SPECIAL REPORT 147   SEPTEMBER 2005

CONTENTS

Michael J. Dziedzic
Colonel Michael K. Seidl

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

and Military Relations with International and Nongovernmental Organizations in Afghanistan

U.S. Central Command

Summary

- Deployed in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) combine military personnel and civilian staff from the diplomatic corps and developmental agencies. Their mission is to: extend the authority of the

Afghan central government, promote and enhance security, and facilitate humanitarian relief and reconstruction operations.

- Twenty PRTs were currently in operation throughout Afghanistan as of June 2005: thirteen staffed by the U.S.-led coalition and seven by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

- Provincial Reconstruction Teams have confronted a cluster of contentious issues that inevitably arise in combat and other nonpermissive environments to cloud the relationship between international civilian assistance providers and international military forces. These issues include the preservation of the "humanitarian space" that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) require to operate, the role of PRTs in promoting a secure environment, the use of military personnel to provide assistance, and information sharing and coordination.

- Civilian assistance providers insist that they cannot allow their efforts to be perceived as part of the campaign plan of a belligerent force. Otherwise, the "humanitarian space" they need to alleviate suffering—wherever it is found—will be placed in jeopardy, along with the lives of relief workers and those they seek to assist. A clear distinction between civilian and military roles is considered to be vital to the preservation of humanitarian space.

- There are fundamental differences in the way the civilian assistance community and military leaders conceive of a secure environment. The military emphasizes national security, public order, and force protection—all of which are enhanced by assertively addressing and reducing the sources of threat. Civilian assistance providers, on the other hand, equate security with ensuring that belligerents do not perceive them as a threat.

- Humanitarian organizations seek to alleviate suffering without regard for the aid recipient's affiliation with any of the parties to a conflict. When military units in combat provide "humanitarian-type" relief, it is typically associated with political objectives. For military forces confronting an insurgency, it may be a matter of military necessity to ensure that assistance is provided to displaced civilians and that civic action projects are undertaken to cultivate popular support and increase force protection. When the focus shifts from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction, the salient concerns that arise are the blurring of civil and military roles and interference with each other's efforts.

- The optimal level of coordination and information sharing sought by IOs and NGOs involves establishing clear boundaries that preserve the distinction between civil and military communities. Military personnel aspire to a cooperative relationship.

- Among the most useful steps that could be taken to minimize sources of friction between PRT activities and those of the international civilian assistance community are the following:

  – U.S. Army Mission Readiness Exercises (MREs) and predeployment preparation of PRT personnel, both military and civilian, should include an orientation to the role and operating norms of the IO/NGO community.

  – Governments that lead specific PRTs need to ensure that adequate civilian expertise is provided to support PRT activities and that non-military positions are filled on a priority basis.

  – A consultative mechanism is needed in locations where the UN Administrative Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) lacks a presence, so that each PRT can work effectively with IO and NGO counterparts in its area of responsibility. Consultations should be used to identify if there is a need to fill gaps in civilian reconstruction and development projects and when PRTs are no longer needed to address these gaps.

– Measures of effectiveness and endstate objectives should be established for each PRT to assist in determining the duration of its commitment.

• A mechanism should be created to permit a regular dialogue between the major IOs and NGOs involved in humanitarian response and reconstruction activities with U.S. government offices at the Departments of State and Defense that are responsible for stabilization and reconstruction policy.

Introduction

Serious complications arise when international civilian and military personnel are simultaneously involved in providing humanitarian relief or reconstruction assistance in the midst of combat or in other nonpermissive environments. Among the concerns that repeatedly arise are security, the proper role of the military in providing assistance, information sharing, coordination, and preservation of the "humanitarian space" that NGOs and IOs rely upon to perform their tasks. The purpose of this report is to examine the effect that PRTs in Afghanistan have had on these pivotal issues.

After reviewing the deployment and evolution of the PRTs, this report provides a description of the different perspectives from which international civilian assistance providers and military actors view these issues. The impact that PRTs have had on these recurring concerns is the principal focus of this discussion. The report concludes with specific recommendations for PRTs, as well as a general set of suggestions for enhancing the quality of the relationship between military forces and civilian assistance providers when they are operating simultaneously in a combat environment or other nonpermissive situations.

Evolution of the PRT

Prior to the establishment of the first PRTs, Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs) and U.S. Army Civil Affairs Teams–Afghanistan (CAT-As) supported humanitarian assistance, relief, and reconstruction efforts throughout Afghanistan. Civilian reconstruction activities were constrained by the lack of an international security presence in outlying provinces. Operation Enduring Freedom was focused on combat operations, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was restricted to Kabul and its environs with little likelihood of near-term expansion.

In April 2002, President Bush addressed the U.S. commitment to help the Afghan people recover from the Taliban rule. He referenced the success of George C. Marshall's vision to rebuild Europe and Japan after World War II, referring to a "Marshall Plan for Afghanistan." In the summer of 2002, the need to accelerate reconstruction in Afghanistan led the U.S. government to seek a way to "spread the ISAF effect" through the deployment of small U.S.-led coalition elements. In Washington, the Departments of Defense and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) developed a concept to employ interagency civil-military field teams throughout Afghanistan. The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM, headquartered in Tampa, Florida) whose area of responsibility stretches from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia, devised a plan to implement this concept using Joint Regional Teams (JRTs). From the outset in December 2002, Hamid Karzai, the interim president of the Afghan Transitional Authority, was an enthusiastic supporter of the concept. At his request, the name was changed from JRTs to "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" to indicate the purpose as providing support to the government (as opposed to regional power brokers or "warlords") and to denote reconstruction as the principal activity of the teams.

PRTs combine military and civilian personnel from various governmental agencies, including diplomats, specialists in economic development, and a few representatives of

In April 2002, President Bush addressed the U.S. commitment to help the Afghan people recover from the Taliban rule. He referenced the success of George C. Marshall's vision to rebuild Europe and Japan after World War II, referring to a "Marshall Plan for Afghanistan." In the summer of 2002, the need to accelerate reconstruction in Afghanistan led the U.S. government to seek a way to "spread the ISAF effect" through the deployment of small U.S.-led coalition elements.

the Afghan Ministry of Interior. Their mission is to extend the authority of the Afghan central government, promote and enhance security, and facilitate humanitarian relief and reconstruction operations.

The first PRT was established in Gardez in January 2003. As of June 2005, twenty PRTs were functioning—thirteen of which were operated by the U.S.-led coalition for Operation Enduring Freedom, the Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (CFC-A). The major contributors are the United States, New Zealand, the Republic of South Korea, and the United Kingdom. The other seven PRTs fall under the control of ISAF, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are responsible for the ISAF PRTs (the UK originally established a coalition PRT in Mazar-e Sharif that was later transferred to ISAF command.) Canada, Lithuania, and Spain have agreed to either take over an existing PRT or establish a new one. Both the CFC-A and ISAF PRTs operate at the invitation of the Afghan government. ISAF PRTs are also authorized by UN Security Council Resolutions 1386, 1413 and 1444.

PRTs vary in size, scope, and mission focus, and they are tailored to local security, political, and socio-economic dynamics in their area of operations. For instance, the German PRT in Konduz maintains a strict division of responsibility between its military and civilian components. It functions as a "secure guest house" for civilian specialists and employs close to 375 soldiers. In contrast, the UK's PRT in Mazar-e Sharif operates with a much smaller contingent of approximately 100 personnel, and there is a very close working relationship between the military contingent and civilian PRT members from the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development (DFID), and other civilian representatives from Scandinavian countries. Most PRTs belonging to CFC-A operate with an average of 60–80 personnel. U.S. military PRT contingents work very closely with their civilian counterparts from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, and Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as the UK's DFID. This flexibility in sizing and configuration is considered essential to adapt PRT capabilities to the requirements of particular regions or provinces. The mix of civilian and military personnel within PRTs varies accordingly. In general, however, civilian staff levels have been around five to ten percent of the PRTs' total staffing.

Most of the PRTs that began operation in 2003 and 2004 were located in "hotspots" like Asadabad, Tarin Kowt, Lashkar Gah, Farah, Khowst, Sharana, and Qalat, where there was virtually no IO or NGO presence. Selected in collaboration with the Afghan government, these new PRTs started as smaller, outpost-sized contingents. While they have increased the military presence in the provinces, they are not intended to provide point or area security for assistance providers or local citizens. Rather, their presence is designed to serve as a deterrent to insurgents and criminals who had been active in these areas. When confronted by hostile forces, coalition PRTs also have the ability to reach back to significant "over-the-horizon" firepower through the use of close air support and quick reaction forces. This capability has been used to good effect.

The various governments that lead and staff PRTs exercise considerable influence over their day-to-day operations, which complicates coordination and is not conducive to unity of effort throughout Afghanistan. PRTs run by the Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have distinctive makeups that reflect their differing tasks, priorities, and national agendas. They vary with their degree of involvement in facilitating reconstruction efforts, developing the capacity for local governance, implementing counternarcotics programs, promoting demobilization of paramilitary forces, and overseeing security sector reform. This differentiation has an impact both on interaction between CFC-A and ISAF forces and with IOs, NGOs, donors, and lead nations operating programs throughout Afghanistan. As more PRTs transition to NATO/ISAF control and more nations assume responsibility, the challenges associated with coordination and harmonization of functions could increase.

PRTs continue to have flexible mandates and evolve as their local circumstances change. Initially, PRT commanders were given the directive to be "creative" and make

Most of the PRTs that began operation in 2003 and 2004 were located in "hotspots" like Asadabad, Tarin Kowt, Lashkar Gah, Farah, Khowst, Sharana, and Qalat, where there was virtually no IO or NGO presence. Selected in collaboration with the Afghan government, these new PRTs started as smaller, outpost-sized contingents.

things happen quickly. Some of the earliest civilian PRT members were somewhat unsure of their roles and responsibilities, or lacked the ability to initiate large-scale projects because of administrative funding requirements. The focus of PRT efforts has since shifted away from providing humanitarian-type assistance to facilitating security sector reform and reconstruction entailing both brick-and-mortar projects and governance capacity building. In addition, the role of USAID representatives in project identification and nomination for funding has been enhanced for U.S.-run PRTs. A shortage of civilian staff, however, has hampered a more rapid reduction in military roles in the PRTs.

Command-and-control of coalition PRTs has been grouped and centralized under regional commanders, each responsible for one of the three sectors that coalition forces control, improving integration among military PRT members. U.S. State Department and USAID advisors are posted alongside these regional military commanders to assist with coordination and oversight of the PRTs within each sector. In February 2005, moreover, the PRT Executive Steering Committee (comprising the Afghan Ministry of Interior, UNAMA, coalition and ISAF commanders, NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, and ambassadors of the lead PRT nations) promulgated Terms of Reference which are collectively agreed-upon guidelines to create a common operating concept for the PRTs. As coalition PRTs transition to NATO/ISAF control, achieving a common orientation will become increasingly important for facilitating working relations with key governmental, tribal, religious, NGO, and UN leaders in the provinces.

The Impact of PRTs on Civil-Military Relationships

During a natural disaster or a peace operation, there is substantial complementarity in the efforts of international civilian and military assistance providers as they seek to fulfill their respective missions. This congruence is generally not the case in a combat environment and other nonpermissive contexts. As demonstrated during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, when international coalition forces are one of the combatants, considerable friction is introduced into the civil-military relationship. Military activities undertaken to defeat Taliban and al Qaeda forces in 2001 and 2002 created conflict with IO and NGO efforts to alleviate human suffering.[1]

As the emphasis of coalition military forces in Afghanistan transitioned from combat operations to stabilization, the deployment of PRTs created a new context for civil-military interaction, but a persistent cluster of issues continued to cloud the relationship—specifically differing views on preserving "humanitarian space," establishing a secure environment, providing assistance, and coordinating and sharing information.

The perspectives of IOs and NGOs involved in providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance are described below for each of these issues, in parallel with those of PRT members.

Preserving Humanitarian Space

The most basic sources of friction in a combat or other nonpermissive environment are divergent and sometimes clashing imperatives that drive the actions of national military forces and the civilian humanitarian assistance community. Defeating an insurgency requires gaining the support and trust of the local population; thus, it may be regarded as a matter of military necessity, in many cases, to ensure that assistance is provided to displaced civilians and that civic action projects are undertaken to cultivate popular support and build collaborative relationships. Civilian humanitarian assistance providers believe that they cannot allow their efforts to be perceived as part of the campaign plan of a belligerent force because the "humanitarian space" they need to perform their work will be compromised, and the lives of relief workers and those they seek to assist will be placed in jeopardy.

IO/NGO Perspectives. The international humanitarian assistance community abides by core principles of concern for humanity, independence, and impartiality. These principles

As demonstrated during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, when international coalition forces are one of the combatants, considerable friction is introduced into the civil-military relationship. Military activities undertaken to defeat Taliban and al Qaeda forces in 2001 and 2002 created conflict with IO and NGO efforts to alleviate human suffering.

are stipulated in UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 of December 19, 1991[2] and *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* (1994).[3] Yet differences exist among NGOs based on the specific needs they address (humanitarian assistance or reconstruction activities) and the timeline under which they work (immediate relief or longer term societal transition). The International Committee of the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders maintain a strict separation from belligerent military forces, even espousing neutrality. Organizations that provide reconstruction and developmental assistance, on the other hand, are less wedded to the concepts of independence and impartiality. InterAction, the voice of the NGO community in the United States, emphasizes the humanitarian imperative, impartiality, and independence. The consensus of its members is that:

> fidelity to the humanitarian imperative and to the principles of impartiality and independence makes it impossible for humanitarian NGOs to become part of the seamless web of [U.S. government-] supported actions which has been advocated by some American public officials for scenarios in which the [U.S. government] is engaged as a combatant or an occupying power. NGOs need to retain their operational independence, whether or not they are accepting U.S. government funds, and to be perceived by the host population as impartial and independent.[4]

The views of many non-U.S. (and especially European) NGOs are even more insistent on the need to maintain independence from U.S. government efforts.

The objective of humanitarian assistance is to help those in need. To have access to vulnerable populations in war-torn societies, assistance providers must have the ability to cross the "lines" of conflict. This access, or "humanitarian space," may be compromised or lost entirely if the assistance community is perceived as undermining the interests and objectives of one of the parties to the conflict or having partisan sympathies. Any taint of association generates a risk that the faction perceiving itself to be disadvantaged will consider humanitarian actors a threat and target their staff and facilities. To maintain their "humanitarian space," most IOs/NGOs in the humanitarian assistance community seek to avoid being associated with combatant forces.

A clear distinction between civilian and military roles is vital for the preservation of humanitarian space. In a conflict or other nonpermissive environment, if the local population is unable to differentiate between foreign civilian and military actors, all international entities may be perceived as belligerents. If military elements operate in civilian clothes and drive unmarked, nontactical vehicles while engaging in relief and reconstruction activities—as they did in Afghanistan during the summer of 2002—the boundary between civilian and military efforts can become blurred, if not erased altogether. This situation, involving U.S. Special Forces and Civil Affairs soldiers operating in civilian clothes, was addressed prior to the deployment of PRTs through the issuance of new guidelines by their headquarters. Nevertheless, the PRTs have not avoided ambiguity entirely. When international forces are involved in a spectrum of roles that ranges from capturing insurgents and bombing heroin labs to building schools and clinics, confusing messages are sent to the civilian population about the difference between foreign military and civilian roles.

Humanitarian space is not an "all-or-nothing" phenomenon. In many of the countries where the humanitarian community operates, "humanitarian space" has a fluid quality. It exists in greater amounts in some regions, less in others, and can vary over time. This accounts for the episodic relocation of NGOs' international staff members within a country (i.e., back to the confines of the capital in Kabul from the outlying provinces), as opposed to their wholesale evacuation out of country. The majority of NGOs hire indigenous workers who remain in their communities. Oftentimes, it is these locally hired assistance and reconstruction workers who end up having their security placed in grave danger if their organization is perceived to be working with or for one of the combatant forces. Thus it is vital to promote and preserve faith in and respect for humanitarian action *over time* (i.e.,

The objective of humanitarian assistance is to help those in need. To have access to vulnerable populations in war-torn societies, assistance providers must have the ability to cross the "lines" of conflict. This access, or "humanitarian space," may be compromised or lost entirely if the assistance community is perceived as undermining the interests and objectives of one of the parties to the conflict or having partisan sympathies.

before, during, and after a military intervention has taken place). This long-term NGO perspective, which is central to the preservation of humanitarian space, tends to clash with the immediate objectives that military forces pursue when they become involved in providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance.

PRT Perspectives. Counterinsurgency operations in places like Afghanistan are enmeshed in the Global War on Terror. There are no front lines in this battle space. Impartiality and independence from belligerents in this conflict offer neither access to the most needy nor safety for humanitarian actors. Insurgents and terrorists believe their objectives can be attained through intimidation, coercion, and brutality, regardless of who their victims may be; that includes the humanitarian community.

Assistance agencies make themselves targets simply by providing relief to the population. As the emphasis shifts from emergency response to reconstruction and development, principles of impartiality and independence lose their applicability. It matters not if a well is dug to encourage refugee returns or to foster economic growth; the benefits will accrue either to the government or to the opposition. Mere association with the central government's objectives and its efforts to provide for its citizens and extend its writ throughout its sovereign territory is often sufficient to invite retaliation. From the perspective of many in the military, this is the primary reason for the loss of "humanitarian space" in Afghanistan and Iraq, not the supposed blurring of civil and military roles caused by military involvement in civic action and reconstruction projects.

Establishing a Secure Environment

There are fundamental differences in how the civilian humanitarian assistance community and military leaders conceive of a secure environment. Military actors emphasize national security, public order, and force protection—all of which are enhanced by assertively addressing and reducing the sources of threat. Civilian humanitarian assistance providers equate security with ensuring belligerents do not perceive them as a threat. They are also directly affected by rampant lawlessness and criminality that military commanders are not typically trained to handle.

To the extent that combat operations, including attacks by insurgents, are prevalent or persistent, the lack of a secure environment may prevent the deployment of civilian humanitarian assistance providers or may limit their effectiveness. The resulting void in relief and reconstruction assistance can, in turn, contribute to an environment that supports insurgent forces. The use of PRTs raises the question: Does the use of military resources to fill the void in civilian humanitarian assistance result in the pacification of hostile territory more effectively than using military resources exclusively to establish a secure environment so that civilian relief and reconstruction efforts can flourish?

IO/NGO Perspectives. The Afghanistan experience underscores the need to establish a safe and secure environment. Initially, the U.S. military engaged in combat operations, supported Afghan forces against the Taliban and al Qaida, and provided humanitarian-type assistance. During this phase, alliances were formed with various regional paramilitary commanders (or "warlords") who now pose the greatest challenge to the central government. The void in law and order is particularly dangerous, because it has left the door open for alliances to be forged between opium producers and local warlords who operate with impunity and pose a growing threat to the central government.

Although coalition combat forces expect IOs and some NGOs to coordinate assistance efforts with them, the coalition cannot provide security for their activities. Currently, international military forces, including both the coalition and ISAF, number less than 30,000, which is insufficient to secure the country. Scarce military resources would be better spent on security-related activities exclusively rather than on reconstruction tasks in which civilian aid specialists have a comparative advantage.

If the PRTs are intended to promote and enhance security, they should be deployed only to the least secure areas. Yet PRTs often have been located in areas where civilian humanitarian assistance providers are also operating. Where PRTs have been deployed

Insurgents and terrorists believe their objectives can be attained through intimidation, coercion, and brutality, regardless of who their victims may be; that includes the humanitarian community.

If the PRTs are intended to promote and enhance security, they should be deployed only to the least secure areas. Yet PRTs often have been located in areas where civilian humanitarian assistance providers are also operating.

in insecure areas like Lashkar Gah, their outreach has been severely restricted because of concerns about force protection and the need to make their humanitarian-type operations distinct from their combat operations.

There is doubt among members of the IO and NGO community that the presence of PRTs has created permissive conditions for their activities. Some perceive that the PRTs actually may have made them less safe by blurring the civil-military distinction. For security, they rely on a nonthreatening posture and transparency rather than on force protection. If their "humanitarian space" is lost, they become soft targets for insurgents and criminal elements that would rather target an unprotected aid agency and gain disproportionate publicity or economic gain for a relatively easy operation.

PRT Perspectives. Military and international civilian actors have different conceptions of the meaning of "security" and how to achieve it. PRTs do not play a direct role in securing their area of operation; rather, they perform a catalytic function by enabling local government authorities to operate and by supporting the activities of Afghan security forces. This role is the most effective way to create a long-term atmosphere of security in a country recovering from twenty-five years of internal conflict. The strategic, national solution for insecurity lies not with PRTs or international military forces; it lies with the development of effective provincial, district and local government; the establishment of the rule of law; and a reformed, retrained, and rebuilt national army, police force, and judicial system.

PRTs were designed to spread a peacekeeping effect without creating a large peacekeeping force. They are the grease, not the wheel, for enabling local government and security forces to function within accepted norms; supporting disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of paramilitary elements; expanding policing beyond Kabul; and supporting the national government's counternarcotics policies and efforts. The policy is to establish PRTs in locations that help stabilize the region by extending the reach of the central government and facilitating increased reconstruction efforts. As a location becomes more secure, the PRT should shift from brick and mortar reconstruction efforts to governmental capacity building and focus on such tasks as security planning for elections, DDR, police mentoring, and so forth. In this case, the number of civilian representatives should increase, and their areas of expertise should be tailored to the evolving tasks at hand.

PRTs have done much to support improved security and stability within the provinces where they operate. They have contributed to the establishment of an environment that has allowed three million refugees to resettle and for a successful presidential election to be conducted. They have influenced and enabled governments at the grassroots level to break through years of local strife and start to provide basic services. They have brought reconstruction efforts to insecure areas that have sustained local hope and partially met expectations for change in areas where there have been no other international actors. As a result, they have extended the reach of the Afghan national government to many of the outlying provinces.

The political process that President Karzai has used to marginalize warlords has been reasonably successful although it remains unfinished. The greatest threat that could derail the process now is opium production and the drug lords who flourish with it. Those PRTs that are located in the largest poppy growing provinces are increasingly working—in concert with the Afghan government—to develop, promote, and implement alternative crop livelihoods and eradication programs to curb the production of poppy. PRTs allow senior military leaders and U.S. policymakers to have eyes and ears on the ground throughout the country. They also provide a means to communicate U.S. policies in support of the Afghan national government to key local leaders.

Providing Assistance

Humanitarian assistance organizations seek to alleviate suffering without regard for the recipient's affiliation with any of the parties to a conflict. When military units in combat

The political process that President Karzai has used to marginalize warlords has been reasonably successful although it remains unfinished. The greatest threat that could derail the process now is opium production and the drug lords who flourish with it. Those PRTs that are located in the largest poppy growing provinces are increasingly working—in concert with the Afghan government—to develop, promote, and implement alternative crop livelihoods and eradication programs to curb the production of poppy.

provide "humanitarian-type" relief, it is normally associated with other objectives such as the defeat of an opponent, force protection, or care of civilians under their control in keeping with the Geneva Conventions. In combat environments, military forces may be the only source of life-saving relief, and under such exceptional circumstances, this role is broadly accepted. Meeting these needs often strains military capabilities, however, and providing assistance can create tensions with the IO/NGO community if performed in a manner that compromises the latter's "humanitarian space."

When the focus shifts from the impact of humanitarian assistance to reconstruction, not many IOs or NGOs would insist that their efforts are impartial. Among the salient concerns that arise during the reconstruction phase are the blurring of civil and military roles, the long-term sustainability of military reconstruction activities, and interference with each other's efforts.

IO/NGO Perspectives. A common perception among NGOs is that "the military is not a humanitarian actor." When military forces provide assistance to a civilian population during conflict, it is not for humanitarian purposes but, rather, to further policies of their national governments, provide force protection, and meet their international legal obligations. The divergence in purpose between military and civilian assistance was illustrated by the latter's reaction to the U.S. military airdrops of humanitarian daily rations, or HDRs, during the combat phase in Afghanistan. Various IOs and NGOs opposed this activity, arguing that the airdrops were essentially a psychological operation for political benefit as opposed to a genuine humanitarian activity that was intended to reach the neediest populations.

The implementation of quick-impact projects and related reconstruction activities by coalition forces also raised a number of issues, usually involving civic action projects such as repairing schools and health clinics and similar small-scale efforts—precisely the realm in which civilian aid providers believe they have a comparative advantage. In spite of claims that most of the PRTs have been deployed to insecure areas where assistance agencies are not present, the fact is that most of the initial PRTs were deployed to cities that already had a significant, long-standing presence of civilian assistance providers. Redundant assessments conducted by military personnel, inadequate coordination with civilian assistance providers leading to duplication of effort, and a disregard for the long-term capacity of the local population to sustain their projects are among the most frequently voiced criticisms of military PRT assistance projects.

The military lacks a long-term development focus and will sacrifice sustainability for speedy results. PRT personnel generally have no training in international development. The short length of military tours also often causes mistakes to be repeated by incoming personnel, compounding these shortcomings. In view of these systemic deficiencies, humanitarian and reconstruction funding provided by the Pentagon for PRT projects should have incorporated more effective mechanisms for transparency and accountability. Recently, many IOs and NGOs have been critical of the U.S. Department of Defense's use of Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) and Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds on these grounds.

Many IOs and NGOs contend that PRT resources are inadequate to address both reconstruction and security requirements. Generally, their most effective use would be to provide unique engineering capabilities to repair basic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, power generation, and water supply systems. When infrastructure has been identified as a national priority, as in Iraq, U.S. military forces have devoted substantial effort—directly and indirectly—to repairing it. Limiting military reconstruction activities to these areas would allow civilian agencies to do their own work more effectively and would also presumably contribute to a sense of good will toward the military from the local populace by facilitating the restart of commercial activity and employment.

On the other hand, under exceptional circumstances when civilian aid providers are unable to operate for security reasons, many acknowledge that military assistance is appropriate. In such cases, the military should adhere to commonly accepted NGO stan-

The military lacks a long-term development focus and will sacrifice sustainability for speedy results. PRT personnel generally have no training in international development. The short length of military tours also often causes mistakes to be repeated by incoming personnel, compounding these shortcomings.

dards when providing relief and reconstruction assistance. To achieve this standardization of best practices, civilian standards should be incorporated into military doctrine. Assessment criteria also should be established to determine operational effectiveness.

PRT Perspectives. From the outset, Afghan president Karzai endorsed the PRT concept, personally requesting the locations of the initial three PRTs and praising the U.S. military for directly providing reconstruction assistance. Most PRTs have been established where there were few, if any, NGOs. When NGOs have moved into their area of operations, the PRTs have shifted projects to less secure areas. Where there has been a significant increase in NGO-provided reconstruction, PRTs have shifted their focus to security sector reform and government capacity building.

The quick-impact projects implemented by the CHLCs and CAT-As at the inception of Operation Enduring Freedom were essential to fill the initial void in the flow of reconstruction assistance. The establishment and use of CERP funds enabled U.S. PRTs to deliver reconstruction programs coordinated with village *shuras* (councils), local governments, and the Afghan central government. Alternative civilian mechanisms for providing reconstruction assistance—whether bilateral, multilateral, or nongovernmental—were simply too slow in deploying personnel and resources, leaving military PRT members to fill the void, often without expert developmental advice or direction. Although there have been reports of PRT assistance projects being poorly implemented, the incidence of this is on par with similar NGO-sponsored projects. Today, the PRTs work exceptionally well with USAID members to leverage not only CERP but also Quick Impact Program (QIP) funds which afford flexibility in determining what to fund and how.

PRTs are not intended to compete with or replace civilian assistance. The eight original PRT locations were chosen in order to be in the same areas as UNAMA field offices so that they could harmonize their activities with the NGO community. As PRTs have expanded into other locations, they have made every effort to coordinate with all international and local assistance programs. Although there are some NGOs that refuse to coordinate with the PRTs, the majority work effectively with PRTs in the field. However, military as well as various civilian agencies insist on doing their own assessments, leading to redundancy. Village leaders usually do not understand that NGO projects entail long lead times and ask other assistance providers, including PRTs, for the same assistance.

The key to sustainability is working with Afghan government officials to ensure projects reflect their national priorities. This is a hallmark of PRT projects. Although there can be real difficulty in getting guidance from the right government officials at all relevant levels, not all NGOs even subscribe to the principle of aligning projects with Afghan government priorities, which has been a significant issue with regard to developing local government capacity. The desire to use the military's "unique engineering resources" to repair basic infrastructure is largely unrealistic. Military forces in Afghanistan, including the U.S. Army, have relatively little in the way of organic engineering assets.

Coordinating and Sharing Information

When civilian and military assistance providers share a common purpose, as in the response to a natural disaster, coordination and information sharing are critical to a rational and efficient allocation of resources. During combat operations, even though there may be different objectives, there are still compelling and even life-saving reasons to coordinate and share information.

At the strategic level, there is a pragmatic need to avoid conflict between the delivery of humanitarian assistance and combat activities in the same area. Identifying where NGOs and IOs maintain their facilities is an important component of planning an effective military campaign, as is minimizing damage to civilian infrastructure and cultural and religious sites. To perform their functions effectively, humanitarian organizations need to know about changes to the security situation, locations where unexploded ordnance might be encountered, and major population movements precipitated by combat operations. Coordination and information sharing at this level were possible through the United

The key to sustainability is working with Afghan government officials to ensure projects reflect their national priorities. This is a hallmark of PRT projects. Although there can be real difficulty in getting guidance from the right government officials at all relevant levels, not all NGOs even subscribe to the principle of aligning projects with Afghan government priorities, which has been a significant issue with regard to developing local government capacity.

Nations Security Coordinator and United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC), as well as a Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cell initially operating from Islamabad. The Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) was established in Kabul in December 2001 and conducted coordination and information sharing meetings by early January 2002. The establishment of UNAMA in March 2002 and the movement of UN operations to Kabul greatly facilitated increased international coordination.

At the operational level during Operation Enduring Freedom, the overriding concern of most IOs and NGOs was preserving the perception by the local population that they were autonomous and independent from the combatants. Consequently, formal or standing means of coordination and collocation of staff or facilities were rejected in favor of an ad hoc approach. In general, military representatives could be invited to attend UN humanitarian coordination meetings on specific agenda items of concern, and UN liaisons could participate in coordination meetings hosted at military facilities for the purposes of information sharing and facilitation. The United Nations also served as a bridge to the NGO community, as did the U.S. embassy and USAID.

With the evolution of the PRTs during 2003–04, UNAMA has chaired formal, standing security coordination meetings—both in Kabul and at regional centers—attended by coalition military and NGO representatives. Coordination of reconstruction activities, however, has remained a challenge. PRTs also have opened their doors to coordination with mixed successes. Although many NGOs have taken advantage of the ability to coordinate with the PRTs, others prefer to go it alone and avoid any contact with the military.

IO/NGO Perspectives. The optimal level of coordination and information sharing sought by IOs and NGOs involves establishing clear boundaries that preserve the distinction between civil and military communities. In a combat environment, what is regarded as information sharing by one of the parties is liable to be perceived as intelligence gathering by its adversary. NGOs and IOs believe that they provide more information than they receive, and security classification rules are particularly frustrating. Many NGOs weigh the risks associated with cooperating with military contingents against what appear to be meager benefits and opt to go it alone; it is more important to retain their image of independence and impartiality by avoiding association with the military.

The way the PRT concept was announced in Kabul offended many in the IO and NGO community. The military had not consulted with civilian agencies in advance and gave the initial impression they would now be in charge of coordination, as if this was the military's solution to their inability to coordinate. Even when collaboration between civilian and military actors is a shared goal, it does not necessarily translate into a larger role for the PRTs in areas where there are other options. UNAMA has been a useful vehicle for much behind-the-scenes interaction, coordination, and collaboration with the military, thereby avoiding the need for direct interaction.

PRT Perspectives. Rather than the boundary setting sought by many of their IO and NGO counterparts, military personnel aspire to achieve a cooperative relationship. Much of the early PRT effort to coordinate and develop and implement an integrated civil-military information management system was rebuffed. The greatest challenge was the reluctance of IO and NGO actors to share specific information about their own activities. The main obstacle to sharing assessment information has been NGOs, which have expressed concerns about the quality of military assessments but have shown no interest in improving that quality. As a result, they have given the appearance that they simply are ideologically opposed to having the military conduct assessments.

A lack of knowledge about the location of civilian-sponsored projects impedes the military's ability to avoid engaging in duplicative activities. A lack of knowledge about NGO movements and locations impedes the ability of military commanders to be prepared to provide effective security assistance. In the final analysis, however, the decision whether or not to cooperate, coordinate, share information, or otherwise interact with military forces is left to each civilian agency. Over the last year, most PRTs indicated they have had increasingly constructive relations with the majority of NGO field representatives in their area. Yet there are still instances—especially when dealing with the smaller, European-based NGOs—when information sharing and coordination are sketchy at best.

Many NGOs weigh the risks associated with cooperating with military contingents against what appear to be meager benefits and opt to go it alone; it is more important to retain their image of independence and impartiality by avoiding association with the military.

Recommendations

These recommendations address both specific issues that relate to PRTs and the civil-military relationship in Afghanistan and broader guidelines for the interaction of IOs, NGOs, and the military in any nonpermissive environment.

PRT-Specific Recommendations

Preserving Humanitarian Space. Combat operations impose great obstacles on the preservation of humanitarian space. It is vital to promote understanding of and sensitivity toward the norms and imperatives of humanitarian relief and reconstruction providers among military commanders—and vice versa.

- U.S. Army Mission Readiness Exercises and pre-deployment preparation of PRT personnel, both military and civilian, should include an orientation to the role and operating norms of the IO/NGO community. This should include the following:

  - *The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*, also known as the "Sphere Standards."[5]

  - *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*.

  - The June 2004 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Paper on Civil-Military Relations in Complex Emergencies.[6]

Providing Security. There is broad agreement that a secure environment is required for humanitarian relief and reconstruction activities to prosper. At the center of concern is what role the international military presence should perform.

- The role of PRTs in promoting a safe and secure environment should be broadly understood by civilian humanitarian assistance and reconstruction providers in Afghanistan. Long-awaited Terms of Reference, published in February 2005, have helped to define their roles and responsibilities.

- Expanding the presence of PRTs in the least secure provinces is beneficial. They should be provided the civilian staff necessary for security sector reform and local governance capacity building such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts and the deployment of Afghan National Police.

- PRTs should continue to work with local leaders and Afghan army and police forces to develop province-specific strategies to support central government policies.

- PRTs should continue to refocus their efforts away from "quick impact" civic action projects as the local environment improves and concentrate on strengthening the capacity of provincial governments, particularly within the security and judiciary sectors.

Providing Assistance. It is possible to build consensus around the proposition that military assistance is appropriate where civilians are unable to operate. More effective coordination might make military involvement in such reconstruction activities a less prominent concern. To harmonize the role of PRTs in assistance efforts, the following steps should be taken:

- National capitals need to ensure that current civilian PRT positions are filled and their numbers steadily increased. Additionally, as the focus of PRT efforts progress to government capacity building and security sector reform, the nature of civilian expertise provided to PRTs should evolve accordingly. Short duration fills and deployments are counterproductive and should be avoided. A minimum tour length of one year should be the norm.

- All PRT staff should be provided pre-deployment orientations on assistance strategies and location of current programs in their areas of responsibility.

- A consultative mechanism should be created in locations where UNAMA lacks a presence. That way each PRT can work effectively with IO and NGO counterparts in their

area of responsibility and identify if there is a need to fill gaps in civilian reconstruction and development projects.

- Measures of effectiveness and end state objectives should be established for each PRT to assist in determining the duration of their commitment. Transition processes should be devised to assist civilian agencies in progressively assuming PRT functions. The PRT Executive Steering Committee should continue to develop and implement this process.

- As soon as the security environment allows, PRTs should shift their emphasis from quick impact projects to local-Afghan capacity building (i.e., "Afghanization"). The assignment of liaisons from the Afghan Ministry of Interior and National Police, for example, enhances Afghan government ownership of programs and local capacity to govern successfully and promotes the principle of civilian control over the military. However, PRTs should not replace the links between the national government and local government.

- U.S. PRTs lacking civilian representation should be provided advice from Kabul-based U.S. government program managers. For PRTs with representatives from civilian agencies (USAID/DFID/USDA) in residence, military members should nominate projects for validation to their civilian counterparts and allow them to be primarily responsible for the coordination and implementation of relief and development activities.

Coordinating and Sharing Information. One of the greatest challenges facing any humanitarian assistance and reconstruction operation is to bring coherence to the multitude of overlapping activities that international agencies are implementing. Establishing a common operating picture through effective information sharing is the basis for effective strategic and operational coordination.

- Afghan government entities should assume greater responsibility for coordination of assistance, as some provincial governors are already beginning to do.

- The PRT Executive Steering Committee and the PRT Working Group that bring the Afghan government together with key donor nations, international organizations, and senior commanders from ISAF and CFC-A in Kabul should include representatives from leading NGOs.

- The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghanistan Relief (ACBAR) should play a more proactive role in coordinating common positions among its NGO members on matters related to PRTs.

- The coalition should establish a PRT Working Group with NATO and its subordinate military headquarters to coordinate policies for the establishment of future NATO PRTs and to facilitate the exchange of information and lessons learned.

General Recommendations

- A mechanism should be created to permit a regular dialogue between the major international agencies and nongovernmental organizations involved in humanitarian response and reconstruction activities and U.S. government offices at the Departments of State and Defense that are responsible for stabilization and reconstruction policy. USIP and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute should work with the Departments of State and Defense and the NGO community in the United States to establish a permanent mechanism for this purpose.

- International civilian providers of humanitarian relief and reconstruction assistance and the U.S. military should work together to establish a list of specified and implied tasks that the military could be called on to perform in support of relief and reconstruction operations.

- The Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations should be used by the NGO community to disseminate guidelines and lessons learned to troop-contributing countries.

- The role of the Department of State's Humanitarian Information Unit should be fully exploited to identify, collect, analyze, and disseminate unclassified information critical to preparing for and responding to humanitarian emergencies—especially those in nonpermissive environments.

- Prior to any international military intervention, the Regional Combatant Command headquarters involved should reach out to the major IOs and NGOs operating in the prospective theater of operation. These IOs and NGOs should be provided an opportunity to establish liaisons, as was done prior to Operation Enduring Freedom with the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida.

- Civil information management systems similar to the Afghanistan Information Management Service (www.aims.org.af) should be fully exploited to establish a civil information management strategy and a database of civilian and military reconstruction projects.

- While still protecting sources and means, the military should avoid classifying information relevant to civilian IOs and NGOs and declassify, as soon as practical, information which may be useful to those organizations in nonpermissive environments.

- The State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization should work with the Department of Defense to develop procedures for coordination and information sharing in nonpermissive environments using civilian interlocutors who are acceptable to IO and NGO actors.

- The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) should develop and implement a humanitarian response and coordination system. Currently the Humanitarian Emergency Branch in New York is the principal source for this type of analysis and advice for the UN in complex emergencies and natural disasters. However, OCHA should work with governments and the military on developing uniform assessment tools that enable interagency assessments in emergencies, including combat and other nonpermissive settings.

Conclusion

The continued fight against global terrorist activities has made the search for open dialogue and constructive relationships between international civilian assistance providers and the military an urgent requirement.

While PRTs may or may not serve as a model for future stability operations, the challenges they have had to contend with in addressing information sharing, coordination, security, the role of the military in providing assistance, and the preservation of "humanitarian space" are likely to arise whenever international civil and military organizations are operating in combat and other nonpermissive environments. The continued fight against global terrorist activities has made the search for open dialogue and constructive relationships between international civilian assistance providers and the military an urgent requirement. There is a compelling need to comprehend these challenges and institutionalize procedures and processes to cope effectively with them, given the potential that military and civilian assistance providers may find themselves in the same theatres of conflict and in protracted transitions out of conflict in the years ahead.

NOTES

1. Olga Oliker et al., *Aid During Conflict: Interaction Between Military and Civilian Assistance Providers in Afghanistan, September 2001–June 2002* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2004).

2. United Nation General Assembly Resolution 46/182, "Strengthening of the Coordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations," was adopted on December 19, 1991. For the complete resolution, see http://www.un.org/Depts/dha/res46182.htm.

3. *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* was developed and agreed upon by eight of the world's largest disaster response agencies in the summer of 1994 and represents a huge leap forward in setting standards for disaster response. It is being used by the International Federation to monitor its own standards of relief delivery and to encourage other agencies to set similar standards. For more information, see http://ww.ifrcorg/publicat/conduct/index.asp.

4. InterAction is the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations. With more than 160 members operating in every developing country, they work to overcome poverty, exclusion and suffering by advancing social justice and basic dignity for all. For more information and guidelines for InterAction staff relations with military forces engaged in, or training for, peacekeeping and disaster response, see http://www/interaction.org/hpp/military.html.

5. The Sphere Project was launched in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Sphere is based on two core beliefs: first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and second, that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore, a right to assistance. Sphere is three things: a handbook, a broad process of collaboration, and an expression of commitment to quality and accountability. The project has developed several tools, the key one being the handbook. For more information on Sphere, see www.sphereproject.org.

6. This paper was endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG) and complements the "Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support UN HA in Complex Emergencies" published in March 2003. It serves as a non-binding reference for humanitarian practitioners and reviews, in a generic manner, the nature and character of civil-military relations in complex emergencies; lists the fundamental humanitarian principles and concepts that must be upheld when coordinating with the military; and proposes practical considerations for humanitarian workers engaged in civil-military coordination. For more information, see http://topics.developmentgateway.org/afghanistan/rc/filedownload.do~itemID=1010088.

Of Related Interest

Many other publications from the United States Institute of Peace address issues that relate directly to peace, stability, and reconstruction operations.

Recent Institute reports include:

- *Building Civilian Capacity for U.S. Stability Operations: The Rule of Law Component* (Special Report 118, April 2004)

- *Creating a Common Communications Culture: Interoperability in Crisis Management* (Virtual Diplomacy Report 17, January 2004)

- *Establishing the Rule of Law in Afghanistan* (Special Report 117, March 2004)

- *Unfinished Business in Afghanistan: Warlordism, Reconstruction, and Ethnic Harmony* (Special Report 105, April 2003)

- *The Ethics of Armed Humanitarian Intervention,* by C. A. J. Coady (Peaceworks 45, August 2002)

- *Information Technology and Peace Support Operations: A Relationship for the New Millennium* (Virtual Diplomacy Report 13, July 2002)

- *Training for Peace and Humanitarian Relief: Advancing Best Practices,* by Robert M. Schoenhaus (Peaceworks 43, April 2002)

- *Good Practices: Information Sharing in Complex Emergencies* (Virtual Diplomacy Report 11, January 2002)

- *Taking It to the Next Level: Civilian-Military Cooperation in Complex Emergencies* (Virtual Diplomacy Report 10, September 2000)

Recent books from USIP Press include:

- *The Quest for Viable Peace: International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation*, edited by Jock Covey, Michael Dziedzic, and Leonard Hawley (2005).

- *Engineering Peace: The Military Role in Postconflict Reconstruction*, by Colonel Garland H. Williams (2005).

- *Where is the Lone Ranger When We Need Him? America's Search for a Postconflict Stability Force,* by Robert M. Perito (2004).

- *Guide to IGOs, NGOs, and the Military in Peace and Relief Operations,* by Pamela Aall, Lt. Col. Daniel Miltenberger, and Thomas G. Weiss (2000).

For book sales and order information, call 800-868-8064 (U.S. toll-free only) or 703-661-1590, or fax 703-661-1501.