

# NATO as a Trusted Partner in Civil-Military Interaction

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The theme of this discussion paper is that *Co-ordination of International Post-Disaster and Peacebuilding Missions* is premised upon trust, and that NATO military are working to further evolve their civil-military mechanisms to engender and maintain the trust of their civilian partners.

## Ad Hoc Trust – An Introduction to Civil-Military Interaction Best-Practices

Co-ordination is easy when one has command and control of all of the relevant actors. The hard part is finding any context whatsoever where that idyllic situation prevails. Arguably, international post-disaster and peacebuilding missions are some of the furthest removed from such operational simplicity, as coordination in those contexts is almost totally predicated on partners voluntarily cooperating and coordinating. Furthermore, most of such voluntary coordination in the field will remain *ad hoc* and will occur *just-in-time*.

There always remains the elusive hope that at least there can be mandatory coordination or unity of effort amongst a particular national grouping, e.g. all Canadian officials in a mission area, or amongst a particular international grouping, e.g. all of the military that are part of an international mission. However even that is an immense challenge, and it is instructive to quote General Zinni USMC, who was the multinational force commander in Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq 1991, as he discussed his command and control arrangements:

*“[Regarding command and control relationships with other multinational contingents, [ t]he Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked me...’The lines in your command chart, the command relationships, what are they? OpCon [operational control]? TaCon [tactical control]? Command?’*

*‘Sir, we don’t ask, because no one can sign up to any of that stuff.’*

*‘Well, how do you do business?’*

*‘Hand Shake Con. That’s it. No memoranda of agreement. No memoranda of understanding...[T]he relationships are worked out on the scene, and they aren’t pretty. And you don’t really want to try to capture them,...distill them, and say as you go off in the future, you’re going to have this sort of command relationship...[I]t is Hand Shake Con and that’s the way it works. It is consultative. It is behind-the-scene.’*

Quoted in US FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, Para 2-13 on Unity of Effort.

Experienced field hands know that most relations are built upon trust, and the term *hand-shake-con* is not a bad metaphor for ad hoc and just-in-time trust building in mission. The challenge is how to create and retain trust amongst even highly

congruent groups such as all the Canadian officials in a mission area or all of the UN mandated military in a mission area. NATO military increasingly understand the challenges of co-ordination of international post-disaster and peacebuilding missions, particularly across the civil-military divide.

The trick is not to rail against reality, but rather to adjust and develop mechanisms which address the ‘fog of peacekeeping’ and maximize civil-military interaction when there is no single boss, nor even a limited handful of bosses, but rather a plethora of quasi independent actors. To further mix metaphors, the herding-of-cats is not just a wry analogy, it is an operational truism, and the most valuable civilian and military leaders in the field are those that are consummate cat-herders. NATO military are looking for ways to facilitate cat-herding. A very indicative emerging NATO practice is the use of CAADs (Civilian Actors Advisors).

### **NATO CAADs**

For over two years NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) has been working to evolve new mechanisms to enhance civil-military interaction. Fundamental to their progress was a desire to change the perception by various civilian agencies that the military were always looking to take over and control.

Of course that perception had built up because in various instances the military had effectively taken over, or tried to control. In Afghanistan “...ISAF takes virtually everything upon itself. This, I would suggest, is not in the interest of the mission, and certainly makes it more difficult to secure the engagement of the non-NATO civilian actors, especially the NGOs.”<sup>1</sup> Equally on a narrower issue, the ongoing debate about Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), there is an enduring perception that the military are driving and controlling much of what most of the PRTs do.

At the same time, the NATO military who desire a better working relationship with civilians writ large and who understand effects-based planning, have led various initiatives to develop sound ‘business’ practices that advance rather than complicate civil-military interaction. They understand that this will not consist of NATO military taking a leadership role in civil-military interaction, but will require NATO military to build trust and enhance their attitudes and procedures on how to be a good partner to civilian agencies – not leadership per se, but rather leadership by example.

NATO military have been working hard to re-fashion the traditional CIMIC concept that had been developed for warfighting but was not fitting well with peace support operations. NATO ACT work on a Transformational Concept for Enhanced CIMIC has morphed into a draft Future Comprehensive Civil-Military Interaction Concept that will likely emerge in late 2007 as a joint SACT and SACO (SHAPE) doctrine.

Concurrently another evolving NATO ACT concept has been the idea of hiring in Civilian Actors Advisors (CAADs)<sup>2</sup> to be on staff and work alongside NATO military

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<sup>1</sup> 15-22 January 2007 Mission Report by Mike Aaronson former head of UK Save the Children.

<sup>2</sup> For greater detail on CAADs, see *NATO Comprehensive Civil-Military Interaction* by NATO ACT Senior Concept Developer Paul LaRose-Edwards 1 Nov 2006: it is a discussion paper on enhancing NATO’s civil-military interactions with Non-NATO Actors (NNAs) across the full spectrum of

at all levels with a view to better informing military actions. These CAADs will serve as trusted advisors to their military colleagues and it is likely that their most valuable role will be in cautioning military against trespassing on civilian functions, i.e. not taking over civilian roles.

CAADs, hired by and working on NATO staffs, will tend to be former NGO and/or IGO (e.g. UN) staffers with extensive experience in NGO and/or IGO field operations. Having ‘come up through the ranks’ of NGOs/IGOs, they will have insider knowledge of NGOs/IGOs and have greater perceived legitimacy by their former NGO/IGO colleagues when they look to initiate or sustain civil-military interaction.

The CAAD concept reflects fast evolving NATO doctrine, and will be a key enabler as NATO military look to further operationalize their changing attitudes, procedures, and doctrines. It should be noted that there is a lot of similar concurrent activity throughout NATO and member-states military, including the ad hoc engagement of CAADs by other names such as DevAds or Cultural Interpreters.<sup>3</sup>

The NATO CAAD concept importantly highlights the rationale for military engaging civilians. As Aaronson puts it, the “DevAd role [in Afghanistan] should be helping commanders to understand better the development context in which they are operating... In this way military activity can be supportive, rather than disruptive... However, that is not the same as advising the Commander how to do development”.<sup>4</sup>

### **NATO Doctrine Underpinning Enhanced Civil-Military Interaction**

The most recent strategic basis for the NATO CAAD concept and other similar efforts to evolve better civil-military interaction is NATO’s Comprehensive Political Guidance. Set out by the NATO Heads of State and Government on 29 November 2006 at the Riga Summit, it provides the framework and political direction for NATO evolution and operations for the next 10 to 15 years.

That Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG) reflects the effort to recalibrate NATO to best achieve its expanding military role in the furtherance of international security writ large. The CPG clearly appreciates the truism that *there is no military solution*. The following are experts from the Riga Summit CPG:

*“Peace, security and development are more interconnected than ever.*

*...*

*Experience has shown the increasing significance of stabilisation operations and of military support to post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The role of the UN and EU, and other organisations, including as appropriate non-governmental organisations, in ongoing operations and future crises will put a*

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possible interactions ranging across: independent action; coordinated action; cooperative action; and joint action.

<sup>3</sup> Cultural Interpreters is the name given to New-Canadians of relevant countries-of-origin who are hired and deployed by the Canadian Forces. Initially called just interpreters, it was immediately obvious that their insight was far greater. Most are drawn from the CANADEM roster.

<sup>4</sup> Aaronson, op cit.

*premium on practical close cooperation and coordination among all elements of the international response.*

...

*While NATO has no requirement to develop capabilities strictly for civilian purposes, it needs to improve its practical cooperation, taking into account existing arrangements, with partners, relevant international organisations and, as appropriate, non-governmental organisations in order to collaborate more effectively in planning and conducting operations;" NATO CPG 2006*

## **Back to Basics – Trust and Other Tactical Best Practices Pushed Upwards**

Operational solutions to the requirement for civil-military interaction have been evolving relatively well for the past decade in a number of multinational contexts including in particular UN peacekeeping operations. This ad-hoc evolution of civil-military interaction built on trust has worked best at lower operational levels, the tactical level in military parlance. Invariably this is because of the immediately obvious co-dependency of civil and military ‘internationals’ as they attempt to achieve their respective goals and end-states. Equally, the lower the tactical level the fewer the strategic or political constraints that can be easily imposed from on high. Tactical level civilians and military are inevitably individuals of goodwill and common sense who simply ‘get on with it’ and find ways to work around rules and regulations. They learn to trust each other even if their coordination may be limited to de-confliction, i.e. staying out of each other’s way, knowing that they are running in parallel paths to achieve common strategic goals.

How to push upwards the civil-military interaction lessons learned at the lowest tactical levels? NATO has been evolving some ad hoc field practices and NATO ACT has been evolving some new concepts to institutionalize these ad hoc field practices. Some in NATO understand clearly that NATO military can be one of the ‘leaders’ in civil-military interaction by not being THE leader. They understand that using their positions of power to preclude or supplant others will only result in those excluded finding ways to not coordinate and not cooperate. Some military extrapolate from their own counter-insurgency lessons learned where even NGOs are critical actors and *“To the greatest extent possible, commanders try to complement [civilian actors] and not override their capabilities. Building a complementary, trust based relationship is vital.”* US Army Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency, para 2-30, Dec. 2006.

Ad hoc tactical-level common-sense-interaction starts to fall apart as one starts to move up to higher operational levels where the ambit of strategic and political guidance start to impact on formal operational procedures. The Afghan mission is nothing if it is not political, with a substantial amount of the politics being played out at NATO national levels.

As in all human endeavours, the devil is in the details. The good intent of NATO’s CPG or other civil-military interaction concepts such as Canada’s all-of-government or 3D, are tested daily as individuals at different levels attempt to implement grand designs in real-life where time is short and work pressure is great.

Normal competition such as inter-party politics, inter-departmental turf battles, or government-versus-NGO-activists, continue to play out. However, efforts to overcome such natural divides also continue and there is substantial progress. Canada's START, modeled on the US S/CRS and UK PSRU is one of the more recent efforts in Canada to coordinate and cooperate. In such efforts, particularly where there is natural competition, there is always a larger onus on the 'bigger' players to share with and involve the 'smaller' players. The obverse of that onus is the constant temptation for the bigger guys to go it alone or attempt to dictate.

In the context of field operations where the military are involved, the military are almost always a bigger player or have the ability to become one. As such, in civil-military interaction, the military are constantly tempted and occasionally give in to temptation and leap out of their lane and take charge. Quite often it is because they are not aware at all that civilians fully populate those other lanes. Those civilians without tanks, uniforms, and weapons, have less physical presence and appear either puny or invisible to those who have different perceptions about ground-truth and shaping-the-environment. The military often misjudge the civilians, but this is understandable, and NATO and others continue to develop methods to counterbalance this, e.g. CAADs.

NATO is also developing more of an understanding of the nature of civilian operations, and that *just-in-time* working interactions will remain an enduring operation reality in crisis response. This is premised upon key civil-military partners having the right attitudes and sufficiently common business practices to enable *just-in-time* interactions that minimize time requirements for collaboration and maximize the attainment of common objectives. But again, just-in-time and ad hoc coordination depends on substantive trust, and trust is a commodity that is hard earned and easily lost.

### **Competition by Military**

When military unnecessarily propose or agree to undertake roles normally best carried out by civilians, they inadvertently become competitors with those they want to be partners with. Many civilian agencies such as the UN or NGOs are highly dependent on mission specific operational funding by governments. Many governments for decades have encouraged the growth of civilian agencies to become their implementing partners for humanitarian and other crisis response, and those civilian agencies are geared to respond rapidly when requested and when funded. *Mutatis mutandi*, the same issues apply to various financial allocations within government, e.g. will scarce funds be allocated to the Canadian Forces, or to CIDA, or to Foreign Affairs?

However in the flurry of crises and the frequent desire to 'plant' visible national-flags, national politicians at times mistakenly view their military as both a military and a civilian crisis response mechanism. Sometimes military themselves will initiate steps to move into the civilian 'lane' in well intentioned efforts to 'do good' or to demonstrate their gentler side (InfoOps, public relations, PsyOps, 'hearts & minds', etc.) Regardless of motivation and intent, military accepting to take on what are normally civilian jobs put the military in direct competition with civilians for scarce resources.

It is hard to trust a partner who is unnecessarily competing and taking over one's role. It is doubly hard for the military to coordinate with trusted partners in the field if the military have inadvertently caused them to be absent in whole or in part because the military have absorbed funds that otherwise would have gone to civilian agencies.

The optimum solution is for the military;

1. Know what the civilians are doing or can do (e.g. informed by CAADs)
2. Avoid taking on the jobs of civilian agencies;
3. Lobby on behalf of the civilian agencies for added or at least more rapid-reaction funding so that there can be concurrent military and civilian activity.

The other related issue not explored here is that well meaning but ad hoc 'civilian'-action by military can have unintended consequences that can reduce the impact of military actions and possibly do harm. That principle of *do no harm* and ways to address it has been painfully learned by civilian agencies over the past two decades.

### **Canadian Vignette**

A concrete example, of military boldly leaping into perceived breeches, is the Canadian Forces Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan (SAT-A): a Canadian military initiative that began operations in Kabul in September 2005 with the mission of strengthening the Karzai government. Composed of 14 military personnel and one development consultant, their activities included supporting the preparation of the Interim Afghan National **Development** Strategy (I-ANDS), strategic planning inputs to **Public Administration Reform** (PAR) and support for the Training and Development Department of the Independent **Administrative Reform** and **Civil Service** Commission.

There is no indication that those military personnel had expertise in devising development strategies, nor that they were experts on public administration reform nor the civil service, and perhaps most importantly, there is no indication that they were experienced in providing guidance and mentoring to developing country civil servants. There is also the issue of whether Canadian military embedded in Afghan civilian ministries, even in civilian garb, are sending the right message about the role of military in a democratic society.

Even superficial analysis would suggest that Canada had many other available experts that combined expertise on civilian-governance with expertise on how to mentor and effect sustainable capacity building with developing country officials. Regardless of the level of commitment and military professionalism of the 14 military personnel forming SAT-A, it is unlikely that they would have had the same effect as professionals in the relevant fields.

In addition, and this underpins a key aspect of successful civil-military interaction, the SAT-A military initiative has negatively impacted on the trust between Canadian Forces and other Canadian government officials.

“This unique project – well beyond the normal realm of military operations – was the brainchild of Canada's Chief of Defence Staff ...” (Scott Taylor, *Esprit de Corps Magazine*, Feb. 2007).

It has triggered unhappiness on the part of those who could have and should have driven this GoC activity. This Canadian Forces initiative

“...has also ruffled some feathers, not least among some senior Foreign Ministry officials in Ottawa who believe Gen. Hillier is poking the military's nose too far into the diplomat's domain.” (Paul Koring, *Globe & Mail* October 25, 2006, *Canadians Go Undercover In Afghanistan*).

This CF incursion has retained its military link, inasmuch as

““...SAT is closely monitored by the chief of defence staff . “This is Hillier’s brainchild and he maintains visibility on this,” says [LCol Aubin, Deputy Commander of SAT]”” (Scott Taylor, *Esprit de Corps Magazine*, Feb. 2007).

It has been suggested that this CF military initiative was due to the level of danger in Kabul. However, there are a large number of Canadian civilians<sup>5</sup> in Afghanistan, including Toni Murray, deployed by CANADEM with CIDA funds to serve as an advisor to the Afghan Ministry of the Interior. She had a number of missions in 2003-4 working on police reform, and then took up a permanent Ministry post in February 2005. She is entering her third year and as such pre-dates SAT and has been on-station far longer than any SAT member.

Rather than danger, it is more likely that the Canadian Forces were seduced by their financial ability to make their initiative happen; were buttressed by the mistaken perception that there were no civilian experts who would deploy; were discounting the likelihood that military officers might not be as conversant with how civilian government ministries in developing countries can be strengthened; and were confirmed in their mindset by what they perceive as an unwillingness of CIDA or DFAIT to get cracking. However, it is suggested that there were civilians experts who could have, should have, and were prepared to take the lead.

Certainly it would have been appropriate for the Canadian Forces to lobby for such a Canadian initiative. Even more so it would have been particularly appreciated in many civilian circles if the military had lobbied for the relevant civilian actors such as CIDA or DFAIT/START to be provided with the funds to take such an initiative either themselves or by turning to their regular implementing partners, e.g. UN and NGOs, to make things happen fast. Speaking more generally, if Canada is going to maximize its impact internationally, it had better be bringing its best experts<sup>6</sup> to bear – not merely assuming that those with the most ready cash such as DND are best placed to effect sustainable change.

## Conclusion

The spectrum of interactions between military forces and civilian authorities, populations, organizations and agencies is broad and complex. Success in operations requires enhanced interaction amongst NATO and non-NATO actors at all levels. The

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<sup>5</sup> CANADEM alone has been instrumental in either deploying or facilitating the deployment of over 150 experts from its roster, the first one having deployed in 2001.

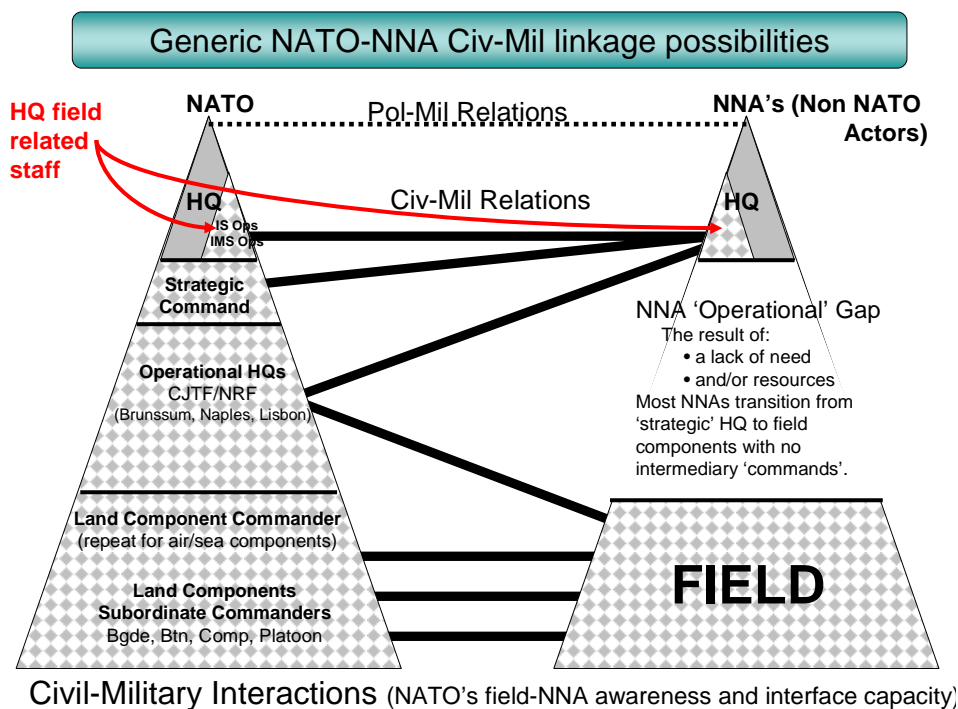
<sup>6</sup> Ten years ago DFAIT started funding CANADEM to assist the UN and other international agencies to connect with our best experts, and CANADEM’s roster of over 8,000 is the leading mechanism of its kind internationally, see the 2006 DPKO Lessons Learned Study by Catriona Gourlay: *Rosters for the Deployment of Civilian Experts in Peace Operations*, download at [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/) then Library; Mission Admin and Support; see page 28.

type of interaction must be equally differentiated or nuanced so as to run across the full spectrum of interaction: independent (e.g. just de-confliction), to coordinated, possibly cooperative, and sometimes joint.

It is broadly accepted that NATO's procedures for consultation, planning and decision making in support of operations, as well as its capabilities, must be more aware of and able to maximize the multitude of separate but mutually-dependent NATO and non-NATO actors.

Equally, it is firmly accepted that interaction implies neither military control of civil organizations or agencies, nor the reverse. Civil-military interaction is a critical enabler for all military operations, just as civil-military interaction can be a critical enabler for civilian operations.

Below is a pictorial representation of what NATO-NNA linkages or interactions could be<sup>7</sup>. It should be noted that in general the NNAs have HQ staff and field mission staff, but for resource reasons, do not have the military equivalence of strategic commands or operational HQs. It is essential that NATO remembers this asymmetrical reality when looking to connect with civilian organization counterparts.



As a closing example, NATO is exercising the idea of facilitating a CMO (Civil-Military Overview). Basically it would consist of a web-based mechanism to share information between NATO and non-NATO actors including NGOs. Sharing information has traditionally been extremely patchy and ad hoc because of information security and the politics of openly sharing. However, NATO figures that

<sup>7</sup> For more nuanced pictorial representations of NNA sub-groupings with different degrees of partnerships, e.g. key IGOs, key NGOs, other IGOs, and other NGOs, see LaRose-Edwards *NATO Comprehensive Civil-Military Interaction op.cit.*

some minimal sharing is possible, and is even considering the idea of totally funding such a mechanism but allowing it to be managed by NGOs. This is a risky endeavor by all potential partners not least of all NATO military, but is indicative of the efforts going into envisaging new ways of coordination and cooperation.

NATO is looking to move to the leading edge on how to be a trusted partner for civilian actors. They are designing and refining those mechanisms and procedures that will have the effect of coordinating without leading, cooperating without encroaching, yet when appropriate, leading in what are clearly military tasks but with minimal collateral damage to their civilian partners.

NATO subscribes to *effects based planning* and *effects based operations*. NATO's desired effect is civilian trust that cuts both ways: NATO military trusting in the civilians; and the mirror trust by the civilians that the military are not looking to dictate nor supplant. That civil-military trust is that collectively they are working towards the same strategic goals and that they are partners in the broadest sense.