

What is UN-CMCoord?

Humanitarian organizations, State security forces and non-State armed groups (NSAGs) increasingly operate in the same space across all humanitarian emergencies, from natural disasters to human-made and technological emergencies. Effective dialogue between these actors is critical to obtaining and maintaining humanitarian access to people in need and ensuring their protection.

Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and armed actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue

common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation.

Coordination within these relationships is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training. Key coordination elements are information-sharing, task division and planning, all of which are adapted to the specific context.

Critical functions of UN-CMCoord include establishing appropriate UN-CMCoord structures, developing context-specific guidance based on internationally agreed guidelines, and ensuring all relevant personnel (e.g. military, political/civil affairs officers, non-governmental organization [NGO] workers) understand the key aspects of UN-CMCoord.

UN-CMCoord's primary functions:

1. Establish and sustain dialogue with military and other armed actors.
2. Establish mechanisms for information exchange and humanitarian interaction with military forces and other armed actors.
3. Assist in negotiations in critical areas of interaction between humanitarian workers, military forces and other armed actors.
4. Support the development and dissemination of context-specific guidance for the humanitarian community's interaction with military forces and other armed actors.
5. Observe the activities of military forces and other armed actors to ensure distinction is maintained and to avoid negative impact on people in need or the humanitarian community.

What is OCHA's role?

In 1995, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee designated OCHA as the focal point and custodian of related guidelines and policies for UN-CMCoord within the UN system. OCHA's Civil-Military Coordination Service (CMCS) performs that function on behalf of the humanitarian community and facilitates the

appropriate interaction between humanitarian operational partners and armed actors. What that facilitation looks like depends on the context, and on the role and mission of the armed actors in that emergency. CMCS also manages the UN-CMCoord training programme, supports large-scale military exercises with a

humanitarian assistance and disaster relief component, provides policy guidance, fosters partnerships with like-minded organizations, maintains a UN-CMCoord roster of experienced personnel, and is the custodian of global UN-CMCoord guidelines and policy documents.

“We need to have humanitarian access to affected people, and they have a right to receive humanitarian assistance and protection services. This is at the core of our collective accountability to people in need. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination plays a key role on behalf of the humanitarian community in facilitating access to such populations.”

- Martin Griffiths,
Emergency Relief Coordinator
and Under-Secretary-General
for Humanitarian Affairs,
OCHA.

What does OCHA say?

1. During the critical period of a humanitarian emergency response, militaries can contribute to humanitarian action through their ability to rapidly mobilize and deploy unique assets and expertise in response to specifically identified requirements as a stop-gap measure.
2. Military action supports political purposes, while humanitarian assistance is based solely on need (impartiality) and is provided without taking sides (neutrality) in disputes, controversies, or political positions on the underlying issues.
3. Interaction between humanitarians and the military can range from cooperation to coexistence. OCHA manages coordination within these differing relationships through the UN-CMCoord framework and the application of related guidelines.

UN-CMCoord in the Central African Republic: Facilitating humanitarian access

In mid-December 2020, high levels of insecurity in the Central African Republic (CAR) triggered the suspension of humanitarian and commercial movements along the main supply route from Cameroon to CAR. From late November 2020 to February 2021, over 1,600 inbound trucks (including 500 with humanitarian supplies, mostly food) were blocked at the border, causing critical stock shortages and a sharp rise in prices.

To solve this impasse, discussions and analysis took place between OCHA, the World Food Programme, and the military and civilian components of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

An access/CMCoord action plan was developed and implemented within the framework of the CMCoord Strategic Group. The MINUSCA Police Commissioner, international NGOs, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and OCHA also participated.

OCHA and the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator also led high-level access negotiations with NSAGs. OCHA's CMCoord platform ensured a consistent and coherent approach between MINUSCA and the humanitarian community, and it was critical in applying agreed standards and conducting risk analysis and assessments.

Humanitarian convoys resumed in March 2021 following the agreement of a time-limited 'area-based secure path'.

To find out more

Humanitarian-Military Dialogue at www.dialoguing.org contains a wealth of UN-CMCoord information, including:

- UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, 2018, v.2.0.
- Guidance Note on OCHA CMCoord Support to Protection Outcomes, 2020.
- UN-CMCoord Operational Guidance for Appropriate Interaction with Armed Actors in the Context of COVID-19, 2020.
- Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets in Natural and Man-Made Disasters, 2018.
- United Nations Civil-Military Coordination: A Guide for the Military, 2017, v.2.0.
- IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the Use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys, 2013.
- Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines), 2007.

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