

II COORDINATION OF THE MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN ROLES

- (i) **The real test of coordination is across the gap between the peacekeeping and humanitarian communities.** It is here that the new alliance between them has been put under greatest strain. In many cases the alliance has been forged successfully; in others it has failed, leading to mutual criticism and recrimination.
- Peacekeepers argue that the humanitarian community often fail both to coordinate amongst themselves, and to cooperate with the peacekeeping operation. This weakens the overall effort towards peace and long-term stability and gives warring factions the chance to play one side off against the other.
 - The principal concern for humanitarian personnel is the use of the military in the provision or support of humanitarian assistance. It is said that they often arrive too late, are inexperienced and hence inefficient in relief operations, are expensive and, just when you have got used to them, they are pulled out too early.
- (ii) **The root of the problem is the lack of clear definition of the role of the military in a Complex Emergency.** No-one can doubt the role of humanitarian agencies in these situations, even if one might occasionally challenge the methods used and the long-term objectives. It is however difficult to pin down what exactly the military are supposed to do. UN mandates frequently contain the phrase 'in support of humanitarian assistance activities'. What does this phrase actually mean? The answer to this holds the key to a less strained relationship between the two would-be partners. If their respective roles can be more clearly separated and defined, it should be easier to coordinate their efforts.