

# Is the Humanitarian-Military Relationship Moving in Reverse? An Analysis Based on Two Snapshots: Iraq and Afghanistan

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## INTRODUCTION

The conflicts of the 1990s are often viewed as departures of state dominated interests in favor of national or other interests and thus have been called “new,” “post-modern” or “residue” as distinct from the conflicts of the Cold War era.<sup>i</sup> The most recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq represent another departure in at least two interconnected ways: first, the supra-nationalist or religious interests of non-state actors are challenging the dominant world system.<sup>ii</sup> For the United States government, at least, this has resulted in renewed activism around the world in an effort to combat terrorism. Second, the relationship between the military and humanitarians has been affected by this activism, most notably in Afghanistan and Iraq. This second departure is the focus of this paper.

In its present form, the high degree of interaction between militaries, in particular the U.S. and British militaries, and humanitarians is only slightly more than a decade old.<sup>iii</sup> On the one hand, the relationship has been formalized through various coordination mechanisms, doctrine, frequent correspondence and the establishment of centers and institutes. On the other, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq raise doubts about the cohesiveness of the relationship and further questions any advancement that may be claimed during the 1990s.

This paper sets out to address two questions: What are the broad previous lessons learned about the interactions between military and humanitarian actors? How were these lessons “relearned” during the recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq? This paper does not add to theory, nor delve deeply into the contentious debate over the appropriateness of humanitarian

intervention or military humanitarianism. Rather, it makes a deliberate effort to add to the discourse that has emerged between and among humanitarians, the military, and scholars.

The first part of this paper presents background context of the recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Next, an overview is provided of five broad previous lessons learned. Following each is a discussion of how they were ignored or were relearned in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although a significant effort has been made to improve civil-military relations during the past decade, it is the contention of the author that this relationship has taken two steps back because of growing negativity about a relationship, continuing lack of security, and frustration over the lack of progress in what are thought to be “lessons learned.” Third, based on experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, at least two emergent issues or “lessons” are discussed. Finally, a conclusion is presented suggesting steps for improving interaction between humanitarians and military personnel.

## THE CONTEXT OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

Before reviewing the situation in each country, it is worth discussing the wider setting. There has been enormous change since the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Many fields including economics and international relations have been altered in profound ways. Economic downturn and renewed U.S. activism overseas serve as clear examples.<sup>iv</sup>

Yet many of the same trends, modalities and lessons learned of the past decade remain the same. For the military, and the U.S. military in particular, the structure, organization and mission are virtually unchanged, save its more active deployment schedule. The strategies and tactics are consistent with many past missions. Most military forces continue to conduct operations as they would have prior to the end of the Cold War.

For humanitarians, much too has remained the same. In a background paper titled “Humanitarian Action in an Age of Terrorism,” Minear articulates three elements that have remained constant.<sup>v</sup> First among these are the difficulties faced by humanitarians, which include gaining safe access to beneficiaries, mobilizing resources, and making programs sustainable. Minear writes “those challenges have not changed as a result of the prevailing constructs through which geo-political events have been understood.”<sup>vi</sup>

One particularly vexing problem that is the politicization of humanitarian efforts, brought about in part by outside intervening forces, including the military forces under the control of other nations. If the military enjoyed increased hegemonic control of civil-military relations, as explained by Pugh, in Somalia and Kosovo, then the evolution of this trend can be seen as complete in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>vii</sup>

Second, world events are changing the paradigm faster than which political, military and humanitarian institutions can keep pace. Indeed, many models used today, both in delivering aid and in fighting asymmetric wars, were developed during previous conflicts, such as Vietnam. Afghanistan was itself a recipient of massive aid projects with the Soviets dominating in the north with dams and agriculture, and with and the Americans in the south with airports and other projects. Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, was a U.S. Cold War ally that received heavy military support prior to its invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

Finally, many of the countries, including Afghanistan and Iraq, that are at the top of the terrorism “agenda” are those that also received aid and military assistance in decades past. Minear notes, “What has been transformed is the optic through which the terrain and the prevailing objectives of outside intervenors are viewed.” This historical perspective makes for an untenable situation that seems most difficult to resolve.

## AFGHANISTAN

The initial phase of Coalition operations in Afghanistan may be seen in retrospect as a huge victory for combined, joint special operations methods and strategy. Support of the Northern Alliance by special operations forces and air assets made a huge military difference. The groundwork was laid for renewed hope for Afghans in less than three months following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

Following the liberation of Kabul in early December 2001, the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) was established for strategic command of Civil Affairs assets. At the tactical level, following the deployment of Special Forces operational detachments in key areas, the Coalition deployed Coalitional Humanitarian Liaison Centers or Cells (CHLCs – pronounced “chicklets”) in several urban areas around Afghanistan. The CHLCs in many ways functioned as Civil-Military Operation Centers (CMOCs) but did not open “store front” offices, as was common practice in, for example, the Balkans. The CHLCs often operated in civilian clothes and supported The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) by providing logistics and security.<sup>viii</sup> The CHLCs performed a variety of tasks including assessments, information sharing, contracting projects and supporting combat operations. Depending on their mandate and mentality, some humanitarians cooperated with the CHLCs, while others kept them at an arm’s length.<sup>ix</sup>

In the summer of 2002, as the mission changed from combat to one of supporting stability, the U.S. government launched a combined civil-military teams called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).<sup>x</sup> These teams, comprised of several different military and civilian government staff who work for the U.S. Department of Defense were first established in Gardez and expanded to select cities, although, as of the time of this writing, none in the south and west of the country. In many ways, the PRTs serve as a stopgap measure in areas where the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)<sup>xi</sup> has not deployed and where the nascent Afghan transitional government fails to hold sway. The PRTs’ presence is thought to add to security, but the teams are largely preoccupied with their own security with the hope that the embryonic Afghan National Army will assume more responsibility.

From the Coalition’s perspective, the PRTs have been a success. As U.S. Ambassador Robert Finn says it, “not many initiatives have been as successful in reaching Afghanistan’s population with the direct and immediate impact of the many projects carried out by the civil affairs teams associated with the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF).”<sup>xii</sup> This statement was backed up by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who said, “I, personally, and our country, our government, are very encouraged about these provincial reconstruction teams, the so-called PRTs,”<sup>xiii</sup> although there seems to be some misunderstanding about what they are supposed to do. “The mission is to help the interim government establish effective control over the country. The teams operate in

environments where nongovernmental organizations won't." But they are in fact in permissive places like Bamiyan and Kunduz and not, as mentioned, in the western or southern region.<sup>xiv</sup>

Humanitarians and many Afghans hardly share this positive view of the PRTs in Afghanistan. The PRTs have been criticized for their mission, structure, and, now that they are in place, their lack of effectiveness. Commenting on the PRTs' work, a humanitarian said they "have failed to tap local resources and have botched construction projects."<sup>xv</sup> Overall, there have been rather negative feelings on the part of humanitarians toward the Coalition's efforts based on a number of issues, which are addressed in the next section of this paper.

There is a long history of humanitarian involvement in Afghanistan stretching back to the 1950s and 1960s through the duration of Taliban regime and up to today. The structures of coordination were fairly formalized through various means, such as the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), active for as many as twenty years. There is also large numbers of Afghan relief and reconstruction organizations, although the lines between them and the commercial sector are not always clear.

During the war, there were different access points for both military and humanitarians, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. InterAction, a consortium of North American NGOs, seconded a staff member to CENTCOM in Tampa to share NGO views and opinions. As areas opened following hostilities, humanitarians moved their activities and offices into Afghanistan, sometimes after years of exile. In certain areas they continue to wait for a declaration from the coalition forces that the area is secure. If made, such a declaration would be discussed among NGOs.

Despite the immediate military success, there are lessons to be learned from a military-political point of view and perhaps none are more compelling than that securing peace is more difficult than winning war. Many feel, especially inside Afghanistan, that the stability is patchy, reconstruction slow, and the dividends of change less than expected. With the death of two Afghan humanitarians, continued factional fighting,<sup>xvi</sup> and pervading warlordism, the strategic goal of securing a peace that lends itself to development in Afghanistan is yet incomplete.

## IRAQ

If the Coalition operation in Afghanistan was an achievement of specialized warfare, the offensive in Iraq was a reaffirmation of conventional military power. The U.S. Administration's mission of regime change in Iraq is widely known. Rather than trying to stitch together a devastated tribal society as in Afghanistan, the Coalition must "de-Baath" an educated, oil rich state, although it is true that tribal influences are present in Iraq as well.<sup>xvii</sup> While both countries are ethnically divided and prone to corruption, the level of complexity in Iraq is higher. Yet, it is still too early, with almost daily attacks against Coalition forces, to assess the extent in which a military success will be translated into a durable peace.

During combat, U.S. Army Civil affairs (CA) units assumed a role supporting conventional forces in reducing civilian interference of the combat operations, liaising with

civilian agencies, and helping displaced persons as needed. These units also played a role in finding civilian resources for military use.<sup>xviii</sup> Iraq is also somewhat unique in that the United Nations agencies do not have a major presence. For these reasons, the Coalition fills an important role in organizing coordination meetings, identifying needs and sharing information. Once Baghdad had fallen, they also implemented their own rehabilitation and humanitarian projects, usually through local contractors. But sometimes their projects compete directly, as they do in Afghanistan, with humanitarian organizations. Unlike Afghanistan, however, CA had prior experience working along side conventional forces in Iraq. Their role in the first Gulf War was similar, but on a more limited scale.<sup>xix</sup>

The civil-military structure in Iraq is somewhat unique for its scope but followed established doctrine closer than in Afghanistan.<sup>xx</sup> At the strategic level, the Coalitional Provisional Authority (CPA) has established the Iraq Assistance Center (IAC) in Baghdad to coordinate humanitarian and reconstruction efforts. At the operational level, three Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centers (HACCs) have been set up: one each in Baghdad, Jordan and Kuwait.

In addition to command and control, various tasks were accomplished at the strategic and operational level including compiling lists of active organizations and Iraqi contractors. Sharing information is also a key function, particularly with many humanitarian organizations based in the capital. Initially, there were eleven daily, and at times redundant, “coordination” meetings conducted by Coalition forces in Baghdad. By July, this number was reduced and combined to a handful of meetings.<sup>xxi</sup>

At the tactical level, there are twenty-one Civil-Military Operation Centers (CMOCs); half are located in Baghdad and the rest are scattered throughout Iraq. These CMOCs provide CA with an on-the-ground presence and allow them to directly support brigade combat teams. Unlike many of the peace operations of the past decade, CMOCs are located within fortified areas; with about half of them being co-located with headquarter units. This arrangement meets force protection measures but represents a trade-off of reduced access to civilians.

For the time being, it does not appear as if PRTs deployed in Afghanistan will be used as a model as the situation develops in Iraq. The local context, with its educated and urban population and natural resource base, requires a different solution. There are plans for civilianizing the CMOCs, through recruiting and training of Iraqis in its functions, and turning them over to district advisory councils.

For humanitarians in Iraq, the challenge is somewhat different from other recent crisis. Unlike Afghanistan, the presence of humanitarian activity is relatively new. Much fewer humanitarians have the depth of experience in Iraq that they possess in Afghanistan. Further, while fairly devastated by war and bad governance, Iraq’s infrastructure is relatively developed, negating the need for many types of humanitarian projects, but not eliminating room for long-term development projects.<sup>xxii</sup> While there are certainly significant needs, Iraq is not currently experiencing a complex emergency, leaving many crisis-centered organizations at a point of questioning whether to stay in country at all. The suicide bombing of the United Nations headquarters on August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 and continued violence in other parts of the country such as Basra has led to a perception that the Coalition is failing in its basic responsibility of providing a safe humanitarian space.

## PREVIOUS LESSONS LEARNED

Problems can always be expected, but what frustrates smooth interaction above all is the repeat of lessons that should have been learned from past experience. This is not a new experience. Fitz-Gerald and Neal write, “Numerous examples of evaluation recommendations can be found that are repeated from operation to operation year after year with no apparent progress being made.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Minear notes this issue as well: “problems encountered both within the humanitarian enterprise and external to it have frustrated the implementation of well-identified lessons from earlier crises....”<sup>xxiv</sup> Five broad problems or lessons learned,<sup>xxv</sup> which are obstacles to effective interaction, are discussed here as they relate to recent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq:

### ROLES AND MISSIONS MAY BE AT ODDS

One point agreed upon by both the military and humanitarians are the core missions of each: respectively, to win wars and to help alleviate human suffering. While these two roles may seem to be at odds, there are not entirely incompatible and there are examples where military resources have made a critical humanitarian impact.<sup>xxvi</sup>

In insecure environments, an important military mission carried out by CA and a few other units is to create goodwill toward the military and thus acts in a force protection role. Humanitarians have a fundamental need for the military to open, and keep open, access routes and thereby to create safe spaces. The lack of providing active protection of civilian populations has been noted as “one of the biggest obstacles in the way of cordial civil-military relationships.”<sup>xxvii</sup> The lack of political will to extend ISAF beyond Kabul has led to an insecure environment in Afghanistan. To many humanitarians, the military has somewhat or even completely failed to create a safe environment for even its own personnel to operate within.

In Afghanistan, humanitarians banded together to forward concrete recommendations to the Coalition. The resulting policy brief outlined a reemphasis of military activities, such as arms collection and demobilization. Where CA wanted to carry out civic-action projects on schools and health clinics, humanitarians often suggested they concentrate on security and fixing those things that were destroyed by the Coalition in battle.<sup>xxviii</sup> The brief also recommended a de-emphasis on humanitarian activities by the Coalition: “The military should not engage in assistance work except in those rare circumstances where emergency needs exist and civilian assistance workers are unable to meet those needs due to lack of logistical capacity or levels of insecurity on the ground. ... All such work should fall under civilian leadership.”<sup>xxix</sup> For a variety of reasons, including a lack of donor and political will, these recommendations have not taken effect.

In Iraq, following the experience of Afghanistan, the debate about the justness of the war further muddied the water as many humanitarians took a strong stance against military intervention. While the military has made strides in its attitudes towards “civilians on the battlefield,” many early meetings between humanitarians and the military were sometimes touchy.<sup>xxx</sup> The covert campaign to undermine the Coalition and the Provisional Authority

efforts to improve conditions in which humanitarians have become a target has been shown as a failure by some to understand the complexity of the situation.

### HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES MUST BE INDEPENDENT

Not completely understood or implemented, independence of action and identity is an imperative principle for humanitarians to maintain. Yet, this has been a contentious issue. The aid industry relies on the donor marketplace for its existence and many humanitarian agencies rely heavily, sometimes exclusively, on donor governments that may be party to the conflict. Experience in Kosovo and other post-conflict countries are illustrative. As Duffield observes, a “new aid paradigm” came about in permanent emergencies where aid is often used by donor countries, in lieu of political action, and NGOs are simply contractors for government interests.<sup>xxxix</sup> This is a struggle that does not affect military personnel, who are state actors.

A manifestation of this issue is the blurring of the lines of distinction between humanitarians and the military. While this has proven to be less of an issue where conventional troops have been the main combatants, in Afghanistan it has been a hotly debated issue. Objections to soldiers wearing civilian clothing were loudly raised in various capitals. One letter from humanitarians noted: “By pretending to be aid workers, armed forces are trying to have it both ways, to benefit from the protections accorded non-combatants [under international humanitarian law] while themselves remaining combatants.”<sup>xxxix</sup> The type of vehicle is also a practical operational issue with some units using civilian four-wheel drive vehicles.

### MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL OPERATE DIFFERENTLY

There appears to be continuing problems at the most basic level with mistrust and apprehension on the side of the humanitarians and fundamental misunderstanding about the capabilities and purpose of humanitarians by the military, and in particular, by the U.S. military. Here are some illustrative examples.

First, there is mutual misunderstanding of how organizations are organized and funded. U.S. government officials talked of “pre-deploying assets” prior to the invasion of Iraq. This seems to show a lack of understanding at a fairly basic level. Humanitarians for their part can misunderstand force mix and composition among the military, thinking that skills and resources can be used for tasks they are not intended for by military commanders.

Second, even when distribution, coordination, and similar type structures exist, it does not mean they are easily used or understood. As Beauregard observes, “military personnel find it confusing to seek structure analogous to military command among civilian agencies – that structure simply doesn’t exist,” among the humanitarians.<sup>xxxix</sup> In both Afghanistan and Iraq, those humanitarians who sought out Coalition CA officers did not always find it easy to do because of the different levels of command. Outside of the capital cities, it was somewhat easier but complicated by force protection issues or competing activities, such as supporting

combat operations. Further, emphasis on force protection means that many humanitarians cannot readily gain access to the military even when they want to achieve a mutual objective.

Third, communication difficulties exist on two levels. On one level, different terms impede communications. The military has its own acronym-filled jargon, just as humanitarians do. CA personnel are taught one definition for “refugee” while there is a different definition common among humanitarians.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Humanitarians, who arrived in Afghanistan, for example, familiar with CMOCs from other conflicts, were confronted with CHLCs. On another level, physical communication systems differ.<sup>xxxv</sup> Maps are not common and humanitarians rely on satellite phones and e-mail, which CMOCs do not necessarily have.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

### MORE “COORDINATION” IS NEEDED

The call for more or better coordination has been wide spread. Rather than simply mandating more coordination and training, past recommendations focus on increasing familiarity between the military and humanitarians through everything from exchanges to joint manuals. But what is clear from the recent Coalition operations in Afghanistan and Iraq is that a deeper examination is needed.

The loose structure of humanitarian organizations and the way they operate, and their very ethos, does not lend itself to being strongly coordinated. Military forces and humanitarians most often try to gain consensus through persuasion.<sup>xxxvii</sup> This is not a foolproof system, as the aforementioned uniform issue in Afghanistan demonstrates. Recommendations for models like combined CMOC and humanitarian information center structures have not been implemented in either Afghanistan or Iraq.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Regarding coordination during the conflict phase in Iraq, one relief worker remarked, “It’s been the normal zoo.”<sup>xxxix</sup> In the post-conflict phase as well, humanitarians felt there were simply too many meetings in Baghdad without substance and so attendance dropped. To their credit, CA at the operational level adjusted their efforts and provided more easily understood security information, and developed a comprehensive contact directory.

While sharing of information and assessments are noted as a key CA function by the military,<sup>xl</sup> it is unclear how often humanitarians use this information or if the assessments were done in parallel with other organizations. A common feeling among Afghans in many parts of that country was “assessment fatigue,” a term used to describe when village elders were tired of questions from outsiders and wanted instead to see results. A major function then became “de-conflicting” activities between humanitarians and the military.

### CULTURAL DIFFERENCES CONTRIBUTE TO POOR RELATIONS

Much as been written about the inherent differences between the military and humanitarian organizations, and the resulting barriers to effective interaction. These differences are widely known but worth reviewing. The decision-making process in the military, for example, is largely vertical in structure with well-established command and control, while humanitarian

organizations are organized more or less horizontally, and decisions are made on a consensual basis. Humanitarian operations tend to be assembled on an “as needed” basis, whereas the military relies on planning and preparation. Humanitarian organizations strive to be transparent and accountable to their donors, while the military values a positive public image, particularly in a democratic state, but must control information to ensure operational security. Most fundamentally, the mandates differ so vastly between the military and humanitarians that interaction, let alone cooperation, makes them strange allies in a conflict.

To be sure, major distinctions exist at the organizational level. Pugh notes, “The NGO world is a fractured, fractious zoo full of weird and wonderful animals.”<sup>xii</sup> Humanitarian organizations are hardly unified in their stance toward Coalition activities, whether military in nature or not. This can show itself through indirect support, tacit acknowledgement, or open opposition. Among the military there has been an emphasis on combined and joint activities, but each branch and even unit has its own way of achieving results.

Profound differences exist at the individual level as well. Often noted are the dissimilarities of “do-gooder” relief workers with hippy lineage or who are excess backpackers, versus gung-ho and robust military personnel who follow orders while disregarding need or common sense. These stereotypes bear little resemblance to reality; some researchers exaggerate the differences. A poll of humanitarian managers in either Iraq or Afghanistan might reveal that many have military experience. Add to this mix former volunteers of government-sponsored programs (e.g., Peace Corps in the U.S., or Voluntary Service Organization in Britain) who are not intrinsically opposed to the military. Generally speaking, military personnel from Western democracies are educated and exhibit genuine humanitarian concerns. Further, reserve civilians make up the majority of CA units, and are in essence, part-time soldiers at home. The degrees of differences in culture and the severity of the impact of these differences lies somewhere between the extremes, but the issues remain.

## **TWO “NEW” ISSUES**

There are two additional issues that deserve wider attention: competition for resources and training of personnel. These are not exactly new, but they have had a greater impact on humanitarian-military interaction in Afghanistan and Iraq than in prior missions.

### **COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES**

War and post-conflict situations are low-resource environments and therefore increased competition among stakeholders is a common characteristic. With the Coalition taking a more active role in sectors normally the domain of humanitarians, clash seems inevitable.

Humanitarians and the military often perceive that the other has resources that outstretch their own. However, analysis shows that humanitarians have few resources in comparison with the military. According to their own figures in Afghanistan, for example, “this year they [the Coalition members] have rebuilt 116 schools, 28 clinics and hospitals and 42 well and irrigation systems. The \$10,653 million dollars they have spent has almost gone entirely

to these projects: basic, no frills and essential work, mostly channeled into the hands of Afghan workers and Afghan companies for the benefit of many communities in all parts of the country.”<sup>xlii</sup> This work was largely done by local contractors and brings up the issue of cost-effectiveness, which considers the ratio of dollars spent per project. Humanitarians on the other hand, implemented thousands of projects across different sectors, from delivering relief supplies to developing civil society. “Many of the NGOs are going bankrupt but the military has lots of funds,” commented one humanitarian working in Afghanistan.<sup>xliii</sup>

Military personnel cost far more than civilians. The costs of military personnel, when counting all direct and indirect costs, are vastly more than civilians doing similar jobs.<sup>xliv</sup> As a CA officer remarked, “one reason that some NGOs are upset with the Civil Affairs units is that they see us as rivals, competing with them for relief funds.”<sup>xlv</sup> A similar issue is the demand for human resources. Potential local staff are routinely poached by Coalition units because they can offer higher pay, also a classic problem between NGOs, embassies and the UN agencies. It is common for highly qualified Afghans and Iraqis, including doctors and other professionals, to work as translators, administrative assistants and drivers because of higher salaries and low employment in their own fields.

A different aspect of this issue occurs when military forces receive funds from donor agencies that normally fund humanitarians. While the U.S. Department of Defense has its own humanitarian funding mechanism, the British funding agency (DFID) provided resources directly to military units for reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. Although this is a repeat of Bosnia where DFID (and its predecessor ODA) funded British forces’ civil action programs either directly or through contractors,<sup>xlvi</sup> it is a worrying trend for humanitarians. Of equal concern is under-funding.<sup>xlvii</sup>

While 20% of UN-requested global assistance for 2002 was requested for Afghanistan alone,<sup>xlviii</sup> the commitment has been far below that and it shows in the field. Similarly in Iraq, the recent donor conference in Madrid secured 33 billion (USD) worth of pledges, far below the 55 billion that was sought. One way to remedy this situation is to reaffirm the primacy of humanitarian. Donor government agencies, who control most of the resources that contribute to post-war relief and reconstruction, should work with both the military and humanitarians to address this situation.

## INADEQUATE TRAINING

Training and preparation are recognized as crucial for the military. Yet, the training received by U.S. CA personnel is inadequate and training for common soldiers, when given, is reduced to a single block of instruction that is too narrowly focused and insufficient in length to properly prepare them for challenges in the field. For an organization that depends on training and preparation, which was until the last two years its sole preoccupation, education and training could be better addressed and improved upon.

In fact, the training issue is not entirely new. A Cuny Center report calls for better training of uniformed forces to the standards of the professional humanitarian community. “In addition to enhanced training programs for DoD staff - including web-based curricula, DoD should find more opportunities to mix armed forces staff with NGOs in their own training. Because NGO staff are few and have little time for training, it is unreasonable to

expect NGO staff to attend DoD trainings or exercises in any large proportions.”<sup>xlix</sup> Speaking of the British military, Gordon notes the challenge “to create a greater degree of expertise and institutional memory.”<sup>l</sup>

Without adequate understanding of their role, NGOs are often seen by most military personnel as assets to be used, controlled or coordinated to complete a mission. The CA enlisted course provides a narrow understanding of NGOs. For example, the training does not include instruction on the basic ideas of development. The reason for this is, perhaps rightly, that development is accepted and understood as an activity that takes place after CA leaves, or it is properly executed by others, like NGOs. Not presenting the broader picture, how the pieces fit together, and who does what and when and for what reasons, only condemns CA to commit repeated errors in future missions. Absence of this basic information can result in mission creep in the field, whereas fully informed and thinking officers may be in a position to plan for mission shift.

This level of training for CA personnel would not normally be an issue, except that development is exactly the activity they have now become involved within Afghanistan and Iraq. Their superficial training, and rudimentary understanding, of how to best provide assistance makes CA susceptible to sophistic projects in the field and can cause more harm than good.

At a higher level, the discourse within the U.S. Army could use advancement and refining.<sup>li</sup> For example, how to run a CMOC is rehearsed, rather than improving the way in which the CMOC operates. More specifically, training for Iraq was described as a “cluster \_\_\_\_\_”<sup>lii</sup> which focused on common tasks. Entering a combat zone, military common tasks are essential survival skills, but advanced preparation needed for mission success seems to have been ignored. The need for security meant that CA personnel could not prepare themselves for the areas in which they would be deployed.

Further, while the civilian professional qualifications of U.S. Army reserve CA personnel are frequently touted,<sup>liii</sup> in reality, skills are infrequently matched to any effect. Qualified lawyers and city planners, for example, are not necessarily placed on government support teams.<sup>liv</sup> The reasons for this may be based on “personnel reasons” where the assumption is that their CA training is the most important qualifying factor.<sup>lv</sup>

For their part, humanitarian organizations need to continue and increase the training provided to their staff. This guideline is outlined in the People in Aid Code, Principle #6.<sup>lvi</sup> Board of Directors should mandate training and senior managers should further develop their staff and mobilize adequate resources to do so. At the industry level, opportunities exist but should be expanded and strengthened instead of the ad hoc approach relied upon to this point. Donors need to be an integral part of this process.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The relationship between humanitarians and the military has taken two steps back following recent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq. There are three reasons for this situation.

First, there is growing negativity in the interactions between the humanitarian workers and the military. While politically motivated in part, there are very legitimate operational concerns, including a blurring of humanitarian principles. Second, there is a failure to provide basic security in Afghanistan and Iraq as witnessed by the continuing unrest in Afghanistan and the August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 attack against the UN in Baghdad. Finally, there is frustration over the lack of progress in what are thought to be “lessons learned.”

Over time, especially in light of the efforts already made, it is normal to assume that progress can be further achieved in improving the relationship between humanitarians and the military. As Fitz-Gerald and Neal point out regarding the lessons learned of the past decade, “in many cases the recommendations require a major institutional change before action can be taken, but the required change is not achieved. The research indicated that the problem seemed to be the fact that people, particularly the more operational types, were not reading the evaluations or, if they were, just putting them on the shelves and forgetting about them.”<sup>lvii</sup>

But the damage is far from irreparable and operations in the near future, perhaps starting with Liberia, may represent a new milestone. The fundamental point is that the onus seems to be on the military to alter the way they operate when working alongside humanitarians. Humanitarians, by definition and purpose, must maintain the principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality in helping those in need. For their part, humanitarians should be open-minded (to the fact, for example, that coalition forces normally make genuine efforts to better the situation) while remaining true to their guiding principles, both personal and organizational.

The military, on the other hand, has a much more singular purpose, which is winning wars. Provided that strategic, operational and tactical objectives are fulfilled, interaction with civilians can be carried out in various ways, and not necessarily in its present form. According to the Cuny Center report, the “DoD can't improve its fit in humanitarian operations without first improving its memory, its recording of what its impact was. A chief failure of DoD's after-action reports to date is that they record the lessons of humanitarian activities using methods that are not rigorous, and which do not take into account the perspectives of achievement of other actors.”<sup>lviii</sup>

U.S. Army CA units have a value-added, force multiplier, combat support role. Their overall mission is first, to help separate or clear civilians away from battle areas to increase the efficiency of military operations, and second, to build stability once fighting has stopped. In Iraq, and to a lesser degree in Afghanistan, spiraling violence and a blurred line between war and peace have complicated this second mission. This has led to a reluctance of humanitarians to work closely with active combatants.

It is the fact that CA's role spans across the spectrum of conflict into peace that troubles many humanitarians. “How can combatants be humanitarians?” was a frequent refrain among relief workers in Afghanistan referring to coalition soldiers, who went from shooting the enemy to fixing schools. Yet, the “blurring of the lines” seems to be part of a larger trend in the humanitarian industry and so perhaps humanitarians need to find a way to deal with it.<sup>lix</sup>

At the least, what is needed is further dialogue and clarification between the military and humanitarians if the cycle of relearning lessons is to end. For the military, this means a full

reexamination of the way they do business, leading to real change. And for humanitarians, rather than decreased dialogue, what is needed is a greater unity of effort and clarity of both core principles and operational issues. Humanitarians might benefit from further codification or guidelines regarding their relationship with the military.<sup>lx</sup> To be sure, flexibility is crucial and this is the likely reason something more significant has not been in place before now. As Barry and Jefferys observe, such engagement is “not a shift to humanitarian minimalism, purism or isolationism – it is a clear affirmation of a commitment to the principles and values enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and in the Red Cross Code of Conduct.”<sup>lxi</sup>

Internal change within U.S. Army CA will almost certainly be called for in the after-action reviews of Iraq. Although it is unclear what the results will be, altering the organization, equipment and structure of CA will likely be recommended by some. There is a need for a larger number of junior enlisted CA soldiers. “We just don’t have enough people to get things done,” commented one officer.<sup>lxii</sup> Such changes may address some of the lessons learned outlined in this paper.

Just like humanitarian organizations, some CA battalions do well while others struggle. These units can also be personality driven to a degree higher than expected. This plays out in the field by some CA units facilitating humanitarian work while others might inadvertently compete with them while trying to do “something good.” Commenting on where to go post-Iraq for civil affairs, one soldier commented, “The best idea might be to scrap the whole thing, and contract it out.”<sup>lxiii</sup>

In conclusion, there are several questions to consider for further analysis. At the geopolitical level, the main question remains: How can the military successes in Afghanistan and Iraq be translated into durable peace? To move the humanitarian-military relationship again forward, three significant questions deserve close examination.

First, what is the best use of resources? Collective thought should be devoted to determining results that can be translated into best practices. This analysis should be comprehensive and take quality of outcome into account as well as quantity of output by humanitarians, the military and other actors in relief and post-war reconstruction. If the existing force structure cannot achieve the mission, then why sink so many resources into PRTs and other ‘solutions’ that aren’t working? There is room for the military to carry out civic action projects to gain good will at home while “winning hearts and minds” in theater, but the budgets given to Coalition forces seem to be out of proportion with these goals, which are not the same as total reconstruction of the infrastructure and national institutions. As has been mentioned, military forces are more expensive to field and it is this “overhead” that could be used to go directly to help those in need.

Second, an important question to consider for the continuation of this discourse is: Do the people on the ground (e.g. local inhabitants, beneficiaries, host country nationals) care about the distinctions between humanitarians and the military? Is it the case that they often see them as one and the same? After all, those of the terrorist ilk do not distinguish between civilians and combatants. The way in which the last UN expatriate was killed in Afghanistan and the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad serves to illustrate this point. Yet, the discussion of the relationship between the Coalition military operations and humanitarians working in the same area rests firmly in a cosmopolitan discourse where nuances in differences over rights and responsibilities matters. In any case, Barry and Jefferys seem

correct in placing the primacy on the beneficiaries: “the civil-military debate needs to be realigned to center first and foremost on the people in need in a humanitarian response.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

Finally, is the association between development and security becoming more complete? Do the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq represent a fulfillment of the new hegemonic paradigm? In some ways, it is still too early to tell, but unless such massive interventions continue, it seems unlikely. Liberia is one case in point where the mission is not moving forward for want of the full commitment of human resources and equipment yet to be fulfilled by UN member states. Therefore the lessons of the past decade are not now without relevance.

The following pictures taken by the Author reflect aspects of life in Iraq and Afghanistan.



*Figure 1:* Iraq, centre of Nasiriyah (where the Italian military have been attacked in winter 2003).



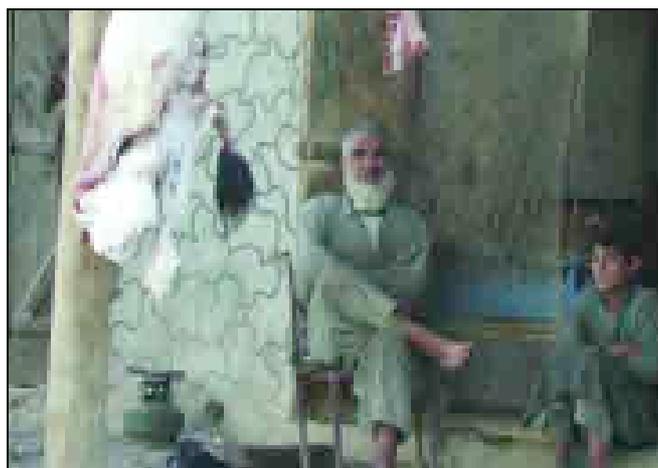
*Figure 2:* Iraq, burned out hospital near Al-Amara, a place near the border to Iran and the Marsh Arabs.



*Figure 3:* Afghanistan, Afghan soldier in Farah province, Western region.



*Figure 4:* Afghanistan, Farah province, Andjela with field staff in March 2003.



*Figure 5:* Afghanistan, Farah province, man sitting in front of his street shop.



*Figure 6:* Afghanistan Farah province, school children sitting on the floor curiously listening to the teacher.



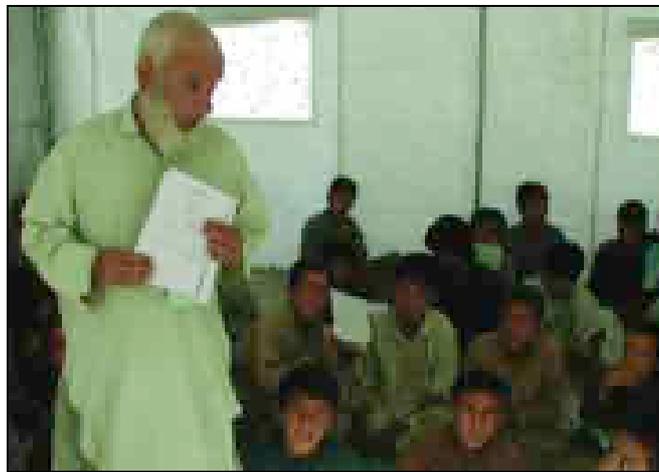
*Figure 7:* Afghanistan, Badghis province, medical staff in a run-down hospital in Bala Murghab.



*Figure 8:* Afghanistan, Farah province, shop owners.



*Figure 9:* Afghanistan, Farah province, Afghan working in his shop.



*Figure 10:* Afghanistan, Farah province, teacher with his class.



*Figure 11:* Iraq, little girl we found in a hospital near Al-Amara.



*Figure 12:* Afghanistan, Andjela in Chakcharan, Ghor province, Central Afghanistan (and full of poppy seeds and opium).



*Figure 13:* Iraqi Shiite woman in Safwan, a border crossing town near Kuwait.



*Figure 14:* Afghanistan, Herat City.



*Figure 15:* Iraq, Nasiriya, street shop and a tailor.



*Figure 16:* Iraq, Aid distribution near to a hospital near Basra with the US military, just a few days after the fall of the regime, April 2003.



*Figure 17:* Iraq, Nasiriya, children on the street.



Figure 18: Afghanistan, Badghis province, people in Bala Murghab try to get sufficient water with very low quality and hygiene

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>i</sup> See, e.g., Kaldor, Mary *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- <sup>ii</sup> See, e.g., Chapter 2 of Fred Halliday's *Two Hours that Shook the World*. London: Saqi Books, 2002.
- <sup>iii</sup> By the military, I mean specifically those from Western democracies and mostly refer to the U.S. Army and others, namely the British Army, in this paper. U.S. Army Civil Affairs units are discussed most closely in this article as the main point of contact for humanitarians in the field – but other forces are active in their area including the U.S. Marines. By humanitarians, I refer primarily to staff of non-governmental organizations (or private voluntary organizations) and some other organizations like UN agencies that implement programs in post-conflict settings. For the purposes of this paper, the term humanitarian and “relief workers” can be used interchangeably. I would separate donors, politicians and others attached to different international organizations because they are not strictly bound to humanitarian principles. Private companies, acting as contractors for the management of large bilateral rehabilitation efforts, are recipients of big business in both Iraq and Afghanistan. While these business contracts are seen as a way to reduce the cost of government and efficiently implement reconstruction grants, these actors may lack the principled and community-based approaches humanitarians rely on. While it is a likely a topic debate and ripe for further research, the increased use of contractors may represent a step back to the now debunked “old style” development.
- <sup>iv</sup> See, e.g., Jervis, Robert “The Compulsive Empire,” *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 137, July-August 2003, pp. 83-87.
- <sup>v</sup> Minear, Larry, “Humanitarian Action in an Age of Terrorism: Background Paper International Expert Conference,” accessed 15 July 2003 <http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/abstracts/haat.html> May 2002, pp. 3-6.
- <sup>vi</sup> *Op Cit.*
- <sup>vii</sup> Pugh, Michael, “Civil-Military Relations in Peace Support Operations: hegemony or emancipation?” London: ODI, February 2001, p. 2.
- <sup>viii</sup> See, e.g., Morris, Tim “Civil-military relations in Afghanistan” *Forced Migration Review* #13, accessed 9 August 2003 <http://www.fmreview.org/1frames.htm>, p. 14. This is also based on this author's personal observations in Afghanistan.
- <sup>ix</sup> Personal observation. In Kunduz, for example, the Coalition was “uninvited” to area NGO meetings. In Kabul, the CJCMOTF held its own meetings which few NGOs attended and ISAF CIMIC attended UN weekly coordination meetings.
- <sup>x</sup> The PRTs were at first called “provisional reconstruction teams.”
- <sup>xi</sup> ISAF of course has its own civil affairs (CIMIC) units, which carry out assistance projects and other activities within their area of responsibility in and around Kabul.

- xii Speech made at a ribbon cutting at the Kabul Medical Institute, accessed 17 July 2003, <http://U.S.embassy.state.gov/posts/af1/wwwwhsp021023.html> October 23, 2002.
- xiii CNN, "Donald Rumsfeld Addresses Reporters," accessed 17 July 2003 <http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0304/26/se.02.html>, April 26, 2003
- xiv Jim Garamone, "The Alamo in Afghanistan," *American Forces Press Service*, accessed 5 August 2003, [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2003/n07312003\\_200307313.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2003/n07312003_200307313.html). And Low, Christian, "Nation Building: U.S. Civil Affairs troops are working in post-war Afghanistan right now. They'll soon see action in Iraq." *Army Times*, 6 June 2003. Civil Affairs teams, it is noted, "will act as middle men--and women--to help get contractors in and construction projects done for local villages."
- xv Zeller, Shawn, "Activist attacks U.S. military relief effort in Afghanistan," accessed 17 July 2002 <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/051303sz1.htm>, May 13, 2003
- xvi This from a 14 August 2003 interview with Dominic Nutt of Christian Aid, BBC televised interview
- xvii It is true that Iraq is in many ways a tribal society. Scot Ritter provides a brief overview in Chapter 3 of his *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Crisis*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. See also Dunnigan, James, "Winning the Peace in Iraq," accessed 15 August 2003 <http://www.strategypage.com/dls/articles/20030307.asp>, 4 March 2003.
- xxiii McConnell, Kathryn, Washington File, "Goal of Army Civil Affairs Unit is Minimal Uprooting of Iraqis," accessed 15 August 2003, <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/03031708.htm>. See also U.S. Army Field Manual 41-10 *Civil Affairs* (2000), which details the different tasks which Civil Affairs may undertake, including "dislocated civilian planning" in Appendix B in different levels of conflict intensity.
- xix See, e.g., Nash, Douglas "Civil Affairs in the Gulf War: Administration of an occupied town," *Special Warfare*, October 1994 pp.18-27
- xx Actually, modern Civil Affairs units trace their lineage to the closing phases of the Second World War when massive civilian displacement and reconstruction was needed. At that time, entire CA divisions were formed and carried out many of the same missions they are tasks with in Afghanistan and Iraq. For a short historical overview see, e.g., Gordon, Stuart, "Understanding the priorities for civil-military co-operation" *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, accessed 15 August 2003, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a068.htm>, 13 July 2001.
- xxi A list of their meetings is available on the CPA website.
- xxii Before the recent war, an estimated 60% of Iraqi's relied on food provided through the UN and its oil-for-food program. To operate in Iraq while it was under sanctions, U.S.-based humanitarian organizations had to obtain licensed permission (OFAC) from the U.S. State Department. Some organizations were active, especially in Kurdish areas, but the coordination structures and level of experience among staff is less than found in many other countries.
- xxiii Fitz-Gerald, Ann, and Neal, Derrick "A Strategic Management Framework for Improved Aid Delivery" Unpublished paper. 2003, p. 7
- xxiv *Op. Cit.*, p. 8
- xxv Beauregard notes that six principle factors have hampered civil-military cooperation and coordination: varying cultures and ideologies, organizational structures, communication breakdowns, independence of NGOs, impartiality, and use of force. My list is slightly more concise but concurs with his thesis. Beauregard, Andre "Civil Military Relations: Lessons from Somalia, the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda" *Ploughshares Monitor*, December 1998, accessed 10 Jul 03 <http://www.ploughshares.ca/content/MONITOR/mond98g.html>.
- xxvi The post-Gulf War I Operation Provide Comfort to assist Kurds where the military arrived more or less first and provided much of the direct assistance seems to be an exception rather than the rule. See e.g. Davidson, Lisa, Hayes, Margaret, and Landon, James "Humanitarian and Peace Operations: NGOs and the Military in the Interagency Process" Washington: NDU Press Book, accessed 3 July, <http://www.dodccrp.org/ngoIndex.html>, December 1996.
- xxvii *Ibid.* Gordon.
- xxviii One particular exchange is highlighted by Larry Minear (*Ibid.* p. 11) in which a CA officer asked an operational NGO for assistance with a project, and the organization's manager reaffirmed his view on their respective roles.
- xxix It continues, "This is essential to ensure that (1) it is founded on the knowledge and experience of the assistance community in Afghanistan, (2) it integrates effectively with existing civilian-led assistance coordination efforts, and (3) it is driven primarily by the aim of achieving long-term positive impact for Afghan communities." Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief. "ACBAR policy brief: NGOs concerns and recommendations on civil-military relations," accessed 25 July 2003 <http://www.reliefweb.int>, 7 Dec 2002
- xxx Unattributable interview with a Civil Affairs officer. 1 August 2003, Baghdad.

- xxxvi Duffield, Mark, "NGO Relief in War Zones: Toward an Analysis of the New Aid Paradigm," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1999, pp. 527-542.
- xxxvii These have even been white as observed by this author in Sierra Leone, among other places, in March 2003. Editor's "Letter Critiques U.S. Military Dress in Afghanistan" accessed 12 August 2003, <http://www.humanitarianimes.org/article.php?sid=101>, 12 May 2002.
- xxxviii Siegel, Adam, "Civil-Military Marriage Counseling: Can this Union Be Saved?" *Special Warfare*, December 2002, p. 30
- xxxix Although this may have been corrected, this was true of the enlisted basic civil affairs course in 2001.
- xl *Ibid.* Beauregard
- xli This was the case in Iraq in August 2003 and earlier in Afghanistan. Interestingly, the Coalition provided mobile cellular phones at no cost to many humanitarian in Baghdad.
- xlii The UN official Antonio Donini distinguishes between three types of coordination; from strong "by command," loser "by consensus" and "by default." See his "The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda" *Occasional Paper #22*, Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1996.
- xliiii Recommendation made in August 2000 U.S. Institute of Peace Workshop entitled "Taking it to the Next Level: Civilian-Military Cooperation in Complex Emergencies" accessed 26 August 2003 [www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/activities/vdiplo-share/cmce.html](http://www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/activities/vdiplo-share/cmce.html)
- xliiii Unattributable telephone interview with humanitarian manager dated 6 July 2003.
- xl See, e.g., Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, June 1995, p. IV-6
- xli *Ibid.* Pugh, p. 2.
- xlii U.S. Ambassador Robert Finn Speech made at ribbon cutting at Kabul Medical Institute, accessed 15 July 03 <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/af1/wwwhsp021023.html> October 23, 2002
- xliiii *Ibid.* Zeller.
- xliiii *Ibid.* Siegel. See also, the Stimson Center report, <http://www.stimson.org>, which costs the yearly price of a U.S. soldier in Afghanistan at US\$215,000 while humanitarians usually cost a tenth of this.
- xliiii Kennedy, Harold "Pentagon Broadens Duties for its Civil Affairs Teams" *National Defense*, <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/article.cfm?Id=1034>, February 2003
- xliiii See e.g. Gordon, Stuart, "Understanding the priorities for civil-military co-operation" *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a068.htm>, posted 13 July 2001
- xliiii According to several sources, during the first year of Coalition operations in Afghanistan October 2001 to October 2002, over \$10 billion went to military operations while \$1.16 billion was spent on humanitarian relief and \$0.37 billion for reconstruction. The dollar amount per person in Afghanistan has been a fraction of other recent crisis including East Timor and Rwanda. See, e.g., "Not a Dress Rehearsal," *The Economist*, 16 August 2003, pp. 41-43.
- xliiii *Ibid.* Minear p. 7
- xliiii Accessed at <http://www.thecunycenter.org/publications/greaterefficiency.pdf>, p. 119
- l *Ibid.* Gordon.
- li Several articles found regarding Civil Affairs at the Center for Army Lessons Learned (available at <http://call.army.mil/Products>) illustrate this point.
- lii This was the sentiment of several personnel spoken to in Baghdad.
- liii *Ibid.* McConnell.
- liiii Unattributable interview, 1 Aug 03 Baghdad
- liiii Telephone Interview 26 July 03
- liiii This code is available at [www.peopleinaid.org.uk](http://www.peopleinaid.org.uk)
- liiii *Ibid.* Fitz-Gerald p. 7
- liiii *Ibid.* p. 118
- liiii As noted by David Lewis of the LSE: "There are many blurred lines in this new world – corporates and academics, many aware of funding opportunities and the legitimacy conferred by NGO status are starting to work as NGOs." Ensuring the Independence of NGOs in New Funding Environments. Accessed 3 Aug 03 <http://www.bond.org.uk/futures/independence.htm#report> 13 Dec 1999.
- liiii Many organizations have forwarded guidelines for the way in which humanitarians coordinate with the military but there is no single accepted policy. Perhaps the most widely known is that of the Red Cross which states that, "we will never knowingly - or through negligence - allow ourselves, or our employees, to be used to gather information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are strictly humanitarian, nor will we act as instruments of foreign policy of donor governments," available at <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>. The UN drafted the so-called "Oslo Guidelines" in 1994 o establish some basis for interaction between UN and government militaries, see "Guidelines on the Use of

Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster Relief” Project DPR 213/3 MCDA, UNHHA-Geneva, [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int), May 1994. Some bilateral governments have established their own recommendations including the Australian aid agency ACFOA in 2002, available at:

[http://www.reliefweb.int/w/lib.nsf/libHome?ReadForm&Query=libByKeyword\\_7&cat=Civil+and+Military+Cooperation](http://www.reliefweb.int/w/lib.nsf/libHome?ReadForm&Query=libByKeyword_7&cat=Civil+and+Military+Cooperation). OXFAM, among others, drafted its own position paper outlining its stance regarding military forces carrying out what would normally be humanitarian tasks in Iraq. See “Iraq: Humanitarian-Military Relations,” *Oxfam Briefing Paper 41*, available at [www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/41iraq/41iraq.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/41iraq/41iraq.html).

<sup>lxi</sup> Barry, Jane and Jefferys, Anna “A bridge too far: aid agencies and the military in humanitarian response” *Humanitarian Practice Network*, Overseas Development Institute, Jan 2002, p. 15

<sup>lxii</sup> Unattributable interview. 1 August 2003, Baghdad.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Unattributable interview. 30 July 2003, Baghdad.

<sup>lxiv</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barry p. 15