

CIMIC – CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES AND FUNCTIONS

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Abstract: CIMIC is a NATO concept, used not only in Peace Support Operations but also in any kind of mission that requires this structure. In July 2003, NATO published its proper CIMIC Doctrine, being described as “the co-ordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies” (NATO, 2003, p. 1-1). According to this AJP-9, it represents the means of linking with the civil environment, which in its turn, provides the adequate conditions in which military force can accomplish the final objective.. It is a rather new concept in military culture although its activity does not represent a new phenomenon but it has acquired new connotations after the 90s. The word, diplomacy, the convincing power and the ability to communicate in a foreign language are the assets of a good CIMIC officer. To this vocation, the emphasis on human quality and the ability to communicate efficiently in a crisis are to be added.

Keywords: civil-military cooperation, civilian actors, NGOs, local authorities

1. INTRODUCTION

CIMIC is a component of military action, having as a final purpose the accomplishment of the objectives of all parties involved.

This cooperation fulfills the political and military objectives of operations, including political, military, civilian and humanitarian elements. In fact, this type of cooperation between civilians and militaries implies the incorporation of military capabilities into a joint reaction in front of all types of human needs.

It refers to all measures undertaken between a military commander and national authorities in peacetime, crisis or war (civil and military).

It involves the relation between military forces, national government and civilian population in an area where military forces are employed.

Such measures might also include cooperation between military commanders, NGOs, IOs and authorities.

In the short-term, CIMIC structures aim to set up and continue the complete collaboration of the civilian population and institutions within a commandant's area of operation in order to create the civil/military conditions that offer him the greatest possible moral, material and tactical advantages.

Furthermore, in the long-term, it aims at creating and sustaining conditions that will support the achievements of a lasting solution to the crises.

Thus, in complex humanitarian crises, the coordination of civil-military structures is vital and may require multiple CMOCs (Civil-Military Operation Centers that is, an ad hoc organization to assist in the coordination of activities of engaged military forces, and other UN Government agencies).

These structures must be easily accessible to the NGO community, support NGO requests for assistance and operate at the local level. However, in-country communication within the NGO community itself is a complex issue. In some situations, parallel UN/military structures of coordination are established which simply serves to complicate coordination.

Improved relations between NGOs and the military through increasing opportunities for closer cooperation in areas such as joint training, joint planning and joint assessment, help each in understanding the other and bring about greater effectiveness during missions.

Differing missions and needs contribute to distinct perceptions of priorities on the part of both the military and NGOs.

These organizations do not always understand the military focus on force protection as a priority and feel that military logistics should be used to transport supplies in the field, and not used for force protection.

On the other hand, the military also needs to consult more with reliable NGOs and coordinate with the DART (Disaster Assistance Response Team).

2. CONCEPTS

CIMIC represents therefore a NATO concept, generally used during peace supporting operations, enjoying the support of the governments, the NGOs, the international organizations and the armed forces. Still, the CIMIC cannot be regarded only as a contemporary type of military activity, as the idea of the cooperation between the civil and the military authorities during this type of operations is not new.

The Romanian CIMIC concept involves the deployment of two activity types. First, there are activities that support the military actions, carried out by the civilian institutions and by the population, during the military actions, by establishing their concept of action, but also their coordination framework.

Another type of activities is represented by those deployed as a support for the central (local) administration or for the population, in order to establish the constitutional order after the end of the hostilities, for the normalization of the situation in the conflict areas or for the removal of the effects of natural or industrial disasters.

The concept of CIMIC was founded throughout the Cold War period and began to take shape only after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the involvement of massive multinational Forces in theaters of operations, especially after the lessons learned from the Gulf War of the early '90s. With the end of the Cold War and the initiation of new types of military operations, the European countries began to develop CIMIC operational structures and the way of understanding the concept by most European countries is in accordance with "NATO CIMIC Doctrine".

Besides NATO, there is also a definition proposed by the United Nations, which gives the concept a broader perspective, defining CIMIC as "mutually supportive, integrated planning and exchange of information needed at all levels between military forces and organizations or humanitarian agencies acting to fulfill a common purpose in response to a humanitarian emergency." Regarding the definition proposed by the European Union, CIMIC is presented as containing "specific tasks or activities conducted by EU forces, alone or in partnership with one or more civil bodies, always supporting the commander's mission." Thus, between CIMIC and civil affairs there are no basically too large differences, the object of the activity being the same. The phrase "civil affairs" is used by the US military, but the structures involved in "civil affairs" types of activities are part of the forces conducting special operations.

Gradually, both the concept and CIMIC activities, have acquired new meanings, becoming part of military activities and part of peace support operations implicitly, including the support of the military governments or local authorities from a certain area or theater of operations. Military operations are currently conducted in a wider political and military context, where the influences (from the physical and economical to the social ones) can trigger a crisis or may arise as a result of some conflicts in regions where they did not previously exist. Besides the Romanian CIMIC conception and general principles found in NATO CIMIC Doctrine we must consider other factors. These relate primarily to CIMIC activities as part of military operations. These represent the command responsibility and an essential part of the mission of each military. Staff elements and CIMIC forces are the basic means for carrying out the CIMIC tasks. Equally important are CIMIC activities that take place with the intention of ensuring the overall success of the mandate by maintaining full cooperation between commanders, civilian population and institutions in their area of responsibility. This cooperation is essential to create conditions for civil-military commanders to provide the best benefits possible, moral, material and tactical.

3. PRINCIPLES AND FUNCTIONS

CIMIC elements usually encountered in stability operations mainly include three main **functions**: the link between the military personnel and all civilian actors in the area of operation, assistance to the civilian surroundings, and support to the force. Thus, a good example is the completion of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where CIMIC personnel paid an important role.

Usually, CIMIC develops tasks that the U.S. military consider as being “Civil Affairs (CA) activities” which apply primarily to “support of the civilian environment.” It covers activities carried out so as to establish and maintain connections between military forces and civil authorities together with the local population. Whereas CIMIC and CA tasks often overlap, there is a clear doctrinal dissimilarity when it comes to their purpose. CIMIC concentrates on humanitarian necessity and offers supervision for how to interact with civilians (civil authorities, locals, international organizations, and NGOs, etc.) in order to complete effectively the tasks of a humanitarian mission. CA, on the other hand, centers on military requirements and necessities, providing ideas for how to obtain the help of civilians for the military mission. In this respect, NATO regards CIMIC as the crossing point meant to predominantly improve coordination and diminish overlap and replication of hard work between civilian organizations and authorities in order to meet humanitarian needs even more efficiently. In a different way, CA, as described in the U.S. Department of Defense Doctrine for Civil Affairs, tries to shape and persuade the civilian environment in support of the armed forces. Regardless of these conspicuous features between CA and CIMIC, the two methods reveal enough common terrain so as to be well-matched and harmonious.

According to Romanian CIMIC Handbook (pp.11-12), drafted in accordance with ACO CIMIC Manual 86-1-1 and NATO CIMIC Policy, the basic functions of CIMIC are as follows:

- a) Civil-military relations that involve maintaining connections with civilian actors so as to coordinate, cooperate and spread information efficiently;
- b) Support provided to civilian actors – that involves a wide range of military resources: information, personnel, technical equipment, transmission facilities – communication and informatics – expertise and specialists training. This support is provided only when and if necessary to facilitate mission accomplishment;
- c) Support provided to military forces – if circumstances impose, commanders may request and use support from the civilian side in areas of operations. In this particular situation, the role of CIMIC is highly important through identifying resources and people who can support the military personnel. This support may consist in: information necessary to evaluate the civilian situation in a certain area, promotion in terms of accepting militaries in the area and access facilitation to civilian resources when necessary.

The overall support given both ways is perceived by civilians as a must, as something that comes with the territory, thus, a refusal from the military side is not quite welcomed and fully understood.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the different themes reflect the mix of experience and knowledge; theory and practice that are so characteristic to living and working on the dynamic civil-military interfaces and are very deserving of in-depth research. Both civilian and military parts share the long-term objective that is to promote human security and to develop those conditions, in case of societies characterized by conflict to return to nonviolent and long-standing structures. At first, civil-military relations were formed in the field, when forces intervened to fill the gaps in civilian capabilities. In return to the increasing complexity of operational requirements, countries are gradually acknowledging the escalating working links between military and civilian actors and are currently implementing their proper doctrines underlying the characteristics of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC).

Therefore, CIMIC offers the best mechanisms to establish the link between military and civilian activities in various areas of operations. Civil-military cooperation is thus vital for success in any mission and it is the responsibility of the command. It is thus part of the responsibilities of each individual working in this field, calling for a clear doctrine that is transparent, understandable for both military and civilian personnel. CIMIC also involves training in this regard for all military personnel.

Civil-military cooperation is therefore a dimension of operations in which the policy is conducted at strategic level, and its implementation is at operational and tactical levels, being the responsibility of the commander, who will ensure the correlation of military action with the requirements of military and civil authorities empowered to materialize defense policy.

Future work will be carried out to identify the particular skills a CIMIC officer should have so as to establish and/or continue the cooperation with the civilian authorities within a certain area of responsibility.

For that, special courses have been developed to train future CIMIC specialists of how to approach locals, how to learn, understand and assimilate their culture and last, but not least, how to behave efficiently and effectively under such special conditions.

A CIMIC officer must also adapt the present social and political conditions that are rapidly changing, leading to changes both in human behavior and approach to life as a whole.

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