

each other for influence and financing. Some (not all) of these clearly tried to influence the MNF during the crisis, providing suspiciously high numbers of refugees in need and using the media as a lever.

Furthermore, on occasion many of the Agencies seemed almost intentionally blind to the political and military implications of some of the suggestions and requests they made both privately and to the media. The public confusion over the numbers of refugees was, to a certain extent, a symptom of this. The numbers provided by some Humanitarian Agencies and NGOs included all the refugees in Eastern Zaire, while Governments considered primarily those people in need whom the MNF could actually reach from outside the country. These political differences are fundamental and go beyond the differences that arose from differing perceptions of the appropriate role for the military.

Recommendation 7: Government and the media must recognize that some Humanitarian Agencies have political interests and agendas that influence their actions on the ground, the intelligence they provide and their media relations. Governments and the media must make every effort during a crisis to understand this, and to differentiate between the various Humanitarian Agencies and NGOs.

Recommendation 7a: Governments should investigate putting in place standing agreements with reputable Humanitarian Agencies, whereby certain military logistics assets would be identified for near-automatic support to HAs and NGOs in time of extreme need. This might obviate the need to involve military personnel in humanitarian operations, thereby minimizing the political effects of military involvement and confusion over mandates and missions.

Observation 8: The coalition may have been difficult to manage because there were too many parties invited, for too many reasons.

The Steering Group proved an unwieldy instrument with which to provide political direction to the MNF. Large, inclusive membership, combined with a decision-making process requiring consensus, made the Steering Group hostage to any one of the many members. It became possible to get agreement only on lowest-common-denominator decisions, such as air-drops of food to refugees; this, while only one country ever formally devoted assets