

STRONG ANGEL III

INTEGRATED DISASTER RESPONSE DEMONSTRATION

Anticipating Complexity | Exploring Responses | Cultivating Resilience

I. Civil-Military Discussions at Strong Angel III

At Strong Angel III, humanitarian relief and development experts from international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and the United Nations met with active-duty military officers and government contractors from the U.S. military and international militaries, including representatives from the Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense and ACT-NATO. Participants held two “gloves-off” civil-military meetings over the course of the week. These meetings were unplanned by the Strong Angel Executive Committee, and were extremely successful in opening dialogue across civ-mil boundaries.

Representatives from the following list of organizations participated in the civ-mil discussions:

- Mercy Corps
- Save the Children
- CARE International
- International Rescue Committee
- ICT4Peace Foundation
- InfoShare
- International Medical Corps
- ACT-NATO (Center for Information Management, Integration and Connectivity)
- Sahana, Lanka Software Foundation
- UNDP (United Nations Development Program)
- UNJLC (United Nations Joint Logistics Center)
- UNOCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
- Internews Network
- Microsoft Humanitarian Systems
- SRA International, Department of Homeland Security
- PACTEC (Partners in Technology International)
- Office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense
- United States Marine Corps

- United States Navy
- United States Army
- Naval Postgraduate School
- Naval Health Research Center
- Marine Corps Installations West (MCIWEST), Camp Pendleton
- Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
- USJFCOM (United States Joint Forces Command)
- USJFCOM SJFHQ (Standing Joint Force Headquarters)
- USPACOM (United States Pacific Command)
- Royal Navy
- Swedish Defense Research Agency

II. Day 1 Meeting - Perceptions

On Day 1, more than 30 participants from the NGO and military communities sat together in a closed room to engage in “no attribution”, honest discussions about communication and information sharing among civ-mil organizations. The group discussed positive and negative perceptions of “the other side”, field experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and other post-conflict reconstruction countries, cross-boundary security and stability issues, gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity in post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction operations, civ-mil organizational and cultural differences, and the U.S. Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 which states that military support to Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations should be given priority comparable to combat operations¹.

¹ Department of Defense Directive, Number 3000.05, November 28, 2005:
<http://www.strongangel3.net/files/dod/DoDD300.05.pdf>

1. What are your perceptions of NGOs / UN / US Military / other militaries?

NGOs and UN perceptions of US Military and other militaries:

Needs Improvement

Military hears, but does not listen.

Lack of humility.

Inadequate understanding of long-term peace-building.

Lack of gender sensitivity in the military's current approach to civilian interactions.

Overwhelming arrogance. Military often assumes that they know best.

Lack of officer accountability for irresponsible actions by enlisted.

A lack of doctrine and training in the military for cultural education.

Too many acronyms, don't speak the same language as everyone else.

Does Well

Military has a very necessary security function. They protect governments, international NGOs, and the local population.

By and large, the state military is well-trained and responsible.

Military has capacities to augment logistics (power & lift).

Military has communications capacities.

Military is good at logistics.

Military can be extremely sensitive to local issues on the ground.

Force protection for cordon sanitaire.

US Military and other militaries' perceptions of NGOs and UN:

Needs Improvement

NGOs are like a patchwork quilt; no one is the same. Very messy to work with.

Lack of appreciation for military's help and protection.

UN Bureaucracy.

Lack of coordination and communication among NGOs and the UN. Very disorderly.

NGOs are arrogant. They always think that they know better.

Does Well

NGOs have a lot of local knowledge about the region and culture.

Big networks and positive relations with the local population.

Good experience with staff rotation and lessons learned in the field.

There are no "absolutes".

2. What do you want the NGO/Mil to do (or not do)?

Thoughts from NGOs and UN to the Military:

- i) Military - Listen. It is powerful to listen and act in response to local needs. The military should try to understand the local culture and not act above the law.
- ii) Keep in mind that certain photos and images of the military can be very offensive to NGOs and to the local population. The military should not “market” SSTR operations in one way to the armed forces, and then present another “softer” image to NGOs. Maintain a consistent message to everybody.
- iii) Establish a more formalized Joint Civil Affairs Officers program in the US Military under DoD Directive 3000.05 to liaise with NGOs and the UN. There is a time lapse between policy change and output via training. Deploy more civil affairs officers to accompany SSTR missions and MEUs.
- iv) Engage with NGO and UN inter-agency working groups, such as:
 - (1) InterAction.org, <http://www.interaction.org/>
 - (2) Inter-Agency Standing Committee, <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/>
 - (3) See also ISDR: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/task%20force/tf-meeting-10th-eng.htm>
- v) Military should look into developing a scheme to manage unstructured security forces (E.g. contractors, private security companies). We need very clear labels.

Thoughts from the Military to the NGOs and UN:

- i) NGOs – Better collaboration internally, from a cacophony of voices to greater harmonization.
- ii) Share the methodologies and best practices from NGO field staff training with the military so that we can learn from you.
- iii) NGOs should not ever be perceived as one entity - the same applies to the military. There are many different entities and service branches within the U.S. military, and across national militaries.

III. Day 4 Meeting - The Way Forward

Department of Defense Directive 3000.05

On Day 4, a smaller group of NGO and military representatives met in focus groups to continue discussions started earlier in the week and to discuss implications surrounding the implementation of DoD Directive 3000.05. Participants agreed that finding neutral ground for honest discussions, like Strong Angel III, is a good environment in which to bring together tiered working groups for future discussions (e.g. USAID, U.S. State Department, European Union, United Nations, NGOs, Militaries, JFCOM), and that apart from a confined dialogue with those present at Strong Angel III, it would be useful to share developments in and within both sectors on a wider scale that impact on each others’ work on a regular basis. Everyone agreed that it

was extremely worthwhile to mutually continue to explore technology, like those tools at SA-III that could lead to greater civ-mil collaboration and communication. Also useful, and very important in the long term, would be to see how the germination of ideas for collaboration at Strong Angel III could feed into policy dialogues at higher levels.

NGO concerns

The NGOs raised some notable concerns regarding the current status and implementation of DoD Directive 3000.05. For example, how does the U.S. military intend to identify and approach appropriate entry points in the NGO community and to establish a working relationship with each NGO? Regarding the rapprochement process, some NGOs are concerned that the military may want full disclosure from NGOs about where and when they are operational, which could not only compromise an NGO's relations with the local population but, very often, this information could be used to impose sanctions against NGOs working in certain "off-limits" areas or with certain actors, even though these interactions are absolutely crucial in the specific geo-political context in order to maintain access to humanitarian aid². Furthermore, NGOs are concerned about being perceived as participating in military reconnaissance, as this could wholly compromise their charter and humanitarian aid channels.

One important aspect to consider about closer cooperation between NGOs and the military is managing the perception that both are one and the same – for instance, the perception that in Iraq, UNAMI and the American military are both under the same operational mandate and follow the same operational procedures. This conflation is arguably more detrimental to NGOs. However, certain initiatives of NGOs with sections of the community can be problematic for the military (say for instance, communities affected by the disaster who are armed). In both instances, effective, culturally appropriate communications strategies need to be developed so as to strengthen the ability of the military to do what it does best (power, lift capacities) and to strengthen NGOs to utilize these resources to do what they do best – long term reconstruction.

There is also a strong concern among NGOs regarding the 1) lack of gender sensitivity and 2) lack of understanding about long-term peace-building within the U.S. military in working with the local population. How does the military plan to build trust with the local population through SSTR operations? And likewise, if the military cannot effectively build trust with the local population, then how will it build trust with NGOs whose primary beneficiary is the local man, woman, and child? In his morning briefing on Day 1, Eric Rasmussen reminded all SA-III participants to keep in mind that 80% of a population affected by a complex disaster is women and children. As a statement by Ms. Carolyn McAskie, Acting Head of the Office for the Coordination of

² ICT4Peacebuilding "Strong Angel III – Final Observations", August 30, 2006:
<http://ict4peace.wordpress.com/2006/08/30/strong-angel-iii-final-observations/>

Humanitarian Affairs recognizes, humanitarian assistance can only be effective if it is gender-sensitive:

While both men and women are affected by conflict, crisis situations have a differentiated impact on them. Conflict and war are not gender neutral. Thus, eighty percent of the internally displaced persons and refugees around the world are women and children. Women are in flight, adapting to life in camps, or are directly caught up in the midst of conflict. In many cases, women and teenage girls in conflict zones are the sole providers and protectors for their families, since most men have either been killed or are away on combat duty. This situation leads to a shift in gender roles with a dramatic increase in the number of women heads of households.³

For a more detailed list of NGO concerns, see Section II Question 1: “NGO and UN perceptions of US Military and other militaries”.

Relationships are the key

As one participant submitted during the civ-mil meeting, “How can we improve operational communication in the field? Relationships are the key.”

Imagine the average 28-year old NGO field worker and think about why she/he left home to live in Country X. Now imagine the average 28-year old enlisted military soldier and think about why she/he left home to live in Country X. Very different reasons, very different outlooks, very different living environments, very different purposes. There is much mutual learning possible, but the obduracy on both sides oftentimes prevents this dialogue. How can we improve cooperation and communication between these two persons? Perception is reality.

Recommendations

Overall, it was recommended that the U.S. military focus on cultural education and gender sensitivity training as part of DoD Directive 3000.05 to improve its trust-building and peace-building capabilities.

The civ-mil group also discussed the question of what is the right entry point within the U.S. military to implement DoD Directive 3000.05. It is recommended to train a special group in the military to carry out the directive, for example Special Forces Officers, JAG Officers, and/or Civil Affairs officers. These groups could then be deployed as SSTR teams to liaise with NGOs and the UN in country because they have been specially trained in the areas of Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction.

In addition to the counsel of deploying specialized groups to implement SSTR activities, it was also collectively recommended that the military and NGOs should work together on a case-by-case basis to identify neutral places in country to host civ-mil meetings, as it was noted that it is

³ ICT4Peacebuilding “Strong Angel III – 18th August 2006”, August 20, 2006:
<http://ict4peace.wordpress.com/2006/08/20/strong-angel-iii-18th-august-2006/>

oftentimes very difficult for NGOs to gain access onto military bases to meet with military counterparts and, likewise, it is equally challenging for military personnel to request permission to leave base and enter NGOs grounds without carrying arms.

It was also recommended that the U.S. military should clearly define what constitutes “SSTR activities” in a certain region before meeting with NGOs in order to establish expectations about how those specific activities align with NGO program goals. In other words, define region by region, what are the resources and services that the U.S. military can provide under DoD Directive 3000.05, and likewise what the military’s limitations are in a certain region. Remember that conflict zones in a country change the dynamics of cooperation and communication among NGOs and militaries, and that the roles and responsibilities within each organization may change as well.