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**CIVILIAN AND MILITARY MEANS OF PROVIDING AND SUPPORTING
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE DURING CONFLICT: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS**

(Note by the Secretariat)

This document presents the findings of the study commissioned by the DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the comparative advantages and costs of civilian and military means of providing and supporting humanitarian assistance during conflict. This study was completed by the Refugee Policy Group and is submitted as BACKGROUND for discussion by the Task Force at its meeting on 29-30 September 1997.

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I. Introduction

Scope of the study

1. The goal of this study is an examination of the delivery and support of humanitarian aid in conflict environments. The principal focus of the study will be an assessment of the comparative advantage of military and civilian means of delivering and supporting humanitarian assistance. Comparative advantage will be assessed through the lenses of experience and mandate, uniqueness, cost-efficiency, timeliness, impact on longer-term development goals and reliability. The study will also examine how to best co-ordinate civil and military means and assess the standby capacities that exist for humanitarian assistance.

2. Throughout this study reference will be made to the military and civilian sectors. The military sector includes all national militaries and the contingents of these involved in various types of multilateral operations, including United Nations peacekeeping. The military cannot, of course, be thought of as one entity. There are enormous disparities between the capabilities of various national militaries. Throughout this paper, the focus will principally be on the militaries that have been most involved in recent humanitarian operations--those of the developed nations.¹ Further distinctions will be made as necessary. The civilian sector is similarly diverse. It incorporates the various specialised United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the commercial sector. The commercial sector is in many ways quite distinct from the other civilian actors and in some contexts it will be examined separately.

3. The subject of this paper is humanitarian assistance in conflict environments, exactly what constitutes a conflict environment is not self-evident. Most serious natural disasters, for example, can produce security concerns as civil authority temporarily breaks down. For the purposes of this paper, a conflict environment will be one in which there is significant and sustained fighting between two or more factions or one in which there remains significant potential for the resumption of conflict. The existence of a cease-fire does not in itself make a situation non-conflictual. Excluded from this study will be cases like Haiti, where low-level political terror rather than sustained combat was the dominant characteristic and natural disaster situations, unless they have coincided with or caused significant combat.

4. It should be noted that humanitarian assistance in conflictual or chaotic environments--often termed complex emergencies--is but one segment of humanitarian assistance. In the vast majority of

¹ Peacekeeping operations, however, have traditionally drawn upon militaries from the developing world and when humanitarian operations interface with peacekeeping missions, their capabilities become relevant.

cases, local governments and the civilian humanitarian sector have the capacity to respond to disaster or disorder and humanitarian aid can be channelled through them. The cases that will be the principal examples in this study are those in which the traditional means of response have been either disabled or have proved insufficient. It should be understood that the attention this report pays to the military's capabilities is a result of the study's emphasis on humanitarian assistance in conflict environments, a situation in which the traditional means of response are in many cases inadequate.

5. There has been much discussion in recent years on the connection between peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. This inter-action has become increasingly important; recent emergencies have often involved both humanitarian and peacekeeping elements. No useful report can or should fully separate these elements. This study will not, however, attempt to provide advice on when and how peacekeeping or enforcement missions should be deployed or what their goals should be.

The evolving rationale for the military's involvement in humanitarian assistance

6. The last decade has seen an upswing in civil and ethnic strife, conflict which in many cases has spawned serious humanitarian crises. The enhanced political flexibility of the post-Cold War world, the greater availability of images and information on humanitarian crises and the significant normative developments in human rights have led the international community to demand a response to these crises, many of which would have gone unaddressed in earlier periods.

7. In seeking to address the humanitarian consequences of internal conflict, the international community has drawn upon both old and new methods. On the one hand, actors like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others have been extensively involved in meeting the humanitarian needs of those affected. Indeed, these organisations have expanded significantly in the face of the growing need. Yet the international community has also turned to other methods, including the substantial use of military assets. The military, of course, has never been completely absent from relief operations. National militaries have often engaged in relief operations during and after conflict, as well as in the context of natural disasters. The frequency and depth of the military's involvement in recent humanitarian operations represents a significant departure, however, and one that requires examination.

8. The decisions to use national militaries in addressing the humanitarian crises caused by civil conflict have been, as is the case with nearly all governmental action, political decisions. Each government has had to reach the decision to involve its military through its own deliberative process and in the context of its own political constraints. Yet it is possible to identify two common motivations for the involvement of the military in humanitarian operations. The first is the understanding that adequately addressing humanitarian crises often requires means beyond those of the actors and agencies whose province has been humanitarian assistance. It is often argued that the capacities of traditional humanitarian agencies are simply inadequate for addressing the massive and sudden human need that has accompanied many recent complex emergencies. Second, the presence of severe humanitarian need in conflictual environments has produced a further rationale for the military's involvement: its ability to provide security. In many complex emergencies, warfare between factions or pervasive chaos can make delivery of humanitarian assistance through traditional means nearly impossible. The military seems to offer a solution. **Concerns about logistical capacity and security are therefore at the heart of the military's expanded role in humanitarian assistance operations.**

9. To these reasons could be added a third: the political benefits that arise from a national military's involvement in humanitarian operations. During this study, it was a frequently heard comment of those

involved in humanitarian operations that the military provides a visible and valuable symbol of action in the face of severe human suffering. The need to appear active in the face of humanitarian crises is a foreign policy concern that can, at times, operate independently of objective assessments of what is needed to support a humanitarian assistance operation. Providing humanitarian assistance and military support to it is, in many cases, an admission that governments are either unwilling or unable to provide real political solutions. Humanitarian assistance can become a facade behind which lies a political vacuum. In other cases, by contrast, a state's decision to involve its military in humanitarian assistance can mask a particular political agenda as regards the recipient state. Unlike some civilian actors, national militaries are not independent agents but instruments subservient to political authorities, priorities and timetables.

Types of involvement

10. The military's involvement in the provision and support of humanitarian assistance is not a subject that lends itself to simple or universal answers. Military involvement in humanitarian assistance has taken a variety of different shapes and forms. A prerequisite to effectively evaluating the recent involvement of the military is distinguishing between the different types of involvement. A comparison of different means of providing and supporting humanitarian assistance cannot be made without the proper perspective. The particular context within which the military provides or supports humanitarian assistance can yield answers to the questions of comparative advantage and co-ordination quite different from those in a different context. Specifically, there are two concepts that are essential to distinguishing between different types of military involvement in recent complex emergencies.

11. The first is the distinction between political and humanitarian action. A political response to a complex emergency would entail addressing the underlying problems that have contributed to the emergency, such as conflict, human rights abuses, or economic instability. These responses might take the form of diplomatic action, development assistance (including institution-building), and various forms of sanctions. Political responses involving the military can take the form of traditional peacekeeping missions, advisory and training missions, and peace enforcement. A humanitarian response attempts to address the effects of an emergency by providing assistance and saving lives. Humanitarian action has hitherto been considered apolitical and the traditional principles behind humanitarian action are impartiality, neutrality and independence. While recent events have brought these characteristics into question, humanitarian action will remain, to some degree, separate from political action. The distinction between a military force with a political agenda and one with a humanitarian agenda does not mean that the former may not engage in humanitarian assistance. There are numerous cases of political missions assisting in the provision of aid. This inter-action between the political and the humanitarian can have complications, however, and must be scrutinised.

12. The second is the distinction between consensual and non-consensual activity. Consent has been a prerequisite in traditional humanitarian assistance, as the standard operating procedures of the ICRC demonstrate. Aid is delivered only after agreement has been reached with the faction or party in control of the territory and population for which the aid is intended. Consent was also a fundamental requirement of Cold War peacekeeping missions, which were authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. The post-Cold War, however, has seen significant changes both in attitudes toward consent and in the mechanics of acquiring consent. The international community has in certain cases shown itself to be unwilling to tolerate the denial of humanitarian assistance to needy populations. This unwillingness has several times resulted in Chapter VII mandates (that do not require consent) for those military forces assisting in the delivery of aid. The nature of post-Cold War conflict has made acquiring consent, even if it is sought, more difficult. Often internal conflict is between numerous factions, the discipline of which is low and the leadership of which is unclear. Gaining firm consent in these situations is difficult in the best of times.

13. With these distinctions in mind, it is possible to produce categories for the military's involvement in humanitarian assistance.

Support to an ongoing humanitarian operation

14. The first form of military assistance to humanitarian operations is support to an ongoing civilian humanitarian assistance operation. In these cases, military assistance is purely a support to humanitarian efforts. Examples of this type of involvement are the involvement of Belgian and other aircraft in Operation Lifeline Sudan, the contribution by the American government of military aircraft for the Mombassa airlift in 1991, and recent military assistance to refugee populations in eastern Zaire and Rwanda. In Goma in 1994, for example, military units from several states provided airlift capacity, water sanitation teams, and engineering expertise. This support generally comes in the form of bilateral assistance. In the Great Lakes crisis, the U.S., Canada, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, Israel and Ireland all contributed military resources as support to the humanitarian operation. In general, forms of assistance to an ongoing humanitarian operation might be airlift and ground transport, engineering, infrastructural repair, and communications and co-ordination capabilities. In certain cases, military support might include the direct delivery of aid or the provision of manpower for tasks such as digging latrines.

15. In theory, one form of support that the military could provide to an ongoing humanitarian operation is security, for airfields, warehouses, convoys or personnel themselves. The provision of security, however, is a difficult task and could alter the military's involvement from simple support to humanitarian intervention. This issue will be explored in more detail below. As a general rule, however, humanitarian assistance operations, and the military support to them, are characterised by a humanitarian rather than political focus and consensual means.

Forceful humanitarian intervention

16. The post-Cold War period has also seen the large-scale introduction of military forces into a country or region explicitly to protect, through force if necessary, the delivery of humanitarian aid. The principal examples of this are the multilateral operations in northern Iraq, Bosnia, and Somalia. In northern Iraq, forces from the allied coalition established a security zone in northern Iraq, transported refugees from the mountains of Turkey back into Iraq, set up camps and provided direct assistance. The operation was justified under a Chapter VII resolution and had the means and will to use force in support of the humanitarian objectives. The operation was handed over to civilian agencies like UNHCR and CARE, though a residual security presence remained.

17. In the case of the former Yugoslavia, UN forces were first introduced in a customary peacekeeping role: monitoring a negotiated cease-fire between Croat and Serb forces. With the spreading of the conflict to Bosnia, however, peacekeepers moved into that country with an explicitly humanitarian mandate. Peacekeepers were to safeguard the Sarajevo airport so that relief supplies could reach the city and to protect humanitarian aid convoys throughout the country. As the conflict continued, UNPROFOR's mandate expanded to include the protection of 'safe areas'. During its time in Bosnia, UNPROFOR acquired a Chapter VII mandate and was granted the right to use force to achieve its humanitarian aims.²

² Though UNPROFOR had authorization to use force in support of its mission, it generally chose not to and operated principally on the basis of consent.

18. In Somalia, an American-led intervention force (UNITAF) entered Somalia in December 1991 with the stated purpose of protecting the distribution of aid and, where necessary, actually distributing humanitarian aid. After several months, UNITAF handed over the operation to UNOSOM II, a UN operation that took responsibility for ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid as well as certain other political responsibilities. Both UNITAF and UNOSOM were given Chapter VII mandates and were authorized to use force in pursuit of their humanitarian aims. The distinguishing characteristics of humanitarian intervention are a humanitarian focus mixed with at least potentially non-consensual means.

Humanitarian assistance as an add-on to peacekeeping operations

19. Taken together, these characteristics distinguish humanitarian intervention from another category of military involvement in humanitarian assistance: as a subsidiary element in a peacekeeping mission. Peacekeeping missions are political and strategic in nature; humanitarian objectives are subordinate to these other goals. During the Cold War, peacekeeping operations were mandated with the preservation of negotiated cease-fires. Today, peacekeeping missions have taken on far more ambitious tasks such as the implementation of comprehensive settlements (e.g., Cambodia). While political objectives remain foremost, peacekeeping missions have never completely detached themselves from humanitarian assistance goals. Several recent missions, including those in Cambodia and Mozambique, have involved co-operation in and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In Bosnia, NATO troops have involved themselves in certain reconstruction and humanitarian assistance projects. Nonetheless, the distinguishing feature of humanitarian assistance as an add-on to peacekeeping is the subordination of the humanitarian to the political.

II. Assessing the Comparative Advantage of Military and Civilian Means

Delineation of tasks

20. The humanitarian needs that occur within or are a result of conflict create vary with the causes of the crisis, the development level of the society, and other factors. Nonetheless, it is possible to construct a list of common humanitarian tasks (both for direct assistance and for support of humanitarian assistance) that recent humanitarian operations have faced. A delineation of needs provides a useful starting point for assessing which sectors can best address them.

- Procurement/ transport/storage:
 - air lift, sea lift, ground transport
 - co-ordination of transport (i.e., air traffic control)
- Direct delivery
- Security
 - -protection of fixed sites (airports, warehouses, etc.)
 - -convoy escorts
 - -mine-clearing
 - -crowd control
- Camp management (shelter and co-ordination)

- Infrastructure repair/ engineering
- Communication and co-ordination networks
- Medical, community health, nutrition
- Search and Rescue/populations movement
- Needs assessment, intelligence (i.e., location of displaced populations)
- Environmental health (including water, sanitation)

General criteria

21. There are a number of criteria which should be used in assessing which of these services can best be provided by which sector. This section will analyse comparative advantage by looking at the experience and mandate of the sectors, unique capabilities that the sectors possess, relative cost, timeliness, reliability and impact on longer-term development goals. It is perhaps important to note that the overall standard by which humanitarian assistance must be judged is effectiveness in saving lives.

22. Assessing comparative advantage between the civilian and military sectors necessitates certain generalisations. As has been noted, the sectors are not homogenous, but comprise numerous different actors with varying capabilities.

Experience and mandate

23. At various times and in a variety of settings, both military and civilian sectors have taken on most of the tasks listed above. Broadly speaking, both sectors retain a capacity to carry out most of these tasks. It is essential to recognise, however, the comparative advantage that comes with the greater experience the civilian sector has in this area. This experience is, of course, a result of the different mandates of the sectors. Militaries are political instruments tasked with the defense of national interests; civilian agencies are less directly tied to political aims and have humanitarian assistance and development as their primary tasks. Therefore it is the civilian sector that is best suited for the great majority of humanitarian tasks, and particularly those involving the direct delivery of assistance:

- **The civilian sector can more efficiently acquire the supplies necessary in humanitarian assistance operations.** The advantage of the civilian sector lies less in large standby stocks (militaries generally have far larger stocks) and more in the knowledge of what materials are needed in what situations and the ability to simplify and streamline needs. Within the military (and particularly Western militaries) there is a “predisposition...toward state-of-the-art solutions to basic problems when simpler approaches may be more effective.”³ The experience of the civilian sector in assessing needs and procuring necessary supplies, and its freedom from many of the other logistical requirements that national militaries face, make civilian supply lines more effective in providing materials for humanitarian assistance.
- **The medical capabilities within the civilian sector are more suited to the needs of populations affected by humanitarian emergencies.** Military field hospitals respond most effectively to the needs of wounded soldiers, and must be adapted significantly to meet the needs of the malnourished, the elderly and the young. Moreover, the military field hospital

³ Larry Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue* (Development Centre: OECD)

itself is a unit not well-suited to the needs of large populations in humanitarian crises, particularly those involving refugees. The civilian sector is more capable of providing the community health care, outreach programs and basic emergency medical care (such as rehydration) that is often needed in these situations.

- **Civilian agencies are more proficient at assessing and utilising local resources and at interacting with the local population.** National military forces, for security and other reasons, tend to sequester themselves from the local population.⁴ The higher degree of interaction that the civilian community maintains with local populations is important in developing and creating local resources for humanitarian assistance. These qualities regularly make the civilian sector, and particularly NGOs, more efficient by opening up avenues for local purchase and more effective in seizing opportunities to work with local communities.
- **Civilian agencies are more capable of managing refugee camps,** an important task in many humanitarian assistance operations. UN agencies and NGOs are generally well-versed in UNHCR guidelines for providing humanitarian assistance, health care, and education and for managing the inter-actions between the refugee community and those providing assistance.⁵ Civilian agencies are also more effective and experienced in the issues of repatriation and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons.
- **Civilian agencies have a comparative advantage in the provision of water and sanitation.** Certain civilian actors, notably European NGOs like Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and Action Internationale Contre la Faim (AICF) have developed water and sanitation technologies and capabilities with the needs of large displaced populations in mind. Existing military capacities, while impressive and often helpful when civilian capacities have been surpassed, are not particularly well-suited to humanitarian assistance environments. Nor are the military personnel responsible for this equipment experienced in how to put it to best use in a large-scale humanitarian crisis. The military water units in Goma in 1994, for example, were best suited to provide high-quality water to small populations, rather than adequate water to large populations.⁶

Uniqueness

24. The civilian sector, however, is not capable of carrying out all tasks necessary in humanitarian assistance operations during conflict. It is possible to isolate a few areas in which the military sector possesses a unique capability. These capabilities all fall within the domain of support to humanitarian assistance operations. These are outlined in some depth because the existence of unique military capabilities would, in the cases when these capabilities are required, provide a clear rationale for the involvement of the military in humanitarian assistance.

25. **Security:** Traditionally, humanitarian aid in conflict situations has been the province of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is given the mandate of protecting humanitarian law by the Geneva conventions. Strict neutrality and impartiality are the operating principles of the ICRC,

⁴ The difference between military and civilian sector approaches was clear in the wake of the military intervention in Somalia. UNITAF constructed a walled city for its troops and invited NGOs to move their compounds inside, a step that most were unwilling to take.

⁵ As recent events in eastern Zaire have demonstrated, security in camps remains a problem, and one for which military resources are perhaps best suited to respond.

⁶ Vassel-Adams, G. (1994), *Rwanda: An Agenda for International Action*, (Oxford: Oxfam Publications).

and the expectation was that by demonstrating strict neutrality, humanitarian workers would be permitted access to conflict areas. A central element in the rationale for neutral humanitarian aid was that all parties would conclude that allowing aid was to their advantage. The type of conflict that has characterised the post-Cold War has challenged that assumption. Aid, in many conflicts, has become a valuable weapon. Particularly in Bosnia, where siege warfare returned as a principal means of combat, aid to alleviate sieges was rarely perceived as neutral or impartial. In Somalia, aid was a valued commodity and the warring factions often made its capture a principal goal of military undertakings. Traditional state armies have been replaced by militias and factions as the principal actors in conflict. The increased complexity and decreased discipline and accountability that have come with this shift have made aid delivery even more difficult.

26. The result has been a significant change in the obstacles that humanitarian workers face. Once seen as above the conflict, they now can find themselves part of it. Security has become a common concern. The military would seem to have an obvious comparative advantage in the provision of security. It was this assumption that lay behind the deployments to Bosnia and Somalia. In both cases, it was judged that military force was necessary to support the delivery of humanitarian aid. In both cases, the military had a measure of success. In Somalia, the military presence allowed the delivery of aid to areas of Somalia that had been isolated for months. Military escorts for convoys and military presence at feeding centers and warehouses drastically reduced the looting that had been commonplace before the deployment. In Bosnia, the effect of military escorts was less clear, though it is beyond dispute that in many cases aid got through because of the military presence. The military in Bosnia also provided necessary support by clearing and repairing roads and bridges.

27. Yet there are concerns both from the military and the civilian perspective that temper the military's comparative advantage in the provision of security. From the civilian perspective, the military sometimes increased insecurity by making the aid that it protected a target for those opposed to the military presence. These concerns increased as the military took on a more assertive posture. At the root of civilian concern were fears that close association with the military could undermine the neutrality, impartiality and independence that characterises humanitarian aid. The ICRC has never accepted military escorts for its convoys, and other aid agencies are also wary of doing so in some cases, notably those in which the military is engaging in coercive operations.

28. From the military perspective, the provision of security for humanitarian aid has difficulties as well. Escorting convoys often means putting soldiers in isolated and exposed positions. Yet provision of security in a more systematic way (by creating safe areas, for example) risks involving the soldiers in the ongoing conflict. There is a growing unwillingness, especially among Western countries, to put soldiers at risk in humanitarian operations. The effects of this policy are clear. In the recent crises in central Africa, international military forces were reluctant to engage in a security function for fear of taking casualties and becoming entangled in an ongoing conflict. These factors created the strange situation of the military engaging in all tasks but that task for which it is most directly trained.

29. In the context of civil conflict and breakdown, however, the alternatives are not clear. Local authorities are either not available (in the case of societal breakdown) or are parties to the conflict. Prior and subsequent to the international military intervention in Somalia, aid agencies hired private guards. This provided a measure of security to convoys and warehouses, but the practice also, in effect, fed Somalia's war economy. Since the departure of international troops from Somalia, aid agencies have pulled out and now rely on measures such as meeting clan leaders across the border in Kenya to distribute relief supplies. In Liberia, aid agencies also pulled out for a while in the face of a deteriorating security situation.

30. Without the military playing a security role, humanitarian agencies must either accept the risks of delivering aid in a conflict environment, pull out of certain situations or find alternative sources of security. One possible alternative to the use of military forces is some type of international police force. In Cambodia and Bosnia, international police forces have been a significant element of the United Nations operations. In neither place, however, were these forces explicitly charged with assisting in the delivery or support of humanitarian assistance. These police forces have usually been assigned monitoring functions and have been either lightly armed or unarmed. It is unlikely that within these constraints they will represent a realistic security alternative. The UN Guards contingent in northern Iraq has, by contrast, provided security for humanitarian convoys. Yet this contingent has not encountered the levels of insecurity that exist in other situations, and being lightly-armed it is not clear how well they could adapt to heightened danger.

31. In recent years, there have been proposals for creating a UN force specifically mandated to provide protection for humanitarian assistance. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has recently discussed this in the context of refugee camp security. Consensus on the need for such a force is still distant, however, and action even farther away. There is also discussion in some quarters of hiring mercenary forces for security, though this concept raises troubling questions about the legitimacy and credibility of humanitarian operations. It is therefore a conclusion of this study that **national military forces have a unique capacity to provide security for the provision of assistance in conflict environments.**

32. **Intelligence/Aerial Reconnaissance:** In conflict environments, a military presence can often provide intelligence and security information otherwise unavailable to the humanitarian community. Principal humanitarian actors in Bosnia, for example, have cited intelligence as the most important service that the military forces provided. In Somalia as well, the military conducted useful security briefings for humanitarian workers. Yet in both cases, the military was able to provide useful intelligence because of its immense manpower and geographic reach. A small military deployment assigned merely to logistically assist a civilian humanitarian operation would likely be unable to provide a similar service.

33. Recent events in eastern Zaire demonstrated that an aerial intelligence capacity can be an important element in certain humanitarian operations. For several weeks after refugees in Zaire's eastern camps fled deeper into the country, humanitarian agencies were uncertain as to the location and size of the refugee population. Military assets, both satellite imagery and photo-reconnaissance aircraft, proved useful, though there remains controversy as to whether these resources were used in the best manner possible. The British and American militaries flew several missions with the express purpose of providing information to humanitarian agencies. The UN and selected NGOs also carried out some photo reconnaissance, but the military resources in this area are superior and likely will remain so for the foreseeable future. The military's special capacities in intelligence can be particularly important in planning for humanitarian operations, particularly as regards surveillance.

34. **Certain airlift capabilities:** The military has in recent years played an active role in the provision of airlift capabilities. This role is not a new one. Military aircraft have been involved in humanitarian operations for a number of years in places like Cambodia, Sudan and Ethiopia. This involvement has intensified in recent years, however. Military airlift capacity played an important role in the several phases of the Somalia operation, throughout the former Yugoslav operations, and during the recent major assistance operations in central Africa.

35. The comparative advantage of the military in this sector has, however, been increasingly brought into question by the growing availability of commercial airlift. Former military cargo planes from the Soviet armed forces, for example, have become widely available on the commercial market. Commercial

flights are often as readily available and more cost-efficient than military flights. The World Food Programme and many NGOs have come to rely on commercial arrangements. The availability of large commercial air transport means that airlift in general is no longer a unique capacity of the military.

36. The military (and particularly the U.S. military) retains, however, an ability to mount a massive and rapid airlift that the commercial sector simply does not have. When such an airlift is a necessity, the military sector must be seen as the holder of a unique capability. Moreover, the military has a near monopoly on heavy-lift helicopters, which have proven extremely useful in search-and-rescue type operations.⁷ In both northern Iraq in 1991 and in Georgia in 1993, military helicopters proved capable of moving thousands of displaced persons from mountains to safer ground where the provision of aid was possible. In Liberia, aid personnel and others had to be evacuated with U.S. military helicopters because commercial craft were either unavailable or unwilling to assist.

37. The military also has a unique ability to conduct airdrops, which have been used as a means of providing humanitarian assistance in several recent operations. That the efficacy of these airlifts has in several cases been questioned, does not indicate that they may not be a needed capacity in future humanitarian operations. Low-level airdrops in particular can be useful for the distribution of aid in those situations that do not permit a substantial ground presence.

38. **Command and control/communications capacity:** The military is trained to manage complex operations in hostile environments; indeed, this is the principal military mission. This background provides the military with a unique ability to set up and run headquarters and communications facilities in the context of conflict or insecurity. Recent operations have indicated that this type of expertise can be a significant contribution to humanitarian operations. In Bosnia, military officers co-ordinated air and ground transport arrangements for the UN relief effort and in eastern Zaire the U.S. military co-ordinated the airlift for several months. In both cases, most observers felt that the military's organisational skills were, if not indispensable, at least highly useful. One advantage of this type of military assistance is that it need not be large in scale. Communications or command and control cells can often be seconded to civilian agencies. The military also has the capability to provide secure communications, which can be a necessity in conflict environments.

39. **Maritime operations:** Many national militaries possess maritime capabilities that can be important in humanitarian assistance operations. The utility of these resources in humanitarian assistance was demonstrated (though outside of a conflict setting) during the U.S. Navy's involvement in Bangladesh after a major typhoon left large parts of the country under water. Civilian actors do not possess comparable capabilities.

40. **Nuclear, biological and chemical (NCB) response:** Recent humanitarian emergencies in conflictual environments have been characterised by low-level conventional warfare. This will likely not always remain the case. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction means that future humanitarian emergencies might involve responding to the contamination that these weapons can spread. In this area, the military (and national civil defence mechanisms) have a unique ability to respond. NATO has engaged in planning for such emergencies in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. But these are not the only regions in which this type of emergency is a threat. Preparing for this type of humanitarian emergency--through either military or civilian means--will be an important task for the international community in the coming years.

⁷ Helicopters, particularly those from the military forces of the former Soviet Union, are becoming available more readily on the commercial market.

Relative cost

41. The issue of the relative cost of different means of delivering and supporting humanitarian assistance is a difficult one, and previous studies, including some devoted entirely to researching cost, have generally avoided putting forward conclusions on the subject. While extracting and interpreting comprehensive cost data has not been possible, this study puts forward several conclusions. These conclusions are presented as hypotheses that can and should be modified in the light of further analysis and information.

42. The first issue to address in the area of relative costs is this: cost for whom? Conclusions will be vastly different as the perspective varies. If, for example, a national military offers its airlift services to the United Nations at a nominal cost, accepting that service is obviously a cost-effective choice for the UN; chartering a plane through commercial means would entail a cost far greater. Yet from the perspective of the national government, which must cover the cost of the plane's operations, the same might not be true. **This report will approach cost from the vantage point of national governments.** From this perspective, several conclusions can be made:

43. **On a task-by-task basis, the military is generally more costly than civilian means.** The cost of military airlift for a given tonnage, for example, will be higher than the cost associated with commercial airlift. One study has estimated that military flights to Goma in 1994 were 4-8 times more expensive than commercial flights.⁸ There are several reasons for this, but the principal one is that military means are designed not to be cost-effective but to be fail-safe. Military procedures involve safeguards, redundancies, and limitations that often do not exist with civilian means. Cargo planes operated by the military, for example, often fly at significantly below capacity because of safety guidelines. Fourteen U.S. military planes involved in the airlift to Somalia in 1991 carried no more cargo than several commercial cargo planes because of requirements that they not fly with a capacity load.⁹ Moreover, when military means are engaged, the significant costs of paying for the military backup and support that follows become significant. The introduction of military assets in a conflictual environment usually means the introduction of significant security for those assets, and the cost of this back-up is considerable. In this way, military assets generate costs that are not associated with other types of assets. Civilian and commercial means are, in general, leaner and less redundant.

44. The costs of national militaries providing security for large humanitarian assistance operations will far exceed the costs of providing the aid itself. The military operations launched in Somalia for the purposes of supporting humanitarian assistance, for example, cost from five to ten times as much as the actual humanitarian assistance operation during that period. The U.S. government spent \$1.5 billion on its military response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. During that same period, it spent only \$311 million on humanitarian assistance.¹⁰ Similarly in Bosnia, UNPROFOR's cost vastly exceeded that of the civilian assistance operation. The fact that in both cases, military personnel and equipment were used in some cases for direct delivery does not undermine the general conclusion. It must be emphasized, however, that in many cases the existence of an effective humanitarian assistance operation will depend on the military's presence.

⁸ Alistair Hallam, "Cost Effectiveness Analysis: A Useful Tool for the Assessment and Evaluation of Relief Operations." Overseas Development Institute, 1996.

⁹ "Hope Restored? Humanitarian Aid in Somalia, 1990-1994" (Washington: The Refugee Policy Group), 1994.

¹⁰ Source: Memorandum from U.S. State Department Bureau of International Organization Affairs, based on data from GAO, OSD, USAID and the State Department.

45. When military assets are already deployed (either for humanitarian assistance or for peacekeeping), the marginal cost of using these personnel and resources will be low. In these cases then, the military can be a cost-effective means of delivering and supporting humanitarian assistance. Military transport with surplus space have often provided cost-free transport for humanitarian supplies and personnel. Military engineering battalions have in many cases done work for the humanitarian community for which it was not strictly tasked. The British Overseas Development Agency has even used British troops as direct implementing partners for assistance projects. The additional costs charged by the military to ODA are competitive with those NGOs would charge.

46. The costs of military deployments for humanitarian assistance operations are generally borne by defence ministries or, in the case of peacekeeping, by the United Nations. Each government has its own means of budgeting, but it appears that only in selected cases are costs charged to foreign affairs or development ministries. National militaries will, however, often seek additional resources for its efforts in humanitarian assistance. The U.S. military sought supplemental budgets in 1993 and 1994, in part because of the unexpected cost of humanitarian assistance operations. It is difficult to determine whether these supplemental costs indirectly detract from funds budgeted for development.

47. In certain cases, a portion of the cost for military involvement in humanitarian assistance can be charged to already extant training accounts. During the UN operations in the former Yugoslavia, for example, some governments paid for military flights into and out of Sarajevo's airport through already-designated training funds. The rationale was that flying into and out of a semi-hostile environment constituted training for pilots and crews. When this kind of accounting procedure is used, the use of military assets becomes more cost-efficient than it might have been otherwise. There is vigorous debate today in certain militaries about the usefulness of humanitarian operations for training purposes and the effect of such operations on readiness. Until consensus has been reached on this point, funding for humanitarian operations by national militaries will be *ad hoc* and difficult to predict.

48. The civilian sector often acquires additional financial resources due to the visibility that the military's involvement brings to a given humanitarian crisis. It is indisputable that the involvement of national militaries raises international awareness of humanitarian need. And from this awareness can come resources from the private sector that might not otherwise be available. The effect of increased awareness, while almost impossible to quantify, is unlikely to be enough to offset the increased cost that comes with the use of military assets.

49. It is unlikely that a government would transfer the funds that would have been allotted for the military directly to the civilian sector. Since the resources put toward a military response may not be fungible, the involvement of the military can in many cases be seen as an added resource for humanitarian assistance. The goodwill and attention that comes with the involvement of a national military can be seen as a foreign policy expenditure that would not be transferred to less visible means of assistance.

50. The question of cost remains largely unresolved and many states which contribute frequently to humanitarian operations still lack consistent and comprehensible means of allocating costs. Further research is necessary both to answer certain questions about relative cost and to determine whether and when the commitment of military resources to humanitarian assistance operations decreases those funds available to the civilian sector or to long-term development work.

Timeliness

51. Humanitarian emergencies often develop rapidly and necessitate an immediate response. The huge population movement that accompanied the Rwandan conflict in 1994 put severe strains on the ability of the international community to react. Similarly, the plight of displaced populations in northern Iraq in the wake of the Gulf War and that of Georgians displaced because of internal conflict placed immediate and pressing humanitarian need before the international community.

52. **It is a conclusion of this study that national militaries have an advantage in responding quickly to large-scale humanitarian need.** One UN official described the awe with which the humanitarian community witnessed the military's operations in northern Iraq during Operation Provide Comfort. The capacity to rapidly move a population from the mountains of northern Iraq and Turkey to camps simply did not exist within the civilian sector. Indeed, the ability of the military to respond quickly provides it with a comparative advantage, at certain times, in fields other than those delineated above. Engineering work, for example, can in general be completed more cheaply and as efficiently by civilian and commercial agencies as by the military. But if a certain engineering task must be completed at high-speed, a military engineering unit might retain the advantage.

53. Yet the frequency and intensity of complex emergencies in the post-Cold War era has seen developments in the ability of civilian agencies to respond. Most UN agencies involved in complex emergencies have developed emergency response mechanisms. The effect of the logistical development of UN agencies has been to "raise the bar" above which military involvement becomes necessary. Both the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have developed emergency response teams to address emerging crises.

54. These developments are reflections of the way in which the civilian sector is adapting to the demands of complex emergencies. Still, it is unlikely that the civilian sector will (and unclear that it should) develop the capacities to respond as quickly or thoroughly as military assets--particularly airlift--permit. A senior official at the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs argues that the relative infrequency of humanitarian crises requiring immediate and massive response beyond that which the civilian sector can provide makes the development of civilian capacities like a permanent airlift capacity unnecessary and fiscally impractical.

Reliability

55. To this point, it has been asserted that the military has certain unique capabilities and an advantage in rapidly projecting large quantities of manpower and supplies. This mix of unique capacity and speed can be, in large-scale and rapid onset disasters, a significant contribution to humanitarian assistance operations. Also, as has been discussed, in some cases the presence of the military to provide security will be a prerequisite for a large-scale humanitarian operation.

56. Yet capacity does not indicate will. The deployment of national militaries will be dependent on the requisite political will. There are no guarantees that national militaries will choose to respond in a timely fashion or with the capacities necessary. Indeed, recent experience has demonstrated that national militaries generally respond with humanitarian assistance only once the crisis phase has been reached or passed. As was the case with security for humanitarian assistance, the military has a distinct advantage in terms of capacity coupled with a politically-based reluctance to utilise that advantage. Given this reality, it would be dangerous for the humanitarian community to rely upon military involvement in responding to humanitarian crises. For while national militaries have been active in recent humanitarian crises, there

have also been numerous cases, including the most recent crisis in the Great Lakes region, in which governments have rejected the use of the military for humanitarian purposes.

57. The military sector's status as an essentially political tool means that it will be an unreliable partner in humanitarian assistance operations. In certain cases, military units from a variety of different countries will offer assistance; in other cases, marshalling military support will be impossible. **Civilian resources, while subject to significant financial as well as certain political constraints and pressures, will be more reliably available for humanitarian assistance. The greater reliability of civilian assets becomes especially important when the question of standby capacities for assistance operations is discussed.**

Compatibility with longer-term development work

58. Humanitarian assistance operations are, it is widely acknowledged, not a fundamental solution to the problems of conflict and instability. These long-term solutions are in the realms of politics and development. The link between relief and development has been an important issue before the international community. This study will not address the mechanics of that link, except as regards the advantages of military and civilian means of delivering assistance in fostering the connection between relief and development.

59. **This study concludes that civilian means of delivering and supporting humanitarian assistance have a distinct advantage in connecting humanitarian assistance to longer-term development goals.** This advantage stems from the ability of civilian agencies (the UN or NGOs) to draw on and develop local resources, to adjust means and procedures to local conditions and to assess and monitor the impact of humanitarian assistance on longer-term development goals.

60. The military's self-sufficiency and cohesion, which provide it with an advantage in term of speed and effectiveness, severely preclude the military's effectiveness in connecting with development work. Several observers have pointed to the efforts of military units in Somalia to reconstruct schools and other public resources. These efforts, while obviously well-intentioned, often could have been better-handled by civilian agencies familiar with procedures for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the reconstruction. This is not to say that the military has no role in promoting reconstruction and development. The British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) is currently using British units in Bosnia as implementing partners for several projects. The principal advantage of the British military was its unmatched field presence and its availability to work in Serb-held areas of Bosnia. But ODA officials admit that this type of work is only possible because conflict has ended. In a conflictual environment, the military would be unable to play this role.

Box 1. A British Civil-Military Partnership in Bosnia

“The Overseas Development Agency has pioneered a new way of co-operating with the Ministry of Defence on aid projects. We have been working with the British contingent of the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Western Bosnia towards our aim of restoring essential services and underpinning the Dayton Accord by making the benefits of peace self-evident...An ODA consultant has been working in the British Civil Affairs Office in Banja Luka to oversee the projects which the military are managing but ODA are funding. 7 million pounds is being provided for this...The Royal Engineers have also been involved in the repair of major roads and bridges destroyed by the war.”¹¹

61. In general, the military’s self-sufficiency restricts the job creation that often accompanies civilian involvement. The military hires far fewer local personnel than do their civilian counterparts. This job creation is generally seen as helpful to longer-term development work and constitutes an advantage to civilian means of providing assistance. In certain cases, however, the disruption that short-term job creation causes in the local economy might actually hinder sustainable development. In these cases, the civilian comparative advantage in this field is reduced.

62. Another area in which the military is not necessarily at a disadvantage in terms of long-term development work is the rebuilding of infrastructure. The military forces in Bosnia, Somalia, for example, conducted large-scale repair on roads, bridges, airports and other facilities. These repairs are undoubtedly of assistance to development goals. Given the massive presence of the military in these situations and the level of insecurity, it is not clear that civilian contractors could have provided this service. Moreover, the military units for such repairs were already on-site and their involvement constituted an add-on cost. In these cases, the military may very well have been the cheaper and most readily available alternative.

63. The civilian sector’s advantage in connecting relief to development does not mean that its ability to do so is significantly developed. There remains much room for improvement in this area. Indeed, some tension between relief and development goals is inevitable. The urgency that is a nearly constant element in humanitarian relief--particularly as regards relief in conflictual environments--often precludes the involvement of local actors and thus hampers the development of local capacities.

64. An important question, but one for which this study will not offer an answer, is where the comparative advantages lies between the humanitarian community and the commercial sector as regards fostering long-term development. Commercial agencies are increasingly involved in humanitarian assistance, and the for-profit sector has an important role to play in long-term development. Ensuring that commercial agencies involved in short-term assistance are aware of longer-term goals is an important task.

Synthesising comparative advantage: Priorities and trade-offs

65. The preceding analysis has produced a somewhat mixed picture in terms of comparative advantage. The military has a few unique capabilities (including the ability to provide security) and it has the capacity to respond more quickly to large-scale need. The civilian sector is more competent and experienced with most relief tasks, is more reliable (by being more free from political constraints), and is more effective at connecting relief to longer-term development work. In making policy, these various and conflicting advantages must be weighed against each other and prioritised. This section will produce recommendations for the prioritisation of these characteristics based on the phase of the humanitarian

¹¹ *Overseas Development*, December 1996.

emergency. It should be noted that the phases of a humanitarian emergency in a conflict environment will not necessarily match the stages of the conflict itself. In certain cases, it is the end of a conflict (with the victory of one side, for example) that will produce a large-scale humanitarian emergency. It is also important to note that security requirements can run throughout these phases and thus, to some extent, act independently of them. The need for security varies with the phase of the conflict rather than the phase of the emergency.

The early phase: Responding to the 'surge'

66. In rapid onset emergencies, such as that witnessed in Goma following the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees, the loss of life is usually most severe in the early stages of the emergency. During this 'surge', as it is often called, the numbers of lives lost will be a direct result of the time it takes for assistance to reach the area. In the early stages of such an emergency, timeliness must often be the principal determinant in the decision of which assets to deploy. When large numbers of lives are immediately at risk, issues of experience, cost-effectiveness, and impact on longer-term development may have to be subordinated to the necessity of an immediate response. The necessity for speed does not mean that cost considerations are irrelevant in these circumstances. Given the military's superior ability to project manpower and supplies in great quantities, the priority of timeliness will, in some cases, dictate the use of military assets.

67. Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq provides a useful example of how the requirement of timeliness can dictate the choice of assets. When large segments of the Kurdish population fled into the mountains, military assets were the only ones capable of responding in a timely fashion to the emergency that soon developed. Military personnel were therefore involved in most aspects of humanitarian assistance, from direct distribution to the set-up of medical facilities. As the situation stabilised and as civilian actors began to arrive, a hand-off was effected.

68. It should be noted that in many cases civilian capacities will be capable of responding in a timely manner. As has been discussed, civilian capacities for rapid response have developed significantly in recent years. Moreover, the choice of assets will often depend on the location of various assets. In 1991, American naval units happened to be passing through the area as a cyclone produced an immediate humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. The American assets were quickly re-deployed to assist. When civilian assets are deployed in the proximity of a rapid onset emergency, it may be that timeliness will be on their side. NGOs and other civilian actors, because they are often already on location when emergencies arise, are in these cases well-situated to respond. The significant civilian presence in the Great Lakes region when conflict broke out again in late 1996 made these assets an appropriate first-line of response. Similarly, the significant and continuing WFP and UNICEF presence in Sudan has allowed the civilian sector to respond to the periodic surges in humanitarian need there without the involvement of the military.

The middle phase: Rationalisation of assets

69. When the surge phase has passed, timeliness should yield its priority to considerations like experience, cost-effectiveness and impact on longer term development and in these areas, the civilian sector has a marked advantage. Military assets deployed in the interest of a timely response should be replaced with more suitable, sustainable and cost-effective civilian means. The exception to this general rule must be those cases in which the military is deployed in a peacekeeping role and when its assets have been offered to the humanitarian effort. Achieving cost-effectiveness in ongoing humanitarian operations

is important in rationalising the expenditure of resources for overseas development assistance, an increasing portion of which is going to humanitarian assistance.

70. Once past the crisis phase, both civilian and military assets should pay increased attention to the ways in which relief efforts impact longer-term development goals. As some observers have pointed out, however, “experience demonstrates that a rigid distinction between relief and development, between aid aimed at saving lives and promoting self-reliant livelihoods on the one hand and, on the other, various forms of longer-term and more structurally oriented development aid often proves arbitrary.”¹²

The end phase: Transition to development

71. When the end of a humanitarian emergency is in sight, the impact of relief work on longer-term development becomes the priority. This will dictate not merely the choice of assets between civilian and military sectors but also within them. Those civilian agencies most capable of fostering longer-term development should play increasingly prominent roles.

72. Development personnel should become more engaged in ongoing tasks, including some tasks typically considered under the rubric of humanitarian assistance, like de-mining and the reintegration of demobilised soldiers. Especially in the case of de-mining, it is essential that the society itself develop capacities to continue the work once international relief personnel have departed. In many conflict zones, adequate de-mining can require decades of persistent work.

III. Co-ordination of Civilian and Military Means of Humanitarian Assistance

73. Once a decision has been taken to involve both military and civilian elements in the support or delivery of humanitarian assistance, the question becomes how these means should be co-ordinated. Analyses of recent operations have consistently produced calls for enhanced co-operation. These recommendations are only valid in part. What is essential in all cases is a clear delineation of roles for civilian and military elements. In certain cases, this delineation will lead to enhanced co-operation; in others, it will keep co-operation to a minimum.

74. It is on the question of civil-military co-ordination that the typology of the military’s role in humanitarian assistance operations becomes important. The three categories were: assistance to an ongoing humanitarian operation, assistance through forceful humanitarian intervention, and assistance as an add-on to a peacekeeping mission. Each of these categories has unique implications for civil-military co-operation and generalisation across these categories yields little of value.

75. In discussing civil-military co-operation in humanitarian assistance, it is decisive that the concept of humanitarian assistance be further defined and elaborated. For as most humanitarian agencies assert, there is a distinction to be made between simple relief work and humanitarian assistance. The latter grounds itself in the principles of impartiality, neutrality and the non-use of force. The International Committee of the Red Cross has, through its work, best demonstrated how these principles are to be carried out in conflictual environments. Assistance is to be provided, whenever possible, directly to the victims. Aid is delivered on the basis of negotiations rather than force, and these negotiations between

¹² “Mobilisation and Allocation of Resources for Post-Conflict Assistance and Identification of Appropriate Modalities for Implementation.” Note by the Delegation of Sweden. (Development Assistance Committee, OECD)

the ICRC and the combatants are to be transparent. This ethos, in slightly varying forms and with greater and lesser degrees of stringency, runs throughout the humanitarian community, from UN agencies to NGOs.

76. These principles of humanitarian assistance are essential background to the question of how civilian and military elements interact. When military forces are engaged in activity that is consistent with these principles (such as traditional peacekeeping), co-operation can be close. When the military is engaged in coercive or non-consensual activity, co-operation will be difficult. Indeed, the ICRC has consistently expressed the view that when UN or international troops are engaged in non-consensual activity, relations between it and these forces must be the same as they would be with any other combatant. Other NGOs are less strict in their views, but most feel that the experience of Somalia, in particular, has taught important lessons about relations between civil and military actors.

77. Representatives in both the military and humanitarian community have consistently expressed the desire for a clear definition of roles. The lack of such a definition, as many feel was evident in operations like those in Somalia and Bosnia, damages the credibility of both civil and military elements. From the humanitarian perspective, too close association with military elements in these conflictual environments damaged the independence and integrity of humanitarian actors. From the military perspective, these ill-defined missions put soldiers in compromising situations that both threatened their safety and, at times, paralysed their operational effectiveness.

Civil-military co-operation in humanitarian assistance operations

78. In this category, military assets are used purely as assistance to an ongoing humanitarian operation. A prominent example is the use of military assets in eastern Zaire during the crisis following the mass exodus to Goma in 1994. This bilateral aid took many forms, some of which are outlined in the table below.¹³

Table 1. Bilateral Military Assistance: Great Lakes Region, 1994

Country	Form of Military Assistance
Australia	Airlift, water purification
Canada	Medical, transport
France ¹⁴	Escort for supplies, security information, transport, direct delivery
Germany	Airlift
Ireland	Secondment of personnel to Irish NGOs
Japan	Medical, sanitation, water purification
Netherlands	Transport, medical, water purification
New Zealand	Airlift
United States	Airlift, water purification, co-ordination, basic repair

¹³ Source: Larry Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue*.

¹⁴ France's principal support came in the context of *Operation Turquoise*, which was authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and constituted forceful humanitarian intervention rather than support to an ongoing humanitarian assistance operation.

79. These contributions, with the exception of those by the French, came as logistical support to a civilian humanitarian assistance operation. In cases like these, **the humanitarian agencies should have the lead in determining which military assets are needed and how they are used.. Military assets should be introduced where and when the civilian actors (be they UN agencies or NGOs) request.** National militaries will not generally permit their personnel to be under the command of civilian authorities.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the use of military units should be, in effect, co-ordinated by the leading civilian authorities. Military units operating without proper co-ordination with civilian elements have the potential to be inefficient and even counterproductive. Moreover, civilian leadership is essential to preserving the neutral and impartial character of the humanitarian operation. Aside from the inherent benefits that come with neutrality and impartiality (improved access to populations, etc.), their maintenance through civilian control will ensure that humanitarian agencies will continue operating.

80. In response to recent events, several mechanisms for co-operation have been developed for these situations. The principal one is the Military and Civil Defence Unit (MCDU) located within the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs. This unit grew out of discussions in 1992 sponsored by DHA, NATO and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The original intent was to look at ways in which military and civil defence assets could be put to use in natural disasters. That focus has broadened in the last few years to include humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies (including those involving elements of conflict).

Box 2. The 'Oslo Guidelines' for the Use of Military Assets in Humanitarian Assistance

In January 1994, the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) jointly hosted a conference on the use of military assets in humanitarian operations. This conference produced a set of guidelines for when and under what conditions these assets should be used.

- military assets should be used for life-saving and life-supporting operations;
- they should be used only at the request of the Government of an affected State, or at the request of DHA with the agreement of that State;
- the assets should integrate with and support existing disaster relief response;
- they should operate under an integrated civilian management;
- they should be at no cost to the receiving state;
- they should be, in principle, unarmed.¹⁶

81. The MCDU has, through discussions with governments, created a list of 'modules', each of which represents a certain technical or logistical requirement for a humanitarian operation. Governments have been presented with the list of modules and many have expressed interest in providing one or more in the event of their need during a humanitarian operation. When the need arises, the MCDU serves as the interface between the humanitarian agencies in the field and the governments that can provide military assets to assist. The MCDU mechanism was used recently in eastern Zaire and was of use in providing airlift capacity especially.

¹⁵ Arrangements like those that the Irish military has made with several Irish NGOs, through which military personnel are placed within the NGO structure, are notable exceptions to this general rule.

¹⁶ UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Round Table on Military Support for Humanitarian Operations. Final Report (27-28 February 1995).

82. The principal advantage of the MCDU is that it provides one funnel through which military resources can be directed. This has the potential to considerably simplify the use of military assets in complex emergencies. Rather than each humanitarian actor in the field liaising separately with various militaries, the MCDU serves as the interface for the entire humanitarian operation. The 'module' system and the registry of military and civil defence assets is a useful means of creating awareness in both military and civilian sectors of both what is available and what is likely to be required.

83. Another such mechanism that developed as a response to recent events is the 'service package' concept, developed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme. The notion was developed as a result of military involvement in crises involving refugees and displaced persons, notably Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, the Sarajevo airlift, and the Goma refugee crisis of 1994. A list of twenty service packages has been created by UNHCR in consultation with interested governments. WFP also has service packages that could draw upon military resources. A service package is a coherent set of services that can be provided on short notice by an interested government. Examples include airport ground handling services, road transport, or water treatment.¹⁷ The idea behind the service packages is much the same as that behind the MCDU: to effectively channel military resources so as to maximise their contribution and minimise confusion and duplication.

84. There is some potential that the UNHCR and WFP service package models might create duplication of their own. The packages have a great deal in common with the DHA modules, though the service packages are broader in scope. The purpose of DHA was to improve co-ordination in international response to humanitarian emergencies; it seems the logical place for the interface between humanitarian actors and national militaries. The service packages of UN agencies should, in the near future, be folded into the MCDU system. The expertise and work that has gone into the concept should influence and benefit the MCDU system. Three UN agencies are developing somewhat separate relationships with the military sector. The MCDU will have to expand significantly to become an effective and comprehensive filter for military resources.

85. The recommendation that the DHA/MCDU should be primarily responsible for general civil-military co-ordination in humanitarian assistance operations does not mean that it should manage these relationships at the field level as well. In a crisis that falls within the purview of UNHCR, it should have the lead in determining what military assets are required and how they should be deployed. As UNHCR officials point out, in refugee crises it has the responsibility for all aspects of safety and well-being of the refugees, from food and shelter to medical care. It is essential then that an UNHCR official determine how military assets can contribute to the mission. The requests for military support, however, should go through the MCDU. The same principle would apply as regards the World Food Programme in an emergency principally characterised by food shortage. When there are already significant military assets on location, a representative from the lead agency (if one has been so designated) should liaise directly with the military leadership.

Civil-military co-operation in forceful humanitarian intervention

86. A decade ago, the concept of humanitarian intervention was a largely theoretical one. Now, the international community has gained significant experience with the concept. Operations in Bosnia, Somalia and northern Iraq saw forceful intervention (authorized under Chapter VII) for explicitly

¹⁷ Source: "UNHCR Government Service Packages--Summary Note." (30 May 1996)

humanitarian purposes. Some of these operations took place under United Nations command, others were authorized by the UN but undertaken bilaterally.

Table 2. Recent Humanitarian Interventions

Operation	Countries	Type
Provide Comfort northern Iraq, 1991	Multinational, principally American	UN-authorized
UNITAF Somalia, 1992	Multinational, principally American	UN-authorized
Turquoise Rwanda, 1994	Multinational, principally French	UN-authorized
UNPROFOR Bosnia, 1992-95	Multinational	UN force

87. These interventions create a problem for civil-military co-operation: humanitarian agencies are wary of co-operating with international military forces when these forces lack consent and are authorized to use force. Despite this difficulty, there should be close communication between civilian and military sectors in the planning phase for the intervention. Civilian agencies are almost always on the ground already and can provide valuable 'ground truth' to those planning for the intervention. Conversely, the military can provide the humanitarian agencies with information about its intended activities that will lessen confusion once the intervention takes place. Though relief officials generally greeted the U.S.-led intervention in Somalia, they were not drawn into the planning for the mission to the degree that they might have been. The communication between relief agencies and national militaries (particularly the Canadian military) during the recent planning for intervention in eastern Zaire was a hopeful sign that these links are developing at the headquarters level.

88. There should be no illusion that contact between military and civilian actors will produce harmony. In certain cases, the military and civilian goals (though they may both focus on saving lives) will be, in a certain sense, incompatible. One senior relief official, for example, in discussing the planned intervention in eastern Zaire argues that the plan to create "corridors" through which Rwandan refugees would be repatriated would likely have conflicted with the humanitarian community's emphasis on voluntary repatriation. But it is best that the differences in goals be understood beforehand so that confusion and dissension on the ground can be minimised.

89. Once an intervention has taken place, there must be some means for co-ordination on the ground. In Somalia, civil-military co-operation was handled by a Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). Humanitarian actors met regularly with military representatives to discuss security issues and to co-ordinate the delivery of supplies. The Operations Center assisted in the provision of transportation, communications, and other logistical services to civilian agencies requiring its assistance. It also provided security for UN and other civilian humanitarian agencies, their offices and residential compounds. The CMOC was also intended to co-ordinate evacuation should it become necessary. The quality of the work the CMOC did varied greatly with the quality of its leadership. Many military officers assigned to it had little experience in civil affairs; others had the appropriate background. The inconsistency of the CMOC operation demonstrates the importance of national militaries training and maintaining staff trained in civil affairs.

90. The CMOC in Somalia received generally good marks initially, though several NGOs claimed that its officers did not adequately understand their work. NGOs also complained about the military's assumption that it should have the lead in co-ordinating activities. These concerns became more acute as the UN troops in the country began using force more frequently and directed that force increasingly against one faction. As this evolution took place, NGOs felt it necessary to distance themselves more and more from the UN military operation. Many humanitarian actors felt caught off guard by the way in which the mission changed from the escorting of humanitarian assistance to an enforcement action against one of the factions. It is essential that lines of communication between civilian and military actors be kept open during a humanitarian intervention. Civilian agencies should be consulted and informed when and if the military intends to change its stance toward the factions. Humanitarian intervention needs the support, or at least the acquiescence of humanitarian agencies, and this will be difficult to sustain without proper communication.

91. In Bosnia, the nature of the military involvement and the co-ordination with humanitarian agencies was quite different. The military forces involved in UNPROFOR were more lightly armed than UNITAF and UNOSOM II forces, and they were in general more hesitant to use force. Civilian efforts at humanitarian assistance were focused on UNHCR, which had been designated as the lead agency by the Secretary-General. The military's agenda in Bosnia was more subordinate to civilian control than had been the case in Somalia. Co-ordination took place at both the headquarters and field levels between UNPROFOR and UNHCR officials and was, by most accounts, quite good. Military units engaged in a number of engineering and other tasks that supported the humanitarian effort. One senior official involved in the humanitarian effort stated bluntly that very little could have been done without the military. Still, as the military mission became increasingly untenable, and as UNPROFOR began responding with force to violations and provocations, civil-military co-operation became more strained. Some senior humanitarian officials began to question whether association with the military was benefiting the humanitarian effort.

92. This strain is an inevitable by-product of humanitarian intervention, which many in the humanitarian community see as an oxymoron. Humanitarian agencies will rarely be comfortable with the use of force in support of their activities. When the international community has taken the decision to use force, it is to be expected that humanitarian agencies will seek to distance themselves from the military effort. In these cases, the international military forces should provide as much information and assistance as possible, while understanding the need of humanitarian agencies to maintain their distance. At a minimum, there can be communication on safe transportation routes and the evolving military situation. There should be no attempt on the part of the military to control the activities of NGOs and UN agencies as was seen in Somalia.

93. The distance that must be maintained between the humanitarian and civilian elements in forceful intervention means that certain military logistical resources that might be valuable to the humanitarian community may be unavailable.

Civil-military co-operation in a consensual peacekeeping mission

94. When the military is engaged in traditional peacekeeping (that is, activity based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and the non-use of force), the humanitarian community and the military elements can co-ordinate quite closely, and the use of military assets in the support and delivery of humanitarian assistance becomes possible. The UN operations in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) and Cambodia (UNTAC) both saw extensive involvement of the military component in supporting

95. humanitarian assistance. Because both were Chapter VI (consensual) operations, this was generally acceptable to humanitarian actors.

96. Because a peacekeeping mission will often have significant logistical capability on the ground, the military may in these cases acquire a comparative advantage in sectors that it normally would not. For while it might be generally more cost-effective to use a civilian contractor to repair a bridge, this may not be the case when capable military assets are nearby. When the military does engage in significant infrastructure repair, development personnel should be, when possible, informed and consulted so that work is done with an eye to sustainability by the local population and government.

Informal civil-military co-operation

97. In the discussion of co-ordination to this point, it has been assumed that the co-ordination was between entirely separate entities: one civilian, one military. This is, of course, a highly simplified picture. In recent humanitarian operations, civil and military sectors have often interacted in more informal and ad hoc ways. In certain cases, national militaries have seconded specialists to humanitarian agencies. In Bosnia, for example, military specialists were lent to UNHCR and assisted in a variety of capacities, from trucking and security to managing the airlift.

Box 3. The Irish Military and Irish NGOs: An Unofficial Partnership

In 1993, the Irish non-governmental organisation GOAL approached the Irish army about the secondment of officers to their operations in Somalia. The army produced several volunteers who joined the NGO effort there. In July of 1994, as events in Rwanda reached crisis proportions, GOAL again sought volunteers for its operation. Again, the military responded. In the field, seconded officers had the status of any other NGO employee; they were not in uniform and they did not carry arms. From the perspective of NGO officials, however, they brought with them three special skills: training in leadership, a knowledge about security and an ability to deploy quickly. In total, the military contributed 60 personnel to three different humanitarian organisations. The salary and transport costs were borne by the Defence Ministry.¹⁸

98. At another level, retired military personnel have often contributed their expertise to humanitarian agencies. In recent years, several firms have grown up that provide logistics to humanitarian operations and that draw heavily on the expertise of retired military personnel. These innovations are valuable in that they can bring to humanitarian operations some of the skills of the military without bringing the political difficulties and operational dilemmas that often accompany military involvement. This type of informal co-operation has already significantly deepened the operational capacity of the civilian sector and promises to continue doing so.

99. Finally, there is the issue of technology and logistics transfers between the sectors. Some militaries have made it a practice to pass on surplus material to humanitarian organisations, but this practice remains *ad hoc* and unpredictable. Within the necessary security constraints, this practice could be expanded and systematised so that civilian agencies could better utilise useful technologies that exist

¹⁸ Larry Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue*.

within the military sector. Regular meetings between military and civilian officials on the issue of relevant technology and logistics equipment would facilitate this process.

IV. Standby Capacities for Humanitarian Operations

100. Complex emergencies have several times in recent years overwhelmed the ability of the international community to respond. This state of affairs has produced serious discussion of how to develop standby capacities that will permit a rapid and effective response. Some of this discussion has been translated into action; much of it has not. What then are the standby capacities that exist today, and how should they be developed in the future?

Civilian standby capacities

101. The scope and frequency of humanitarian emergencies in the past decade have forced humanitarian actors to adjust. Specialised UN agencies like UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme have become more capable of responding quickly to emergencies. Each of these agencies has set up emergency response mechanisms. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs maintains a warehouse in Pisa with WFP that can allow the rapid disbursement of emergency material. So too have non-governmental organisations become more attuned to crisis response. Many NGOs previously focused on development work have redirected their energies and planning to emergency response. There can be no doubt that the civilian sector's ability to respond quickly has developed in recent years. Some of this improvement is due to the involvement of the military, which has both pressured civilian agencies into expansion and acquainted them with certain logistical capabilities and expertise.

102. Still, there is no central location for a civilian sector, or even UN, standby capacity. The MCDU has the potential to become a co-ordination center, but barring major change in its mandate, it will not itself represent a standby capacity. The World Food Programme possesses perhaps the most-developed standby capacity in the civilian sector. At any one time, WFP has available over twenty chartered aircraft. There is potential for WFP's capacities to serve as the core of a centralised UN logistics standby capacity. Yet the difficulty of one agency providing the logistics for others is a serious one. Each agency has its own set of priorities, and co-ordination in the past has been strained. Some within the civilian community argue that it is not cost-effective for civilian agencies to invest in a permanent logistics capacity in areas like transport. The costs of maintaining aircraft and other equipment, in this view, outweigh those associated with leasing the equipment from commercial agencies or borrowing it from the military.

Military standby capacities

103. National militaries are, by their very nature, standby capacities. Militaries are designed to respond quickly and energetically to unexpected events. The question that has been raised in the post-Cold War is that of the degree to which this standby capacity should be directed toward humanitarian operations.

104. There have been several proposals for developing the military's ability to respond to the security needs in humanitarian emergencies. In the wake of the 1994 killings in Rwanda, the Canadian and Dutch governments were active in putting forward proposals for a rapid-response team. There have been other developments as well:

- The Swedish military has a specially-trained unit for humanitarian emergencies and disaster response that has been designated for call-up by the UN.
- The Australian military has a medical unit on standby for secondment for humanitarian assistance operations.

105. There are also continuing discussions on how a more sizeable military force could be put on standby for humanitarian operations. Recently, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has discussed a standby UN force that could assist in providing security for refugee camps and in separating refugee populations from militarised elements. At the same time, there has been some progress toward creating standby arrangements on the logistical side. The DHA modules and UNHCR service packages that have been discussed above are steps in this direction. Yet neither scheme has been able to secure binding commitments from member states to provide assistance when it is required.

Directions for standby capacities: Reliability and cost-effectiveness

106. It has been argued in this study that the civilian sector has a distinct advantage in reliability. Civilian agencies, be they UN or non-governmental, will be more reliably available to provide humanitarian assistance. This reliability is essential in crafting standby capacities. If a capacity is not reliable it cannot truly be considered a standby capacity. Despite the progress that has been made in certain national militaries (notably the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Canada) toward making military resources more reliably available for humanitarian assistance operations, the primacy and persistence of political constraints indicate that the **standby capacities can be more effectively developed within the civilian sector, either through developing internal capabilities or through more effective and comprehensive relationships with commercial firms.**

V. Conclusions and recommendations

This study reaches the following conclusions:

1. The civilian sector, by virtue of its extensive experience, has a comparative advantage in most aspects of the provision of humanitarian assistance. These areas include the procurement of the supplies necessary for humanitarian assistance, the provision of medical assistance, managing inter-action with local communities, operating refugee camps and facilitating the repatriation and reintegration of the displaced, and providing water and sanitation.
2. Both in size and technical sophistication, civilian agencies at the intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental levels have improved their capacities to respond to large-scale and rapid onset humanitarian emergencies. The 'bar' above which military support is necessary has been raised.
3. The military's involvement in recent humanitarian operations has been the result of three factors: the magnitude of certain recent crises and the inability of civilian capacities to meet all the needs created by them, the need for security in many of these crises, and the desire of governments to appear active in the face of humanitarian need.
4. The military possesses several unique capabilities that might be required in humanitarian assistance operations during conflict. These include the ability to provide security, specialised airlift capacities, maritime resources, reconnaissance and intelligence capacities,

- the ability to rapidly arrange effective communications networks, and the technology to deal with nuclear, biological and chemical threats. National militaries differ widely in capacity, however. It is the militaries of the developed nations that can best provide advanced logistics and intelligence capacities.
5. The political realities that surround the involvement of the military make it an unpredictable asset for humanitarian assistance operations in several ways. First, political constraints often mean that military assets cannot be deployed until after the peak of a crisis has been reached. Second, recent experience indicates that when militaries are deployed for humanitarian purposes their involvement in security matters will be restricted. Finally, the use of the military can at times politicise the delivery of humanitarian aid and threaten the neutrality, impartiality and independence of that aid.
 6. Civilian assets are, in general, more cost-effective. Military means, which are designed to be fail-safe rather than efficient, will cost more task-by task than civilian means. Moreover, the cost of the military providing security for large humanitarian assistance operations will be significantly greater than the cost of providing assistance itself. Further work is necessary to better distinguish between tasks the military can provide in a cost-effective manner and those it cannot.
 7. The cost of military deployments in support of humanitarian assistance is principally borne by defence ministries, and a portion of these costs has been charged to already extant training accounts. When military assets are already deployed, moreover, the marginal cost of using these assets for certain humanitarian assistance and development tasks is often competitive with those of civilian means.
 8. The military, because of its size and technical capacity, has the ability to respond more quickly to large-scale humanitarian need than the civilian sector and possesses a comparative advantage when massive need must be met quickly. Civilian assets, however, are often in the location of emergencies and in these cases they can react most quickly.
 9. The civilian sector has a comparative advantage in connecting relief work to longer-term development goals. The military, however, can play an important role in rehabilitating infrastructure.
 10. In certain cases the military's involvement has permitted a large-scale humanitarian operation where one would not have existed otherwise. Many areas of Bosnia, Somalia, and northern Iraq, for example, would have been left without assistance had there not been a significant military presence.
 11. The involvement of the military has had a beneficial effect on civilian capacities, both by serving as a model for and as a competitor to these actors. Civilian agencies, through their work with the military, have absorbed benefits in terms of expertise in rapid response, command and control and communications. Informal co-operation and contacts between the military and civilian sectors has hastened these developments. Capacities for humanitarian assistance are evolving at a rapid pace.
 12. Mutual understanding between the military and civilian sectors has increased dramatically in the past several years. The two sectors are more aware of each other's capacities and working procedures than in the past. This allows a measure of co-ordination that was not possible in the past.

This study makes the following recommendations:

1. In most cases donors should provide humanitarian assistance through civilian agencies, whose experience, cost-effectiveness, reliability and ability to connect relief to development are superior. Military assets should be used only when civilian capacities have been overstretched or when the security situation makes the presence of the military a prerequisite for the effective delivery of assistance.
2. When the military is deployed in order to provide logistical assistance to a humanitarian operation, civilian authorities should provide guidance as to how these units can best be integrated into the effort.
3. National governments should not charge the use of military units against development or humanitarian assistance accounts except in cases when the military's presence was necessary on strictly humanitarian rather than political grounds. Even in these cases, it should be clear to donors that development and assistance budgets will often be unable to cover the costs of the military's involvement. More work is needed to determine the true incremental costs of the military's involvement.
4. The military and civilian sectors will continue to co-operate on humanitarian assistance, and the links and dialogue that have grown up between the military and civilian sectors should develop further. In the absence of a UN peacekeeping force or national intervention force, there will be a need for a central co-ordination point between the civilian sector and military units assisting it. The Military and Civil Defence Unit (MCDU) of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs has the potential to play this role. This co-ordination mechanism should work closely with other civilian agencies and must expand rather than constrain the activities of these agencies. When there is designated lead agency, however, it is this agency that should manage relations with the military.
5. National governments should establish more effective means of co-ordinating peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations at the headquarters level. This co-ordination cannot be expected to provide harmony in all cases between the goals of the actors, but it can improve understanding and minimise confusion on the ground.
6. Given the apparent infrequency with which national militaries will provide security for humanitarian assistance, donor governments must attempt to address the question of security in humanitarian operations by establishing, in co-ordination with major humanitarian actors, credible and practical guidelines for either finding alternative sources of security or withdrawing in the face of unacceptable risk.
7. When international military units are engaged in forceful or potentially forceful activities, clear communication between the military and humanitarian agencies is necessary to ensure that these activities remain and appear distinct to the parties involved. This separation is essential for maintaining the humanitarian character of relief activities. The Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) model has proved useful in these situations and should be a model for managing civil-military relations in future such operations.
8. The principal humanitarian agencies should continue to develop their own capabilities to respond to emergencies through partnerships with the NGO community and commercial firms. Arrangements with national militaries should be supplemental and should not hinder the development of civilian sector's own capacities. Political constraints dictate that assistance from national militaries will be unpredictable.

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