stakeholder community and complements, rather than duplicates or erodes, the work of other intervening agencies.

### *Performance management*

An added dimension of many humanitarian operations with "wide variation in the quality of field programs and the technical competence of staff" is that beneficiaries and donors often have no way to gauge the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian agencies at the field level (Natsios, 1995b, p. 409). The humanitarian community is not known for recording details pertaining to their relief operations thereby reducing learning opportunities and institutional memory regarding successes and failures. The military for their part record all aspects of their mission this transfer of knowledge and information is crucial in building and developing efficient and effective logistical relief for the next humanitarian crisis. Research

should be conducted in analysing mechanisms to encourage humanitarian agencies to capture information pertaining to the success and failure of a relief effort. This research should include cross referencing with the military to determine where improvements and greater efficiencies can be found.

### *Human resources*

The issue of selection and recruitment remains the cornerstone for effective logistical management in CIMIC. As in business logistics the quality of people is critical in the delivery of humanitarian aid, particularly those that have the skill set to operate complex logistical systems. The implications for training and the costs of solutions are important in this regard. Innovation in problem solving is needed, along with the importance of understanding the sources of uncertainty in the humanitarian supply chain.

Calls persist for more cross-fertilisation to take place within military, UN agency and NGO training programmes and contingency planning. The skills and approaches used and the personalities of the people involved matter to coordination outcomes. As well as strong logistical knowledge and skills, recruitment should emphasise skills that include negotiation, conflict management, leadership capabilities and/or abilities, as well as interpersonal and communication skills, if civil and military personnel are to bridge major organisational divides and promote coordination.

Efforts are underway to encourage military and civilian personnel to participate in joint workshops and exercises (e.g. Exercise Viking – a European interagency exercise) to study subjects of mutual interest, and to learn about each other's perspectives. There could be merit in conducting joint contingency planning, particularly logistical planning.

### *Boundaries*

Humanitarian organisations adhere to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and humanity. A key challenge for the humanitarian community is to clarify for themselves and the military how humanitarian principles apply to activities in settings such as humanitarian relief. The military do not apply these principles in quite the same way and consequently close cooperation between humanitarians and other actors can lead to the perception that the humanitarians have become ‘tainted’, reducing their ability to gain access to those in need.

The principle of neutrality and the division of tasks from the military is guarded by agencies engaged in humanitarian work. The military have the logistical capacity to deliver aid in certain circumstances where humanitarian actors cannot gain access (due to degraded infrastructure, security threats) so, should the military not intervene? To ensure clear delineation the military should focus its efforts on establishing security and resist the temptation to promote its mission in humanitarian or development terms. Military and humanitarian organisations need to establish ‘clear blue water’ between one another otherwise boundaries become blurred, which results in lives becoming endangered, particularly the beneficiaries and aid workers. The solution is likely to involve closer contact and joint training exercises before deployment to foster understanding and trust between the various organisations.

### *Culture*

Organisations will not learn effectively until they recognise and confront the implications of the three occupational cultures (strategic, operational and tactical) (Schein, 1996). Until military and humanitarian personnel discover that they use different languages and make different assumptions about what is important and until they learn to treat each other’s culture



as valid and normal, organisational cooperative efforts will continue to fail. Some solutions include taking the concept of culture more seriously. Instead of superficially manipulating a few priorities and calling that "culture change" (Schein, 1996) both the military and humanitarian community must recognise and accept how deeply embedded the shared, tacit assumptions of military and humanitarian personnel are. Avenues to communicate across the cultural boundaries have to be found. This is achievable by establishing some communication that stimulates mutual understanding rather than mutual blame. The creation of communication by learning how to conduct cross-cultural "dialogues" needs to be encouraged. If the military and humanitarian organisations (who come from different cultures) sit in a room together, which is hard enough, they must reflectively listen to themselves and to each other, which is even harder.

### *Doctrine*

The end of the Cold War re-oriented military doctrines which included potential contributions to disaster relief operations (Heaslip, 2011). Although strictly adhering to doctrine may hinder some flexibility in chaotic humanitarian operations, it greatly contributes to institutionalization, resulting in less inconsistency, less duplication and smoother rotations in both global aid agencies and the military. Doctrine of all large organisations involved in humanitarian provision from the UN, UN-CMCoord (Civil-Military Coordination) forms part of the process aimed at creating a better capacity. Doctrinally the acceptance of Army and other defence people working among the civilian population and providing health, education, infrastructure and engineering aid is demonstrated by the recent doctrinal changes to the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) Army Doctrine:

“The battle for the hearts and minds of domestic and international audiences is a decisive element of warfare. Infantry, working among the people, is uniquely placed to influence perceptions through respect for the people, adherence to the laws of

armed conflict and the sparing use of force (lethal and nonlethal, kinetic and non-kinetic) with the greatest possible discrimination.” (Operation Series, 2009)

The use of applied force concepts in a tactical counterinsurgency environment, i.e. the COIN approach used in Afghanistan is supportive of the humanitarian logistical modelling. Its phases are shape, clear, hold and build. The ‘shape’ phase is a strategic planning phase; the ‘clear’ phase involves the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) troops to clear the area of insurgents; the ‘hold’ phase demonstrates the overlap of phases as it incorporates both the maintenance of security and ensuring that the area remains clear of any insurgent action whilst concurrently assisting with the ‘build’ phase. The ‘build’ phase includes establishing the basic services, basic law and order, supporting the indigenous forces of the host nation to take over and let the people acknowledge their support for their own resources and military and civilian cohorts. In such fragile states the fluidity of the COIN stages are forever transitioning. Military staff is becoming adept at adjusting rapidly to the fluidity of COIN phases and it is a clear lesson to be learnt by the humanitarian logisticians. The fluidity of these COIN phases also make it extremely testing for the international aid agencies working in areas of conflict not only in Afghanistan but across Africa and there is often very close coordination of the logistical flows and reverse flows as the fluidity of conflict surges and ebbs in fragile environments.

## **Conclusion**

To the layperson, the term civil-military coordination evokes notions of a seamless division of labour 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, has become more frequent. The problem is that this image of civil-military teamwork is too simplistic and assumes too much.

This prevailing approach frames coordination as a technical exercise that the right combination of meetings, information flow, and coordination focal points can solve. It also frames civil-military coordination as an agreed goal. Yet in areas of active conflict and in fragile post-conflict settings, the mandates, timeframes, guiding principles and methodologies for working of civilian aid agencies and military forces are radically different and often clash, despite good intentions and a sincere common desire to “help the people” between most international military and civilian aid personnel involved in international peace operations. Attempting to bridge what are perceived to be cultural and operational disconnects, may very well dilute the consolidated product/service that an inter-agency effort delivers.

The challenges to better civil military coordination are numerous but not insurmountable. In reality, during major humanitarian operations, strongly motivated people in both camps usually find ways to surmount these challenges, but valuable time is lost inventing and reinventing these solutions. In recent years relationships have improved, but considerable progress is necessary before both sides can realise the advantages of improved cooperation.

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