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Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies - What Role for the Military?

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Foreword

At the beginning of 2012 the northern part of Mali was proclaimed a separate state by the Tuareg and the 15 ECOWAS states started to discuss the role of the ECOWAS Standby Forces and their possible use in an operation in this conflict, which is also a humanitarian one. Even the Political and Security Committee of the European Union are discussing the issue, since the stability of the Sahel Zone is endangered and thusly threatening not only the regional stability but also the security and the interests of the EU and its member states.

These current events yet again form a basis for discussion in regards to the topic of Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies - What role is there for the Military?

As is well-known, the Association of Austrian Peacekeepers as a supporter of peacekeeping activities and promoter of the ideals of the United Nations in society has been intensively involved in holding the Blue Helmet Forums in cooperation with the MoDS. The peacekeepers of Central and South-eastern Europe but also national and international organisations are meant to come together at these forums in order to discuss important current topics.

Last year's forum was dedicated to the topic of "International Disaster Relief Assistance", concerning the topic of natural disasters and the deployment of military forces in disaster regions; this year, the employment of military forces in complex emergencies was discussed.

The **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)** defines a "complex emergency" as a humanitarian crisis in a

country, region or society, where a total or significant breakdown of authority has resulted from internal or external conflict, requiring an international response that extends beyond the mandate or the capabilities of one single and/or running UN Country Programme”.

Such catastrophies can not be rigidly categorised into natural or environmental disasters, disasters that are made by man or complex emergencies, the latter two have to be viewed at least as overlapping.

While only natural disasters were looked at last year, at the current forum the military aspect was highlighted, having civil-military cooperation as the focal point.

At the beginning of the 1990s the term “Peace Support Operations” was introduced, based on the necessity to incorporate other concepts in addition to peacekeeping and peace enforcement, namely humanitarian operations, which have increasingly been carried out in recent years. In the meantime, one always has to be prepared for humanitarian operations that can emerge due to situations that can arise in a region; for example, a flood does not respect any borders in regards to a mandate.

At this point I would like to stress that it is of course not the military’s main task to render humanitarian aid and in order to anticipate an initial misinterpretation: The military has no intention of taking control of humanitarian operations. That is the task of the United Nations and respective civilian organisations. The United Nations have, according to resolution 46/182 of the general assembly, the competence to coordinate humanitarian aid worldwide, but only in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

The United Nations have done a lot in this field, and the Austrian Armed Forces have played a particular role in it.

Just to mention the Oslo Guidelines covering natural disasters or the “Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies” of March 2003 – General Greindl and also ambassador Dr. Stefan Scholz and the former commandant of the NBC Defence School, BG (ret.) Norbert Fürstenhofer, were a major part in the development of this document.

Not to forget Mr. Rudolf Müller, a former Austrian NBC defence officer who was sent to Geneva by the Austrian Armed Forces and was appointed Deputy Director of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in 2011 and can be seen as a “family friend”. UN OCHA has been a partner of the Austrian Armed Forces since 2008.

And what are the Austrian Armed Forces doing or planning regarding humanitarian operations?

As early as 2008 in my function as Chief of the General Staff I signed the “Operative Approach Concept for Humanitarian Operations of the Austrian Armed Forces”, in which, apart from the general tasks of a soldier, the field of humanitarian aid was described as a dual function of the Austrian Armed Forces.

Presently a draft paper for a concept of “International Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief” is on my desk; it examines in detail various options for the employment of the Austrian Armed Forces, particularly in the area of civil-military cooperation.

As you may be aware of, the Austrian Armed Forces' objective in terms of security strategy will be to strengthen and improve measures pertaining to national and international humanitarian disaster relief. This corresponds to the new security strategy, "Variant F2 – Enhanced Cooperation".

With its "Profilvariante F2 - gesteigerte Kooperationen" [Profile variant F2 – enhanced cooperations], the Austrian Armed Forces will have the reinforcement and improvement of measures pertaining to national and international humanitarian disaster relief, in the sense of the new security strategy.

It shall in particular take place on both a national and an international level after natural and technical disasters with a focus on qualified tasks like transport, air, NBC defence, engineers and search&rescue forces.

I would also like to thank the Disaster Relief Unit of the Austrian Armed Forces, in short AFDRU, and all the ones participating in it, who managed in the last week of September to pass the INSARAG External Classification of the United Nations as a "Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Team" and who are now a team classified worldwide for the next five years until the next reclassification.

This exercise has shown how civil-military cooperation can function in a simple, uncomplicated manner; it has to be noted that not only active and militia personnel of the Austrian Armed Forces were deployed, but also civilian dog handlers with their search dogs.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that the Republic of Austria, pursuant to art. 222 of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, is bound to the solidarity

clause and is thus obliged to give assistance after terrorist attacks. Therefore, possible operations and cooperations in the field of disaster relief are being considered. Forums like the Blue Helmet Forum can contribute to specialist discussions here.

General Mag. Edmund Entacher
Chief of Defence Staff

Preface

Crisis prevention and conflict resolution have gained a particular significance in Austria, particularly during the last few years. The recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Chad, the Congo, in Egypt, Syria and many other countries have clearly shown that the classic analysis grids of “war and peace” (friend and foe, winners and losers, beginning and end) are today no longer fully applicable to many international violent conflicts.

The humanitarian crises today are called “complex emergencies” because of their multi-layered structures. International relief organisations view them as special humanitarian crises within states, regions or societies.

In order to differentiate them from emergency situations that result from natural disasters for example, “complex emergencies” arise from civil wars that

- are caused by a combination of economic, political and ecological factors;
- produce widespread famine, violence and the displacement of persons; and
- cause a high number of civilian victims (deaths, refugees, displaced persons).

They are frequently complex, long lasting conflicts with many different (internal and external) reasons and variable, often diffuse constellations and alliances which are triggered by ethnic, religious or cultural antagonisms and resource allocation conflicts. There are no clear starting and ending points.

Often there are several countries in a region afflicted by strife, which can however, not be considered a war between two states. Under this category come long-lasting, violent conflicts which are, on the territorial level, confined to a single country or which have led to the destruction of civilian structures and to the establishment of a “culture of violence”.

These conflicts are exacerbated by the failure of the governments in the afflicted countries.

Thus, in most cases cooperations with civilian and military organisations certainly seems to be necessary. This civil-military cooperation has been very fruitful and expedient in most crisis regions.

In this year’s Blue Helmet Forum Austria cooperational possibilities were discussed and various aspects were presented and highlighted by speakers with civil as well as military backgrounds.

In the film “20 Jahre Nachbar in Not” [“20 Years of ‘Neighbour in Need’”], which was presented at the Forum, the success of this cooperation is demonstrated by the Balkan conflict, for example. The initiator of “Neighbour in need”, Mr. Kurt Bergmann, explained many key aspects in detail.

Our Chief of Defence Staff, General Mag. Edmund Entacher, addressed in his speech part of the background and also current developments in this field.

Concerning this topic, the National Defence Academy offers various courses and seminars in the realm of the further and continual education and training of senior officers. In higher officer education courses, topics such as disaster relief, stress during military assistance operations,

aspects of Civil Military Cooperation as well as leadership during difficult operations in different settings are taught and developed. A special focus is placed on operational relevance in order to offer commanders, in the first place, a broad spectrum of possibilities for dealing with disaster relief and offering cooperation to aid organisations and so raise their awareness for their tasks and the timely employment of methods of leadership. In this context the fact seems to be important that commanders must keep contact with other organisations and highlight the special capabilities of the military during relief operations. Support possibilities and security, i.e. guarding the aid goods and the personnel, are of the utmost importance in this respect.

The National Defence Academy is, however, not only involved in the training for national and international disaster relief, but also the preparation for operations in general. The fact that many scientists and instructors gained extensive intensive practical experience in operations as commanders or specialists helps us in this context. In the field of research many expert reports and analyses are produced and then incorporated into the training.

Lieutenant General Erich Csitkovits,
Commandant of the National Defence Academy

Preface

On October 12th, 2012 the Security Council of the United Nations adopted Resolution 2071, in which the body declared its readiness to respond to Mali's request for an international military force. The recent events in Mali lead us straight to the core issues of the Blue Helmet Forum 2012 on "Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies – What Role for the Military?" Général de Division TOURÉ, former ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs, peace and security and presently Head of the Peacekeeping School in Bamako/Mali, and Brig Gen Hassan LAI, chief of staff of the ECOWAS standby force, were particularly important guests in this regard, as they provided us with a view from outside Europe, and an insight into Mali's situation at present.

The cooperation between General GREINDL'S Association of Austrian Peacekeepers and the Directorate for Security Policy has been very fruitful during the past years. Many issues relating to peacekeeping and emergency relief were discussed with high ranking national and international experts in this forum.

The participants of the Blue Helmet Forum 2011 assessed the role of the military in international disaster relief assistance. In 2012, we focused on complex emergencies and the role of the military in these particular theatres. Hence, the purpose of this forum was to discuss the role of civil and military assistance in humanitarian crises in a country, a region or a society, where a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict had taken place. In addition, we were look-

ing forward to an enriching exchange of experiences and lessons learned.

There is still a lot to do in the area of complex emergencies: priority areas are the access of civil forces to people in despair, the protection and security of civilian agencies, preparedness of states and organizations as well as resilience and preparation. Ongoing global changes also require an adaptation of the legal framework. The distinguished participants of this year's Blue Helmet Forum will certainly be able to make an important contribution to these issues.

This Blue Helmet Forum also serves a second purpose, namely to inform representatives of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) about the role of the military in complex emergencies and civil-military coordination. The events in Mali have attracted international and political attention. Recently, the United Nations has given the go-ahead for the planning process for an engagement of ECOWAS forces in Mali. The EU has also stated to be engaged in a planning process to support ECOWAS.

A third aspect of this forum was the intention of the Austrian Armed Forces (AAF) to increase their activities in Africa in the areas of exchange of experiences, training, security sector reform, SALW etc. This also includes the issue of civil-military cooperation in emergencies. Concrete initiatives have been launched in cooperation with the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Centre for Peace Research in Schläining, and should culminate in a closer cooperation between the AAF and ECOWAS.

In the last decade, Austria has lost some of its dynamism in international civil-military crisis management, compared to the role the AAF had played in the drafting process of basic civil-military documents such as the MCDA Guidelines or the Oslo Guidelines in the 90ies. This might be due to different structural and inter-ministerial circumstances. However, the intention of the Directorate for Security Policy is to reverse this trend, regardless of the decision on the future model of military service.

The reasons for our willingness to revive the role of the AAF in civil-military crisis management are the following:

- The increase in frequency, intensity and complexity of natural disasters is foreseeable; these disasters have enormous consequences and also highly developed states such as Japan are not spared as we could see.
- Civilian and military actors increasingly act in the same geographic area, so they should fulfill their tasks in a complementary way. This also concerns the AAF.
- Austria's government program contains a declaration of intent regarding civil-military cooperation. The extension of international and national humanitarian aid and emergency relief tasks are defined as political and strategic objectives in the government's report on a new security strategy. The AAF is considered as an indispensable element inside Austria, serving as the strategic reserve.

- Emergency relief tasks will be an important aspect of the future profile of the AAF. This has also been confirmed by the Austrian Minister of Defense. Inter alia, rapidly deployable units should be on hand for humanitarian operations and for specific tasks in an international civil-military framework.
- Processes aiming at the operative implementation of the so-called solidarity clause in Art. 122 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) are ongoing. This concerns in particular consequence management after man-made or natural disasters.
- There is a new momentum for the use of civilian and military capacities in emergency relief operations in the United Nations system.
- The HOPEFOR initiative saw the light of the day in the same building where the Blue Helmet Forum took place in 2012. This initiative – whose founding father was Gen GREINDL – aims at improving civil-military preparation and coordination in disaster relief operations, as well as a regionalization of this preparation and coordination. This initiative triggered an unexpected dynamic. In June 2011 Qatar, Turkey and the Dominican Republic supported a Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations in favor of further development of MCDA. I was also personally involved in this development – creating together with some representatives of IPA the name HOPEFOR. The speech of Valerie Amos, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, on the occasion of the first HOPEFOR conference

in Doha represents a key document in the area of civil-military cooperation in disaster relief.

All these elements form the framework for this year's Blue Helmet Forum in the view of the Directorate for Security Policy.

In the AAF's perspective, several considerations have to be underlined:

In my opinion, Austria should revitalize its leading role in training and education. The AAF are extremely successful in organizing EU training courses in the area of SSR, peace building and international law, as well as preparations for policy advisors in operations. A pilot course on UN Resolution 1894/Protection of Civilians in cooperation with the UN DPKO is ongoing.

Austria is also a lead nation regarding the conceptual development of the 3D-approach (Diplomacy, Defense, and Development). It was one of the few states where a declaration of intent – the so-called Vienna Appeal – on the cooperation between NGOs and ministries in the area of 3D could be agreed on.

A backlog demand persists in the area of international humanitarian emergency relief. However, the cooperation between the AAF and the Ministry of the Interior and its Security Academy is very promising: Austria can also count on the support of UN OCHA.

Besides theoretical enhancement, the advancement of capabilities for disaster relief is equally essential. This concerns in particular the Austrian Unit for Disaster Relief, AFDRU, and the development of so-called civil-military disaster relief packages. In the spirit of the EU's solidarity clause, Austria has started to be engaged in close

cooperation with its neighbors in Central Europe in the area of disaster relief. The intensification of our relations with UN OCHA, especially in the area of training, will definitely foster the Austrian engagement in international humanitarian disaster relief.

Western Africa is becoming a more and more important region for the EU, Austria and for its Armed Forces. Some examples: The planning process for training in the area of international humanitarian emergency relief and conflict prevention in the Kofi Annan Training Centre in Ghana has already led to results that might be implemented soon. There are preliminary considerations about the focus of the next Blue Helmet Forum, which might be “International Crisis Management in the Western African Region”. The IPA Vienna Seminar in 2013 will deal with the subject of transnational threats as the main challenge to Western Africa. And finally, an even more ambitious goal could be the following: we might explore if a partnership between the AAF and ECOWAS Standby Forces could be possible and useful in the area of disaster relief and civil-military cooperation.

Major General Johann Pucher,

Head of the Directorate General for Security Policy
of the Austrian Ministry of Defence

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