

## Sections

- News
- Letters
- Pulse
- Sports
- Stripes Accent
- Stripes Travel
- Sunday magazine

## Information

- About us / Contacts
- Archive highlights
- Archive Photo of the Day
- Classified ads
- Library research
- Links
- Print Shop
- Stripes Lite

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Current Articles

Archives

## STARS AND STRIPES.

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## Military, NGOs seek to foster cooperation

By [Jeremy Kirk](#), Stars and Stripes  
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YONGSAN GARRISON, South Korea — Call it an irony of modern warfare: Sometimes the military and nongovernmental organizations cannot succeed without the other — but often their missions conflict.

U.S. military civil affairs teams focus on maintaining security and improving infrastructure for local populations. NGOs provide humanitarian help for war victims. Sometimes those two missions uncomfortably collide.

“We’re admitting there’s a problem,” said Brig. Gen. Ronald S. Mangum, commander, Special Operations Command Korea. “We are examining how to get through it.”

That friction is one focus of the second annual Special Operations Forces Korea conference, held Tuesday and Wednesday. It brought U.S. and South Korean special forces and NGO representatives together to discuss civil military affairs, psychological and humanitarian operations and how the groups can better work together.

The goal is to apply lessons learned from other operations to Korea, Mangum said.

According to a November 2001 article in the British Journal of General Practice, reprinted on the Doctors Without Borders Web site, “the military can provide help to people in danger in certain circumstances.” For instance, military units often help after natural disasters such as earthquakes. “And peacekeepers have an important role to play in protecting civilians caught in conflict.

“But every time a military power that is belligerently involved in a conflict describes their actions as humanitarian, this vital concept is eroded. Aid agencies

are perceived as less neutral and less independent, and staff will find it increasingly difficult to work and will be increasingly targeted.”

Mangum said, “The military and NGOs often come into an area with their own prejudices. However, in many cases, the NGOs have been there long before the military. The NGOs have set out a personnel, materiel and monetary plan for operating in an area over a period of time and suddenly the military shows up with combat operations ... and disrupts all of their plans. Understandably, they are upset.”

Sometimes NGOs and military units integrate well. And NGOs often can move faster than the military, Mangum said. For instance, up to 700 NGOs are believed already active in Iraq. The challenge, he said, is ensuring their efforts translate into improvements for Iraqis.

South Korea’s government has developed plans to deal with a post-unification Korea and the U.S. military has worked with them on “complementary concepts and plans,” Mangum said.

The military could help somewhat in providing security and distributing aid, said Maj. Dario A. Barrato, with the Combined Forces Command civil-military affairs branch. “We would definitely need to be complemented with the efforts of NGOs and international organizations.”

The U.S. Agency for International Development and several South Korean NGOs would be incorporated into operations here. “If we have a situation that involves mass refugees, we have to make plans for them to get humanitarian relief aid,” Barrato said.

Col. George Maughan commanded the Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force in Afghanistan from August 2002 until May 2003. The operation involved small civil affairs teams spread out in 14 safe houses doing projects costing less than \$300,000.

Friction with NGOs came when soldiers dressed in civilian clothes but carried concealed weapons, said Maughan, of the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade at Fort Jackson, S.C. That practice was stopped, he said. Still, some NGOs “would not talk with the military at all. Others had no problems.”

Edward Artis is part of a three-man NGO, Knightsbridge International, that operates in areas including Cambodia, Chechnya and Rwanda. The group works in concert with the military because “we are not at cross purposes,” said Artis, of West Hills, Calif. “There are some NGOs that will just have no interface at all with the military. We consider that to be very short-sighted.”

Another NGO, The International Organization for Migration, has worked well with military forces in Kosovo and Africa, and often with the U.N., said Goh Hyun-ung, chief of international organization for the group's Seoul office. His office has worked with the U.S. military here on women trafficking and sex trade issues.

NGOs are driven by politics, Goh said, adding that part of the key for NGO-military cooperation is third-party brokering. "You get the feeling that these NGOs are against the U.S. military," he said. "But when there is kind of a mediator ... there could be a possibility to bring these parties together in a more neutral setting."

Doctors Without Borders also makes no judgments on military actions, said Dr. Marie- Madeleine LePlomb, deputy program manager for DWB Paris. However, she said, the organization does keep its distance from the military to avoid endangering either its own workers or the civilians with whom they're working.

Confusion can erupt when both the military and NGOs operate in the same area, LePlomb said, but each case must be considered separately. "We have to not judge the Army as long as it doesn't affect our actions," she said.

That's a less-than-ringing endorsement of military-NGO cooperation. But it's a beginning on which the U.S. military knows it must build. As events in Iraq and this week's conference in South Korea demonstrated, the military is coming to grips with the reality that modern warfare requires a host of noncombat tasks to secure the victories that combat obtained.

Or, as Barrato said, "The military could not handle the problem alone."

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