

The Three-Legged Stool
Presentation by
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I want to begin my presentation today by thanking Don Macnamara for inviting me to address the CDAI seminar. It is a privilege and a heavy responsibility to be the lone NGO representative on the speakers' list.

I want to make clear from the start that my comments should not be taken to represent the view of all NGOs. We are far too diverse a group for anyone to make that claim. I do, however, speak for CARE Canada which has a long experience in responding to emergencies in a wide range of wars and natural disasters. Today, the CARE federation spends over half a billion dollars – year in and year out – in more than 70 countries in the Third World. We are one of the half dozen or so major emergency humanitarian agencies that are operating out of Canada. It is a very small group among the hundreds of Canadian NGOs that work to alleviate poverty in the Third World.

To explain why we have anything of value to say about things military, I want to start with a story. It could be a story about Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Angola, Sudan, East Timor, Somalia, Rwanda, Colombia, or one of the other dozens of crises we have been on the frontlines of for the past two decades. This one is from Zaire in 1994-95.

There we found ourselves responsible for the overall management of a camp of 500,000 refugees from Rwanda who arrived virtually overnight and had been given an old lava flow to set up on. The technical problems of camp management on such difficult terrain would have been challenging enough for any normal group of refugees this size. But this was not a normal group. It contained many of those responsible for the genocidal massacre of a million of their fellow citizens.

We knew from the start that we had to break the hold of the genocidaires on the general refugee population or the camp would become the rear base for mounting ongoing raids, spreading murder and mayhem across the border. In principle and practice, we claim no professional expertise in security operations, so we sought a solution through the United Nations. The UN rejected a proposal from the private security firm DSL as too expensive and inappropriate and instead turned to UNDPKO for assistance. UNDPKO took six months canvassing UN members for a deployment of troops and came up empty-handed.

In the meantime, we did what we could. The Zairoise authorities assigned police to the camps but being unpaid, the police started doing what you would expect them to do – taxing the refugees for their services. This caused several riots as a result. We identified Rwandan Boy Scouts in the camp who were keen to help, and after determining that the Boy Scouts were one of the few organizations that did not take part in the genocide, we assigned traffic control duties to them. They did a good job within this limited mandate. But within two weeks, two dozen of them were taken out in the middle of the night and slaughtered. Their bodies were never found but the point was made. The genocidaires would not allow any Rwandan authority to develop outside of their own.

Only eight months after the camp was established did a contingent of Dutch police arrive to train and pay regularly a contingent of Zairoise red berets who did a remarkable job with minimum resources. But it was too late. The genocidaires were established in the camps and over four million people have since died in the Congo as the madness and mayhem spread across the country.

From this experience we mounted a research project that examined the changing nature of humanitarian crises in the post-Cold War world. The report of that project, released in 1995, concluded that successful humanitarian interventions were like a stool with three legs – the UN, the NGOs, and the military. Each has a specific capacity and an appropriate role to play. All are necessary. In a complex emergency, if one of these actors is not present, or starts playing a role for which it is not best suited, the entire humanitarian effort becomes unbalanced.

- The UN’s crucial role is the overall coordination of the assistance from the international community and the liaison with the local government.
- The military is essential to secure the humanitarian space and to provide the lift capacity that no other institution has when bottlenecks develop.
- The NGOs are best at providing the basic necessities on a mass scale – food, water, shelter, health and social services.

In crises where the response is unbalanced, or the three actors confuse their roles, you get, at best, wasted resources and at worst a humanitarian failure that takes hundreds of thousands of lives.

Let’s now turn to some examples of military action in humanitarian crises and examine them in light of this tripartite scheme for the appropriate division of labour that, in our view, makes for an effective and efficient humanitarian response. Let us start with the role of the DART team and its recent deployment to Sri Lanka.

Because I have made some critical comments on DART, I want to make clear from the start that I believe DART is composed of talented and dedicated professionals who do first rate work when assigned to the field. Nevertheless, I think DART is fundamentally a wrong-headed concept that confuses the role of the military in a crisis context.

There are two reasons for this. The overriding one is cost. As I have said before, DART is a Cadillac applied to a situation where a bicycle or a skateboard would be sufficient. The second reason is that its self-contained nature, which is an understandable characteristic of a military response, makes it inappropriate as a service provider in contexts where the maximum use of local products and personnel is called for.

According to the DART press story released following my original comments, much was accomplished by DART in Sri Lanka, 2.5 million litres of clean water was provided, a bridge was constructed allowing 7,000 people to cross a washed out area, and 5,800 patients visited the DART clinics. Sounds pretty good, eh? We are also told that it cost about \$20 million to deploy.

On the basis of the DART figures one of my staff sent me his back-of-the-envelope exercise to determine what the per-unit cost of providing these services were. He assumed that the \$20 million is an all-in cost of deployment (which I do not believe is the real cost; I think it is higher) and did an allocation of 50% water, 25% to engineering and 25% to health services. On this basis his per unit figures are as follows:

- \$4 per litre of water,
- \$71.43 per bridge crossing per person, and
- \$862.02 per clinical visit.

When you consider that bottled water is available locally at 30 cents a litre in Sri Lanka, you begin to see what I am getting at.

Consideration of our intervention for safe water systems in Indonesia further highlights the alternatives to DART in the water sector. Water sources are not in short supply in either Sri Lanka or Sumatra. The post-Tsunami problem is that the traditional local water sources are contaminated or salinated. In Sumatra, this problem is compounded by the destruction of the coastal roads which has led to the isolation of those communities most in need of humanitarian assistance. Under these circumstances we are distributing small bottles of sodium hypochlorite solution. One small, locally purchased bottle of this solution will provide 400 litres of potable water – enough for a family of five's needs for one month. In unit terms, that means a fraction of a cent per litre. We will be distributing two million of these bottles over a six-month period. This will give us breathing space to survey the traditional water sources and begin the more complex work of dealing with decontamination and desalinization.

Beyond cost, the CARE intervention is of interest for other reasons as well. It is a point-of-use approach to purification as opposed to the point-of-source purification used by DART. In an area where transportation infrastructure has been destroyed and initial relief had to be provided by helicopter, every 100 millilitre bottle helicoptered in represents 400 litres of water that do not have to be flown in. Also, the solution requires some basic training and the participation of families in the preparation of the potable water. It is not just a handout. This too has a very positive effect on the badly traumatized victims of the disaster, for it allows them to take a measure of active responsibility for getting over the disaster. Finally, it is sustainable in that it fits in with local markets. I would be very surprised if, over the long-term, bottles of sodium hypochlorite solution do not become a regular product line at rural stores throughout the Tsunami region on a commercial basis.

The second case I want to mention was the situation we faced in East Timor in the immediate aftermath of the Indonesia withdrawal. Having lost the referendum on independence, the East Timorese pro-Indonesian militia had engaged in an orgy of murder and destruction, burning thousands of houses and destroying or contaminating hundreds of water sources as they left. A massive reconstruction job was mounted under UN auspices. Among other responsibilities, CARE assumed the responsibility for wells and housing reconstruction around Suai on the Southern coast. It was a tough assignment. The destruction was almost total in Suai, and material had to come in over very bad roads from the port of Dili on the other side of the island. On top of this, the kind of truck that could negotiate the difficult roads was in short supply in the critical period after the disaster.

The Canadian supply ship HMCS Provider had been assigned to the UN mission and was at anchor off Dili. We went out to the Provider and explained our problem to the Captain. In what I assume was a typical Canadian Forces "can do" reaction, he provided a solution. Building materials were loaded onto the Provider in Dili and offloaded the next day by landing craft onto the beach at Suaii. It was a crucial intervention at a critical time. It made a mark with us at CARE, and was greatly appreciated.

One could not help to notice however, that the equipment being used by the military was old and required high maintenance. That is why I broke ranks with NGO colleagues and supported the Minister of Defense in seeking significant increases to the military budget.

In short, in my opinion, dedicated lift capacity – both strategic and tactical – is essential in crisis situations and is unlikely to be available outside of the military. The direct provision of humanitarian services is not, however, a role that the military should engage in for reasons of cost and suitability.

I want to close these comments with a few words on what I believe is the most critical role of the military in humanitarian crisis: securing the humanitarian space.

The CARE federation has lost 64 staff since 1995, and other humanitarian agencies have faced similar losses. As you in the military know only too well, these numbers go beyond statistics. They represent six to seven members of our CARE family who, every year for the past 10 years, have been lost to us. They died trying to bring peace and comfort to those whose lives have been shattered by conflict.

We know that it is a very dangerous world. We take the issue of security very seriously and have a talented group of specialists who do nothing but focus on improving the security of our operations. But it is not enough.

The security continuum runs from acceptance through deterrence to protection. Our security people concentrate on acceptance strategies which reflect our humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. We are experts at not getting involved in local politics and conflicts; at being transparent in our efforts to deliver aid to those that most need it; and in involving the local communities and authorities in how this is done in a fair and professional manner. We are not "happy amateurs" wandering innocently around war zones. Our greatest strength is real-time knowledge of what is going on in our operational area largely through the savvy of our dedicated national staff. Nevertheless, an acceptance strategy is more and more often not enough.

The main expertise of the military is obviously at the other end of the security scale in the area of protection. While this is an essential element in mounting a successful military deployment, it is simply not feasible for a widely dispersed humanitarian operation.

I will leave you with the thought that there is an essential missing middle in the security continuum: deterrence. It is my impression that in a post-Cold War world this is an equation that has not yet been solved. It is certainly one that I would like to see the Canadian military

specialize in. (I suppose that there are those among you who will say that the PRTs in Afghanistan are a good example of experimentation in this area. Unfortunately, I have to report that we do not favour the PRT model for reasons similar to those related to the division-of-roles model outlined above. But this is too short a presentation to deal with the complex issue of PRTs.)

My challenge to the Canadian military would be to develop a niche role in training local security personnel in situ in a way that minimizes their exposure to attack and infiltration. I suspect it would require new, and in some senses, counterintuitive approaches and without question would be an extremely dangerous undertaking. But over the long-term, I think this type of intervention has the potential for rekindling the wide-spread and well-deserved reputation for excellence that our Forces built as peacekeepers throughout the Cold War.

March 3, 2005