

Running head: NEGATIVE IMPACT OF HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

Negative Impact of Humanitarian Operations on US Army Operations

MSG William J. Paulin

United States Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

SGM Del Hoyo

27 November 2007

Negative Impact of Humanitarian Operations on the US Army

The United States Army is one of the largest and is the most powerful. The world heavily relies on the US Army. Moreover, as the Army conducts operations for what we say are good intentions, other countries do not see it that way. As we use the US Army in humanitarian operations, we must understand that some adverse consequences may happen along the way. We must look at some of the current administration's strategic policy and the history of operations from our past. We first started humanitarian aid in the US Army after the Civil War. The Freedmen's Bureau was the Army's first operation as a humanitarian force. In debating whether to use the US Army, we must ask some questions:

1. What is the role of our military power in foreign policy?
2. What are the limits of global engagement to our Army?
3. How do we manage the uncertain nature of deploying our Army in an unstable world?

During the years of the Cold War, our major policy of our Army was deterrence and defense of our country. Our Army has now become more of a 911 panacea for all nations during a time of crisis. In addition, we are a fully deployed operational Army fighting two wars in two countries. This is in addition to numerous other smaller operations in countless other countries hunting, capturing or killing extremists with the intent to destroy our way of life.

Since September 11, 2001, combat operations have stretched the limits of the US Army. We are mobilizing and utilizing National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers in a matter that is unparalleled in our Nation's history. By having our Army in different countries providing help we also leave our Army vulnerable to opportunistic terrorists. We have over 200,000 troops on foreign soil and more than 50,000 personnel afloat in foreign waters (Conetta & Knight, 2001).

There is current debate within our country and military advisors that we should return our Army to more of a traditional function.

The amount of global engagement by the US Army surpasses any other nation. Before the end of the Cold War the primary reason for global operations was to beat the Soviet Union to the punch, a fellow superpower, it was military competition to win countries hearts and minds. We see our ability to help other nations as an important “feather in our cap” in order to maintain our global status as the only superpower left in the world. Due to the ever-increasing role of the US Army throughout the world, we have now greatly reduced our readiness. We have equipment shortages and our Soldiers (our most important asset) are tired and need time at home in an environment that is secure. The Army is seeing an increase in suicide and divorces that is unmatched in our history. Although keeping pace with set goals, recruitment needs too many enhancements such as; bonuses, lowering of standards and increasing of age requirements.

There is current debate as to whether the draft should be re-introduced to increase the Army’s strength to meet current operational demands. Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Casey has admitted that we are in a crucial period and that our Army is broken and needs transformation. This is very difficult to accomplish while fighting wars let alone providing humanitarian operations either within our borders or outside. As we are in very uncertain times the advantage of maintaining an Army for operational combat means is that we can respond in a timely and effective manner. When units are deployed helping out either in Pakistan during the earthquake or New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, those very well needed units are not available for the defense of our country. We must also look at the cost of operations, as we are now facing a trillion dollar war and continues to increase minute by minute. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the Pentagon spends roughly \$58 billion a year on

humanitarian aid overseas; in 2005, it spent an additional \$117 million (Kelleher, 2006). How can we as a country continue to afford sending and utilizing our Army for situations that a country or State can provide for themselves? When sent to perform humanitarian operations, how long of a commitment do we provide? We do not tell that nation we will be sending a prescribed amount of Soldiers, for a determined amount of time, instead our commitment is open-ended. Most businesses in our world, in order to be successful, do not prescribe to this type of dealing and with good reason, the unknown effects. As we are providing comfort to nations and to our citizens, China and Russia, continue to build their military and regain superpower status.

We do not know the threats that exist tomorrow and that we will face in the next ten, fifteen, twenty years. We should not commit our Army for humanitarian operations. Within our borders, we have agencies such as the Red Cross, Homeland Security, and FEMA. Those well-funded agencies should have the focus of helping our citizens during time of peril. Whether it is a hurricane, earthquake or raging wildfires, these agencies are better suited to respond. We as a country need to build those agencies and make them accountable and suitable to handle any type of domestic problems. In doing so, our citizens will have less bureaucracy to deal with and those agencies will have command and control and will “be in charge.” Communication is essential, as we have learned from September 11th, 2001 and our current operations. On that horrific day, the Police could not talk to the Fire Department or to the military. In Iraq and Afghanistan Marines, cannot talk to Soldiers (though we are getting better and better understand and embrace joint operations.) As we established the Homeland Security Department, let them do their job, build this agency to one that can command, control, and communicate with all necessary providers during domestic trouble.

For outside our borders, each country has some sort of mechanism to help them during unfortunate times. The International Red Cross, the United Nations, that particular countries internal assistance and government can provide support for their particular need. The less that we send our Army to help other countries, the better suited these countries will become. Each country should have the economic means to sustain them and not rely on other countries to assist them. In underdeveloped countries, that cannot provide for themselves, we have international aid agencies designed to provide them with humanitarian aid. We need to use them and not continue to send our Army on global humanitarian operations. We are engaged in a global war and no end is in sight. We must maintain our Army's ability to fight and win wars no matter how long it takes. Utilizing the US Army for humanitarian operations diminishes that ability.

References

- Conetta, C, & Knight, C (2001). *A New US Military Strategy: Issues and Options*. Retrieved October 22, 2007, from <http://www.comw.org/pda/0105bm20.html>
- Kelleher, E (2006). *U.S. Military Humanitarian Efforts Planned for 99 Nations*. Retrieved October 21, 2007, from <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html>