CIVIL AFFAIRS IN KOSOVO
Eric Ridge

Description

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic’s 1989 abolishment of Kosovo’s sovereignty marked only the beginning of a highly tumultuous period in the region’s history. In the years following Milosevic’s decision, human rights abuses abounded and countless people were driven from their homes. But the situation reached critical mass in 1998 when the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) launched a series of deadly attacks on Yugoslav troops and Serbian police. Milosevic responded with counterattacks on ethnic Albanian citizens, further destabilizing the already-tense region.¹ The skirmish catapulted ongoing strife in Kosovo onto the world stage, calling widespread attention to the growing tragedy.

Facing a refugee crisis – some estimates at the time tallied as many as 400,000 people driven from their homes, another 3,000 dead, and the risk that fighting would spread to neighboring Macedonia – NATO countries took swift diplomatic action.² Unfazed, Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic boldly slighted the NATO nations’ efforts aimed at quelling the violence.³ After NATO sanctions failed, and the Rambouillet Peace negotiations disintegrated amid Yugoslavia’s unwillingness to sign the agreement, NATO prepared to launch both an offensive operation against the Serbs and a subsequent humanitarian relief operation in support of displaced Kosovo citizens.⁴

In the US, the prospect of sending American troops to participate in an air or ground offensive in the Balkans proved controversial. Henry Kissinger attacked President Clinton for “invoke[ing] historical analogies or current threats that are extremely dubious,” in support of war.⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, on the other hand, implored US leadership to participate in NATO action, arguing that “the stakes are enormous in their humanitarian as well as political dimensions,” and claiming that failure to act could empower even more ethnic cleansing.⁶ The hawks ultimately prevailed in the US, and American troops began deploying to the Kosovo region under the code name Task Force Falcon.

³ Ibid., p. 121.
In March 1999, nineteen NATO coalition nations launched the bombing campaign Operation ALLIED FORCE against Yugoslav targets in Kosovo and Serbia, seeking to end Serbia’s bloody oppression of Albanian citizens. By early April 1999, with the bombing campaign still underway, NATO quietly began conducting humanitarian efforts to aid the then-estimated 1.5 million ethnic Albanians seeking refuge from Kosovo. By early June, seventy-eight days after Operation ALLIED FORCE began, Milosevic agreed to withdraw Serbian forces from Kosovo and cease all ethnic cleansing. The G-8 nations brokered UN Security Resolution 1244, stipulating: (1) Serb withdrawal from Kosovo (2) Creation of an international peacekeeping body to be deployed to the region, and (3) Permission for international officials to administer governance until elections could be held. On June 10, 1999, when the bombing campaign executed by Operation ALLIED FORCE officially ended, NATO’s mission shifted from an entirely offensive campaign to a reconstruction effort. Operation JOINT GUARDIAN, under an international peacekeeping force called KFOR, deployed just two days later on June 12, 1999.

This case study traces US Civil Affairs involvement with NATO peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo. NATO-CIMIC and Civil Affairs leadership/personnel clearly learned lessons from Persian Gulf and Bosnia, thus contributing to some successes in Kosovo. But the case study also identifies several ongoing hindrances to the operation, including: Poor NATO-CIMIC planning, Questions about US commitment to the CA mission, US CA force protection incongruence with the operating environment, Weak funding streams for US CA projects, and Problems with short-term deployments of US CA personnel.

**Key Actors**

- **Blue:**
  - KFOR
  - UNMIK
  - UNHCR

- **Green:**
  - Kosovo Protection Corps
  - Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)

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8 Ibid., p. 60.
• Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)\textsuperscript{11}
• International Allies:

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<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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• Brown:
  o NGOs, including:\textsuperscript{12}

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<tr>
<th>World Food Program</th>
<th>Oxfam</th>
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<td>Save the Children Fund</td>
<td>Children’s Aid Direct</td>
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<td>Action Against Hunger</td>
<td>Finnish Red Cross</td>
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<td>International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting</td>
<td>Merlin</td>
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<td>Christian Aid</td>
<td>Project Hope</td>
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<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>ADRA</td>
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<td>CAFOD</td>
<td>War Child</td>
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• Red:
  o Pro-Milosevic Serbian and Federal Yugoslav authorities in Belgrade\textsuperscript{13}
  o Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)
  o Yugoslav military forces
  o Serbian Interior Ministry Police\textsuperscript{14}

**Objectives & End States**

Operation ALLIED FORCE sought to accomplish five key objectives:

• Conclusion to all Serbian military action;
• Complete police and paramilitary withdrawal;


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 3.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 3.
• Agreement on deployment of NATO-led, international military force to Kosovo;
• Unconditional return of all Displaced Citizens (DCs);
• Complete access for NGOs and relief organizations;
• Commitment to seek a political framework for the embattled region.\textsuperscript{15}

UN Resolution 1244, which was passed after conclusion of offensive combat operations, stipulated the following objectives to be achieved by the KFOR, UNMIK, and UNHCR:

• “Deterring renewed hostilities, maintaining and where necessary enforcing a ceasefire, and ensuring the withdrawal and preventing the return into Kosovo of Federal and Republic military, police and paramilitary forces;
• “Demilitarizing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups;
• “Establishing a secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return home in safety, the international civil presence can operate, a transitional administration can be established, and humanitarian aid can be delivered;
• “Ensuring public safety and order until the international civil presence can take responsibility for this task;
• “Supervising demining until the international civil presence can, as appropriate, take over responsibility for this task;
• “Supporting, as appropriate, and coordinating closely with the work of the international civil presence;
• “Conducting border monitoring duties as required;
• “Ensuring the protection and freedom of movement of itself, the international civil presence, and other international organizations;\textsuperscript{16}

These specific end states constituted critical guidance to KFOR, UNMIK, and UNHCR as those entities developed their own sets of coordinated implementation objectives. NATO leadership understood that, in the words of one KFOR Commander, “the success of KFOR was inextricably linked to the success of UNMIK.”\textsuperscript{17} This recognition of the interplay between civil and military activities even in the early stages of the operation proved important. In support of the broad end states articulated by UN Resolution 1244, as well as the implementation objectives of KFOR, UNMIK, and UNHCR, US Civil Affairs teams and CIMIC forces more broadly sought to complete the following four overarching missions:

• Humanitarian Assistance

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Larry Wentz, Lessons From Kosovo: The KFOR Experience (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2002), p. 483.

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NATO failed to articulate an overarching campaign strategy, however, for conducting these four missions. Still, despite this lack of NATO centralization, and the requirement for executing a largely military mission, US Civil Affairs assets played a significant role in completing tasks in these four areas. US Civil Affairs Teams in Multinational Brigade East (MNB-E) developed their own civil-military plan and coordinated operations accordingly, relying on experience gained during recent operations as well as relationships within the region to facilitate Kosovo’s recovery. US Civil Affairs teams coordinated large-scale humanitarian assistance efforts with USG agencies and NGOs, supplying food, medical care for refugees, and shelter.

**Operational Strategies/Key Missions and Tasks**

Even before the bloodshed and tumult of the 1990s, Kosovo was a province in disrepair – perennially the least developed and poorest area in Yugoslavia. The province was literally crumbling: Since the 1980s, neither the Serbian nor the Albanian governments had undertaken any significant infrastructure improvements. But if conditions in Kosovo were dire before the bombing campaign, conditions in its aftermath were calamitous. Operation ALLIED FORCE left over half of the houses in Kosovo with significant damage. Every aspect of life was affected: Electricity and water were scarce, bridges were destroyed and non-operational, roads were littered with mines, and schools and hospitals were closed.

“Kosovo was a beautiful country that had been ravaged by war. The mountain villages were collections of tiny houses with red tiled roofs, which probably looked just as they had centuries ago. Most homes had no indoor plumbing, necessitating outhouses near every home. Water was obtained from springs and wells, however the departing Serbians had fouled many wells by throwing animal carcasses into the water. Villages that relied on streams suffered the pollution effects of rusting cars, dead animals, and general refuse. There were roaming packs of stray dogs,
abandoned by owners whose homes had been destroyed during or after the war.”

KFOR troops encountered a province devastated by Milosevic’s rule and by the bombing campaign. Although many troops deployed to Kosovo had recently served in Bosnia, vast differences existed between the countries and the NATO operations within them. Unlike in Bosnia, outdated and missing information about the status on the ground meant that soldiers entered Kosovo largely without understanding the gravity of Kosovo’s infrastructure problems. Working to overcome this information deficit that left soldiers generally unprepared for the environment they were entering, CA supported all four civil-military objectives: (1) Humanitarian assistance; (2) Civil administration; (3) Institution building; and (4) Economic reconstruction.

Immediately following the end of Operation ALLIED FORCE, US Civil Affairs soldiers began engaging in Humanitarian Assistance efforts, constructing refugee reception areas, refugee camps, emergency food stations, and working to disperse hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid. Instead of engaging in longer-term reconstruction efforts during the first six months after the bombing campaign, CA soldiers secured the area and dealt with immediate human needs. CA personnel coordinated with allies and NGOs to provide shelter, food, water, and medical supplies/assistance. With a cold winter coming, US Civil Affairs soldiers also helped import fuel for heating and to make repairs to the electric grid. With a focus on spring, they organized fertilizer and seed deliveries. US Civil Affairs units facilitated repairs to the telephone system and other utilities while also convening meetings with key local stakeholders and religious leaders. In doing so, they sought to open channels of communication and to generate buy-in from thought leaders.

As the months passed, requirements for emergency humanitarian assistance faded and reconstruction became a higher priority, MNB-E (the region where US forces were stationed) increased the time and resources it devoted to conducting damage assessments and assisting administration of development programs. This not only facilitated projects that CA personnel undertook themselves, but also enabled them to provide

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30 Ibid., 129.
detailed and timely information to allied countries and NGOs conducting their own projects. Many of these endeavors proved particularly valuable, seeking to ensure not only that Kosovo’s infrastructure was effectively rebuilt, but also that its population accrued the skills needed to sustain development after international assistance had faded. For instance:

“Efforts were also made to develop and fund labor intensive projects that would employ locals. The Village Employment Rehabilitation Program (VERP) was such a program funded by the EU and implemented by the U.N. Development Program. It focused on funding low cost projects that would hire unemployed locals in selected rural areas. Typical projects funded riverside cleanup, retaining wall construction and secondary road repair at a project cost of roughly $25,000.”

By June, after one year of NATO engagement, progress clearly had been made in providing emergency humanitarian assistance, but longer-term reconstruction and civil administration still lagged. In support of UNMIK Civil Administration tasks, US Civil Affairs officers proved instrumental in facilitating the creation of civil structures to perform governance and services such as firefighting and sanitation. Civil Affairs officers also made numerous additional varied contributions, a sampling of which includes:

- In response to the rampant problem of aggressive, diseased dogs roaming the streets and creating a public health problem, Civil Affairs assets worked with the Task Force Falcon veterinarian to procure cages, lure the dogs into those cages, obtain medication, and ultimately euthanize the dogs and dispose of the carcasses.

- A Civil Affairs soldier who had just graduated from law school conducted the first preliminary criminal hearings in postwar Kosovo, drafting the procedures himself.

- A US Civil Affairs soldier, who served as a police officer in his civilian career, “convinced the Urosevic police chief to reassign officers to assist the forester in preventing illegal woodcutting. His team also worked with local schools to

36 Ibid., p. 490.
37 Ibid., p. 490.
38 Ibid., p. 32.
39 Ibid., p. 487

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provide English language books, particularly on the subjects of history and civics, thus teaching language skills and democracy.”

- A US Civil Affairs engineer instructed the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) on the best ways to survey infrastructure damage after natural disasters, especially earthquakes.

- A Civil Affairs soldier created a board of directors for a telephone company.

Ends-Means Relationships/Final Thoughts

NATO-CIMIC engagement in Kosovo experienced numerous successes, including the conduct of widespread emergency humanitarian assistance efforts, particularly during the late fall and cold winter of 1998-99, and longer-term reconstruction efforts later in the effort.

Critics have also leveled a number of critiques relevant to the contributions of US Civil Affairs Units NATO-CIMIC:

- **US Seeking to ‘Get Out Fast?’** US Civil Affairs engagement in Kosovo must be evaluated squarely within the broader context of resources that the US committed to war. A majority of the American public, in no uncertain terms, harbored reservations about US engagement in the conflict and many had downright opposition to it. Some analysts claim that this sentiment made US leadership casualty-averse and fearful of becoming embroiled in a protracted mission. By this logic, US policymakers favored heavy involvement in the ALLIED FORCE air attacks because the mission was narrowly constrained, but were less enthusiastic about a major US role in the resulting humanitarian assistance effort for fear of becoming embroiled in an operation with no exit strategy. Therefore, to the extent the US was involved in the humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts following ALLIED FORCE, at least one critic claims that the US was less than fully engaged. “Believing that the best way to keep the deployment short,” was to limit engagement the US kept “CA units on a short leash and at arm's length” and in the process ironically extended the mission.

- **Lack of Overarching Campaign Plan/Measures of Effectiveness.** Widespread criticism focused on US Civil-Military Operations having

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43 Ibid., p. 16.
46 Ibid., p. 17-18.
suffered from the lack of a NATO-led campaign plan and the inability to measure the status and effectiveness of the CIMIC activities.\textsuperscript{47} Although NATO’s decentralization allowed MNBs to craft their own, region-specific plans, some critics have claimed that the US-run MNB-E did not effectively make use of this flexibility, noting that “neither Civil Affairs nor maneuver units have been provided phased objectives with means to measure the effectiveness of CMO activities” and that “An overall CMO campaign plan for MNB (E) [did] not exist.”\textsuperscript{48}

- **Force Protection Incongruent with the Operating Environment.** Some criticism of US Civil Affairs teams surrounded their inability to tailor force protection schemes to their specific warfighting environment. Civil Affairs personnel had to wear helmets, flack jackets, carry weapons, and travel in convoys, all of which intimidated the local population.\textsuperscript{49} As one officer told an analyst, “being dressed like a Ninja Turtle gets in the way.”\textsuperscript{50} Wearing these full uniforms and combat gear, CA personnel often were indistinguishable from combat units, thus limiting their ability to easily interface with locals.\textsuperscript{51} Along these same lines, soldiers were prohibited from giving and receiving hospitality from locals, as well as from consuming alcohol with them, again hindering their ability to build relationships.\textsuperscript{52}

- **Funding Steams Weak, Limit Resources to Conduct Valuable Projects.** USG Funding for Civil Affairs received widespread criticism. Although Civil Affairs assets were initially able to use humanitarian aid funds, these were soon cut, and no discretionary funding mechanisms such as modern-day CERP came in their place. The little funding that existed came from military streams rather than civilian ones. The overall lack of resources led one analyst to conclude that CA teams were able to provide expertise but often unable to conduct their own specific efforts.\textsuperscript{53} The problem is illustrated by a case in which resource constraints prevented Civil Affairs teams from conducting an important mission:

> “Since potable water must be made available to rebuild villages, an American CA team needed to get wells dug. They had the trained personnel but lacked the funds for such

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 284.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 484.
\textsuperscript{50} Thomas Mockatis, “Civil-Military Cooperation In Peace Operations: The Case Of Kosovo,” Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2004, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{52} Thomas Mockatis, “Civil-Military Cooperation In Peace Operations: The Case Of Kosovo,” Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2004, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 49.

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a project, nor could they use equipment belonging to engineer units since digging wells was not properly “security” or “freedom of movement.” Officers from the most powerful nation in the world had to find an NGO willing to foot the bill for the project, while the needed equipment sat idle.”

- **Short Term US Deployments Hinder Civil Affairs Relations With NGOs, Indigenous Governments, US Government Civilian Agencies.** Some NGOs that interfaced with US soldiers during Kosovo – especially Civil Affairs personnel with whom they interacted with most often – claimed that US short-term deployment in Kosovo (6 months for many soldiers, 270 days maximum for reservists) hindered cohesiveness and institutional memory. In one compelling incident in Kosovo, “One aid worker recounted how a CA officer showed up at her door, insisting that more Serbian doctors be brought to Gjilan hospital so that Serbians would feel more comfortable being treated there. She politely informed him that such a program already existed, and that Serbian doctors had been attending patients at the hospital for some time.”

  Similar gaps developed between Civil Affairs assets and other entities. Indigenous governments and US Government civilian elements (such as DART teams) struggled to interact with rapidly-changing Civil Affairs assets due to Civil Affairs’ short deployments and frequent rotations.

- **Size and Shape of US Military Confuses Civil Affairs – NGO Relations.** NGOs also noted that the size and complexity of the US military proved a hindrance to effective civil-military cooperation.” Perhaps due to specialization or – more likely – due to the cultural chasm between general purpose forces and CA, NGOs characterized US Civil Affairs teams as detached from broader Task Force Falcon, and suggested that this gap limited CA ability to garner resources from commanders. In comparison:

  “[An] Austrian CIMIC officer had only to stroll across the compound to get the well cleaning equipment he needed, but his American counterpart would have had to go through layers of bureaucracy even to request the use of such equipment. He would then probably have been told that the equipment could be used only for its strictly designated purpose: supporting the military mission. At the very least, the delay in getting a response discourages most aid workers from even asking for help.”

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54 Ibid., p. 49.
55 Ibid., p. 17.
56 Ibid., p. 34.
57 Ibid., p. 34.
APPENDIX I: Qualitative “Order of Battle”

Several weeks into the Operation ALLIED FORCE bombing campaign, NATO initiated plans for deploying 10,000 troops to engage in the mammoth humanitarian undertaking required to welcome Albanians back to Kosovo and to rebuild the province.58 As the bombing ended in early June, 20,000 troops from five countries (France, Germany, Italy, the United States, and United Kingdom) entered the region organized in six brigades.59 Ultimately, the planned total force was 47,868,60 with the UK contributing the largest troop totals (13,000), Germany contributing 8,000, the US and France 7,000 each, Italy 5,000 and numerous other countries in smaller increments.61 The US contribution to the effort represented the majority of MNB-East, which at its maximum deployment in October 1999 possessed just fewer than 8,500 troops.62 In MNB-E, US Military CIMIC responsibilities largely fell to reserve Civil Affairs companies which were comprised of 50-60 officers/enlisted personnel and augmented by general purposes force officers.63

Although NATO efforts in Kosovo did not suffer from a bottom line shortage of troops, the increasing need for highly-skilled personnel able to assist in reconstruction – especially as the mission entered its second year – led to shortfalls among highly-skilled personnel, such as engineers.64 Ongoing operations in Bosnia complicated matters, not only taking away from the sheer number of troops available, but also draining the specific personnel required given the similarity of skill sets required in both engagements. As evidence of the stress these two simultaneous wars put on the US force, in 1999 nearly every CA unit in the USAR served in either Bosnia or Kosovo.65

61 Ibid., p. 10.  
63 Ibid., p. 13.  
65 Global Security Fact Sheet: Civil Affairs in Bosnia. Site: www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/ca-psyop.htm+%22bosnia%22+%22civil+affairs%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us.