

# The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

---

Volume 26  
Number 2 *Parameters Summer 1996*

Article 12

---

6-1-1996

## Managing Peace Operations in the Field

Mark R. Walsh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

---

### Recommended Citation

Walsh, Mark R.. "Managing Peace Operations in the Field." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 26, 2 (1996). <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol26/iss2/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

# Managing Peace Operations in the Field

MARK R. WALSH

© 1996 Mark R. Walsh

---

From *Parameters*, Summer 1996, pp. 32-49.

---

They tell this story about Fred Cuny, the Intertec relief worker and tragic victim of the hostilities in Chechnya. During the Biafran civil war in the late 1960s, the relief agencies providing assistance faced many operational challenges. Relief workers were particularly stumped by the rapidly deteriorating public health conditions. Recognizing the need for proper field sanitation to improve the quality of public health, Cuny attacked the problem at its basic level: he pointed out that somebody had to dig latrines. The response he received from the agencies was that no one knew how to construct latrines; Cuny replied that millions of manuals on the subject had been printed by the world's armies, and asked why the relief community couldn't acquire the necessary information from such manuals. The difficulty, he learned, was that no one knew whom to approach in the military to obtain them.[1]

Nearly 30 years later, in a world struggling to cope with many complex emergencies, there is still a communications gap between the civilian and military communities that respond to the emergencies. In many respects, the mutual understanding essential to success has not moved beyond Fred Cuny's experience. The reasons why this cooperation is difficult to establish and sustain and what practitioners--civilian and military alike--can do to improve prospects for more effective peace operations are the focus of this article.

The article draws on the author's peacekeeping experiences in Israel and Lebanon and more recent field experience in multidimensional peace operations in Somalia, Haiti, and Angola.[2] It examines the nature of the multidimensional peace operation--its composition, organization, and objectives and strategies--and then identifies certain factors that affect any peace operation. These include ethnic considerations, non-state actors, international community organization, the target community's capacity to absorb reforms and recovery efforts, and external support of the mission's strategy.[3]

The challenge in coordinating operations in the field includes establishing and maintaining a balance between cooperation and independence among the participants.[4] Key issues here are intramission cooperation and independence, prioritizing efforts and resources, building teamwork, and reducing the inevitable organizational friction inherent in such operations. The article concludes with observations on expectations, timing, and sustainment of an operation as well as some thoughts on high-level operational planning.

## **The Multidimensional Peace Operation Framework**

A host of factors requires detailed attention at every organizational level by participants in a multidimensional peace operation. Foremost is a clear understanding of the physical environment in which the mission will operate. Thereafter, planners must consider the composition of the international organizations responding to the crisis, the organizational relationships among these agencies, and the strategies, objectives, and operational methods of all participants.

Analysis of the mission's operational environment should begin with a concerted effort to identify the core problem to be alleviated by the humanitarian intervention. Problem definition is complicated by the fact that the challenges facing the international community in any complex emergency will be many and diverse; each will have its own constituency demanding priority and immediate attention to its particular interest. The intervention in Somalia was prompted in part by intense international media coverage of the famine in that country. UNITAF, UNOSOM I, and UNOSOM II were to discover that social and political imbalances were the real causes of the hardships that had led to the famine.[5] The intervention brought the immediate problem under control; it could do little to compensate for the deep social and

political divisions in the country. The gravity of a particular emergency, the need for a reasonable and rapid solution, the invariably constrained resources, and the short attention span of the international community emphasize the need for a clear understanding of the core problem before committing to such missions.

Planners need to develop a comprehensive view of the physical and social conditions that exist in the mission area. Topics such as these should be addressed from the outset of planning:

- state of the target community's political, military, economic, and social institutions
- status of military and police organizations
- health conditions of the citizens and the refugee population
- ability of local community leaders to exercise their authority
- condition and status of assistance currently being provided by international organizations: structure, volume, processes, and relevance to the problem as it is defined
- current popular attitudes regarding the crisis, especially related to day-to-day existence and the prospect of outside assistance
- capacity and will of the receiving nation to cope with an assisted recovery
- significant population shifts that result from or may have contributed to the crisis
- existence and condition of school systems
- condition of the business community

Questions about the current status of relief efforts can be answered through an analysis of local, regional, and international media attention to the crisis. It is important to know, for example, if there is any major power interest in the humanitarian relief mission, particularly in its composition and activities. The policies and practices of the regional or international authority behind the intervention also must be clear. Other essential information is related to policy deliberations and decisions that have led to the mandate for the mission; matters related to the composition of the mission; discussions related to the mission's strategy; designation of a lead regional or international relief agency; experience of the international relief community in the crisis area, and the implications of that experience for the mission's strategy. There will never be enough time before launching the operation to complete research into all such topics.

Time also must be spent analyzing the physical environment. Regional analyses, UN assessments, and relief organization reports are valuable resources; discussions with individuals familiar with the area and its issues will also be required. Much as a lawyer who hopes to succeed must know the case before entering the courtroom, so the successful peace operations practitioner will know the crisis before engaging in the mission.

The composition of the intervention team is important to that success. More often than not, by the time the US Army becomes involved, a regional or international organization will be either assembling or already in place. The sponsoring international body usually will be represented on site. For operations directed by the United Nations, a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG)--almost always an experienced career international civil servant--will not only define the organization's operational methods, objectives, and resources, but will also integrate the efforts of the diverse groups that will carry out the intervention. It is also important to know where on the UN's crowded humanitarian relief agenda any particular crisis fits. Recent reforms in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have added immeasurably to the institution's ability to plan, execute, and manage diverse, simultaneous operations in the field. Nevertheless, it is important to assess any new mission's purpose and appeal to the nations that have been asked to furnish human, financial, or other resources as the operation develops.

In addition to the UN departments directly involved with creating and conducting a specific humanitarian intervention operation, an array of international organizations (IO) will most likely participate. They will be of varying importance and can play multiple roles in dealing with a given crisis. These organizations will raise the issue of the proper balance between independent and integrated, coordinated operations. However, unlike private voluntary organizations (PVOs), which must also be dealt with individually, many of the international organizations are affiliated with or integral to the United Nations. The task of integrating their activities is therefore assisted by the broad authority of the SRSG. In the final analysis, commonality of purpose among the diverse groups involved in responses to complex humanitarian emergencies depends to a great extent on the strength of character, leadership, and personality of the Special

Representative.

The targeted country's institutions are important to the mission's plans and activities; they determine the long-term success of the intervention. Whatever attention can be given to the sustainability of these local institutions will reap great rewards, whether a mission is deployed to implement, make, enforce, or keep a peace, or to assist in rebuilding a nation. Any humanitarian intervention provides no more than a short-term fix for the immediate problem. It offers a moment's respite to allow those suffering and in need to get their community back on its feet.

Long-term solutions come from indigenous resources and energies. Local institutions and assets must be engaged at appropriate times during the intervention; planners and operators should therefore become aware of the ability of local organizations and structures to absorb investment and to sustain change and development. A relief plan in excess of a billion dollars was initiated in Haiti in 1995, yet two years earlier the country had difficulty absorbing several million dollars in foreign assistance. The international financial and development communities presumably understand this weakness and are directing resources to strengthen Haiti's capability to receive, administer, and apply the assistance it so desperately requires.

Private voluntary organizations and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) will invariably be partners in any humanitarian intervention.[6] The mission has to structure itself to connect and cooperate with this component of the relief community. The mission's humanitarian and development elements, civilian and military alike, together with the PVOs, must seek mutually agreeable, responsive, and nonthreatening ties among themselves. These strong ties must exist at all levels--from the board rooms of the PVOs, the United Nations Secretariat, and the major command headquarters through the offices of PVO country directors, the SRSB, and the task force commanders, to the PVO field practitioner, United Nations Zone Director, and Army or Marine Corps battalion commander. Operational freedom, proactive communications, vigorous liaison, and networking among the political, military, and relief communities are at the heart of successful coordination and cooperation.

Finally, there may well be unilateral players in the mission area. Often nations will develop assistance programs to support their force contingents or national private organizations in a multinational peacekeeping operation. These programs may or may not be executed with broader mission strategies in mind; they could in fact be at cross purposes with the mission's objectives and efficient operations. In southern Somalia, cooperation with Belgian diplomatic authorities was important to ensure that unilateral humanitarian assistance from Brussels to support Belgian military forces operating in the zone complemented the broader relief strategy.

Once the composition of the mission team is clear, it is important to understand the organizational relationships among all participants. In UN peace operations, a mission's mandate can include Security Council resolutions and decisions, Secretariat reports, and member states' international policies as well as directive and coordinating responsibilities among the agencies taking part in the operation. As the mission's mandate takes shape and after field assessments are evaluated, DPKO planners and trainers, guided by the UN budget process and in cooperation with mission advance teams, will develop, refine, staff, and finalize the mission's concept and orders. DPKO then recruits, equips, trains, and deploys the civilian and military components of the mission; DPKO also will provide oversight for the operation from UN headquarters in New York. Participants should bear in mind, however, that the functions and responsibilities of the UN-affiliated international organizations and other specialized agencies involved in the intervention, because they are often directed from headquarters not collocated with the UN, may not be clear at the mission's outset. Commanders and planners therefore will have to monitor the activities of all participants in the crisis area.

Balancing the mission's resources becomes a key challenge once the intervention is under way. If the central problem has been correctly identified and if the mission has been properly resourced, reasonably successful outcomes can be expected. Success requires constant attention to unpredictable shifts in the events that were the basis for the mission's initial strategy. Clarity of purpose and objectives among the mission's component organizations are essential to keeping the work of all elements coordinated and within the limits of the plan. The exchange of information within the mission, in conjunction with mutually agreed methods to identify and to resolve differences, are prerequisites for success. This notion of shared responsibility and purpose should extend from the mission to all other agencies and institutions operating in the area, including national and local organizations of the host state. The relief mission, a collective of diverse enterprises, must actively encourage coordination, cooperation, and teamwork among groups that

are often unprepared for any constraints on their operations. As with so many other responses to complex, often unprecedented challenges, success depends on leadership and vision.

Reduced to its essentials, a multidimensional peace operation generally involves varying measures of stability and security operations, political initiatives, and humanitarian relief and economic programs. Military operations are derived from interpretations of mandates, resolutions, and national policies. Equally important for military planners and leaders is an understanding of how the military's contribution complements the broader goals and objectives of the mission. Each decision or action taken must be considered in terms of whether it helps to solve or contributes to the basic problem.

Similarly, the mission's political initiatives must be inspired by cultural sensitivity. More often than not, local ratification of the mission's political strategy for ending the crisis is a prerequisite for success. This condition needs to be recognized and provisions made to involve broad and diverse segments of the local citizenry in mission activities, notwithstanding the time delays and extra effort required to persuade and accommodate such participation. Political activities, particularly reconciliation and conflict resolution efforts, should support all of the mission's objectives and not be--or even appear to be--at cross purposes or in competition with other programs and initiatives.

Finally, effective humanitarian relief and sustainable economic development require a strategy that is feasible, affordable, and internally and externally credible. There will be a natural tendency to concentrate resources at the hub of national activity; this impulse must be avoided. Attention to "the field"--in this instance to relief operations in the local communities--must reach the farthest link in the assistance chain. Despite the differences among relief and development institutions and organizations--size, resources, operational focus, and efficiency--it is essential that all involved in the intervention make every effort to join together, to appear and behave as a single entity, one whose collective voice will be sufficiently strong to ensure a balanced response to the crisis.

### **Factors that Affect the Mission**

While there is no checklist worth considering during the planning and execution of a multidimensional peace operation, several factors seem to be present in virtually every complex emergency. Any one of these considerations, if left unattended, can upset the best-planned, resourced, and managed intervention.

Foremost is the effect of **local culture** on the mission's operations. Given the pressures associated with preparing for an international peace operation, few participants will find the time to learn about the social, political, and economic roots of the crisis. Mission efforts to understand the crisis and to design suitable remedies can be hampered by caution, uncertainty, and xenophobia within the troubled state, occasionally even among national leaders of the targeted population. The following anecdote is instructive. For six months the author's office and authority as the United Nations Zone Director appeared to be moving the conflict in southern Somalia toward resolution. On closer examination, reconciliation proved to be the result of the agendas, personalities, and energies of local leaders. The Somalis had been controlling the reconciliation effort from the outset, with only an occasional boost from the intervention force. In many instances, local leaders set the long-term agenda and frequently the day-to-day program.

The second important factor is the **non-state actor**: militia chief, traditional elder, bandit, informal community leader, and the like. These individuals have to be identified and understood lest they remain invisible to the outsider. Their roles, motives, objectives, and the basis of their popular support must be determined as quickly as possible. Equally important is establishing the mission's relationship with these figures, particularly regarding their influence on the mission's impartiality and the sense of fairness that must guide the mission's activities. Identifying them can be more difficult than imagined. Well into the author's assignment in Somalia, new and influential community leaders continued to introduce themselves. All were important to the peace process, few had agendas in common, and all had particular reasons for declining to participate at the outset of UN-sponsored initiatives in the region. Time and circumstances eventually allowed many of these individuals to exercise their authority and influence in constructive ways to advance the peace process.

Once identified, many of these informal, local, special-interest advocates become candidates for receiving power and privilege over their neighbors. When the mission extends authority to a local individual or agency in a socio-political environment that traditionally inhibits power-sharing, that authority is frequently acquired at the expense of some other

community figure or activity. Care must be exercised that decisions to award contracts, distribute funds and assistance, and support certain individuals do not lead to outcomes opposite to the intended consequences, as the following example demonstrates.

The three-year civil war that caused major demographic shifts in southern Somalia had produced many orphans in Kisimayo, a regional population center. When a call went out from the zone's humanitarian affairs officer for "orphanages" to identify themselves, a number of children's centers seemingly appeared overnight. Relief funds and supplies were then distributed to some of these centers after they had been certified. It was subsequently discovered that children in many of them had been transferred from displaced-person camps and other relief points in response to the call for orphanages. Soon the new "orphanages" began to receive a portion of the relief that had been planned to support those traditional aid distribution points, whose allocations had been established some time earlier by a census. In several instances, the directors of the new "orphanages" suffered the wrath of their neighbors whose benefits had been diminished. The good, but misplaced, intentions of the United Nations mission were the cause of the problem.

The lesson to be learned from such examples is that popular endorsement of all aspects of the mission's operations is essential. Long-term rather than short-term solutions to the community's problems should be the rule; participation of local problem-solvers should be cultivated by all components of the mission. Notwithstanding their efficiency, modern high-tech practices that we take for granted, unless tempered by local norms, can be inappropriate for solving the community's problems.

The regional reconciliation process in southern Somalia mentioned earlier was structured to take advantage of contemporary Western processes. Committees, subcommittees, working groups, partial and plenary sessions, statements of the problem and potential courses of action, negotiation and mediation methods, and generally accepted conference and debate procedures were the norm during the 47 days of meetings that produced the accord. However, an underlying, serious problem required resolution before agreement could be reached: compensation for atrocities that had occurred during the conflict. No amount of contemporary problem-solving techniques, or logic for that matter, seemed likely to settle the compensation issue.

As it turned out, in the midst of the meetings of committees and working groups, of debates and associated procedures, a traditional Somali process emerged, impromptu, and solved this potentially intractable problem. It is noteworthy that the author had absolutely nothing to do with inspiring the events that established compensation for the community's dead. In hindsight, the peace accord was a unique blend of two cultural approaches to settling communal conflicts, serendipitous yet informative regarding the value of this problem-solving combination, and, most important, instructive regarding the value of cultural awareness to the success of these operations.

A third factor influencing mission success is the **organizational strength of the international community** responding to the crisis. Strife and destitution in the suffering country can overwhelm the assets of any and all organizations that respond to the emergency. Demands on the mission are urgent and complex; resources are often limited and not always efficiently applied. The SRSG can help to prioritize and allocate shortages.

As the mission's leadership deals with the gaps between requirements and resources, the mission must constantly review the shifting array of problems it faces to ensure that mission components are applying their talents in as many areas as possible. In Haiti, for example, the human rights monitors were asked how they might contribute to the civil-police training curriculum to increase the graduates' sensitivity to the personal rights of the citizens being served. Another inherent problem facing the managers of a multidimensional peace operation is the requirement to balance force protection commitments against the pressing needs for the military, such as support for elections. Comparable assessments must be made of the changing priorities of PVOs. Those organizations do the best they can with the assets at hand while they try to compensate for the vagaries--at times the inertia--of the international donor community.

Reflections on the strength and welfare of the mission must include an appreciation of the effects of profiteering. Many will find it a sad comment on human nature to acknowledge the behavior of individuals who try to profit through manipulation, coercion, and terror directed at the humanitarian relief process. The reality is that governments as well as non-state actors make a practice of capitalizing on others' misfortune. Events in Somalia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia have affirmed that tribal and ethnic differences are sufficient distinctions to turn neighbor against neighbor,

friend against friend. The challenge is to establish and enforce rules to prevent local behavior and practices from undermining the fundamental premise of fairness that must guide the operations of the international relief community.

In addition to cultural factors and the mission's organizational strengths, dialogue, mutual understanding, and compromise are also needed to reinforce the operational foundation of the intervention. Within the mission, interconnectivity among field offices is essential to success. Weeks went by after the author assumed responsibility in southern Somalia before effective lines of communication were established with UNOSOM headquarters in Mogadishu. Because reports and guidance could not be exchanged in a timely fashion, operations in both locations were diminished in the complicated, rapidly changing environment. Without a very proactive approach to internal communications, any relief group or organization faces a host of competing priorities and high prospects for misunderstanding, missed opportunities, and possibly failure.

A fourth factor that affects mission plans and operations is the **local community's capacity to absorb change**. To the greatest possible extent, the mission's strategy, especially its objectives, should be designed from the local community's perspective and coordinated with that community during implementation. A strategy that appears appropriate to the mission staff may be fundamentally flawed when viewed by the beneficiaries, as the following story suggests.

After the successful conclusion of the Kisimayo reconciliation accord, UNOSOM headquarters attempted to introduce the Transitional National Council (TNC) government process to the region. The TNC governance program was a bottom-up concept intended to bring participatory democracy to Somalia's 92 districts. They in turn were expected to elect representatives to the country's regions; a national council of representatives ultimately would be chosen from the regions to govern until a time when nationwide elections could be held to reestablish the country's political leadership.

The difficulty with UNOSOM's plan was that the three-year civil war had seriously destabilized demographic patterns in the southern region of the country. Local dignitaries, many from the displaced and minority communities, across clan affiliations, joined in denouncing the UN's proposal to inaugurate the TNC program without allowing a reasonable period for the provisions and sentiments of the accord mentioned above to take hold at the community level. In future operations the relief mission and the local community should work together, to the extent of developing a "contract" among responsible parties, so that a recovery strategy can be developed with the full participation of local leaders. The result can be a community that has invested in its rehabilitation, offering the requisite local judgments when necessary, which creates an atmosphere of popular tolerance and discipline concerning all mission operations. That tolerance, in no small measure, allows the intervention strategy to take hold and flourish.

The fifth and last major factor relates to **external support of the mission's strategy and programs**. All mission components must be informed about the nature and degree of international assistance for the mission's operations. Some offices within the mission, primarily those with relief and reconstruction responsibilities, focus almost exclusively on this subject. While others may appear marginally interested in the external donor world, the fact is that outside support of the mission is integral to virtually every facet of mission business. The mission's military forces and civil-police agency are dependent upon donated human and material resources; military observers and human rights monitors have to be recruited from suitable national sources; external funding is needed for election expenses; and humanitarian relief and economic development programs require investment from donor nations and international financial institutions. Input from the field--the relief mission's outstations--is also important in building a case for donor contributions. The mission's success at coordinating and integrating operations around a shared strategy and common objectives reinforces its appeal for all forms of external support.

The local community's ability and willingness to play one agency off against another will also affect the mission's strategy. It was the writer's experience that the Somali was a master at this destructive practice. Inevitable cracks in the mission's cohesiveness, caused by internal conflicts, misunderstanding, or the subordination of the mission's larger purpose to that of one component or organization, will be exploited by local interests bent on profiting from any internal disarray. The most effective remedies for this problem are the awareness of its inevitability and the understanding that it can be offset by close coordination of policy, plans, and operations at all implementing levels among all organizations in the mission area.

## **Coordinating Multidimensional Peace Operations**

One of the most daunting challenges facing managers of multidimensional peace operations designed to overcome complex emergencies is establishing a balance between cooperation and independence among the components of the international community that have responded to the crisis. This section examines organizational conflicts caused by agencies working at cross purposes within the relief effort. Methods for dealing with operations in collapsed states include techniques that can help the manager in the field coordinate international efforts during complex emergencies.

Recent international interventions have included military forces to deal with stability and security requirements. When required, a civil police training and advisory element has also been part of the mission. Political initiatives, such as cease-fires and disarmament, as well as national and local negotiations, mediation, conflict management, and reconciliation programs, are managed through the UN Mission's political office, whose director reports to the SRSG.

Humanitarian assistance--food distribution and public health concerns--will be the responsibility of the mission's director of humanitarian affairs, assisted by a variety of United Nations special agencies. Others involved with food and health matters can include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a host of international, regional, national, and local private voluntary organizations or non-government organizations. Longer term economic rehabilitation will be the responsibility of United Nations Development Programme, international financial institutions, regional development organizations, interested nations through bilateral aid programs, and the host government, to the extent that it can assist.

Refugees and displaced persons will be looked after by the United Nations, other appropriate international agencies, and local national organizations. Included in this category are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA), and the International Office of Migration. Human rights matters are the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; in some instances regional human rights organizations--in Haiti, for example, it was the Organization of American States--will also participate in this function. The team assembled to answer a call for help on an international scale is large, diverse, and represents many constituencies. The field manager must follow closely the charter and evolution of agencies, their membership and methods, and operational priorities. Everything about peace operations is dynamic.

Field coordinators and senior management will have to determine--sometimes help to establish--what is acceptable among and between agencies regarding shared goals, plans, and operational methods. During the author's service in southern Somalia, military forces were employed in conventional security operations; food and health agencies in feeding, nutrition, and health clinic activities; and ICRC and UNHCR in refugee and displaced-person programs. All of these organizations, however, were influenced by the need to help bring about the peaceful reconciliation of the region's communities, shattered by 20 years of dictatorship and the subsequent three-year civil war and famine. The need for reconciliation became the overriding consideration for many in positions of responsibility; a lengthy peace conference was its centerpiece. Awareness of this fact encouraged a sense of cooperation and common purpose among diverse relief groups which, in turn, enhanced mission accomplishment by all agencies in the Southern Zone.

The field manager should strive for early, selective, and purposeful collective planning and decisionmaking to determine acceptable limits for cooperation among supporting agencies. The threatening environment characteristic of most humanitarian interventions spreads risks and sacrifices more or less equitably within the relief community. The coordinator can capitalize on this risk as an incentive to encourage attendance at daily coordination meetings. Equality can be underscored by constantly changing the location and moderator for these meetings. If handled properly, no single agency will be perceived to be "in charge." Divisions among team members, often between the military and the rest of the team, must be addressed as soon as they appear. For example, military outposts in remote areas of the Southern Zone in Somalia were better received by the local communities if humanitarian relief, under escort by UNOSOM military forces, followed an agreed schedule, even if the schedule at times conflicted with planned military operations. Here the military demonstrated its willingness to adapt to a need that the relief community as a whole considered more beneficial to the group than military-specific activities on their behalf. But there are no rules to determine when such compromises are required; each field manager in a position to make those decisions must understand the risks, potential costs and benefits, and the capacity of his or her colleagues to meet the new or changed requirement.

Personnel rotations and the occasional arrival of a new organization are events that demand the field manager's



immediate attention. New personnel must develop a thorough understanding of current operational methods and the contributions expected of all members of the team. Relief agencies often shift their emphasis from one part of the host nation to another, which can bring those agencies into contact with other parts of the intervention group that had no prior experience with the relief community. Such shifts have to be anticipated, planned for, and managed; all concerned can help to compensate for sudden arrivals and departures of members of the international relief community.

Major decisions by any agency that have potentially profound effects on the team should be discussed, coordinated, and implemented collectively. In June 1993, the ICRC determined that its feeding programs had effectively dealt with the malnourished in the Southern Somalia Zone, that the food crisis had passed, and that the agency had to relocate to other areas in need of its services. The decision was made without informing in a timely fashion other organizations in the region; the ICRC abruptly left the zone, confusing and upsetting not only other relief agencies but also many of the local people. On very short notice, the rest of the team developed a stop-gap program that adjusted food sources and distribution plans, and gradually helped the local communities to become reasonably self-sufficient. In this instance, early coordination (or even notification) would have reduced anxiety among local Somalis as well as others in the international relief community.

All activities in an intervention need large measures of flexibility and creativity. Once the civilian agencies acquire confidence in each other and agree to the strategy behind their parts in the intervention, these agencies can demonstrate remarkable initiative and resourcefulness. Paradoxically, the uniformed services, which have so much to offer the collective enterprise, may require more time and outreach than the civilians to develop an informal approach to meeting day-to-day requirements. In Somalia, the Kisimayo reconciliation conference required daily meetings involving 200 local participants for almost two months to reach consensus. Substantial security and other military support for the conference was required from the reinforced Belgian army airborne battalion and Botswana light infantry company with a combined strength of approximately 950 personnel. Given the large regional stability task, the local military commander was unhappy with the size and duration of his commitment to the reconciliation conference. Ensuring the commander's support was essential and, at times, not without stress; not only did we have to make a compelling case to the local military commander, but he, in turn, had to be persuasive with his superiors at UNOSOM headquarters as well.

Relief agencies, by contrast, were quicker than the military to offer support for the conference, providing food, administrative material, and blankets upon which to sit; in some instances this material exceeded the normal operational charters of the donors. For example, the World Food Program located in the zone's headquarters in Kisimayo, which donated food to the conference, ordinarily provided assistance only through agricultural, fishing, and other rural development programs. Their willingness to adapt reflected their understanding of the importance of reconciliation to the overarching strategy for the Southern Zone.

The foregoing notwithstanding, it will be impossible to retain the cooperation and support of all members of the relief team. Events will drive some agencies to more independent operations. Personal threats to members of a relief organization can cause leaders to make decisions that separate the organization from the team's joint efforts. Regardless of the reasons for such changes, the field coordinator must respect the decisions and not interfere with members of the community that feel compelled to perform their mission without coordination or collaboration.

Organizational friction is inevitable in complex, diverse peace operations, and the field coordinator can take several measures to minimize its effects. First, try to get to the root of the problem and determine, if possible, its potential consequences for the goals of the relief operation. Individual or organizational fatigue, resource or operational shortfall, changes in the local environment--the list is endless, and each incident requires a rapid and forthright assessment. The field coordinator needs to determine what aspects of the problem can reasonably be influenced, what aspects require outside help, where to find likely sources of assistance, and what aspects are considered to be beyond immediate solution. The latter may eventually be recognized as intractable, but they can sometimes be ameliorated with careful attention.

Second, when confronted with organizations at cross purposes, the coordinator should always try to seek resolutions at the most informal level of relations between the opposing individuals or agencies. The relief community is well-connected for information and very sensitive to personal or organizational aberrations. Seek a simple, straightforward

solution to the difficulty; avoid public airing of the details, which risks inviting into the debate those who had been spectators. Such an outcome invariably complicates problem-solving.

Third, the most important reason for limiting knowledge of the problem is the potential harm that could follow should the issue become known to the local populace. Local interference in the daily operations of the relief effort is a very important consideration, one that under the best of circumstances is nearly impossible to prevent. As much as the international team thinks it understands local culture, attitudes, and perceptions, once an internal problem becomes generally known to the local nationals, the field coordinator and individual relief workers must exercise great caution to offset local efforts to drive wedges into the relief community. Local organizations that oppose the international effort will not waste time capitalizing on a real or perceived fracture in the relief team's cohesiveness, to the detriment of all, as the following example indicates.

Relief agencies operating in southern Somalia were unable to standardize local labor wages for offloading relief ships, a failure that caused considerable difficulty among the agencies. The local Somali labor committee pitted one agency against another when negotiating wages, threatening one relief agency head who resisted higher wages that another agency head had been coerced into paying. Indeed, the January 1993 assassination of Sean Deveraux, a member of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) staff in Kisimayo, was traced to attempts by UNICEF to eliminate such coercive labor practices.

In such situations, all elements of the international relief community must become involved in the search for alternatives. Organizational differences will have to be subordinated, at least temporarily, to the interests and goals of the larger relief community. During periods of heightened tensions, whatever the cause, it is all the more difficult to maintain the objectivity needed to solve underlying problems.

### **Future Multidimensional Peace Operations**

The following insights from the author's experience in Somalia and Haiti may fall short of universal truths; knowledge of them could, however, enhance--if not quite guarantee--the prospects for success in future peace operations. They are equally relevant to the uniformed and civilian practitioner, regardless of the contribution each makes in responding to a complex humanitarian emergency. These insights should be considered first as planners and commanders prepare for an intervention.

Establish reasonable **expectations** for success. Participants should keep in mind that operations with well-thought-out plans and consistent execution, whether under the control of the United Nations or regional or national groups, offer only a window of opportunity for nations and peoples to improve their condition. National or international prestige should not be at stake in any intervention aimed at reducing conflict, providing humanitarian assistance, restoring governance, rehabilitating an economy, or developing a nation. Expectations of success must be defined, understood, and shared between and among the recipients and providers of assistance. Measures of progress should be taken early and frequently, and success should be expected in small increments. As a complement to measuring progress, strategies and operations designed to ease the emergency should be continually reviewed.

All parties to the complex emergency, those that are suffering as well as those laboring to relieve suffering, must acknowledge the constraints that exist, and seek to apply all available resources to treat and remedy the problem in a cooperative fashion. The most evident constraint is the gap between the needs of the people in the affected country and the resources available to the international community.

No international relief effort will ever have sufficient time or resources to resolve a conflict, enforce peace, or build a nation. End states for interventions, whether determined by events, by time, or by international mandates, should allow humanitarian organizations to establish reasonable, achievable intermediate goals and objectives en route to the terminating event or date. More often than not, security and stability objectives of a complex humanitarian crisis can and will be met long before social, political, economic, institutional, and infrastructure goals have been attained. The challenge here is to make the most of each component's contribution within the time allotted for its participation.

The second important consideration in multidimensional peace operations is **timing**. The schedule to restore a complex emergency to normalcy is inevitably driven by forces and factors external to the crisis. International focus and

priorities, influential national interests, and other emergencies competing for attention and resources come to mind as determinants of staying power in any particular intervention. Attempts to allow considerations external to the crisis to set the clock and the agenda need to be resisted. While a sense of urgency between those experiencing the crisis and those trying to treat it may coincide, capabilities to plan, organize, and respond to the problem are not comparable. In the final analysis, a strategy to overcome a complex emergency has a greater chance for success if it is anchored in the local reality of emergency conditions rather than in external, artificial schedules and milestones. Do not try to rush what can't be rushed.

A third consideration has to do with **sustainment**. It needs to be recognized that any international response to complex emergencies will be plagued at the outset by insufficient resources, conflicting interests and priorities, and short attention to the problem. The notion that Band-Aid approaches can help to relieve these emergencies is both wasteful and perilous. The international relief community should not be expected, nor should it try, to deal with the problem unaided. An enduring solution to the crisis almost always requires a combination of international and local resources and efforts. The challenge in a cooperative approach is to identify and empower the most appropriate and effective local institutions to share with the international relief community the management of the problem and the effort to bring about peaceful and sustained change.

Perhaps the most important consideration regarding future peace operations, however, is the requirement to develop a sound **strategy**, one that makes the best possible use of the partnership that assembles to solve the problem. While each major component of the intervention team--from the political, military, and humanitarian communities--will undoubtedly have distinct operational concepts and plans, an overarching strategy understood by and supported by all the members of the team is absolutely essential to a successful mission.

All participants in the intervention must contribute to the strategy designed to resolve the crisis. All should seek to identify accurately the basic causes of instability. For military participants in peace operations this collective judgment determines the configuration, planning, mission, objectives, deployment, and operations of the military force that is expected to restore order. Having all participants provide information and ideas as the international force is being recruited, assembled, trained, and deployed will add much to the prospects for establishing the stable working relationships so important to the mission's broader objectives.

While the devil is always in the details of any strategy, the conceptual model for producing the strategy is relatively straightforward and worth mentioning. The strategic *ends* are derived from a clear identification of the root causes of the emergency. These ends define the conceptual framework for what has to be accomplished in order to remove those causes and restore the crisis area to some measure of normality.

The strategic *ways* through which the above concept is carried out are derived from the local, national, regional, and international institutions, organizations, and instruments of authority that are available to help overcome the emergency. Examples of strategic ways include bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, UN Security Council resolutions, regional security and economic assistance agreements, and international and regional financial policies.

The strategic *means* that resource the chosen ways are found in the structures and capacities of the international, regional, national, and local institutions--public and private--that share an interest in combating the complex humanitarian emergency. Examples of strategic means are UN peace operations, the programs of international relief organizations, humanitarian assistance projects undertaken by private and non-government organizations, bilateral assistance initiatives, ad hoc technical assistance programs, economic development assessments, and financial grants and aid.

The latrine problem that Fred Cuny faced in Biafra more than a quarter of a century ago has by and large been solved. Today Fred's successors--those who share his vision--would probably define the new challenges as the need for a vibrant spirit of cooperation, marked by information exchange and integrated strategies and practices among the many organizations dedicated to relieving suffering around the world. The number and variety of appeals to the international community for humanitarian assistance may have changed since Fred Cuny's time, but the requirements for success have remained relatively constant.

---

## NOTES

1. William Shawcross, "A Hero of Our Time," *The New York Review*, 30 November 1995, pp. 35-39.
2. The author was a member of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) during the early 1970s in Israel and Lebanon and has had more recent field experience in Somalia, Haiti, and Angola. While in Somalia, the author served as the United Nations Zone Director responsible for all UN operations in the southern region. His service in Haiti and Angola was as a member of the United Nations Training Assistance Teams that provided pre-mission training to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and to the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III).
3. For the purpose of this article, multidimensional peace operations are defined as actions taken in the field by national, regional, and international organizations to respond to a man-made or natural crisis that presents several dimensions of political, military, economic, and social problems which require resolution by the intervening organizations. These peace operations are undertaken in support of diplomatic initiatives designed to restore order to the area experiencing the complex emergency. The term "mission" is synonymous with the organizations that assemble in the field to solve the problems created by the crisis.
4. Field operatives seek to balance the need for cooperation in support of a common strategy and the independence that enables each organization to comply with its internal policies and controls. The participants--civilian and military, governmental and private, expatriate and local--will be looking for the ways and means to remedy the core problems in the troubled state or region. Field coordination relates to the responsibilities of the leadership of the mission at the farthest extension of the intervention, i.e. those mission components that directly confront the basic manifestations of the crisis, to bring the mission together in a common purpose with a coordinated, integrated plan. In the author's case in southern Somalia, as the senior United Nations official in the region, the coordinating challenge was to bring together the efforts of the zone's military forces, United Nations political initiatives, the international and private relief organizations, and local community groups in a coherent, cooperative fashion to achieve shared goals.
5. United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) I was created under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 751 in April 1992. UNOSOM I deployed in September 1992 under Chapter VI of the UN Charter to provide protection for humanitarian relief organizations. UNOSOM I ceased operations in April 1993. The United Nations International Task Force (UNITAF) was created under SCR 794 in December 1992. UNITAF deployed in December 1992 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to exercise all necessary means to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations. UNITAF ceased operations in May 1993. UNOSOM II was created under SCR 814 in March 1993. UNOSOM II deployed in May 1993 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to provide a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations, implement a disarmament program, provide humanitarian assistance, rehabilitate political and economic institutions, and promote national reconciliation. UNOSOM II ceased operations in March 1995.
6. See Andrew S. Natsios, "The International Humanitarian Response System," *Parameters*, 25 (Spring 1995), 68-81; and Peter J. Spiro, "New Global Communities: Nongovernmental Organizations in International Decisionmaking Institutions," *Parameters*, 25 (Spring 1995), 43-54.

---

Colonel Mark R. Walsh (USA, Ret.) is an associate professor in the US Army Peacekeeping Institute, US Army War College. He is a graduate of the US Military Academy and holds master's degrees from the University of Illinois and Boston University. His military service included assignments in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Vietnam, Belgium, and Germany, as well as with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Israel and Lebanon. Upon retirement from active duty, he rejoined the United Nations, serving as the Zone Director of UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) in Kisimayo from April to October 1993. In 1994 and 1995 he served with the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Haiti. In August 1995 he was a member of the UN Training Assistance Team that provided pre-mission training to the UN Angola Verification Mission. In February 1996 he served in Bosnia as a consultant to the Implementation Force (IFOR), providing planning assistance to the Office of the High Representative.

---

Reviewed 28 May 1996. Please send comments or corrections to [carl\\_Parameters@conus.army.mil](mailto:carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil).