
MILITARY CIVIC ACTION*

By

CAPTAIN CRAIG L. SMITH, USA

Governments fall for many reasons. Today, with the social unrest which has led to bread riots in some Third World countries, the state of the national economy, as well as that of the political environment within a country, can represent very serious security considerations in their own right. In effect, although a stronger armed force decreases military security considerations, it may well increase domestic (political and economic) concerns. Additionally, every day there is news indicating that many Third World countries have reached, or even passed, the point where their political economies can sustain current or higher military expenditures--a sort of saturation point.[1] Their acquisition of military capability beyond this point can well lead to a country's degradation in both political and economic terms. Predictably, in many Third World countries where this saturation point has already been reached, the standard of living is falling (bread riots) even while the national defense capability is declining. In some countries this saturation point was reached several years ago.

There can be disastrous consequences from the allocation of scarce national resources for either "guns" (military capabilities) or "butter" (quality of life) after this saturation point has been reached. Every additional "gun" procured after that point is at the very real and critical expense of the quality of life. Further, this action puts at risk the stability of the political economy of the country as a whole. At the same time, resources used to improve the quality of life in a country may be at the expense of that country's ability to thwart the military threats which that nation may perceive--in fact or fiction--by reducing the number of "guns" it has. Therefore, as a country approaches this saturation or balance point, it is presented with an increasingly difficult choice to make: improving the quality of life of its citizenry or sustaining its defense capabilities, either of which is detrimental to its future. After the saturation point has been reached, management in this regard becomes an effort in damage control. Thus, in the same way that both options may serve to undermine development, both may also prove to be increasingly harmful to U.S. interests.

*Although the term "military civic action" is used here, the reader may see "civic action" or "military civic action" used interchangeably, in this article and elsewhere. In a pure interpretation of the term, "civic action" could include programs which may or may not involve military forces; but as a form of Security Assistance (SA), "civic action" is an idiom which really means "military civic action." The important fact to keep in mind for SA activities is that no matter which term is used, military forces (both U.S. and host nation) are an integral part of the program.

So what is the answer? One obvious answer is to provide grant aid to countries who both need it and who represent vital U.S. security interests. Another equally viable and certainly more mutually beneficial answer is military civic action (MCA). MCA, in many situations, can answer the needs of many of these countries as well as U.S. interests. Further, as a result of interest at the highest levels of the U.S. defense community in the applicability of MCA, the developments in this component of U.S. security assistance have been actively pursued.

After presenting MCA in conceptual terms, the object of this article is to identify the major actors involved in analyzing, approving, and implementing an MCA project, as well as to describe how they analyze a proposed MCA project.

The current DOD 5105.38-M, Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM), provides several basic policy principles about the implementation of U.S. security assistance. Chapter 4, paragraph B.4., presents the following guidance concerning a recipient country's economy:

Security assistance plans and programs shall take into consideration the economic capabilities of the foreign country concerned and the support provided by third countries. Except for overriding military considerations, the build up of military forces that the recipient country ultimately cannot support shall be discouraged. [And] In providing assistance to less developed countries, emphasis shall be placed on the development of their capabilities to organize, employ, and manage national resources allocated to defense.

There are two phenomena which make civic action especially appropriate today in the developing nations. One is the degraded ability of many of these countries to continue, much less increase, military spending, as these expenditures do not expand national development benefits to a population. The second is the perception that validated threats of credible, overt, and conventional military aggression seem to be diminishing--in real terms. Therefore, a fundamental change in the components of the security assistance the U.S. offers in its foreign policy must occur to meet the challenges in a world where low intensity conflict is increasing at a higher rate than traditional military threats.

Congress supports addressing the developmental needs of less-developed countries, while also appreciating the value of military capable friendly nations to U.S. national security interests. The Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended, and the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, provide the authorities and associated funding for U.S. security assistance to assist friendly countries in meeting both internal and external threats to their security and to participate in U.N.-recognized regional or collective political and/or military organizations. Additionally, Section 502 of the FAA and Section 4 of the AECA authorize the use of U.S. defense articles or services abroad [security assistance programs] to assist foreign military forces construct public works and engage in other activities helpful to their economic and social development. Clearly, the acts which establish and govern U.S. security assistance also provide authorization for involvement in host national conducted civic action projects. The regional U.S. defense components are now becoming advocates of U.S. security assistance directed

at nation building, more so than in earlier years. A recent reference to this shift in direction was highlighted during the U.S. European Command Conference in May, 1985, where a keynote speaker mentioned civic action programs as a potentially important element in the future of security assistance.

Now, given an emerging need for SA programs to become even more involved in military civic action in order to meet U.S. interests in foreign countries, what does the term "military civic action" mean? And, how is it viewed by major actors in the SA community?

Simply stated: Military civic action sees the use of military resources in such a way as to enhance not only the national security posture of a country but its political stability, social cohesiveness, and economic development as well. This concept is derived from the recognition of a dependency linkage among the political establishment, the military sector, and the economic system of a country. It is a harmony between joint U.S. and host government objectives--a more integrated strategy of defense on more than one front or in depth.

The above definition is meant to convey the theory of military civic action in an understandable fashion, more so than to give an operative description. Although this simplified definition serves to illustrate the spirit behind and the impetus for the program, the one adopted by the policy actors in the SA community describes MCA in more operative terms, as listed in JCS Pub 1:

The use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation, and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population. . . . (U.S. forces may at times advise or engage in military civic actions in overseas areas.)

With this widely accepted definition, there is no real lack of consensus on what MCA is or is not--even regarding what can or cannot be done in the name of MCA. However, what can or cannot be done in the name of MCA is not always obvious either. The problem is one of differences in interpretation for categorizing and prioritizing MCA projects vis a vis other missions. For example, this definition clearly shows that it is important that the host country military benefit most from the positive image developed; but, how exactly is this to be done?

There is no written document which definitively presents what can or cannot be done in civic action projects. Although this at times may seem to be the result of a lack of consensus about the role of civic action in security assistance, it really is not. The functional reason why no hard and fast list materializes is that to establish such a "do" or "don't" list would, in practice, constrain a decentralized implementation of U.S. security assistance and would impose too formalized an interpretation upon SA programs from the very beginning. Guidance could quickly become directives, or worse, mistaken, over-generalized directives. Therefore, each proposed MCA project will likely

continue to be analyzed and approved on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the President's arms transfer policy.

If it is difficult to be precise in stating what civic action is, it may be useful to look at what civic action is not. First, there is Congressional concern that the U.S. may be becoming too deeply involved in the internal affairs of some countries. This prohibition against involvement in the internal affairs of another government may appear to be too subjective, but it does serve as a very real litmus test in the approval of a requested program. For example, there can be no assistance whatsoever to any internal police force (except in Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and the Eastern Caribbean states, as provided for in the recently enacted "International Security Development and Cooperation Act," P.L. 99-83). Secondly, MCA is not a concept which will prima facie link the SAO and USAID in joint projects. There is a strong aversion in USAID against becoming too visibly identified with military security assistance, and the spirit of MCA will not override it. Also, USAID discourages infrastructure-type projects. USAID will, for example, support projects aimed at increasing planting/harvesting, as well as improving other means of production, before it will support road building type projects.

As an overview, requests for MCA projects are submitted to and acted upon just like any other security assistance request. The general process of approving, funding, and implementing an MCA project--after the project is agreed to in principle at the country team/host government level and presented with the ambassador's recommendation--concerns approval or disapproval of the project on a case-by-case basis in accordance with standard SA guidelines. Although the role of the Ambassador and the regional bureaus in the Departments of State and Defense, are not specifically identified in this presentation on MCA, their involvement in MCA projects is no less indispensable than it is in any other SA program--this point cannot be overly emphasized. The Department of State and the Department of Defense through their numerous offices and agencies, such as the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), are the implementers of SA programs, including MCA projects. As in all MAP projects, DSAA and the Department of State are the operative controllers of the implementation of specific MCA projects. Essentially, DSAA and the Politico-Military Bureau, Office of Security Assistance and Sales (PM/SAS) in the State Department are keystone organizations in the myriad of others which can be involved in both the approval and/or the implementation of an MCA project.

Additionally, the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS)--specifically, the Deputy Director for Politico-Military Affairs (OJCS/J-5), and the different unified commands--are also very much involved in MCA projects.[2] With the joint or combined war readiness exercises which are conducted in its area of responsibility (AOR), a unified command often becomes the most appropriate and most flexible resource base with which to support the implementation of MCA projects around the world today--a "springboard" of sorts. As a result, the JCS becomes involved in a defacto manner, but very directly.[3] The commander-in-chiefs (CINCs) are the proponents for MCA, and the JCS strives to support the projects they have adopted. Other than when joint or combined exercises are involved which are coordinated or supported by JCS and conducted by the unified commands, the CINCs are constrained in their ability to sponsor civic/humanitarian projects.[4]

This impetus to use unified command exercises as a springboard for MCA projects is of special utility today since there is really no other resource base which can support an MCA project with U.S. military personnel and funding. One notable exception to this involves a pilot project whereby the Congress has authorized and appropriated funds (\$5 million for FY 85) for military civic action projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby decoupling this resource dependent relationship by charging the Office of the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (OSD/ISA) with the implementation of this specially funded program. Although the annual budget for security assistance is another source of funding for MCA projects, this yearly budget authority will probably always seem to be inflexible as a source of funding to respond to specific MCA project opportunities in a timely and appropriate manner. Therefore, the required funds to support an MCA project will probably always have to be diverted from some other approved program, or go through the full budget process in its own right. As a result of the seeming inevitability of MCA projects being coupled with joint/combined exercises as things stand today, there is some very serious study being devoted to the proper coupling of MCA projects to combined or joint exercises. The crux of this study is that U.S. involvement in these exercises is solely funded by taxpayer money--appropriated exclusively for U.S. defense operations and maintenance (O&M). Any use of these O&M funds to facilitate projects for the benefit of foreign governments can be interpreted as a misuse of the funds for purposes which they were not specifically appropriated--especially if those benefits were not "incidental" to the normal joint/combined military mission(s) of the operations.[5]

The JCS seems to be especially concerned that proposed MCA projects which are to be coupled with joint or combined operations satisfy specific criteria which are meant to ensure that resources are not misused. In other words, MCA projects, in their view, should be "incidental" to the primary mission. In an effort to ensure compliance, JCS takes care to check that (1) a proposed MCA project which will be conducted in conjunction with such an operation is independently funded to the extent that MCA projects will not represent a questionable or gray area of expenditure of O&M funds which were appropriated solely for the operation and maintenance of the exercise; (2) that the two missions (MCA and the objective(s) of the exercise) must be as compatible as possible in an effort to harmonize the two in order to vividly demonstrate that the MCA project was supportive of the mission of the exercise--and therefore that the MCA benefits were clearly incidental to the operation. The result of this insistence on the part of JCS is that they, in effect, advocate and lend support to the development/implementation of MCA projects in terms of militarily operational contributions. As a result of this insistence on operational compatibility, the JCS tends to present the real needs of many Third World countries in terms of a model country threatened by insurgency, such as the Philippines, Honduras, or El Salvador. In the view of the JCS, MCA represents a program which can, and should, counter what many Third World countries tell them are really their more immediate and actual threats--insurgency. In essence, to many critical Third World countries, and by transference to the JCS, MCA is in many ways a means to directly confront threats of insurgency more than it is a way to build a nation. PM/SAS, ISA, and DSAA see MCA in a more holistic, nation building fashion. The JCS, an equally strong advocate for more MCA projects, sees MCA's real value in terms of the specialized role it can play in supporting other counter-insurgency efforts. As stated, the JCS perception of the

value of MCA programs is tempered by input from U.S. and foreign participants (in joint or combined operations) who have conducted MCA projects in conjunction with operations in the past. They view prior and ongoing action/humanitarian projects as justifiable, both in terms of military objectives as well as administrative authority. Thus, although the respective unified command is often involved in an MCA project by the circumstances of the moment, and the JCS by association as well as its authority, both play very active roles in MCA projects today.

Other organizations involved in MCA projects are the OSD's Humanitarian Assistance Division (OSD/HA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). Given the circumstances prevalent at any given moment, both could be very important actors in MCA projects, although OSD/HA is a smaller organization than USAID in terms of manpower and funding resources (OSD/HA has only four people, all of whom work in the Pentagon; AID has around 4,000 who work worldwide). OSD/HA is directly involved in all MCA projects, while AID is directly involved in all non-military civic action. However, both have some involvement, either direct or indirect, in both military and non-military civic action.

OSD/HA advocates the enlargement of an MCA program at least to a point where MCA projects would be initiated and supported in any area of the world--independent of other programs or operations which may or may not already be in process there. At the same time, OSD/HA endorses a modus operandi toward MCA which would be limited only by the existing legal limitations (such as the prohibition against non-interference in foreign internal matters) and the use of funds only for purposes for which they are appropriated.[6] Not only is there wide support for the expansion of the MCA program, but also there is the view in some circles that DOD can do the best job of it for the U.S. and therefore, DOD should play a leading role in U.S. efforts in MCA. Clearly, both DOD and OSD/HA want to do even more.

Organizationally, AID is an independent agency with the only formal charter for U.S. development assistance abroad. This charter is closely monitored by Congress, especially in the post-Vietnam era. AID's actions are not wholly independent abroad. Its efforts in a foreign country are very much influenced by, and indeed integrated with, other programs advocated by the U.S. mission in that country, through the Ambassador and his country team. The Department of State (DOS) is responsible for foreign policy, while AID is responsible for foreign economic and disaster assistance. DOS and AID co-manage ESF programs. Just as the security assistance organization (SAO) tries to merge MCA projects with joint or combined operations, so too could a similar relationship of mutual interest be developed between the SAO and AID, given the proper circumstances. But, AID also has regulating guidelines which govern its involvement in MCA projects.

As AID and DOS personnel work together closely in an organizational sense in many countries, AID personnel and DOD personnel share a natural camaraderie in many informal ways. However, it is indeed difficult to formally link AID to an MCA project through its support for the project; AID's primary mission is economic and social development, and it normally sees any military connection as a compromise in a strict interpretation of that mission, since AID is prohibited from supporting any military or police

activities. Therefore, it would seem that joint MCA projects, which could serve the objectives of AID, the SAO, and the host government all at the same time, will probably be rare. For political reasons, particularly in Central America, as well as to maintain the credibility of their overall development program, AID, although generally supportive of the SAO mission, will take careful steps to ensure that it is "officially" separated from military activities. AID's economic development programs are designed to encourage the adoption of democratic principles which are presented as the best engine of "progress with equity" for all people. AID administers most of the non-military foreign economic assistance programs of the United States. Today, AID's work is almost exclusively in the less developed countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In those few projects where these two objects of development can be harmonized and both missions can be simultaneously enhanced by a single project, AID's resources such as experience, funds, and local contacts can represent a critical resource to the SAO.[7]

Hence, for AID to officially sanction and support an MCA project, the SAO would need to go to considerable lengths to insure AID that its support would not be directly connected with a "military" project. If only a token level of support by AID is required for a proposed MCA project (other costs being offset by the recipient country, private donations, volunteer work, etc.), then the chances of forming a partnership between AID and the SAO on any specific project would be increased. Further, AID is no longer concentrating on development projects which attempt to develop the infrastructure of a country, such as bridges, port development, etc. AID is placing more emphasis on projects which can be better absorbed into the political economy of the receiving country--smaller dollar level projects but more of them. Special efforts are being made to place AID resources into the development of health, education, and the means of production (planting, harvesting, factories, etc.) than into infrastructure maintenance/development.

The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within AID is of special interest when considering MCA projects. As AID's work is almost exclusively in the lesser developed countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, OFDA's assistance is targeted to provide disaster related relief and technical assistance worldwide. The AID mission has grown over the last 21 years. While constantly insuring that U.S. relief efforts, both public and voluntary, are complementary to the objectives of U.S. missions overseas, AID has gone from only conducting preparedness training (contingency planning, prediction, warning, prevention, and mitigation) to establishing and maintaining an overall sense of preparedness in many disaster prone areas. In this process, OFDA has become a developer of early warning technologies to meet disaster requirements and has maintained a long term presence in disaster prone areas. Today, OFDA has begun to bridge the gap between disaster assistance and the development process. OFDA is now prepared and wants to work in conjunction with governments threatened with all kinds of natural disasters. It does not intend to do the work of the governments in any disaster prone country, nor is OFDA in a position to subsidize the work those government should be doing for themselves; but OFDA stands ready to support and stimulate the efforts of those governments with technical assistance, training opportunities, technology transfer, and where appropriate, objective and innovative ideas. Although OFDA has extremely limited staff resources, it can call on the resources of the rest of the U.S. government as

well as the private sector (including active duty as well as reserve military personnel) for help as needed. OFDA provides support to foreign governments in the following areas:

- Contingency planning for major disasters and exercises to test these plans.
- Hazard analysis to determine the range, frequency, and magnitude of potential disasters.
- Vulnerability analysis to estimate the damage which such hazards may cause to human settlements.
- Preparedness programs to help develop the country's institutional and human resource base.
- Technical assistance in the application of techniques for the prevention and mitigation of disasters.
- Technology transfer in the improvement of forecasting and early warning systems.
- Training in the several tasks of disaster relief management.

All of these activities are in addition to OFDA's primary goal of providing disaster relief. In the past 20 years, OFDA has expended more than \$210M in 770 disasters affecting 800 countries--and the expenditure in 1985 alone will be about double. Disaster relief has included: medical services and supplies, potable water equipment, tents, and temporary shelter material, and rehabilitation activities. At this time of fiscal constraint, OFDA is increasingly concerned that every dollar expended has a positive effect on countries which are either affected or threatened by a natural disaster.

Finally, one of the most important actors in an MCA project is the host/recipient country itself. The commitment of the recipient country to any MCA project is absolutely essential. The more closely a recipient or host government participates in the conceptual planning and approval phases of a program and dedicates its firm support to the completion of that program, the easier it will be to implement that MCA project. The recipient or host government is every bit as important an actor as the others listed above.

In conclusion, it should be clear that given the political economies of the Third World, the security assistance offered to these countries by the United States must continue to be dynamic if it is to meet their needs and our interests in the future. Moreover, many segments of the SA community see MCA projects as the nexus of that dynamism. Civic action represents a multifaceted project for the SAO, and one which will probably grow as it develops, affecting virtually every SAO operation. There are several MCA projects either in planning or in execution today; and in the case of the Sub-Saharan Africa Civic Action Program, a whole new component of U.S. security assistance--a completely separate fund--has been established and is operating.

MCA is becoming increasingly important as an especially effective component of an overall security assistance program in many Third World countries.

The trend seems to portend that SA programs in many developing countries which do not have a viable MCA component may seem to be incomplete in the future, as this assistance is increasingly needed to augment virtually all security interests in some under-developed countries. Just as there can be no solid, long term peace in a world where the balance of power is out of equilibrium, there can be no real security in a world of shaky political economies. The U.S. can always provide advice, training and, in most cases, material for MCA projects, in addition to military assistance. We have to encourage allies to avail themselves of this alternative in shoring up their political economy also.

ENDNOTES

1. In political science, the collective term "political economy" implies that a political system also has an economic component, and vice versa, and as a consequence neither component can be understood in a vacuum without the other. The term political economy means both political cohesiveness and economic stability.
2. Unified commands have been very much involved in MCA projects--at least operationally. The reason for this is twofold. One, the process of gaining approval for and supporting MCA projects in a timely manner without using a combined or joint exercise conducted by Unified Command as a vehicle is much more complicated to plan and conduct due to a multifarious environment. Bureaucratically speaking, it is much easier to initiate an MCA project if the CINC supports the project and provides the necessary resources (military personnel, funds, etc.). This process is easier and faster than attempting to get the necessary resources from Congress, DOD, and/or DOS. Secondly, in spite of desires by DSAA as a keystone organization to manage directly all aspects of security assistance, including MCA, the unified commands seem to be the only organizations today which can administratively and financially support such projects on the short notice basis which is endemic to the genre, given the concurrent support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And, they are the only ones who conduct combined or joint exercises in the region which can be used as a "springboard" for MCA projects. As a result, they are very much involved on an operational basis today.
3. Unified command involvement will probably continue as is, at least until the Congress "earmarks" some funds which it appropriates for predetermined MCA projects, and thereby gives some other organization both the authority and the appropriation to conduct MCA projects. The Congress has enacted this kind of special funding as a pilot program in Africa. As a result, the Office of the Secretary of Defense for International Affairs (ISA) now controls a special pool of resources (as depicted in the African section of the Congressional Presentation Document under the title of "Civic Action" fund) which in effect provides Sub-Saharan countries with a useful alternative/supplement to operation and management funding authority as personified by the Unified Commands in the region.
4. Although the CINCs control ample resources to assist in MCA projects, JCS has the authority to conduct MCA projects. Section 1540 (the

Denton Amendment) to the pending Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1986 (Title 10), as adopted by the House-Senate Conference Committee, authorizes the Secretary of Defense (OJCS) to provide for the transportation of humanitarian relief supplies on a space available basis worldwide. Furthermore, Section 8103 of the Conference Report on House Joint Resolution #648, Continuing Appropriations, 1985, authorizes the use of O&M funds to conduct humanitarian/civic action works in conjunction (on an incidental basis) with DOD (JCS sponsored and coordinated) activities. With this stipulation in the appropriations act, the JCS can commit the services of personnel and equipment participating in a worldwide exercise to humanitarian/civic action endeavors as long as no additional funds or time is spent in this endeavor beyond what would have been expended anyway. As such, this can be viewed as authorization without appropriation. This section of the law is referred to as the Stevens Amendment; it reads:

Of the funds appropriated for the operation and maintenance of the Armed Forces, obligations may be incurred for humanitarian and civil assistance costs incidental to authorized operations, and these obligations shall be reported to Congress on September 30, 1985: Provided, that funds available for operation and maintenance shall be available for providing humanitarian and similar assistance in the trust territories of the Pacific Islands by using Civic Action Teams.

J-4 is preparing to take a more active role in security assistance matters in support of exercises and crisis situations. Also, when MCA projects are implemented in conjunction with joint or combined operations, J-3 acts to control, supervise, and direct them.

5. A benchmark of current thought as to how joint/combined exercises can/cannot be used as a vehicle for facilitating MCA projects is contained in the Defense Department Task Force Report on Humanitarian Assistance Approved by the Secretary of Defense, dated 19 June 1984, as well as the memorandum by the Secretary of Defense, dated 12 January 1984, which initiated the task force. Further, the General Accounting Office (GAO) study of Operation Big Pine (Report Number B-213137, dated 22 June 1984, "Funding of Joint Combined Military Exercises in Honduras") offers detailed principles for using O&M funds for MCA operations. The report contains a considerable amount of specific commentary and justification about what the GAO considers proper or excessive in the funding of MCA projects with O&M funds. The result is that in GAO's view, without specific funding authority (funds from another government agency or Congress), only "incidental" civic action is allowable. Depending on the interpretations of each of the unified commands, as well as on the individual policies each follows as a result of this report on MCA projects during Big Pine II, this report could severely constrain the unified commands in supporting any MCA projects unless the project is funded from sources other than their operating budget. A related

financial constraint is the Economy Act. It prohibits any U.S. military competition with qualified civilian firms and services.

6. AID funds are programmed 2-3 years in advance and in close cooperation with many other government and private sponsors, and there appears to be growing support for this view within DOD, the Congress, and DOS.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Captain Smith has been with DISAM since 1984 and is an Instructor of Security Assistance Management and the Director of African Seminar Studies. He is a 1975 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and holds a double MA in Management and Public Administration from Webster College (1982).