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**U.S. MILITARY SUPPORT FOR RWANDAN REFUGEE RELIEF:
ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVES DETERMINE THE END-GAME**

Core Course 3 Essay

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Course The National Security Policy Process

Seminar M

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Introduction

On July 22, 1994, President Clinton announced that the U S would contribute massive relief assistance to the Rwandan refugees in response to an appeal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The U S support would be provided primarily by the military. The Defense Department quickly responded, and almost all observers have commended it for quick action that saved thousands of lives. The subsequent decision to have the U S military withdraw from the Rwanda region did not, however, flow directly from the commitments made by the President and his National Security Adviser in July. For that analysis, one needs to look at the different perspectives of the organizations involved and at how the Defense Department was able to use the military chain of command to serve its purposes.

The State Department and the Agency for International Development, facing a humanitarian emergency of unprecedented magnitude, saw the situation in the Rwanda area as unstable and were reluctant to prematurely declare the crisis to be over. From their perspective, it was important for the U S to keep the President's commitment to support UNHCR.

To understand the perspective of the Defense Department, on the other hand, it is useful to keep in mind that tasks which run counter to an organization's traditional goals tend to meet resistance. The Pentagon viewed military support for the humanitarian relief operation as something which was not its normal function, particularly since there was no security component involved. Many military supporters further argued that such an operation would undercut the ultimate purpose of the military, to fight and win the nation's wars. The military concentrated on stopping the dying and then quickly turning the operation over to civilian relief agencies.

It therefore is understandable that the decision to terminate the military operation by September 30 was the subject of bureaucratic politics between the Defense Department on one

side and the State Department and USAID on the other. And it should come as no surprise that such a controversy would find its way into the pages of the Washington Post.

The President Establishes Policy

Some 500,000 to 800,000 refugees fled from Rwanda into Zaire in July 1994. Initial estimates at the time were as high as 1.2 million people in the period July 14-17. This sudden and massive outflow of refugees overwhelmed the ability of relief agencies to provide water, food, medical care, shelter and other relief items (Goma Group, 339).

By July 20, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has the lead responsibility internationally for protection and assistance of refugees, quickly put together a list of eight self-contained (and ill-defined) "service packages." High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata requested that donor governments provide the specified assistance as in-kind contributions. Many of the packages were geared to the kinds of operations which could be accomplished by military establishments: airport services, logistics base services, road servicing and road security, site preparation for refugee camps, provision of domestic fuel for cooking, sanitation facilities, water management, and airhead management (UNHCR 2-4).

The U.S. was quick to respond. On July 22, President Clinton held a news conference at the White House. He reported that

.. The flow of refugees across Rwanda's borders has now created what could be the world's worst humanitarian crisis in a generation. It is a disaster born of brutal violence, and according to experts now on site, it is now claiming one life every minute.. Today, I have ordered an immediate, massive increase of our efforts in

the region, in support of an appeal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2)

He said the efforts would be directed "from the White House" through the National Security Adviser working with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Administrator of USAID, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President explained that the Defense Department would "establish and manage an airlift hub in Uganda, assist in expanding airlift operations near the refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu, establish a safe water supply, and distribute as much water as possible to those at risk." In response to a question, he reported the cost would be "in excess of \$100 million." (1, 3)

The Military Quickly Responds

The U S military effort, dubbed Operation Support Hope, quickly commenced. It ended a little over two months later. How the President's policy was implemented, and why the military operation ended when it did, can be best understood by analyzing the different approaches taken by the military and civilian organizations involved in the relief effort. In particular, it is useful to keep in mind particular relevant observations on organizational processes made by Graham T Allison.

A considerable gap separates what leaders choose...and what organizations implement. .. Projects that demand that existing organizational units depart from their accustomed functions and perform previously unprogrammed tasks are rarely accomplished in their designed form.. . Where an assigned piece of a problem is contrary to the existing goals of an organization, resistance to implementation of that piece will be encountered (62-63).

Within a week after the President's announcement, military leaders signalled their concerns about how the assignment to facilitate refugee relief was not part of the military's existing goals. A newspaper report appeared in which Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili and Army Chief of Staff General Gordon R. Sullivan expressed misgivings about such use of the military. The article noted that

Humanitarian missions are fine now and then, Pentagon officials say. But these operations sap time and attention of senior officials, cut into combat training exercises, tie up equipment and personnel and take increasingly scarce defense dollars away from other operations focused on the Pentagon's primary mission of making sure U.S. armed forces remain strong enough to win two regional wars nearly simultaneously. A Pentagon task force on readiness urged Congress last week to create a separate fund to pay for contingency operations rather than draw more money from the Defense Department's operations account (Graham A29)

Nevertheless, the President's policy remained in place. On July 29, the Defense Department announced that it was sending additional troops for the Rwandan aid effort. The administration also asked Congress for \$320 million in supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 1994. About the same time, both Republican and Democratic members of Congress "criticized the Clinton administration for failing to adequately and speedily deal with the civil war and refugee crisis" (Fleming 2158)

As the relief effort continued, frequent international consultations were held on the political, economic, military and humanitarian aspects of the Rwanda crisis. On August 2, an international donors pledging conference was held at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. In his speech, Richard McCall, head of the U.S. delegation and chief of staff to USAID Administrator Atwood, described the international relief effort and the U.S. actions "to implement

four of the eight service packages requested " He mentioned the request for supplemental appropriations and noted that "much of this will be used to continue managing the four service packages on behalf of UNHCR " He also reported that

Secretary of Defense William Perry visited Kigali and the refugee camps around Goma this past weekend Upon returning to Washington yesterday, Secretary Perry reported that, thanks to the collective relief efforts, the corner has been turned, but much work remains to be done (McCall 1-2)

Organizations Differ on the Termination Date

Joint Task Force Support Hope proved critical to the expeditious delivery of humanitarian relief By August 12, a news report out of Kigali said that "most American soldiers probably will leave Goma, Zaire, within weeks, senior U S officers here say " Lt Gen Daniel Schroeder, Commander of the Joint Task Force, was quoted as saying, "The Goma piece, I think, is settled. Our water production is now at the point where it is exceeding consumption" (Vogel A12) Experts in humanitarian relief, however, had a different view The Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees on August 11 wrote to the U S Ambassador to International Organizations in Geneva to explain that much more needed to be done "Substantial support will be needed in the water sector until production goals are achieved in all areas and distribution systems are fully established and sustainable" (Walzer).

By mid-August, it was increasingly clear that organizational perspectives on the relief operation in eastern Zaire differed dramatically between the Department of Defense on one side and the Department of State and the Agency for International Development on the other.

From the military perspective, the worst was over and it would soon be time for an expeditious transfer to relief agencies. In mid-July, Zaire had witnessed one of the worst humanitarian crises imaginable: up to 800,000 refugees had crossed the border in the course of four days and arrived in a remote area of volcanic rock with insufficient water and food, almost 50,000 refugees (between 6 and 10%) died during the first month after the influx. By the second month, however, "a well-coordinated relief programme was associated with a steep decline in death rates" to one-fourth of the earlier level (Goma Group, 339-342). The U.S. military, with its unmatched logistical capability, had provided the necessary "surge capacity" which international relief agencies lacked for a crisis on such a massive scale. As one Defense Department official involved in the operation put it, once the dying stopped and the infrastructure was established, "our mission was over" and resources which had been diverted to Operation Support Hope could be applied to "more appropriate tasks." In his view, "the military didn't perceive this as a true mission" because there was no security factor involved (Pentagon official).

The civilian agencies, however, had a different outlook. They were accustomed to dealing with refugee and migration crises, but this was one of the worst in history. It seemed less and less likely that the refugees (primarily Hutus) would return to Rwanda anytime soon. Extremists, many of whom had committed genocide, were living in the refugee camps. Meanwhile, Rwanda itself had been devastated by the horrific genocide and the government takeover by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (led by Tutsis). The prospects for further conflict appeared to be high. During the second month of the crisis, 5 to 8 refugees out of every 10,000 were dying each day, and this was still way above the crude mortality rate (0.6 per 10,000 per day) in Rwanda prior to the conflict (Goma Group 340). Thus, from the perspective of State and USAID (and many non-governmental organizations), this looked to be a long-term situation requiring large-scale humanitarian and development resources and an extraordinary commitment on the part of the international community. Given this context, they saw it as important that the U.S. Government meet its July policy commitment to provide four of the "service packages" requested by UNHCR.

They also believed that the departure of the military should take place only after certain standards were met (such as the generally-accepted figure for liters of water needed per person per day in a humanitarian emergency), and that there should be a seamless transition as the military departed. In this view, it was important to look objectively at the situation on the ground rather than simply "define the crisis as over so the military could leave" (Refugee official)

By the latter half of August, an additional factor, funding, became more prominent in the organizational debate to determine when U.S. military support for the relief operation would end. Military supporters in Congress and the Executive branch made, in effect, a budgetary case for declaring that the military mission had been accomplished. On August 24, 1994, Senator Strom Thurmond, ranking minority member of the Armed Services Committee, wrote a letter to the President urging that humanitarian operations be paid from a separate account, rather than from "the already anemic defense budget." Three days later, a newspaper article citing administration officials and congressional sources criticized the Clinton administration's "open-ended commitments [for the Pentagon's Rwandan relief mission and refugee interdiction in the Caribbean] costing millions of dollars a day without agreement on how to pay for them" (Lippman A10). An official at the Department of Defense confirmed that "budget was part of the bureaucratic reinforcement of the perception of mission responsibilities" (Pentagon official). Meanwhile, it was obviously in the financial interest of State (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration) and USAID (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) for U.S. military assistance to continue so that there would be less of a burden on their limited budgets as the relief effort continued.

UNHCR, with its responsibility to care for the refugees after the initial crisis passed, considered it vital to maintain continuity in the humanitarian relief operation after withdrawal of Operation Support Hope. At the request of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Counselor for Refugee and Migration Affairs at the U.S. Mission in Geneva (the author) met on August 16

with UNHCR staff and was presented with an urgent request for information on U S plans and intentions in order to identify resource gaps and priorities in the coming weeks. The U S Government response, which was transmitted to Geneva two and a half weeks later, made U S intentions clear.

The U S commitment "to carry out" the service packages will not necessarily continue. The U S committed its military forces to several UNHCR packages on an urgent, crisis-response basis. As NGO's, under the guidance of UNHCR, are accepting responsibility for these packages on a continuing basis, the U S military is being withdrawn. U S forces withdrew from Goma on 26 August after having handed over operations to UNHCR et al on the ground. Provided the situation remains stable we expect to restructure the U S military presence in the region to handle remaining missions -- essentially airlift -- with greatly scaled-down presence at Entebbe and Kigali. Planning considerations: (a) our goal is to have no residual military presence in the area, (b) U S military support should be considered only if it is a unique, military capability not found in IO's NGO's or other countries (Geneva response 1-2)

Two days later, a news report citing U S. and international relief officials criticized the Defense Department's organizational response to the President's commitments in July:

The discrepancy between the White House's promises and the Pentagon's performance was due to a combination of the administration's reluctance to insist that the military meet each U.N. task and the military's judgment that the tasks were either too costly, too risky or unnecessary. . . [The projected end-September withdrawal] is earlier than some U S. diplomats and many international relief workers favor. Moreover, the military plans to depart after performing only a

portion of the four principal humanitarian tasks that National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and other senior officials in July pledged publicly it would undertake (Smith A1, A16)

The article also provided a clue as to why the President and the National Security Council had allowed such bureaucratic politics to proceed "Senior administration officials who would ordinarily closely monitor the military's performance were distracted by crises in Cuba and Haiti" (Smith A1)

Soon afterward, with most of the Rwandan refugees remaining in Zaire, the U S military -- whose operation had been announced with great fanfare on July 22 -- was gone "JTF Support Hope completed re-deployment on 30 September and was disestablished on 8 October 1994 having accomplished the mission assigned by CINCEUR" (EUCOM 24)

Some on the civilian side see the military as having withdrawn before the job the U S Government had "contracted for" was completed, and to have done so when it still was not clear whether the civilian agencies could gear up quickly enough to meet the military's timeframe (Refugee official). The U S military review of Operation Support Hope recognized such divergent approaches taken by the civilian and military organizations involved in the relief effort The After Action Report also explained how the mission guidance through the chain of command to the Joint Task Force Commander allowed the military to prevail in the bureaucratic battle with the civilian organizations.

.. From the first the commander and staff were permitted to develop criteria that defined success in doctrinal military terms, resisted mission creep, and encouraged the rapid transition of relief support from military to USAID or other civilian agency control. Other agencies, however, notably the State Department, USAID,

and the UN NGO community, had a longer view of involvement that, without specific limits, was roughly tied to stabilization of life in the refugee camps and nation-building activities (in some cases they had *no* view of end state criteria, as expressed and understood in military doctrine) Clear mission guidance thus permitted the commander considerable freedom of action in determining his operational objectives and end state, and was key in avoiding the additional taskings to deployed forces that has become known as "mission creep" (EUCOM 26, emphasis in original)

It is also worth keeping in mind that the Rwandan refugee outflow took place only a few months after the last U S troops had left Somalia. The Somalia operation is commonly looked on as a failure, in part due to "mission creep" after its original goal, to alleviate the suffering, was expanded to include nation-building and later to arrest a particular warlord From the Pentagon's perspective, the Rwanda operation was to be a success and there would be no Somalia-style mission creep

Conclusion

The termination of Operation Support Hope by the end of September forced the civilian relief agencies to take over all aspects of the relief operation within a few months of the massive refugee outflow Perhaps the presence of U S. military support for a period beyond September 30 would have made for a better transition, but that subject is beyond the scope of this paper. What is clear is that, for various reasons, U S. military support provided to the relief effort did not match that which had been promised by the President on July 22. That change in policy is best understood by looking at the different perspectives of the military and civilian organizations involved and at the military's use of guidance through its chain of command to win the bureaucratic battle.

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