2014

Teaching Notes for CHAPTER 10: Military Provision of Humanitarian and Civic Assistance: A Day in the Life of a Civil Affairs Team in the Horn of Africa

Jessica Piombo  
Naval Postgraduate School, jrpombo@nps.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/ucmoteaching_notes

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/ucmoteaching_notes/2

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching Notes by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University.
**TEACHING NOTES**

**Military Provision of Humanitarian and Civic Assistance:
A Day in the Life of a Civil Affairs Team in the Horn of Africa**

By Jessica Piombo*

This case study is designed as a retrospective study to encourage discussion about the ways that Civil Affairs teams operate; the logic and implications of how and where the U.S. military conducts strategically focused humanitarian assistance; and the impact of the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in the region. The case raises larger issues about civil-military coordination in stabilization and reconstruction activities as a secondary focus. It engages the student in an in-depth examination of the activities of one Civil Affairs team attached to the CJTF-HOA in 2007, operating in Lamu, Kenya, and how this team interacted with the headquarters of the CJTF-HOA that was located in Djibouti. From these perspectives, the case introduces the concept of the Civil Affairs team and how it operates, and uses the experience of this particular team to shed light on a large number of debates that surround military provision of humanitarian and civic assistance and the military’s increasing involvement in stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Presented in a narrative style that presents a stylized account of the team and the way that it operates, the case study periodically switches from the team’s perspective to the broader background of the CJTF-HOA and then back to the team and its supervising officers at the CJTF-HOA headquarters in Djibouti. In this way, the student is presented with the collective life experience of a typical Civil Affairs team, to use that experience to raise issues involved in the military provision of humanitarian and civic assistance, and to present some of the larger background that situates the activities of the team. The dialogue contained in this narrative is a near literal reproduction of what I was told as a researcher by the team members and the officials at the headquarters but also includes insights from similar visits in Ethiopia and Djibouti in 2007 and 2008.

The case study is appropriate for courses on stabilization and reconstruction activities, on the military’s involvement in humanitarian and civic assistance, and Africa-specific courses on the Horn of Africa and U.S. foreign policy in Africa.

**STUDENT PREPARATION**

The case study is designed to provide enough background to orient those not familiar with the CJTF-HOA to understand its basic operation, rationale for existence, and scope of operations. The case should be general enough to be used for various purposes in different courses, but the specific direction of the student discussions will depend on instructor cues and course preparation prior to engaging in the exercise.

---

* Jessica Piombo is an Associate Professor in the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), where she teaches courses on African politics, U.S. Foreign Policy, comparative politics, and ethnic politics and conflicts. Piombo also is the Director for Planning and Content of the Regional Security Education Program (RSEP) of NPS responsible for faculty recruitment and program content.
If the case is used in courses that include modules on stability operations and military provision of humanitarian and civic assistance, students should be familiar with the following before conducting the case study:

- Department of Defense rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures regarding the various humanitarian assistance programs; AFRICOM-specific guidance on humanitarian assistance programs;
- Doctrine on the U.S. military’s role in stabilization and reconstruction operations, foreign disaster assistance, and related topics; and
- Critiques of U.S. military involvement in humanitarian assistance, civic assistance, and related areas.

If the case is used in courses on Africa and/or U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, students should, at a minimum, be familiar with the following:

- Debates about the militarization of aid to Africa;
- The creation and mission of the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM);
- U.S. strategy for supporting fragile states;
- U.S. developmental policy and interagency processes in support of developmental objectives; and
- Drivers of Islamic radicalization and terrorism in the Horn of Africa. (If the case is used as an example of combating terrorism through engagement and development.)

The case study is designed to initiate conversation and debate on the following questions/topics (listed in no particular order):

- The rationale for establishing the CJTF-HOA; its goals and whether its methods of operation will achieve those goals.
  - This discussion could be expanded—on a broader scale, the use of humanitarian and civic assistance to achieve counterterrorism goals. Is this appropriate? Effective?
  - What are the official goals of DoD’s humanitarian and civic assistance programs?
- Are such militarily oriented goals effective tools for development?
- Are they appropriate tools in a counterterrorism strategy?
– Is developmental impact an appropriate metric by which to evaluate the impact of DoD humanitarian and civic assistance? (DoD will say no—refer to the previous two questions; the goal is to shape the environment.)

– Can these types of programs really “shape” the environment through short-term projects spread throughout a country?

• Issues that are important for developmental projects to succeed, and how these are or are not incorporated into CJTF-HOA projects.

– Local ownership;
– Use of contractors versus local vendors and laborers for projects; and
– Appropriate selection and vetting of projects.

• Why is the CJTF-HOA so short-term oriented? (This discussion can be extended to apply to Provincial Reconstruction teams and the navy’s “partnership” programs like the Africa Partnership Station, the Pacific Partnership, and the Southern Partnership Station).

– What are some of the effects of the short-term orientation of the core staff of the CJTF-HOA?

– Should an operation like the CJTF-HOA be pursued with a longer-term administrative structure than the current “task force” model allows?

– What are the issues and tradeoffs involved in this decision?

• What kind of effect can projects have? This discussion should consider some of the following, and if students are having trouble, refer them to the section that describes Lamu and what it is like there, how it is (or is not) integrated into the rest of Kenya, etc.:

– The location of projects within countries (sensitive areas versus areas with high population concentrations or areas important to a country’s economic activity).

– The cumulative effects (if any) of numerous, short-term projects.

– The effects of targeting Muslim populations as opposed to the general populace.

• How does the way that Civil Affairs teams operate affect their impact?

– What do students think of the work-around that the teams have developed to avoid onerous paperwork and the approval process for the official humanitarian assistance programs?

– Is civil mapping undermined by the search for minimal expenditure projects?

– Can these projects be fit into an overall U.S. policy goal for a country? If so, how? Is there evidence that this happens—either based on the case or outside reading?

The instructor might want to base a minidebate about this aspect of the case study—do the benefits of local involvement and ownership, and quick impact, outweigh the cons that these
projects are less integrated into the overall U.S. assistance strategy for a country or region than
the official humanitarian assistance projects (since these latter ones require coordination with
USAID as part of the approval process). There is an entire field of study about the impact of
humanitarian assistance programs that can be captured in microcosm here.

In fact, while this is written as a retrospective case to facilitate discussion about many debates
over whether or not the U.S. military should provide humanitarian and civic assistance, the
instructor could turn it into a decision-forcing case on this point about the way that Civil Affairs
teams bend the rules: Overall, does this action promote positive outcomes? Should the teams be
prevented from operating in this way? Are there potential negative consequences that outweigh
the benefits?

The case could also be used to facilitate discussion about principal–agent problems in military
operations, as there are many elements of this in the story of the Civil Affairs team in Lamu and
the Horn of Africa, more generally. This discussion would focus on Hicks’ comments and the
last few pages with the Djibouti headquarters’ reactions to the story of the Civil Affairs team in
Lamu.

Suggested Supplemental Readings:

America’s History in Nation Building

Dobbins, James, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell,
Germany to Iraq. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation.

This multiauthor volume presents a series of case studies that chronicle the U.S.’s
successes and failures in state building in Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo,
and Afghanistan.

Tate, M. L. 1999. The Frontier Army in the Settlement of the West. Norman, OK: University of
Oklahoma Press.

Discusses how as the U.S. Army explored the western region of the United States in the
nineteenth century, it built roads, compiled scientific records, improved river transportation,
delivered mail, and supported new governmental institutions such as police forces and the
agricultural extension service.

Analyses of the Evolution of Military Involvement in
Stabilization and Reconstruction

Note: This is very selective; there are literally hundreds of works that an instructor could use.
When picking, be careful to maintain the distinction between humanitarian assistance as defined
by the military and humanitarian assistance as defined by the NGO and development community.
The military combines development and disaster relief under humanitarian assistance, while the
NGO and development communities treat them separately. In the realm of stability, security
transition, and reconstruction, these two different concepts often become conflated.

Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities, Office of the
This study recommends that the U.S. military should increase its capabilities in four principal areas, two of which are related to stabilization and reconstruction: (1) stabilization and reconstruction capabilities; (2) strategic communication; (3) knowledge, understanding, and intelligence relating to stabilization and reconstruction; and (4) identification, location, and tracking for asymmetric warfare.


This report addresses (1) DoD’s approach to enhance stability operations capabilities and challenges that have emerged in implementing this approach; (2) DoD military planning for stability operations and the extent to which the department’s planning mechanisms facilitate an interagency approach; and (3) the extent to which DoD is applying stability operations-related lessons learned from past operations as future plans are developed.


This study focuses on the U.S. Marine Corps’ activities in the initial postconflict transition period in Iraq in 2003, as well as the subsequent protracted efforts to reestablish security under the rule of law, representative government, and essential services in Iraq during 2004.


Analyzes the Defense Science Board’s 2004 Summer Study.


Discusses the evolution of DoD thinking about stabilization and reconstruction—in particular, moves to create a military stabilization and reconstruction force that would include both military and civilian capabilities in an interagency effort. Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/12/mil-031230-afps01.htm.

Development and Defense


Provides a brief review of the CJTF-HOA and its operations from a slightly sensationalist angle, likely to capture the imagination of undergraduates in a way that formal academic writing and histories cannot. Available at http://www.esquire.com/features/africacommand0707.


This document summarizes findings of the CSIS Task Force on Non-Traditional Security Assistance. It proposes policy, institutional, and legislative changes for consideration by the current and future executive branch and Congress. The task force reviewed DoD activities in


Lischer discusses and critiques the logic of humanitarian aid as a counterterrorism strategy. She also puts humanitarian assistance for counterterrorism within a counterinsurgency framework. Available at http://hir.harvard.edu/articles/1481/.

Selected Issues in Military Involvement in Humanitarian Assistance and Stability, Security Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations

Note: As above, this is also an extremely small sample of potential works that could be incorporated into the class. It combines case study and general works.


Reviews coordination issues between civilians (government and NGOs) and the military in humanitarian assistance operations. Reviews tensions that are caused by military involvement, particularly for NGOs, and the disjuncture in goals between civilian and military agents.


Discusses the NGOs’ concern that military involvement in a humanitarian mission will disrupt established relations between the host nation and the NGO community.


Reviews the record of Provincial Reconstruction teams in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2006, arguing that while ambitious and diverse in their goals and accomplishments, most of the teams were affected by challenges related to interagency coordination and cooperation. Available at http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub828.pdf. If the original link is broken, attempt at http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA475717&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf.

Note: Instructors should examine the table of contents to this volume, as many of the chapters could be background, depending on what the orientation of the course is and how this case study will be used.


The Lischer and Pugh articles all raise issues of civil-military coordination and the impact of military involvement in stability, security, transition, and reconstruction and humanitarian assistance operations.

Scenario-building Tool


Field Manuals and Official Doctrine on Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance


**Additional Resources**

Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa


United States Africa Command

U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)