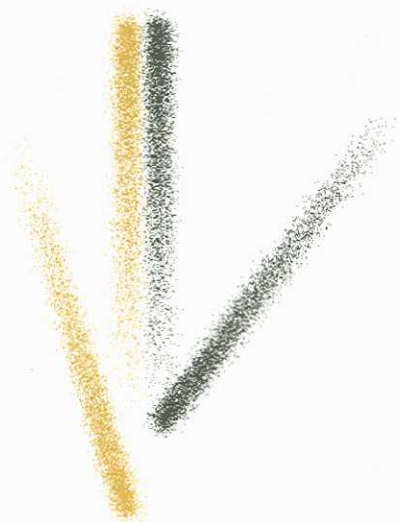




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# **CNA 1995 Annual Conference Proceedings**



## **Military Support to Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: From Practice to Policy**



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# P R E F A C E

The CNA 1995 Annual Conference provided a forum for military officers, statesmen, and humanitarians to debate the role of the military in complex humanitarian emergencies. CNA was fortunate to have had many current and former U.S. government officials, representatives from UN organizations and prominent non-governmental and private voluntary organizations, and experienced U.S. and foreign military officers participate in the conference. Indeed, the success of the conference stemmed in large part from the diverse perspectives of the participants.

The purpose of these proceedings is twofold. First, we hope the proceedings capture the richness of the discussions that made the conference such a success. The two-day conference built from practice to policy: The first day explored operational issues with people who have worked in-country, on the ground in many of these crises; the second day featured a seminar game that demonstrated the decision-making process by which policymakers decide to commit U.S. military forces to complex humanitarian crises.

This evolution from practice to policy revealed many things. Complex humanitarian emergencies are not a new phenomenon.

But since the end of the Cold War they have commanded more attention from the international community. In the absence of involvement in any greater conflict, the U.S. probably will continue to respond to complex humanitarian emergencies. And the decision to do so probably will be driven by factors unrelated to the humanitarian aspect of the crisis. As the seminar game demonstrated, the decision to commit U.S. forces will be influenced by the often competing demands of national security interests, the international community's expectations of the U.S. as a world leader, the U.S. domestic agenda, and U.S. public opinion.

When the U.S. does choose to respond to these crises, the military is just one tool for that response. Certainly it is the most visible form of response. But also the U.S. military often is the preferred tool because, as the Somalia panel concluded, it possesses a number of unique capabilities absent elsewhere. Thus, it is likely that the U.S. military will continue to respond to these crises.

Therefore, the military should prepare for this kind of nontraditional mission. It must not only learn how to improve its ability to work with other organizations, militaries, and cultures, but also understand how U.S. military involvement affects a complex emergency. The conference highlighted two particular effects:

- *The magnet effect.* The seminar game demonstrated that creating a secure, stable environment in a crisis area may bring about yet a different kind of problem—more refugees might be drawn to that area. In Somalia, for example, the U.S. presence in Mogadishu attracted displaced people, who were then recruited by Aidid. Often, actions intended to ease the situation actually exacerbate it.
- *The lightning rod effect.* Some conference participants believed that the greater and more visible the U.S. presence, the greater the risk for incurring casualties. They held that U.S. forces are perceived as a political presence and, hence, are a potential target for those opposed to an operation and the U.S. involvement in it.

Because the credibility of the U.S. military—and the U.S. reputation as a world leader—will be judged by its performance in these emergencies, it is imperative that not only the military but also the policy-makers understand these effects. Indeed, policy-makers must understand the ramifications of committing U.S. military forces to complex emergencies well enough to determine whether they outweigh national security interests, the U.S. domestic agenda, and U.S. public opinion.

Our conference was just a first step in tying operations to policy. Although the conference illustrated the need to link policy and operations, it did not explore that link—how operations affect policy and, in turn, policy affects operations. We plan to build on the conference to further our understanding of that link. Therein lies the second purpose of these proceedings: to spark your interest in exploring the policy and operational implications of committing U.S. military forces to complex humanitarian emergencies.