

Briefing

Counting the cost of humanitarian aid delivered through the military

March 2013

Author: lydia.poole@devinit.org



Global Humanitarian Assistance

A DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE 

Development Initiatives is an independent organisation committed to enabling the effective use of information to end poverty. We make every effort to ensure that our reports provide accurate and reliable information. You are welcome to use our work, citing Development Initiatives. Please do contact us with any new information or corrections to errors of fact or interpretation.

*Development Initiatives, North Quay House,
Quay Side, Temple Back, Bristol, BS1 6FL, UK
T: +44 (0) 1179 272 505 E: info@devinit.org W:*

The last decade has seen an increased prevalence and normalised involvement of military actors in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Recent discussion and debates around military involvement have typically focused on matters of principle or practical questions of coordinating, regulating or limiting military involvement in humanitarian aid.

Unlike traditional humanitarian aid delivered by civilian agencies, we seldom hear of the financial costs of military involvement in humanitarian aid delivery. This is an area we hope to shed more light on in future, but currently, this remains an opaque, sometimes secretive and almost always poorly accounted for component of humanitarian action.

This briefing collates and summarises existing information on financial investments in humanitarian assistance via international military actors and outlines the difficulties in apportioning values to the financial cost of humanitarian assistance delivered through the military.

Why has the role of the military increased in recent years? From 2001 to 2011, the annual average number of people affected by natural disasters has risen by 232%, compared to 1990 to 2000. With this increase, domestic and foreign militaries are often expected to play a more significant role in responding humanitarian needs, particularly in large-scale disasters, where the capacity of civilian agencies may be stretched and infrastructure badly damaged.

Changes in how we think about ways to engage with conflict, combined with changes within military actors themselves, concerning both their perceptions of their own mandates and the means of achieving military objectives, have also driven trends for increasing military presence and involvement in what would ordinarily be civilian tasks in humanitarian crises.

There has been a remarkable growth in number of peacekeeping boots on the ground in conflict affected states, which are very often also situations of humanitarian crisis. The 1990s saw a spike in the number of civil conflicts, which as they declined and moved towards resolution in a number of cases, drove a dramatic expansion in the number of multi-lateral peacekeeping operations globally. In 2000, there were around 135,000 United Nations (UN) and non UN peacekeeping personnel deployed, by 2009, this had grown to more than 200,000. UN peacekeepers are deployed through UN Security Council resolutions and the mandate binding them often limits and defines their role very clearly within a mission. There has been greater pressure for regional bodies to take on greater peacekeeping role within their regions to ensure regional solutions are being applied to regional conflicts.

Not only have the numbers of uniformed peacekeepers grown, peacekeeping operations have also seen a dramatic expansion in the scope of their engagement. With the introduction of the UN 'integrated mission' model, civilian and peacekeeping staff now explicitly work alongside each other, to linked peace-building and development goals. A number of large peacekeeping missions have incorporated a range of civilian led responsibilities including coordinating refugee and IDP returns, coordinating protection actors, coordinating international support to census and elections and in some cases even humanitarian coordination. In limited ways peacekeepers themselves have been seen to also dabble in humanitarian or aid like tasks. For example, the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) acts as a donor providing 'QUIP' funding; on an ad hoc basis providing logistics support to governments and humanitarian actors upon request; and in the case of major natural disasters, peacekeepers may provide significant contributions in manpower and logistics where security may be weak within the affected country.

There is a discernible shift in the ways in which military actors think about what it is they do. The post-Cold war modern soldier may have more cosmopolitan aspirations, a reality which is not lost on army recruiters. The [British Army](#), for example, states that it "actively engaged in operational duties across the globe... [and] the work we do ranges from peacekeeping to providing humanitarian aid, from enforcing anti-terrorism measures to helping combat the international drugs trade." However, national militaries are also called upon to provide assistance for national crisis when other private or public bodies fall short, for example providing security at the 2012 Olympics in London and also removing and safely discarding the carcasses of cattle following the Foot and Mouth epidemic in the UK.

Finally, there is a distinct and related trend, latterly associated with the global war on terror whereby military actors consciously engage in a variety of normally civilian managed humanitarian

and aid like tasks with the explicitly stated purpose of achieving security objectives. This development is consistent with the United States (US) government's 2002 National Security Strategy, which explicitly identified 'development' as a security strategy of similar importance to defence and diplomacy – the famous 'three Ds' – in achieving stabilisation and national security.

This may yet prove a historic anomaly, nevertheless since 2001 large volumes of government resources have been directed towards this type of 'military humanitarianism', notably through the US government's Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP)¹ and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What do military actors do in a humanitarian crisis?

The UN agreed a set of guidelines in 1994, revised in 2006, to regulate the conditions and modes of engagement for military actors in humanitarian situations. The '[Oslo Guidelines](#)' on the use of military and civil defence assets in disaster relief were developed primarily to guide UN organisations including UN peacekeeping forces.

The Oslo Guidelines state that military involvement should be as a last resort, when no comparable civilian alternative exists, and only deployed when meeting a critical humanitarian need. In addition, the Oslo Guidelines envisage that UN civilian agencies and the affected state will coordinate requests and deployments of military actors involved in humanitarian activities.

In practice, the most common forms of assistance are logistical support to enable access for humanitarian personnel and relief goods, followed by medical operations and the provision of material relief goods (such as tents, clean water and food supplies).

In the ideal scenario described by the UN guidelines, military actors may fill a clearly identified civilian capacity gap in responding to natural disasters, their involvement will be civilian in nature and under civilian coordination and of course will be motivated by the humanitarian imperative.

However, in some cases military actors may also actively pursue their own strategic security related agendas, particularly where they are actively engaged in military operations. This additional motivator may pattern the nature and targeting of assistance. It is of course less likely that assistance provided with a strategic security motivation will be coordinated by civilian authorities. In the case of the US Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) fund for example, priorities for assistance are determined by operational Commanders. At this far end of the spectrum, as well as providing assistance directly, the military may also be a donor of aid financing to third party implementing actors.

What is the cost of military involvement in humanitarian action? Military involvement in humanitarian response is typically much more costly than civilian operations. The UN's Oslo Guidelines cautions that '*An Assisting State deciding to employ its MCDA [Military and Civil Defence Assets] should bear in mind the cost/benefit ratio of such operations as compared to other*

¹ See for example 'Money as a weapon system Afghanistan: Commander's Emergency Response Program SOPs, Updated 2009', US Department of Defense, <http://info.publicintelligence.net/MAAWS-A.pdf>

alternatives, if available. In certain circumstances however, the superior logistic capabilities and state of readiness of the military will be more important in providing timely life-saving assistance, overriding cost considerations.

Moreover, because military assets are kept in a state of readiness, procurement, maintenance, training and other investment costs, are already budgeted for and therefore typically not considered in assessing the costs of deployment for humanitarian activities. If these investment costs were taken into account, the real cost of military assistance would be far greater. Military assistance is often therefore in effect subsidised by existing state investments in military capabilities in comparison with the market rates one might face when trying to procure similar assets and services via the private sector.

It is conventional to only account for the marginal or additional costs incurred as a result of undertaking humanitarian activities through the military over and above the costs that would have been incurred had those military assets and personnel remained deployed in existing operations. These costs might include additional fuel and other equipment running costs, and procurement or reimbursement of material relief supplies.

There is no common standard however to report against when counting and estimating the financial value of military contributions; interpretation of additional costs will therefore vary. In addition, many contributions are in-kind, therefore making it difficult to ascribe monetary value to them. Or they may have already been written-off against military budgets and may not be included in assessments of additional costs.

The OECD permits the reporting of 'additional costs' as official development assistance and this is one the major sources of publicly available information on the cost of military costs for humanitarian assistance.

Between 2006 and 2009, an average of 2% of official humanitarian aid reported to the OECD DAC was channelled via military actors. In 2010 this share more than doubled as major military involvement in humanitarian operations increased in response to the earthquake in Haiti and flooding in Pakistan.

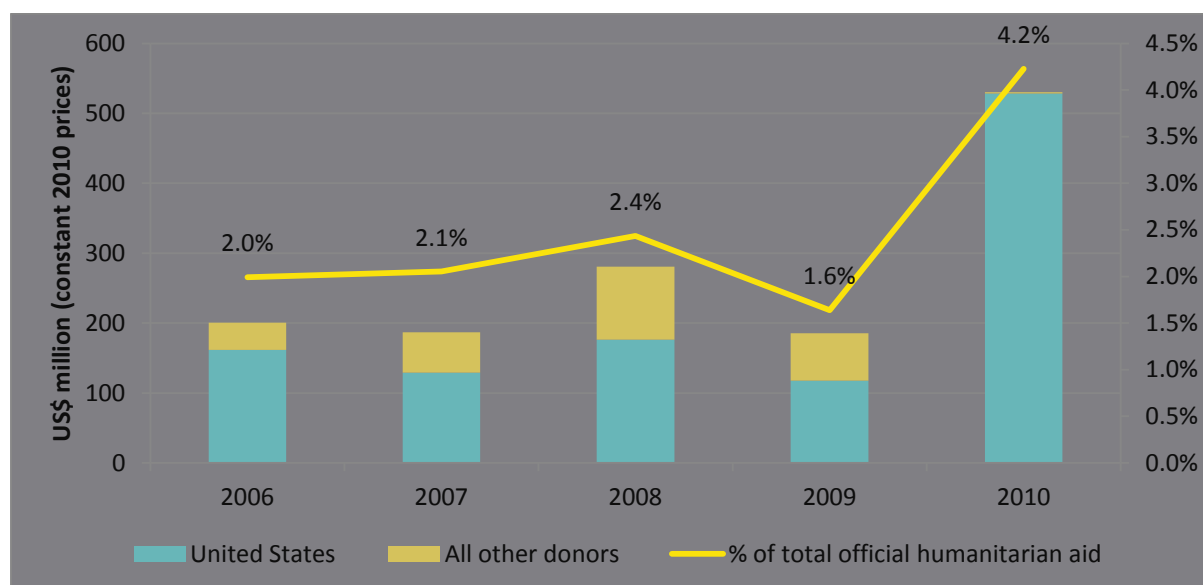
Official development assistance exclusion of military in delivering aid

....additional costs incurred for the use of the donor's military forces to deliver humanitarian aid or perform development services are ODA-eligible.

OECD DAC, 2008

<http://www.oecd.org/investment/aidstatistics/34086975.pdf>

Figure 1: Official humanitarian assistance delivered by military actors, 2006-2010



Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data

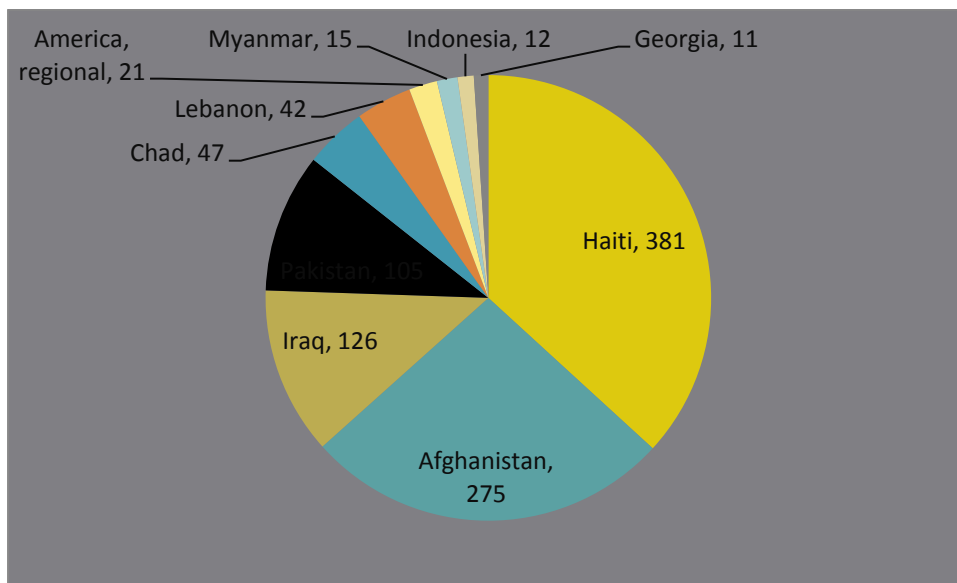
Figure 2: Official humanitarian assistance delivered by military actors by donor country, 2006-2010

US\$ million	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total 2006-2010
United States	161.5	129.0	176.2	117.8	528.2	1,112.6
Australia	11.7	32.0	71.3			114.9
Spain		15.0	0.3	41.4	1.4	58.2
Austria		1.2	27.0	18.4	0.0	46.6
Korea	7.9	8.1	5.1	1.6		22.6
Greece	18.7	0.2		2.7		21.7
Canada			0.1	3.0		3.1
Finland		0.9	0.0	0.5	0.4	1.8
Denmark	0.3	0.2	0.7			1.1
Portugal	0.3					0.3
Switzerland	0.2	0.04				0.3
Belgium	0.1		0.01	0.03		0.2
Ireland		0.1		0.01		0.1
Total	200.8	186.7	280.6	185.5	530.0	1,383.5

Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data

However, it is worth noting that not all of the military involvement in humanitarian assistance is declared as ODA and will relate to the type of natural disaster response anticipated under the Oslo guidelines. A proportion will also relate to funds channelled via military actors in pursuit of strategic stabilisation and security goals for example, PRTs in Afghanistan and the US CERP. Indeed the second and third-largest recipients in the five years from 2006 to 2010 were Afghanistan and Iraq.

Figure 3: Country recipients of military assistance for humanitarian or development objectives, 2006-2010 (US\$ million)



Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC data

The other major source of information on humanitarian contributions from military actors – both ODA eligible and non-eligible - is via the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Financial Tracking Service (FTS).

What is notable from the military activities allocated as humanitarian aid activities reported to the FTS is that many non-OECD DAC member governments report them, including China, Indonesia, Russia, Turkey and Brazil. And while most of the aid which is attributed a cash value, is reported by the United States (84% between 2005 and 2010), non-monetised in-kind contributions of goods and services are reported by a large number and diverse range of governments including Argentina, Azerbaijan, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Morocco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, South Africa, Suriname and Uruguay.

Figure 4: Reported military contributions to humanitarian activities, 2007-2011, US\$ million

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
United States of America	3.4	25.0	8.7	559.2	89.7	685.9
Germany	6.0		3.8	10.0		19.8
France				17.0		17.0
Spain		0.0		4.8		4.8
China					4.6	4.6
Greece		1.4		0.1	1.8	3.2
Indonesia				2.0		2.0
Russian Federation				0.0	2.0	2.0
Suriname				1.0		1.0
Turkey					0.6	0.6
Brazil				0.5		0.5
Switzerland			0.3	0.1		0.4
Sweden					0.1	0.1

Total	9.5	26.3	12.8	594.6	98.7	741.9
--------------	-----	------	------	-------	------	-------

Source: UN OCHA FTS

Who pays? Determining which domestic budget should bear the cost of military activities in the humanitarian space is of course at the discretion of individual governments. The Oslo guidelines advise that the decision to use military resources should not disadvantage aid budgets, *'In principle, the costs involved in using MCDA on disaster relief missions abroad should be covered by funds other than those available for international development activities.'* In practice, however, governments may reimburse military budgets with aid resources and may report these additional costs as ODA.

In several countries cost-sharing mechanisms and formulas have been developed across defence and aid budgets. The Australian Department of Defence (DoD) will bear the cost if it is less than AUS \$10 million. In Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (UK) the defence ministries are partly reimbursed from humanitarian budgets for certain expenses.²

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) for example, provides support on request to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID) and 'normally recovers the marginal costs from the other government departments'.

The following operations and marginal costs were reported by the UK MoD for humanitarian and relief operations between 2005 and 2009. In several instances, costs were fully absorbed under the MoD budget.

Figure 5: UK Military humanitarian operations, 2005-2009

Year	Operation name	Cost to UK government US\$ million	Description
2005/6	Garron	5.45	Assistance given to DfID following the earthquake in the Indian Ocean during Jan 05.
2005/6	Shandon	10.91	Assistance given to the United States following Hurricane Katrina.
2005/6	Maturin	4.82	Military support given following Pakistan earthquake of 8 Oct.
2007/8	Colobus	0.00	Hurricane Felix redeployment of 53 family dependants of serving British Army Training Support Unit Belize and use of C130 aircraft. Costs lie where they fall therefore no charges raised.
2007/8	Hurricane Dean	0.23	Hurricane Dean, assistance to DfID.
2007/8	Tropical Storm Noel	0.00	HMS Wavenight in location of Caribbean 19 Nov 07. Falls under existing Atlantic Patrol Task force (North) budget therefore costs lie where they fall and no charges were raised. Use of supplies onboard paid for by DFID.
2007/8	Zest	0.15	Use of HMS Goldrover to resupply medical goods for Tristan Da Chuna in Dec 07

² See p24, Wiharta, S., Ahmad, H., Haine, J., Löfgren, J., Randall, T., (2008), *The effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, SIPRI

Year	Operation name	Cost to UK government US\$ million	Description
2007/8	Zest	12.01	Recce team deployed to Tristan Da Chuna to carry out emergency repairs to Calshot harbour in Jan 08.
2008/9	Songster	0.02	Support to humanitarian aid/disaster relief operations in Burma following the 3rd May 2008 cyclone. At the request of DFID, MOD has agreed to purchase and embark HADR stores in India and deploy HMS Westminster to stand by off the Burmese coast.
2008/9	Hurricane Omar	0.00	HMS Wave Ruler assistance in the Caribbean. Falls under existing Atlantic Patrol Task force (North) budget therefore costs lie where they fall and no charges were raised
2008/9	Hurricanes Gustav and Ike	0.00	HMS Iron Duke and RFA Wave Ruler assistance to Turks and Caicos Islands. Falls under existing Atlantic Patrol Task force (North) budget therefore costs lie where they fall and no charges were raised

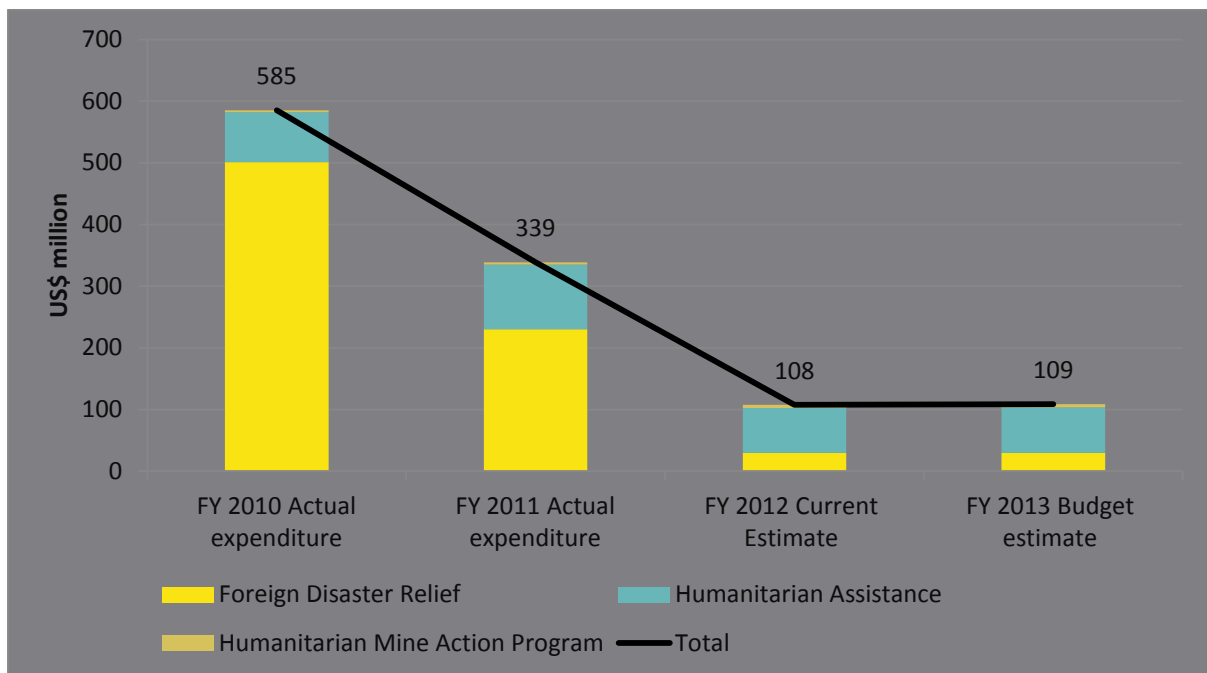
Source: UK Ministry of Defence, response to Freedom of Information Request, 24 May 2010

The US government is worthy of note not only because it appears to be the largest military providing humanitarian assistance, but also because this role has been formalised in a separate department with its own budget within the Department of Defense (DoD), the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) office. OHDACA receives a separate annual budget allocation for three thematic windows: humanitarian mine action, humanitarian assistance and foreign disaster relief.

The category of 'humanitarian assistance' refers to funds contracted to third parties to implement projects consistent with OHDACAs goals. Funds expended under the Foreign Disaster Relief Initiative which funds the DoD's direct material involvement in the provision of humanitarian aid.

Figure 6: United States Department of Defence, Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster and Civic Aid, Fiscal Year 2010 – 2013 actual and budgeted expenditures

Counting the costs of humanitarian aid delivered through the military



Source: United States Department of Defence

2010 and 2011 were exceptional years, with major responses to the earthquake in Haiti and major flooding in Pakistan in 2010 and the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011, where additional funds were appropriated or transferred from other budgetary authorities. However, baseline budgetary requests grew from US\$20 million in 2010 and 2011 to US\$30 million for 2012 reflecting increasing demand for and interest in this facility.

The US DoD also operates as a major donor of aid financing to third party implementers and explicitly budgets for these expenses. In 2009, the US channelled US\$2.2 billion in ODA to developing countries through the DoD. A large proportion of this was spent in Afghanistan (37.1%) and Iraq (36.4%) but 100 other countries also received funds via the US DoD. Of the ODA funds spent through the US DoD in 2009, US\$116.4 million qualified as humanitarian aid and of these funds, US\$39.7 million was disbursed via commanders on the ground in active theatres through the CERP in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Improved 'countability' and transparency? The scale and true cost of military involvement in humanitarian assistance remains largely un-quantified rendering assessments of the cost-effectiveness and impact of military operations extremely difficult.

There is no common reporting standard for counting and estimating the value of military contributions. Many contributions are in-kind and are difficult to ascribe a value to and costs are accounted for and attributed differently by different governments. And the contributions of domestic military actors to humanitarian assistance are completely un-counted in existing publicly available data.

While many governments publicly report their aid spending with increasing levels of transparency, they do not apply the same commitment of transparency to their military expenditures. In the

particular case of the US CERP fund, the ability of the military to effectively account for funds has been [called into question](#), further illustrating the need for greater transparency in accounting for what are effectively aid-like resources channelled via military actors.

Common standards for reporting military expenditure need to be developed to support transparency in the areas of military activities for humanitarian operations. A common standard needs to also be accompanied by a change in attitude toward transparency from military actors, to ensure that this information is regularly and pro-actively made publicly available.