



OFFICE OF RESEARCH
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
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Conference Report

***MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO HUMANITARIAN
CRISES***

***Meridian International Center
1630 Crescent Place, NW
Washington, DC***

Sponsored by

***The US Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Office of Research and Office of the Geographer***

October 20, 1993

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Executive Summary
"Multilateral Responses to Humanitarian Crises"

On October 20, 1993, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research sponsored a full day conference on recent multilateral interventions in humanitarian crises. Participants included experts on the UN system, refugee health care, NGOs, and the media, as well as officials from State. The observations are as follows:

Do more, before: The typical multilateral response to humanitarian crises can be summed up as: "do nothing" to prevent it; "do little" to intervene while it is unfolding; and "do something" to salvage lives after much of the disaster already has played out. Unless the UN gives serious attention to conflict prevention strategies and radically improves its handling of mass emergencies, future interventions will fail. Official assessment missions usually arrive too late to be effective in public health emergencies.

Media-twist: USG reactions are often guided by the TV network "parachute journalists," who jump from crisis to crisis based on the potential "sizzle" of a story and the presence of US troops. Such coverage increases the tendency of all governments and the UN to engage in ad hoc, reactive measures, rather than long term humanitarian and development-oriented programs.

Political-Military context: The military must be included in any initial plans for humanitarian interventions and must be given clear, attainable mission-objectives. Relief operations in civil wars also must integrate humanitarian goals with political stabilization and cessation of hostilities; this may be better performed by civil affairs units of armed forces than by civilian agencies.

UN role: UN rules and institutions designed for refugees do not work under civil war conditions. This exacerbates traditional relief delivery problems, such as ineffective UN/NGO cooperation, resource and funding shortages, poor planning and inappropriate implementation, and inexperienced personnel. The UN does not adequately promote self-reliance among relief-dependent groups and fails to coordinate relief and development agencies.

UN leadership: Despite the creation of a Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Security Council and Secretariat have failed to pull together effectively the decentralized and uncoordinated UN system to respond to urgent regional crises. Missions in Somalia and Bosnia have become political quagmires in part because of confusion over Security Council

resolutions. On paper they are Chapter Seven measures, which authorize UN forces to "use all necessary measures" (with or without the consent of the belligerents), while in practice they are Chapter Six operations, which allow UN mediation and peacekeeping only with the consent of the parties. The resulting mandates fail to deal with violent actions that threaten civilians, relief workers, and peacekeepers.

A lead "crisis" agency must be identified to cope with all aspects of humanitarian crises, particularly prevention; it must have the resources to deploy quickly experienced, well-equipped teams who can call upon relief supplies pre-positioned in the region.

NGOs at the frontlines: NGOs play many roles in a crisis: as the grassroots-level arm of international relief operations; as advocates for foreign involvement in a crisis; and as tripwires for intervention. The UN and donor governments often minimize the NGO's role; as a result, much NGO activity remains poorly coordinated with government efforts.

Bottom line: Costly, tragic humanitarian crises will overwhelm the UN and major donor countries unless they take greater responsibility for pre-conflict diplomacy and protecting human rights, and significantly improve their ability to manage war-induced emergencies.

Relief delivery problems have become exacerbated due to ineffective UN/NGO cooperation; resource and funding shortages; poor planning and inappropriate implementation; and inexperienced personnel. Finally, the UN has not systematically promoted self-reliance among relief-dependent groups and still lacks coordination among relief and development-oriented agencies.

Prepared by: INR/GE - William Wood

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Sponsored by the Office of Research and
the Office of the Geographer, Bureau of
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Department of State

"Multilateral Responses to Humanitarian Crises"

Wednesday, October 20, 1993

8:30 a.m. **Registration and Coffee**

9:00

OPENING REMARKS

Ambassador Walter Cutler, President, Meridian International Center
Toby Gati, Assistant Secretary-designate, Bureau of Intelligence and Research,
U.S. Department of State

William Wood, Conference Moderator, Director, Office of the Geographer,
Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State

9:15

LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS IN A CRISIS

Michael Toole, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta

What happens to populations under severe stress? What are the early warnings of a public health catastrophe? What are the most effective measures to save lives? Do international public health/medical agencies work well together?

9:45

THE CRISIS AS NEWS

Stephen Hess, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

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What are the changing characteristics of the media that affect how crises are covered?

10:15

THE POLITICS OF A CRISIS

John Hirsch, Council on Foreign Relations, former DCM in Somalia

How can political stability be restored? How can belligerent factions be induced to cooperate in humanitarian relief efforts? Who should determine who is in charge? How important is disarming belligerent forces in implementing relief?

10:45

Coffee Break

10:55

THE MILITARY'S ROLE IN PROVIDING RELIEF

Eugene Dewey, International Consultant to the United Nations

What is the appropriate role for foreign/U.N. forces? When does protection of relief deliveries cross over into provocation? Who should lead, in what capacity, and for how long?

All remarks are off the record and not for attribution.

11:25

NGOs ON THE FRONT LINES

Larry Minear, The Refugee Policy Group/Watson Institute, Washington, D.C.

What are the problems of the UN system in responding to complex conflict-related emergencies? What role can/should NGOs play in providing emergency relief assistance? How do they interact with each other and with governmental and U.N. agencies? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

12:00 p.m.

Working Lunch

FIRST HAND EXPERIENCES IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Fred Cuny, Intertect Relief and Reconstruction Corporation, Dallas, Texas

1:30

U.N. COORDINATION OF PEACEKEEPING AND HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

Ed Luck, U.N. Association of the United States of America, New York, New York

How does the U.N. bureaucracy implement UNSC resolutions on peacekeeping and relief assistance? What are the commands and controls between headquarters and the field? How can U.N. mission responsibilities and implementation be improved?

2:00

BEYOND THE CRISIS

Dennis Gallagher, Refugee Policy Group, Center for Policy Analysis and Research on Refugee Issues, Washington, D.C.

After the emergency has abated and many refugees repatriated, what can/should the international community do to enhance regional political and economic stability? When does humanitarian relief become economic development and who should handle it?

2:30

Soda Break

2:40

PANEL DISCUSSION

Jessica Tuchman Matthews, Moderator, Deputy to the Counselor, U.S. Department of State

Based on experiences in Iraq, Somalia, Cambodia, and Bosnia, what are the key lessons that the new Administration might apply to future crises? What USG and multilateral institutional changes (especially with the U.N. and NGOs) need to be made now to better prepare us for the next disaster? Where might the next crisis arise and how will current crises likely evolve? What role can conflict resolution play in averting humanitarian crises and what diplomatic efforts would be directed toward prevention of potential disasters? What are the links between humanitarian crises and broader issues of population pressure, economic/ecological decline, and democracy and human rights?

4:00

Closing Remarks (Jessica Tuchman Matthews)

All remarks are off the record and not for attribution.

MULTILATERAL RESPONSES TO
HUMANITARIAN CRISES

Summary of Conference Presentations

Life Threatening Conditions in a Crisis

Michael Toole, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Toole asserted that the most serious aspect of a crisis is its interference with society's ability to provide basic needs. Frequently, populations flee the area of strife, leading to mass migrations internally and across borders. A trend in recent crises is the exponential increase in civilian casualties. Civilians in WWI were 5% of total casualties, and 50% in WWII, yet today civilian casualties range from 80-90% of total war casualties.

The speaker identified this as a "war on children." More than 1.5 million children have been killed in the 130 conflicts between 1980-1993. From some 100 million land mines employed worldwide, there is a global epidemic of land mine injuries causing death, traumatic amputation, and permanent disability. Other impacts of recent crises include psychological stress from war, dislocation, constant threat of injury, and the effect of frequent sexual assaults in areas of conflict.

Dr. Toole identified the fundamental difficulties in redressing these conditions as the lack of adequate regional stores of medicines, the targeting of existing health facilities by warring parties, and frequent lack of command and control of many forces on either side of the conflict. The high cost of treating the wounded also interferes with normal health services.

International efforts such as Provide Comfort succeeded due to the logistical capability available through already deployed military assets, and to the highly-motivated personnel. Conditions in Somalia were different. There was a lack of security for food distribution and medical relief, and intervention occurred after the level of disease infection already had peaked, following the catastrophically high mortality rates. Bosnia-Herzegovina is plagued by pilferage and the inability of the United Nations Protective Force (UNPROFOR) to protect food and medicine shipments to remote areas, where up to 50% of medical supplies fall prey to confiscation at roadblock inspections.

Dr. Toole concluded with a plea to revise the obsolete WWII-era institutions of the UN. Policymakers must contend with more recent phenomenon, e.g., deliberate food deprivation, the internally displaced, and the use of widespread sexual assault as a weapon of terror. The international community should consider the creation or designation of a lead agency to direct future interventions, in order to ensure a measure of emergency preparedness.

The Crisis as News

Stephen Hess, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC

Mr. Hess observed that crisis response is increasingly driven by television images. As an example, the 1984 surge of relief to the famine victims in Ethiopia was a result of the coverage of a previously aired story on the BBC by the NBC London bureau chief. After initially balking at the idea, NBC aired the piece, and the amount of media coverage increased dramatically--rapidly spreading to the other networks and the print media.

This press campaign led to a public outcry, pressuring the Reagan administration, then engaged in a re-election campaign, to increase aid to the starving from \$23 million to \$98 million. After the public tired of the issue, news coverage swiftly dropped, and subsequently so did relief efforts. Thus, famine that began years prior to any significant attention by the Western media experienced a brief respite, then resumed, and continued for a long time thereafter.

Mr. Hess noted that budgetary drawdowns have resulted in the reduction of a large number of foreign correspondents, forcing news agencies to rely on local press films with their own voice-over. The objectivity of such reporting is highly suspect. Coverage of a crisis is governed largely by its sensationalistic aspects and has led to "parachute journalism," where major known journalists are dispatched to the scene and serious press attention lasts only briefly. The speaker identified the two criteria needed for extended press coverage as emotional "sizzle," and the involvement, or possible involvement, of the US military.

Mr. Hess believes television is a reactive media-- the cameras follow the troops. This is much in evidence when one considers the media "teeter-totter" between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia. The Cable News Network (CNN) shows low ratings on uneventful days and high ratings during times of tension, leading to a crisis mentality by the viewers. CNN is on in many press rooms and intelligence facilities. National leaders watch CNN, sometimes making decisions based on CNN coverage.

The Politics of a Crisis

John Hirsch, Council on Foreign Relations, former DCM in Somalia

Mr. Hirsch stated that the US intervention was essential in Operation Restore Hope, from December 1992-March 1993, to end the starvation induced by the two-year civil war. As part of the US involvement, the political advice given by the State Department to the Somalis emphasized their responsibility for their future. A mutual agreement was reached in which Somali leaders agreed to reduce weapons and police the accords themselves with a minimum of violence. The initiative was to create interim local governments which would help administer Somalia until the planned transition of operational control from the US to the UN.

Initially, these policies were welcomed by the Somalis, but they reduced Aideed's ability to act as a military commander. As he saw his influence decline, Aideed developed his own plans for the transition from US to UN control of the relief operation. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali wanted to disarm the nation prior to the transition and the initiation of a national Somali government. This conflicted with the US goal of limited disarmament, confiscation of all large weapons if found in the streets, and efforts to build an interim local Somali police force.

The UN was clearly not ready for the transition. This led to the re-appearance of weapons on the streets of Mogadishu and the targeting of NGO personnel. This was not addressed by the UN, and in the subsequent violence, the UN was overwhelmed--prompting US reinvolverment. Mr. Hirsch suggested that the original US initiatives need to be re-activated. The speaker asserted that only with disarmament and the rekindling of a sense of Somali self-determination can the task of nation-building seriously progress.

The Military's Role in Providing Relief

Eugene Dewey, International Consultant to the United Nations

Mr. Dewey indicated that though a field manual is being drafted, the military has few guidelines in humanitarian relief operations. For instance, there was no appendix in the operations order for Desert Storm for the foreseeable humanitarian disaster in both north and south Iraq that followed in the wake of the Gulf War.

The pattern is to resort to the military to save relief operations, with an often costly and sub-optimal result. The

speaker stressed that deterrence as a means of behavior modification is an important tool for the prevention of future crises. This goal often is thwarted by the ineffective employment of the UN and by its operational shortcomings. This, in large part, is attributable to the differences in the culture of the US government and the UN, and organizational defects in the interface between the US/UN command structure that preclude effective integration of unit components.

Mr. Dewey noted a distinct lack of success regarding military involvement in humanitarian relief. Two successful examples cited were the operations on the Thai-Cambodian border in the early 1980's, and those in Africa in the mid-1980's. An important element of both was the lack of an opposition role for the indigenous forces; the factions supported relief.

According to Mr. Dewey, there is a need to "re-invent" both the US and the UN ability to deal with complex crises. The speaker emphasized the need for the US to assume leadership, citing the successful US mobilization of the UN to deal with the African drought of 1984-1985 and the recent southern African drought. Mr. Dewey advocates the formation of "humanitarian task forces" with respect to the "triad" of effort between the political, military and humanitarian institutions. The speaker recommended the use of Swedish forces, who are already trained for humanitarian duties, in a relief and security team, and other nations for the logistics. He detailed the success of the USAID office in recent humanitarian relief exercises, and the leadership of the USAID Special Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance.

NGOs on the Front Lines

Larry Minear, The Refugee Policy Group/Watson Institution,
Washington, DC

Mr. Minear discussed how Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) can reach people at the grass roots, and can operate in areas of disputed sovereignty and legality--entering where the UN has "feared to tread." As world attention wanes in crisis areas, NGOs represent a source of information on emergency situations, and provide direction for foreign intervention. The NGOs place priority on alleviating suffering, and have operated in situations where the host nation government did not necessarily condone their efforts.

Mr. Minear stated that the role of the NGO is unchanged by the end of the Cold War--global need has not diminished. The international nature of the NGO community is a real asset.

They have the ability to interact with governments, the UN, and insurgent movements. The NGOs can take the lead from the UN in assisting in matters of repatriation and reconciliation, as in the return of refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala following the long civil wars there. The NGO's also generate popular support for relief in donor nations.

First-Hand Experiences in the Former Yugoslavia

Fred Cuny, Intertect Relief and Reconstruction Corporation,
Dallas, Texas

Mr. Cuny noted that the level of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/United Nations Protective Forces (UNHCR/UNPROFOR) coordination is tenuous at best, and this often leads to a lack of ability to communicate directly with one another. Additionally, the size of UNPROFOR exceeds that of UNHCR, perhaps the inverse of the ideal configuration. Currently, UNPROFOR can do little to prevent the pilferage of relief supplies. Mr. Cuny believes that many relief agencies are asking for trouble by using high-value foods and medicines in some relief operations, and by employing militarily-useful 4x4 vehicles under conditions of little security. Mr. Cuny stressed that the current multilateralism is ineffective and that US leadership is needed.

Currently, Mr. Cuny sees a lack of contingency planning in general for complex crises. He advocated the increased use of US military civil affairs units, now composed mostly of reservists, to assist with the interaction among the military, NGOs, factions, and the victims. Mr. Cuny stressed the difficulty of conducting relief missions in cities, with assets often subject to the predation of the local mafia. Frequently, the most secure and effective locations are in rural areas surrounding the cities. Mr. Cuny stressed that effective peacekeeping must occur prior to, and not after, the deployment of humanitarian agencies.

UN Coordination of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Missions

Ed Luck, UN Association of the United States of America, New York

Mr. Luck decried the fact that the United Nations is inherently decentralized and highly uncoordinated. He asserted that for operations to proceed, involvement must occur at several levels in the UN--the agencies, member states, and opposing factions. As currently employed, he argued, the UN has difficulty succeeding either with or without the military.

The conditions on the ground and the staggering logistical load borne by humanitarian relief efforts warrant military involvement, at the risk of the military action falling into the ill-defined areas of either peacekeeping or peacemaking. This blurring of missions causes friction and frustrates coordination between the humanitarian and military missions, thus creating ambiguities in the rules of engagement used by the military. Mr. Luck stated that little deterrence is effected by UN resolutions as a result of these ambiguities, often leading to the targeting of the NGOs by the indigenous combatants. One distinction made by Mr. Luck between peacekeeping and peace enforcement is in the degree of cooperation among the factional parties.

Beyond the Crisis

Dennis Gallagher, Refugee Policy Group, Center for Policy Analysis and Research on Refugee Issues, Washington, DC

Mr. Gallagher observed that operations previously known as "refugee relief" are known now as "humanitarian aid." Such efforts are more common with the demise of superpower antagonism. The strategy for providing aid also has undergone significant change. During the Cold War, aid was rendered on the periphery, with victims sometimes trekking hundreds of miles to reach relief. In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, aid for refugee Afghanis was administered in Iran and Pakistan. Because of civil war, the needy in Ethiopia sought relief in Sudan. Refugee problems then were seen as long-term, often lasting up to twenty years, with no immediate solution being sought. There was an avoidance of empowerment of these refugees by relief agencies, in order to placate the local population and the host government.

The difficult adjustments in the wake of the Cold War include experiences of varied success, e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Somalia. No longer is there tolerance for twenty year crises. Current emphasis should be on implementation of market-related aid packages and early integration of the NGOs into the relief process. With 17 million refugees and 24 million displaced persons worldwide, Mr. Gallagher asserted that benefits in developmental intervention must accrue to locals as well as refugees. He concluded that the UN needs to aid in the transition from relief to development efforts by better coordinating the agencies and resolving issues of sovereignty.

Panel Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Jessica Tuchman Matthews, Deputy to the Counselor, US
Department of State

Ms. Tuchman Matthews summarized some of the major themes of the conference. She reiterated the call discussed frequently during the conference to intervene in crises at an early stage. The conference noted a continuing ambiguity surrounding the enforcement of Chapters 6 (peacekeeping) and 7 (collective security) of the UN Charter, and referred to "6 1/2" operations which confer the military capabilities of Chapter 7, but the rules of engagement of Chapter 6. Some of the discussants perceived this as a public diplomacy "whitewash," designed to portray ground operations as less severe than is the case. A possible need was discussed for either a new agency or separate rules for the employment of Chapter 7, in order to avoid confusion between peacekeeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian efforts. Peacekeeping can only begin after the killing stops. That reflects current UN doctrine, but has been ignored by the Security Council in approving most recent UN peacekeeping missions.

Debate continued on the effectiveness of economic sanctions, specifically in South Africa, the former Yugoslavia, and Iraq. Specific proposals were discussed, including the need for a set of agreed political acts which would trigger intervention, a global ban on anti-personnel mines, a demand to be stricter in war crimes trials, and special provisions for intervention in ethnic crises.

Prepared by: Michael Nelson

