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Preventive Humanitarian Assistance and GWOT in PACOM

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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23 October 2006

ABSTRACT

More can be done to develop a systematic program of preventive HA through the innovative use of theater forces, materiel, and manpower. Operations can be modified or planned to support dedicated HA and in support of the TSCP, a long-term HA strategy needs to be crafted to focus these efforts in the right locations using the most effective means as part of the Global War on Terror. To date, however, most relief interaction between the U.S. military and PACOM country populations has been through brief crisis responses or through aid provided coincident to military exercises. Disaster relief is a tremendous capability and goes a long way toward strengthening relationships with PACOM nations, but it is reactive and may or may not have an impact on populations where extremism is a potential factor. Development of an effective strategy would accomplish several things: 1) improve attitudes and impressions of the U.S. and partner nations among the serviced populations; 2) stem the possible development of extremism among these populations; 3) improve interoperability and strengthen relationships between and among the U.S., partner nations, and NGOs; 4) and provide training between, and exposure to, participating forces. This strategy will also save lives and treasure by preventing future humanitarian crises and better preparing forces that may be called upon to react to natural or manmade disasters.

INTRODUCTION

USNS Mercy, one of two dedicated hospital ships in the U.S. inventory, recently completed a five-month humanitarian assistance (HA) deployment to South and Southeast Asia. The deployment focused on U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) cooperative security priority countries as part of the Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP). The purpose was to "demonstrate U.S. compassion, support, and commitment to the Pacific region by leveraging and continuing the goodwill developed during Operation Unified Assistance (tsunami relief) and by providing highly valuable medical services to under-served populations throughout the region."¹ The locations visited by Mercy were chosen for a variety of reasons, but a common thread running through all of them is that they are in areas ripe for the growth of violent extremism. Attempting to shape attitudes and opinions through humanitarian assistance is not new, but the deployment of U.S., other nation, and non-governmental organization (NGO) relief capabilities aboard a U.S. Navy ship in a preventive fashion was unique.

USPACOM has taken a first step, but more can be done to develop a systematic program of preventive HA through the innovative use of theater forces, materiel, and manpower. Operations can be modified or planned to support dedicated HA; and in support of the TSCP, a long-term HA strategy

¹ Commander, Pacific Fleet to Headquarters, U.S. Pacific Command, message, 100624Z MAR 06, 10 March 2006.

needs to be crafted to focus these efforts in the right locations using the most effective means as part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). To date, however, most relief interaction between the U.S. military and PACOM country populations has been through brief crisis responses or through aid provided coincident to military exercises.² Disaster relief is a tremendous capability and goes a long way toward strengthening relationships with PACOM nations, but it is reactive and may or may not have an impact on populations where extremism is a potential factor.

Development of an effective strategy would accomplish several things: 1) improve attitudes and impressions of the U.S. and partner nations among the serviced populations; 2) stem the possible development of extremism among these populations; 3) improve interoperability and strengthen relationships between and among the U.S., partner nations, and NGOs; 4) and provide training between, and exposure to, participating forces. This strategy will also save lives and treasure by preventing future humanitarian crises and better preparing forces that may be called upon to react to natural or manmade disasters.

Relief efforts following the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake caused the affected populations to develop a better impression of the U.S., surely due to the

² Siegel, Adam. "A Sampling of U.S. Naval Humanitarian Operations." Navy Department Library. November 1990. Department of the Navy, Naval Historical Center.
<http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/humanitarian.htm> (accessed 6 Oct 2006)

provision of critically needed relief supplies, but social psychology studies reveal that, in general, proximity breeds liking and preventive HA should produce a positive result. Additionally, a systematic HA program, as part of overall stability operations, would meet the spirit and direction of several guidance documents ranging from the National Security Strategy to NSPD-44 to Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.05 to the PACOM Theater Security Cooperation Plan.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Following the catastrophic tsunami of December 2004, the U.S. rushed aid to the Aceh region of Indonesia. DOD assets, including a Carrier Strike Group, an Expeditionary Strike Group, and a large hospital ship, played a huge role as part of Operation Unified Assistance. Despite the tremendous capabilities these forces could provide, there was trepidation on the part of Indonesia. As Marine Public Affairs Officer Joseph Plenzler stated at the time, "The Indonesian suspicions of and sensitivities to our presence cannot be understated. The Indonesian population, already upset at U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, was grateful for our humanitarian response efforts but also extremely wary that we had a more nefarious purpose in mind. One of the war-game scenarios at the TNI Staff College is that of a U.S. invasion under the guise of a humanitarian

relief effort!"³ Following Unified Assistance, opinion polls revealed an increase in positive opinion of the U.S. Around 65 percent said they were more favorably inclined toward the U.S. following American relief efforts. This should not be seen as a watershed event, however, as 54 percent still held an overall hostile attitude to the U.S. (34 percent held a favorable opinion, up from 15 percent in 2003).⁴ Focus group studies in Indonesia sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations also revealed a softening of attitudes towards the U.S. The studies (conducted in Jakarta, not in Aceh where opinions would likely be even more positive) revealed Indonesians were less inclined to question American motivations, with some participants even demonstrating comfort with the participation of U.S. troops: "I feel they are really helping people in Aceh after the disaster. They work hard there together with other NGOs. (Older Indonesian woman, post-tsunami) Our people are not really concerned about their presence. (Young Indonesian man, post-tsunami)" Some Indonesians still harbored suspicions, but others commented that U.S. forces in the region could provide a

³ Joseph M. Plenzler, "Conducting Public Affairs at the Little End of the Operational Spectrum," *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, no.5 (May 2006): 47.

⁴ Terror Free Tomorrow, Inc., *A Major Change of Public Opinion in the Muslim World: Results from a New Poll of Indonesians*. (Washington DC: March 2005): 2-5.

measure of security by lessening the impact of the Aceh separatist movement.⁵

The same effect was seen in Pakistan in November 2005 following earthquake relief operations in the northern part of the country. The U.S. favorability rate doubled in surveys taken after relief efforts had begun and nearly 80 percent of those who had confidence in Osama bin Laden reported they now had a more favorable view of the U.S.⁶ The Pakistani Director of the Federal Relief Commission Major General Farooq Ahmad Khan noted at the end of U.S. relief operations in March 2006 that, "US Chinooks became a symbol of hope for tens and thousands of quake victims. The American engineers and doctors did a commendable job. It shall be remembered forever."⁷

The Pakistan earthquake and Indonesia tsunami efforts were responses to catastrophic disasters and it is hardly surprising to see that the assisted populations would react with appreciation. But a disaster need not be the prerequisite to targeted humanitarian assistance. The development of goodwill between people needs to be an ongoing endeavor. Research has revealed that proximity and contact between people leads to a greater degree of

⁵ Craig Charney and Nicole Yakatan, "A New Beginning: Strategies for a More Fruitful Dialogue with the Muslim World," *CSR No. 7*, Council on Foreign Relations (May:2005) , 51-53

⁶ Terror Free Tomorrow, Inc., *A Dramatic Change of Public Opinion in the Muslim World: Results from a New Poll in Pakistan*. (Washington DC: November 2005): 7.

⁷ Our reporter, "US Military's Relief Operations End," Dawn.com, 22 March 2006, <http://www.dawn.com/2006/03/22/top5.htm> (accessed 19 October 2006).

understanding and liking. David G. Myers cites interaction, anticipation of interaction, and mere exposure as factors which kindle liking between people. Interaction allows people to "explore their similarities, to sense one another's liking..."⁸ On an individual level we are biased toward those we often see. In studying attitudes of native Europeans to immigrant populations, surveys demonstrated that if you have a minority group friend, you are much more likely to express sympathy and support for that group. American students studying in Germany and Britain were more positive in their attitudes toward host nation individuals the more contact they had with them.⁹ Regular visits by U.S. forces to areas in need will increase proximity and interaction and thus liking.

Of course, it can be expected that some people and organizations will try to undermine any efforts undertaken and this was reflected in the strategic communications plan for USNS Mercy's recent deployment. An unclassified item in the 19 September PACOM Joint Intelligence Operations Center Daily Intelligence Update discussed how an Indonesian Islamic monthly magazine blasted The Asia Foundation, a U.S.-headquartered non-profit NGO, for using U.S. money. The magazine claimed such institutions spend U.S. dollars to change Islam and pit Muslims against each other.

⁸ David G. Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology*. 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 274-275.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 323.

Operationally and tactically, establishing contact and developing relationships can be difficult. Following Unified Assistance some contended that:

"Seabasing humanitarian assistance whenever practicable is clearly a sound model. A "less intrusive" means of providing support, such missions are more likely to be welcomed by nations concerned with the presence of U.S. military personnel "occupying" bases ashore. Sea-based relief efforts capitalize on the efficiencies gained from the existing support infrastructure of ships (communications, food, shelter, medical facilities, and fuel). Finally, force protection efforts for personnel do not have to be borne ashore 24 hours a day. The return of all personnel each night to the strike group's ships from Banda Aceh prevented the relief effort from becoming a potential target for terrorists."¹⁰

This contention is correct if the goal is purely to provide assistance while maintaining the optimal force protection posture. But if a goal of the mission is to improve the perception of the U.S. and others providing relief a certain amount of risk must be accepted to allow for exposure to Americans and other aid workers. As those receiving aid get to know and accept those providing help, the relief effort itself can be a form of force protection by forming "a 'flak jacket' of good will around the personnel on the ground."¹¹

Care will have to be taken to select the right nations to approach, allow the host nation to take the lead on all efforts, and thoroughly understand local cultures.¹² A

¹⁰ Mark S. Leavitt, Jeffrey M. Vorce, and Michael M. Hsu "For Compassion and Country-Unified Assistance." *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 131, no. 4 (April 2005): 44-48.

¹¹ Plenzler, "Public Affairs at the Little End." 48.

¹² U.S. Navy, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Operations Planning, Navy Warfare Development Command TACMEMO 3-07.6-06. (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, CNO, May 2006), 4.3.2.

steady theme among participants in the CFR studies in Muslim countries was that of respect. They desire and appreciate U.S. aid, but do not want terms of the aid to be dictated to them. As one young Indonesian woman put it, "Please help us with our economy but let us manage our country."¹³ This is mostly common sense and comprehensive joint and Navy doctrine provides detailed guidance to commanders preparing to engage in HA/DR operations.

An improvement in perceptions towards the U.S. following relief operations will result only if the aid produces tangible results. Showing up is vital, but providing concrete aid that improves lives is paramount. Only then will attitudes truly change. Measures of performance and effectiveness need to be developed not only to measure changes in perception, but also to measure whether the relief is mitigating suffering. Navy Warfare Development Center TACMEMO 3-07.6-06 provides a few examples:

Numbers of air and boat sorties, people evacuated, pets evacuated, rescues conducted, people treated for medical conditions, cases of specified diseases, repairs to infrastructure, obstacles cleared, meals served, berths available, passenger transfers, personnel ashore, pounds of food and water delivered, gallons of fuel delivered, etc.
- Some of these measures indicate trends in level of effort, task performance, or transition progress and may be useful analytical tools in determining success in overall mission performance (e.g., decrease in mortality or morbidity rates, percentage of tasks transferred to another agency, etc.).¹⁴

¹³ Charney and Yakatan, "A New Beginning," 56

¹⁴ U.S. Navy, NWDC TACMEMO 3-07.6-06, A.5.

"It is difficult to argue with the principle that it is better to deal with threats as they develop rather than after they are realized," says Lawrence Freedman, professor of war studies at King's College in London.¹⁵ Preventive HA can be applied selectively to attempt to stop the development of extremist ideology within sympathetic populations. This effort is in line with the U.S. National Security Strategy: "As humanitarian relief requirements are better understood, we must also be able to help build police forces, court systems, and legal codes, local and provincial government institutions, and electoral systems. Effective international cooperation is needed to accomplish these goals, backed by American readiness to play our part."¹⁶ In fact, DODD 3000.05 states as the first item of policy that, "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DOD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning."¹⁷

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN PACOM

¹⁵ Lawrence Freedman, "Prevention, Not Preemption," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2003, 105-114.

¹⁶ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2002).

¹⁷ Department of Defense. *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.05, (Washington, DC: DoD, 28 November 2005), 2.

A program of regular, dedicated, focused humanitarian assistance visits should be planned well in advance and funds should be programmed for these missions. Although USNS Mercy's deployment was likely effective it was conceived in late-2005 for execution in spring of 2006. One effect of such a short-notice evolution was the scramble to acquire funding. Until money could be found, funds already set aside for humanitarian events in PACOM were held resulting in the cancellation of several events and others firmed up only after funds had been secured. The cancellation of some events and the uncertainty introduced to others may have had the adverse effect of hurting our relations with countries and populations we were trying to help.

Mercy's deployment back to Aceh solidified impressions and bonds formed during Unified Assistance. The population was reminded of previous aid, some patients were able to receive follow-up treatment, and additional Indonesians received aid and treatment.¹⁸ This revisit and a policy of repeated trips to assisted areas will strengthen the goodwill that is established. Some older Muslims in the CFR report remembered seeing aid with American logos, but it is something from childhood, not something seen today. We need to change that.¹⁹

¹⁸ Tom Gordon, "Missions of Mercy," *al.com*, 26 September 2006, <http://www.al.com/healthfit/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1159175968306440.xml&coll=2> (accessed 19 October 2006).

¹⁹ Charney and Yakatan, "A New Beginning," 49

Commanders should prepare and train to conduct relief operations while operating within the PACOM AOR. A variety of resources are available to commanders including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Field Operations Guide, the Sphere Project Handbook, and the NWDC TACMEMO. In addition to participation in exercises and liberty port calls, ships should conduct dedicated HA visits as well. Aid would be delivered, services provided, and equally important, American sailors will make contact with people who otherwise might grow to hate us.

Thought has already been given to developing additional platforms to support the HA mission. For example, the CONOPS developed for the Littoral Combat Ship by NWDC discuss how the ship can support a variety of missions including HA. A possible loadout, supported by telemed capability might include:

- Radiological services
- Medical laboratory including: pharmacy, optometry lab, and cat scan
- Mobile oxygen producing plant
- Portal between twin hulls providing a lee in order to take on patients at sea
- Four semi-trailer hospital bed facility
- Six semi-trailers with fully equipped operating rooms
- Four water tankers
- Four food trailers

- Four toilet/shower trailers
- Six HMMWV
- Eight to Twelve passenger buses²⁰

This would bring much flexibility, particularly suited to regions of the PACOM AOR that are difficult to access. But specialized ships are not a requirement. Normally outfitted ships can still have an impact by simply arriving and providing what assistance they can.

THE NEED TO WORK WITH OTHERS

Efforts need to expand to operate with other nations to provide humanitarian assistance. Medical teams from India and Canada were aboard the Mercy for the duration of here voyage and other countries provided personnel during portions of the deployment. A variety of countries sent relief personnel, equipment and supplies to Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and other locations following the 2004 tsunami. There is no shortage of regional desire to assist other nations and PACOM needs bring regional partners into this preventive HA strategy. For example, Geoffrey Till, Professor of Maritime Studies at King's College in London, notes that, "The threats of international terrorism and piracy have resulted in a considerable expansion in the range of Japanese naval and other military activity in recent years." He continues that "expanding naval activity

²⁰ Navy Warfare Development Center, "Littoral Combat Ship Concept of Operations," http://www.nwdc.navy.mil/Concepts/Sea_Shield/LCSCONOPS.aspx (accessed 19 October 2006).

is seen as a natural Japanese contribution to the global community's response to threats to the international system." It is also a means by which Japan can engage other maritime powers. Japan has made it policy to engage in "more proactive implementation of international peace support activities." They clearly recognize the benefit gained by providing relief during the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake.²¹

China also recognizes the benefit to be gained. Commenting on the purpose of Chinese relief to nations affected by the tsunami, Zhang Xizhen, a scholar at Beijing University said, "The goal is to enhance their trust in China...during the Cold War...their attitudes toward China were suspicious and distrustful. Even now, there are many conflicts. But China is trying hard to change these attitudes. The tsunami aid shows the emerging influence of China in Southeast Asia."²²

THE WORD MUST GET OUT

Humanitarian assistance operations are noble in their own right. Providing relief in most cases is simply the right thing to do. But providing assistance must be looked at in the broader context of improving relations and satisfying operational goals. A broad, effective strategic

²¹ Shohei Naito, Japanese Permanent Representative to NATO (address, Center for the Study of Democracy Fourth Annual Security Conference: NATO Transformation - Facing New Security Frontiers, Sofia, Bulgaria, 28 April 2006).

²² Anthony Faiola and Philip P. Pan, "As Asians Offer Much Aid, Chinese Role Is Limited." Washington Post, 5 January 2005, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/> (accessed 15 October 2006).

communications plan must be a part of the PACOM relief strategy. The CFR studies revealed that few participants had any idea of the scope of overall U.S. aid and believed it should be better publicized.²³ A comprehensive strategic communications plan was developed for USNS Mercy's deployment. Its four main themes consisted of demonstrating U.S. commitment to the region; demonstrating U.S. military flexibility and responsiveness; reinforcing that the U.S. military is operating in support of the host nation; and demonstrating that the U.S. military is working in cooperation with NGOs. The plan explicitly states that one reason for the deployment is to "help foster an environment in which extremist ideologies are less likely to breed," but carefully avoids fostering a perception of U.S. intent to impose democracy or any other specific conditions upon the visited nations. Regional peace and stability are the stated goals.²⁴

Strategic communications need to start early and get the message out aggressively. HA is not as appealing to a press corps looking for sensational items. Major Plenzler provides another good anecdote:

Before deploying to Indonesia my good friend, radio host and Royal Australian Air Force (Reserve) Flight Lt Phil Smith, warned me that PA during HA/DR was a sprint not a marathon. "The honeymoon with the press is quickly over, and no

²³ Charney and Yakatan, "A New Beginning," 49

²⁴ Commander, U.S Pacific Fleet, "Strategic Communication Plan for Deployment of Hospital Ship USNS Mercy for HA/TSC Mission," <http://www.cpf.navy.smil.mil/n00pa/Strategic%20Communications/2006%5CME RCY%20STRATEGIC%20COMM%20PLAN%20REVISION-4%20APR%202006.DOC> (accessed 12 September 2006).

matter how much you do for the people, it is never enough," he said. The III MEF PA officer (PAO), Maj Brad Bartelt, and I discussed this and realized that we had 7, maybe 10, days from the beginning of HA/DR operations to "spread the good news" before the media telescope turned to other events. True to plan, the media attention at the start was intense and packed with the urgency and drama that only a rescue mission could conjure. As predicted the media attention was inversely proportional to the duration of the mission. On the 10th day the international media focus shifted to Palestinian elections, and Indonesia fell off of the screen. The crash of a SH-60 from the Abraham Lincoln on the Banda Aceh airfield brought the focus back for a day, as did Mr. Wolfowitz's visit, and then it died almost completely. The very ephemeral nature of the media's attention makes it vital that PAOs are aggressive in getting the story out in front of the bow wave and milking the spotlight for all it is worth.²⁵

A DOWNSIDE

Greater inclusion of HA into the operational repertoire is not without some negatives. Principal among these is the contention that this type of activity degrades readiness and training for more traditional warfighting missions. In order to best support principally helicopter-borne relief operations off of Aceh, Indonesia, the USS Abraham Lincoln remained relatively close to the coast. However, the Indonesian government prohibited fixed-wing flight operations while Lincoln was in Indonesian waters. This forced the ship to head to international waters to conduct flight operations to maintain pilot qualifications.

Some in the international aid community believe that the Global War on Terror will reduce the worldwide

²⁵ Plenzler, "Public Affairs at the Little End." 49

humanitarian relief effort.²⁶ I believe the opposite should be true. By assisting those in need we can shape perceptions and attitudes to develop a more favorable social environment. Perhaps ironically, HA would increase as part of the GWOT.

Often, the military is the only means to get the job done, not only because they have the equipment and personnel available, but they can act as required. As former President Clinton lamented, "One of the things that I regret about my Presidency, I had to struggle because, when I was President, the Congress was very hostile to all foreign assistance and I really had to struggle to find ways to help other countries, and after we threw the dictators out in Haiti, when I realized that I was going to get no money for civilian reconstruction, I just left the military there as long as I could and told them build roads and schools and do all this stuff that we should be doing through USAID because I knew that I had control of them, so they just stayed down there and did it."²⁷

CONCLUSION

U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander, Admiral Gary Roughead characterized the Mercy deployment as allowing "a force of good to go someplace, do good work and show people that there are alternatives to some of the forces that are in

²⁶ Thomas G. Weiss, "The Sunset of Humanitarian Intervention? The Responsibility to Protect in a Unipolar Era," *Security Dialogue* 35, no.2, (2004), 135-136.

²⁷ William J. Clinton, UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery (address, InterAction Forum, Washington, DC, 12 April 2006).

play in their part of the world."²⁸ Mercy did just that. But this effort requires constancy to maximize its effectiveness. We must identify locations where HA can impact the extremist center of gravity (popular support), determine the types of assistance most required, and develop a timeline to ensure regular, familiar contact with these populations. It would be a shame if our efforts result not in the improvement of relations with USPACOM area nations and a corresponding increase in positive perceptions of the U.S., but only in memories of long ago U.S. visits.

²⁸ Richard Halloran, "No Shortage of Kindness aboard Mercy," *HonoluluAdvertiser.com*, 23 July 2006. <http://www.honoluluadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060723/OPINION03/607230307/-1/WEATHER0701> (accessed 19 October 2006).

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