



Troops maintaining contact with the civilian population, Bosnia.

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CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION: A NEW TOOL FOR PEACEKEEPERS

It is an often repeated truth that peacekeeping has undergone profound changes since the end of the Cold War. Inter-state conflicts that once may have been quelled by the interposition of an impartial force between two opposing armies have been succeeded by far more complex intra-state conflicts involving belligerents who may not operate under a coherent command structure, and who often target members of an opposing group or ethnic minority for the worst forms of humanitarian atrocities.

The changing nature of conflict has forced the evolution of both doctrine and practice in international efforts to restore or preserve peace. While military forces have the training and equipment to bring an end to open fighting, the concurrent demands for humanitarian aid, police training, infrastructure reconstruction, and reconciliation among the population are simply beyond their scope and abilities. These vital roles have in recent years been filled by a large number of civilian organizations and agencies — Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Governmental Organizations

(GOs) and International Organizations (IOs). These civil agencies provide an immense array of essential services, but they have very different operating procedures and organizational cultures than the military, and at times these differences create difficulties that complicate the relationship between the civilian and military bodies. However, civilian agencies are probably the most important elements in creating the conditions for a lasting peace in civil societies that have been torn apart by internal conflict.

The role of military forces in modern intra-state peacekeeping operations should by definition be of a transient nature. Their primary aim should be to create a security situation conducive to the vital work of the civilian organizations, as it is only in a secure environment that local and international civilian organizations can work effectively towards conflict resolution at both

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community and national levels.¹ The length of time that a military force must remain in place in a peacekeeping operation will indeed often depend on how well its members are able to cooperate with the civilian organizations toward achieving a common goal: the restoration of peace and stability.

Civil-military Co-operation (CIMIC) has thus become an important component in a peacekeeping operation. It can help a commander to deal with local authorities (including 'spoilers' in the peace process), it can help him/her work with international civilian

unlikely to be able to operate effectively in these new and complex conflict situations.

THE 'NEW' PEACEKEEPING AND THE ROLE OF THE SOLDIER

Civil Affairs is not a new concept, but its applications have changed markedly since the end of the Cold War. During the Second World War, cooperation with civilians was oriented primarily toward preventing them from interfering with, or becoming victims of the Allied armies. In areas that were already under Allied control, essential supplies were provided to the population through the surviving civilian infrastructure. The dynamics of the military-civilian relationship were 'top down' with the military in charge, and predicated upon a functioning civilian administration through which aid could be effectively distributed.² Relationships between the military and civilians in peacekeeping operations until the end of the Cold War were not dissimilar. Peacekeepers, in what is now regarded as classical peacekeeping, were interposed between two defined forces under control of their respective governments, allowing both sides the opportunity to reach a political settlement without their military forces interfering. In this relatively uncomplicated situation, the existence of an intact government infrastructure on both sides reduced the degree to which peacekeepers had to interact with the populations they were protecting.

The experience of post-Cold War peacekeeping, with only a few exceptions,³ is quite different from these earlier missions. In many recent operations, peacekeepers have been plunged into a complicated ethnic maelstrom characterized by mass murder, if not actual genocide, massive civil displacement (so-called 'ethnic cleansing'), little evident government infrastructure (or local authorities who are themselves part of the problem), and relationships between ethnic groups based on mutual violence and revenge.⁴ Into this complex mix have been thrust a growing number of capable and well-funded internationally-based civilian organizations,

many with specialist capabilities well-suited to both crisis intervention and post-conflict reconstruction. They include UN agencies, NGOs, and civilian relief and development agencies of sovereign governments such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) or the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). While organizations such as these may appreciate the considerable assets that a military mission can bring to bear in a crisis, they tend to regard the military as a useful but short-term asset to overcoming a crisis; the military will leave when the crisis has passed, while they will remain, per-



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Refugees under the protection of Canadian peacekeepers, Bosnia.

resources essential to overall mission success, and it can assist in supporting and preserving military assets by freeing soldiers from non-military responsibilities. The huge increase in the number of civilian organizations involved in peacekeeping and other humanitarian operations in recent years has made CIMIC support an absolute necessity: whereas in the Second World War the International Committee of the Red Cross was the largest of a small number of civilian aid groups, peacekeepers may now be faced with thousands of groups in a single theatre. Without the ability to communicate and coordinate efforts with these groups, the military is

haps for decades. Given their longer-term outlook, international civilian organizations feel little obligation to obey orders from a military commander.⁵ Similarly, the local authorities in an affected country may have mixed feelings about the presence of an international military force. Indeed, the military commander may have to deal with local authorities whose interests and actions undermine the purpose of the mission.

Although both local and international civilian organizations may be ambivalent about an international force, it is in the interests of the military to find ways to cooperate. The military force, despite its often substantial logistical capabilities, is generally incapable of providing food and shelter for an extended period of time, creating employment for refugees, providing individual protection or nurturing a stable government. However, many civilian organizations, within their respective specialties, are skilled at providing such vital assistance, and it is therefore in the interests of the military to interact in a constructive and purposeful way with these organizations to ensure the success of the mission.

While the military must work perform with local authorities, military commanders have often been reluctant to cooperate closely with international civilian organizations and NGOs, usually because of an inherent mistrust that stems from very different institutional cultures. Civilian organizations are less hierarchical than the military — decisions are often taken in committee so there is more freedom of action for individuals within the organization and there is no obligation to take direction from outside their own group.⁶ Problems have also arisen from the reluctance of some groups to cooperate with the military in any way because it could be seen to compromise their security⁷ or their impartiality,⁸ or because of an innate distrust of the military born of past experience.⁹

Among the most common of the problems encountered by military staffs when dealing with international civilian organizations is the sheer number of organizations now associated with every peacekeeping operation. Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, for example, there were 109 humanitarian organizations operating out of Kigali¹⁰, and a 1996 estimate placed the number of NGOs active in Bosnia at 1,700.¹¹ While a large number of civilian organizations can be beneficial — allowing implementation of a wide range of

services and aid activities — it is often difficult for peacekeeping troops to make sense of the plethora of well-meaning organizations or, because of the diversity of their activities, to provide for their security.

A second problem that confronts peacekeepers who must deal with NGOs is the wide range of competence they demonstrate. Fortunately, some are highly effective while others are simply useless. Many small agencies may be very well-connected to the local situation yet lack the administrative capacity to manage the money donated to them. Other groups simply lack the ability to coordinate their actions with outside organizations.¹² The impressions formed by peacekeepers who have seen



Canadian troops delivering supplies to an orphanage in Rwanda.

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some of the less competent agencies, unfortunately, may colour their perception of the whole spectrum of humanitarian aid organizations.¹³

Another area of difficulty encountered by peacekeepers who deal with civilian organizations is what might be called their 'agenda'. The more reputable groups have straight-forward goals and tasks, such as feeding a starving population or providing medical care to victims of a crisis. Different groups, on the other hand, pursue a less clear-cut path. Some NGOs sponsored by church groups, for example, may provide aid only to those people who share their religion.¹⁴ Others may be more concerned with raising money than with helping victims. NGOs of this latter type may, for example, send a team into a crisis situation only long enough to get photographs that can be used in propaganda pamphlets for fund-raising campaigns back home.¹⁵

Still another aspect of some civilian organizations that the military finds distasteful is the level of competitiveness between them. In reality, this often comes down to competition for media coverage: the group with the best TV and press coverage tends to get better financing. The theatrical demeanor of these organizations, their tendency to go into dangerous situations, and their disregard for cooperation with other groups are especially irritating to peacekeepers.¹⁶ This sort of competition is particularly galling when a group places its pursuit of publicity above the goals of

when an NGO announced a major donation to the town. The NGO thought it was more important for them to be seen providing aid to the town than for the humanitarian stakeholders to present a united front. With this NGO's money the mayor was able to ignore pressure to accept minority returns."¹⁷

Many of the military peacekeepers' frustrations with civilian agencies are reciprocated, and they must remember that the military component has a limited function in the peacekeeping mission, a limited period of time that it will be in the area, and that it has no mandate to direct the activities of civilian organizations. Many agencies have an aversion to any form of outside direction, not only because it places limits on their freedom of action but because they have, in the past, seen the results of muddled attempts at direction made by United Nations officials. For many, creative chaos is preferable to botched direction.¹⁸ It seems, however, that with cooperative efforts, movement toward what should be the common goal — restoration of a peaceful, self-sustaining state — could be accelerated.

Since it is known that civilian organizations are generally reluctant to accept direction, and may not be constrained by consensus, successful efforts at military-civil coordination have often been a function of personalities. Attempts to coordinate the actions of the groups involved in a peacekeeping mission have sometimes taken the form of regular, voluntary meetings that at least allow the agencies to be made aware of the actions of other groups, thus minimizing duplication of effort and keeping the military abreast of events that could be of concern to them. The manoeuvring that occurs after these meetings, often over coffee,¹⁹ has a parallel in the common understanding amongst soldiers that a good social relationship with the quartermaster is the best way to facilitate one's own projects. The realization that good relationships with civilian organizations in a crisis area are important to mission success has given rise to a growing appreciation of the importance of CIMIC operations.

The conduct of CIMIC activities in peacekeeping operations is often an exercise in the art of the possible. There have been a number of advances in the way that the military can foster cooperation with civilians in a crisis situation. The evolution of 'CIMIC Houses' and Civil-Military Cooperation Centres, and the use of liaison officers attached to the leading civilian agencies, are innovations that have facilitated interaction between the two groups. Other useful initiatives have been public relations exercises such as the 'guns for gourdes' programme to buy back weapons in



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Young refugee in the Canadian sector, Central Bosnia.

the overall peacekeeping mission. In one example from Bosnia:

A Canadian led team had arranged to halt SFOR-coordinated humanitarian aid to the town of Kotor Varos until the municipal leadership demonstrated a willingness to accept the return of displaced ethnic minorities. The team's efforts were undermined, several days later

Somalia, or the 'adopt a school' programme where soldiers donate their time to repair schools in their area.²⁰ In most cases, these efforts have met with success and serve as a useful model for future operations. While every new situation will undoubtedly require fresh solutions, current doctrine and practice would seem to provide an adequate template for future operations.

While there seems to be little doubt that friction between the military and civilian organizations can be alleviated through cooperation in theatre, the potential for cooperation could be greatly improved by building relationships before a crisis erupts. One small first step might be to have members of both the military and civilian humanitarian aid groups attend some of the many conferences on related topics held every year. If the military were to send representatives to the civilian meetings, and vice versa, the mutual understanding that is so important to the success of the CIMIC mission would have time to develop outside of an operational crisis area. In this respect, the Canadian Forces needs to improve its record. A recent CIMIC conference in San Francisco, for example, was attended by only one Canadian officer, and he had nothing to do with CIMIC.²¹ A second step would be for the military and civilian organizations jointly to send staff members on applicable military and civilian courses, and this is perhaps where Canada could develop a niche specialty. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre regularly runs brief two-week courses on CIMIC.²² Members of leading civilian organizations could be invited to attend these with the officers they are most likely to encounter overseas.

Increased contact with these civilian groups would certainly result in a better understanding of each organization's purpose, goals, assets and abilities. Such knowledge might guide the CIMIC specialist towards those organizations most suited to conduct certain tasks. For the civilian groups, the contact would allow them to gain a greater understanding of the military in general and, specifically, what the military can do to help them accomplish their goals.

CANADIAN CIMIC CAPABILITY

Civil-Military Affairs is a relatively new field of staff specialty within the Canadian Forces, the first CIMIC cell having been formed at 1 Canadian Division Headquarters in 1997. The concepts and procedures of a Canadian CIMIC doctrine have been drawn largely from American Civil-Affairs (CA) doctrine, and the differences are largely matters of semantics and capabilities. Canadian doctrine, for example, tends to emphasize cooperation over direction, reflective of our greater experience with peacekeeping and our more limited resources. A CIMIC manual was published in 1999, and because of broad-based consultations with NGOs and

civilian agencies while it was being written, it has set a very high standard and is widely admired.²³

Despite having innovative doctrine at the national level, fewer than twenty Canadian personnel have had formal training in CIMIC staff matters, and most of these received their qualification at the US Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg.²⁴ This relatively small number has meant that the Canadian Forces are now



Delivering aid to the hospital at Visoko, Bosnia.

often forced to use untrained officers in a CIMIC role. With the value of well-planned and executed CIMIC operations now proven, it would seem appropriate that the Regular Force should be training more officers in CIMIC skills and techniques, and that a CIMIC cell should be established at the national level. These changes would allow civil-military cooperation concepts to be a more effective tool for Canadian commanders in peacekeeping missions.

From the perspective of Canadian CIMIC specialists, the most significant problem is lack of understand-

ing on the part of National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ). There is, for example, no officer at the national level responsible for CIMIC affairs. The resulting lack of communication between NDHQ and CIMIC cells in the field limits responsiveness and leaves specialists without a point of contact for advice on operational matters. NDHQ's lack of awareness was demonstrated during Operation "Assurance" in Bosnia when CIMIC-qualified officers were assigned to completely unrelated tasks. The After Action Report lamented "critical shortages in many functional areas",²⁵ including CIMIC. In response, the J5 (CIMIC) officer corrected the false assumption that there had been a shortage of CIMIC personnel, and recommended that "NDHQ must be made aware of the fact that a competent, trained CIMIC cadre is available within the HQ."²⁶

The small size of the CIMIC staff and their lack of contact with NDHQ is disturbing from an operational perspective because of the potential of CIMIC operations to make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of a peacekeeping mission. After Action Reports dating from 1994 have noted that CIMIC is too important to be left to chance, and that the efforts of all the parties involved should be coordinated to streamline the mission.

There is, fortunately, an increasing appreciation of the value of CIMIC in peacekeeping missions. The Joint Task Force Headquarters CIMIC cell is small but operational, and there are plans to create a CIMIC cell in NDHQ within the next two years. Recommendations have also been put forward that officers selected for CIMIC duty attend the US Civil Affairs course to avoid having to learn their task while on operations.²⁷ Moreover, in a move that could conceivably provide the Canadian Forces with its most specialized CIMIC operators, NDHQ has announced that it intends to create units within the Reserves dedicated to CIMIC.²⁸ This initiative is a partial acknowledgment of the vast, untapped pool of talent available within the Militia whose members can offer a variety of non-traditional military skills that can be used to accomplish military objectives.²⁹

This initiative is also similar to American practice which acknowledges that reservists are potentially excellent CIMIC specialists because their expertise spans both civilian and military applications. The duality allows an appreciation of the ways in which civilian agencies work, but even the Americans experience problems in employing reservists on CIMIC duty. For instance, the majority of American Civil Affairs battalions are composed of reservists whose obligation is to serve two days a month, and two weeks a year, but who may be called upon to serve for longer periods during national emergencies or in the case of a Presidential Selective Reserve Call-up. There are, however, very

few reserve soldiers who are willing to leave their civilian lives for what is often a long-term obligation.³⁰ It stands to reason that Canada will experience this problem with one very important difference — in the US a reservist has job protection. In the event that an American reservist is called to duty, his/her job is guaranteed; if a Canadian reservist volunteers for such duty he/she will lose their civilian job. Since those most likely to hold the civilian qualifications which make them suitable as CIMIC staff are highly skilled, they will surely be reluctant to leave a well-paying civilian job for six months or a year, knowing that it will not be waiting for them when they return. If Canada is to have a viable CIMIC component in its reserve structure, job protection for reservists will be essential.

CONCLUSIONS

Civil-military Cooperation is a new and developing art for the Canadian Forces. Our military is slowly becoming aware that effective use of CIMIC can enhance military effectiveness in peace support operations. By reducing the friction between the Forces and the civilian agencies capable of creating the infrastructure needed for a true and lasting peace, the military is also likely to reduce the size and duration of its commitment. CIMIC operations should thus be allocated sufficient resources to support the mission personnel and train those officers who will implement the programmes. The Canadian Forces must also work to improve the interaction between its staffs and the civilian organizations that will be encountered in an operational theatre. Promoting contact with these organizations in peacetime through conferences and mutual training will pay dividends in operations. The military can also train its soldiers at very little cost through programmes such as the CIMIC Course offered at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. Although the training there may not be as extensive as that offered through the American Civil Affairs Course, it will increase the pool of junior officers and NCMs capable of competently undertaking the range of CIMIC duties. Moreover, by providing a CIMIC cell at NDHQ, the job of these officers will be facilitated by giving them a contact point through which they can receive direction.

Finally, with the initiative to restructure the Reserves to provide expertise that is lacking in the Regular Force — in areas such as language skills and an appreciation of the functioning of civilian organizations — it is vitally important that job protection become a priority. Without job protection, the specialties that the military wants to cultivate in its revamped Reserve Force will never be deployable.



NOTES

1. This is based on the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Cycle proposed by George A. Joulwan and Christopher C. Shoemaker, "Civilian-Military Cooperation in the Prevention of Deadly Conflict: Implementing Agreements in Bosnia and Beyond", *The Carnegie Commission of Preventing Deadly Conflict*, (CD ROM) (New York, 1998).
2. Capt. F.R. McGuire, *Civil Affairs in the Mediterranean, July 1943-May 1945*, National Archives of Canada, RG. 24, Vol 6925, and LCol Nicholson, *Canadian Participation in Civil Affairs/Military Government, Pt V. Germany, General Historical Survey*, National Archives of Canada, RG. 24, Vol 6920.
3. Missions like ONUC in the Congo during the 1960s are examples of Cold War peacekeeping that resemble quite closely that of the Post-Cold War era. United Nations, *The Blue Helmets, A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping*, Ed. 2 (New York, 1990), pp. 213-259.
4. Boutros-Boutros Ghali, *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*: www.un.org/Docs/SG/agsupp.html 1995, pp. 3-4.
5. Thomas G. Weiss, *Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crises* (New York, 1999), pp. 11,17.
6. DND, *Dispatches, Lessons Learned for Soldiers: Lessons Learned in Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)*, (1999), pp. 20-21.
7. In some cases, NGOs have noted that a military presence in their compound may make them a target to local belligerents who see foreign troops as a compromise of the NGOs neutrality. In other cases a military presence scares away legitimate refugees who may have been displaced by their own military and are therefore wary of any person wearing a uniform. *ibid.* p. 25.
8. In order for an NGO to get access to the victims of a crisis, impartiality is often a prerequisite. All sides of a conflict appreciate the aid that they receive from these groups.
9. There is a problem, however, when the victims are overwhelmingly on one side. The actions of peacekeepers are therefore often directed against the faction creating the victims. Therefore, it often facilitates the job of NGOs not to be seen to cooperate too overtly with the peacekeeping force so they can maintain their impartiality and continue to aid the victims on both sides. David M. Last, Don Vought, *Interagency Cooperation in Peace Operations: A Conference Report* (Fort Leavenworth, 1994), p. 8.
10. DND, B-GL-300-001/FP-000 *Operations Land and Tactical Air, Vol. 3, Peacekeeping Operations* (Canada, 1995), p. 3-6-1.
11. IFOR Catalogue of NGOs, 1996.
12. During Operation "ASSURANCE", the mission to aid the refugees from the Rwandan Genocide, an offer was made to a certain NGO to ship relief supplies by military airlift. The sole stipulation was to have their cargo in a certain place at a certain time so that it could be shipped, free of charge, by the peacekeeping force. The NGO was unable to organize itself to get their supplies to the airfield. Interview, 1 Canadian Division CIMIC cell, 3 March 2000.
13. Interview, 1 Canadian Division CIMIC Cell, 3 March 2000.
14. John Mackinlay, *A Guide to Peace Support Operations* (Rhode Island, 1996), p. 100.
15. Interview, 1 Canadian Division CIMIC Cell, 3 March 2000.
16. Mackinlay. pp. 111,118.
17. DND, *Dispatches, CIMIC*, p. 22.
18. Weiss, p. 24.
19. David M. Last, *From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding: Theory, Cases, Experiments and Solutions*, (Kingston, RMC Working Paper, 1999), p. 61.
20. DND, *Dispatches, CIMIC*, p. 18.
21. Interview, Major David Last, 12 June 2000.
22. www.cdnpeacekeeping.ns.ca/programmes.
23. DND, B-GG-005-004/AF-023 *Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace, Emergencies, Crisis and War* (Canada, 1999) has been widely praised by Dayton Maxwell of World Vision International and other senior officials consulted in its preparation.
24. There are only an estimated fifteen to twenty officers in Canada who are qualified on either the US CIMIC Course or the NATO CIMIC Course. Interview, 1 Canadian Division CIMIC Cell, 3 March 2000.
25. L.V. de Chantal, 'Op ASSURANCE-J5 Comments-Lessons Learned Staff Action Directive' *Army Lessons Learned Centre Information Warehouse* Version 10.0 (CD ROM)(Canada, 1999).
26. *ibid.*
27. DND. 'Operational Lessons Learned: 1 PPCLI on Op HARMONY, ROTO 4' (1994), *Army Lessons Learned Centre Information Warehouse* Version 10.0 (CD ROM)(Canada, 1999), and 'GB R22R (BATCAN 1)-Op HARMONY ROTO 6, Leçons Apprises' (1995), *Army Lessons Learned Centre Information Warehouse* Version 10.0 (CD ROM)(Canada, 1999).
28. DND. *Rethinking the Total Force: Aligning the Defence Team for the 21st Century*. www.vcds.dnd.ca/vcdsorg/intrest/rethink/part3_e.asp.
29. An example of this is that all nine Haitian linguists used in Canadian Military Information Support Teams (MIST) were Haitian-Canadians drawn from reserve units, mostly in the Montreal area. Interview, Commanding Officer of Canadian MIST teams, 2 August 2000.
30. National Defence University. *Beyond Jointness*, p. 23.