

# AT 100, CIVIL AFFAIRS IS COMING OF AGE



By Col. Christopher Holshek, U.S. Army retired

**T**hird Army's post-World War I occupation of the German Rhineland revealed numerous shortfalls in its military government experience, leading to development of civil affairs doctrine, specialized personnel and units, and professional training and education. Col. Irwin L. Hunt's 1920 report, "American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918–1920" heralded the beginning of modern Army civil affairs, which is celebrating its centennial the last week of October at Fort Bragg, N.C. Along with civil affairs' enduring value, many current issues in maintaining this unique and vital strategic land power capability stretch back to that formative report.

The key finding of Hunt's report for Third Army rings familiar: The Army "lacked both training and organization to guide the destinies of the nearly one million civilians whom the fortunes of war had placed under its temporary sovereignty." Although the Army had experience in military government operations as far back as the 1830s in Texas and Mexico as well as in the Philippines and the Caribbean after the Spanish-American War, Hunt's report established the enduring requirement for civil affairs/military government units and a standing staff section at Army

Headquarters to incorporate them into war planning. The Rules of Land Warfare that followed in 1934 contained a section on military government, confirming the same need. In 1940, the Army published Field Manual 27-5: Military Government and Civil Affairs, which guided civil affairs/military government efforts during major combat operations in World War II and Korea.

The rest is history. The Army continued to deploy civil affairs units in Vietnam and in small wars for military civic action and civil assistance during the Cold War. Civil affairs provided ministerial advisory teams and functional specialists for the invasion of Grenada in 1983, the restoration of Panama in 1989 and Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti, then supported peacekeeping and stability operations in the Balkans. Shortly after the U.S. Special Operations Command began in 1987, the Army aligned civil affairs commands—in addition to the then-96th Civil Affairs Battalion under the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) and eventually under the U.S. Army Forces Command.

## **CAPABILITIES FOR EVERY SITUATION**

The unique diversity and blend of active and U.S. Army Reserve civil affairs resources provide the best possible capabilities base for effective civil-military operations in



every situation. Active civil affairs units can deploy for quick response and provide ground assessments to determine follow-on support, whereas Reserve civil affairs units are tasked to provide technical civilian knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, or access that is not resident in the active force. While the Army and Marine Corps provide tactical civil affairs capabilities, only the Army—mainly through Reserve civil affairs—provides operational and strategic capabilities such as theater civil affairs planning teams, civil-military support elements (which support U.S. country teams) and functional specialists.

U.S. Army civil affairs functional specialists go back to their military government experience during and after World War II, in the days of the “Monuments Men.” The new Army Field Manual 3-57: Civil Affairs Operations copiously covers military government and functional specialists, especially in case of major combat operations. Reserve military government personnel (38G) comprise 18 civilian skill identifiers and eight other Army specialties. Army civil affairs’ 16 functional specialties are aligned in five functional specialty areas: security, justice and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance and social well-being, governance and participation, and economic stabilization and infrastructure. The Institute for Military Support to Governance at Fort Bragg, N.C., manages this program.

The values-added of civil affairs have grown in an era of gray-zone conflict,

Above: Capt. Alexander d’Orchimont, left, with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, speaks with an orphanage volunteer in Niger; opposite: Spc. Lauren Reed, a veterinary technician with the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne), demonstrates a military working dog procedure to members of the Kenya Defense Force in Nairobi.

ABOVE: U.S. AIR FORCE/TECH. SGT. NICK WILSON; OPPOSITE: U.S. NAVY/PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS TIMOTHY M. AHEARN





people-centric warfare, and great- as well as small-power competition. As the draft Army Special Operations Command white paper on civil affairs puts it, Army (and Marine) civil affairs forces are DoD's "primary human geography-focused capability to understand and engage civil society and agencies across domains by applying unique knowledge, skills, and abilities ... across the competition continuum in joint and multinational operations that include military engagement, security cooperation, deterrence, crisis response, limited contingency operations, large-scale ground combat operations, operations in dense urban environments, and defense support to stabilization."

A core business of civil affairs is its support of military stability operations that, in turn, support interagency stabilization. Stability operations, in turn, are a core military mission per DoD Instruction 3000.05—through civil-military operations, a command responsibility regardless of mission or level of command. Under DoD Directives 2000.13 and 5100.01, respectively, DoD and the Army are mandated to "maintain a capability to conduct a broad range of civil affairs operations." Because of its strategic land power role, the Army is directed to organize, train, equip, deploy and employ civil affairs forces. The U.S. Special Operations Command, in turn, provides special operations doctrine, procedures and equipment for civil affairs forces.

### CIVIL-MILITARY INTEGRATION

Among civil affairs' critical roles in interagency stabilization, which the new U.S. Stabilization Assistance Review defines as "an inherently political endeavor," is civil-military integration. "To wage war effectively, civilian and military leaders must

operate as successfully on political battlegrounds as they do on the physical," former Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategy Nadia Schadlow wrote in *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success Into Political Victory*. "As the difficulties encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan revealed, integrating efforts across those battlegrounds is essential to success in war."

Civil affairs is gaining recognition as a strategic as well as operational and tactical capability to consolidate military and security gains into political and civil outcomes—or, per its regimental motto, to "Secure the Victory." The U.S. military capability to win wars by winning the peace and, increasingly, mitigate the unnecessary use of combat forces, is about 12,000 Army and Marine Corps civil affairs personnel, or about one half of 1 percent of the total joint force.

Far more than a contingency force, civil affairs operates in security cooperation and other strategic shaping missions in scores of countries worldwide. Following the liberation of locales like Syria's Manbij and Raqqa, for example, civil affairs and U.S. Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives teams, along with peacebuilding and civil society organizations, are helping local councils "provide security, services, and an administrative structure that can establish conditions" for a self-governed region once under Islamic State group control, Col. Tony L. Thacker, Civil Affairs Operations Division chief for the U.S. Central Command, said at last year's Civil Affairs Symposium.

In Africa, active and Reserve Army and Marine Corps civil affairs troops are assisting civilian partners in over a dozen nations mitigate violent extremism by helping build local government capacity, empower

A Tanzanian game warden practices reconnaissance under the watchful eye of Staff Sgt. David Marcet of the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne).

U.S. NAVY/PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS TIMOTHY M. AHEARN

women through education and training initiatives, and even train Tanzanian game wardens to counter poaching and illicit trafficking—a key source of revenue for dark networks. Mainly out of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, civil affairs units like the Army's 404th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) have been building counterpart civil-military operations capacity in places like war-torn Somalia.

These operations are proving how civil affairs is unique to the joint force and the Army in its natural ability to operate in partner nation, interagency and multinational settings critical to stabilization. Civil affairs is also most effective when appropriately leveraged through geographic combatant and service component commands, among its main customers in the regions it operates in. At the Army level, civil affairs has had the greatest impact when part of an Army special operations cross-functional team with Special Forces and psychological operations.

### NOT PUBLIC RELATIONS

By understanding civil affairs this way, it becomes clear what civil affairs is not, despite long-running misconceptions. For one, civil affairs is not public relations or community relations. Nor is it intelligence collection—although main activities like civil reconnaissance, civil engagement and civil information management significantly contribute to a commander gaining a comprehensive understanding of the operational environment.

Because it is integral to war-fighting and conflict management, civil affairs is not merely a force multiplier or enabler. Civil affairs is a maneuver force in the human geography that is the key center of gravity in contemporary conflict—much as infantry and

armor maneuver on the physical battlefield. It also provides staff expertise on civil-military operations, much like intelligence, engineers and others do for their battle operating systems.

Given the nature of conflict and competition the Army must contend with, civil affairs' part of the Army's strategic roles is only coming of age. There is still much unfinished business in maturing it into a full-fledged member of the Army family. Civil affairs is still not an accession branch, lacks unity of command for force management, and—a century after Hunt's report—there is still no standing civil-military operations or civil affairs staff section at the Joint Staff or Army Headquarters, nor is there organic civil affairs/civil-military operations staff or plans capability at major geographic, service, operational or tactical commands, which still try to access Reserve civil affairs with outdated Title 10 budget authorities for contingency vice continuous operations.

### A SHRINKING FORCE

Once again, the future of civil affairs is in some doubt, given renewed pressures to reduce its ranks despite defense budget increases. Service cuts in civil affairs forces are well on their way to pre-9/11 levels and impending reductions may go beyond that. The Navy eliminated its civil affairs capability; two-thirds of active Army general-purpose civil affairs is gone; and reduction of Marine civil affairs Reserve Groups and capability is taking place.

"We are currently not meeting our production numbers," Maj. Gen. Kurt Sonntag, commander of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School/ Special Operations Center of Excellence, the schoolhouse for Army special operations, announced at the 2017 Civil Affairs Symposium. "The restructuring of the 85th [Civil Affairs] Brigade created an imbalanced [civil affairs] force structure, and our recruitment is down. If something doesn't change soon, we will short the operational force drastically over the next five years."

### TIME TO REBALANCE

A rebalancing and overhaul of civil affairs along doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, education and policy lines is overdue, with a schoolhouse-led civil affairs capabilities-based assessment taking place right after this fall's centennial and symposium. Maj. Gen. Darrell J. Guthrie, the new commander of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), has recognized the need to turn his globally engaged force into "more of a learning organization."

Civil affairs must continue to evolve and adapt to changing national and Army imperatives. Any reconfiguration of civil affairs forces, however, must consider its strategic as well as operational and tactical roles and its cross-continuum contributions and capabilities. It also must exploit the civil affairs regiment's human capital as the most operationally experienced civil affairs force in its first 100 years.

Moreover, as Sonntag urged, the civil affairs regiment itself must break its paradigm as "silent professionals" and do a better job of telling its story, beyond Army and joint commands to civilian leadership and the public at large, on how it helps secure the victory. ★

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