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Testimony before the Committee on Government Reform,
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and
International Relations
House of Representatives

on Humanitarian Assistance Following
Military Operations: Overcoming Barriers

Washington, D.C.
May 13, 2003

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about humanitarian assistance following military operations. As we speak, the largest single humanitarian response in history is proceeding with the full collaboration of staff from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, the Department of Defense, other coalition governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Although the specific circumstances that our relief teams face in Iraq are unique, USAID humanitarian interventions are profiting from wisdom gained over decades of experience in places such as Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. In my remarks today, I will relate several of those lessons and offer some thoughts on how well we are applying them in Iraq.

USAID is the U.S. Government agency charged with coordinating much of our nation's foreign humanitarian assistance. This authority is derived from the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, both as amended, and was reinforced through President Bush's designation of USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios as Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance on September 21, 2001.

There is a defined division of labor within the Administration between State and USAID, consistent with our Congressional mandates, on humanitarian issues, with the Secretary of State assuming overall responsibility. The State

Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) primarily supports efforts to assist refugees (including returnees) and other conflict victims. USAID usually focuses on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the other general humanitarian needs of civilians, including food, health services, water and sanitation, and shelter.

USAID's Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance has lead responsibility for addressing humanitarian concerns. Our offices respond to natural disasters and conflicts of all scales. Our responses range from providing \$50,000 for blankets and food to people displaced by landslides in Bolivia last month, to the deployment of large-scale disaster assistance response teams, or DARTs, to manage massive relief and recovery programs, such as the one in Iraq. In emergencies involving refugee populations, we follow the lead of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. In many situations, we draw on the expertise of our partners in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Geological Survey, and several other agencies with which we maintain formal relationships.

Our experience in responding to humanitarian crises has taught us many valuable lessons. First, a successful intervention is a well-planned intervention. Civilian, military, nongovernmental, and United Nations agencies are well served by establishing working relationships long before a crisis occurs. Clarity about which organizations undertake which activities, under what mandates, and in what situations greatly reduces confusion that might otherwise arise during an actual emergency. One of the many ways in which USAID has facilitated mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities has been through informational briefings on its mandate and disaster response capacities for U.S. Military Civil Affairs officers stateside, prior to their deployment.

Second, when a disaster strikes, close operational coordination becomes imperative. Needs are best addressed when humanitarian responders devise coherent plans that take advantage of all of their relative strengths. To maintain a standing military coordination capacity, USAID has a Military Liaison Unit that stays in constant contact with U.S. Combatant Commanders around the world. Prior to the conflict in Iraq, the U.S. interagency community worked in an unprecedented fashion to create a plan addressing future Iraqi relief and rehabilitation needs. Staff from USAID; the Departments of State, Treasury, and Commerce; the National Security Council; the Joint Staff,

Office of the Secretary of Defense; the U.S. Military's Central Command; and others collaborated in the Joint Interagency Planning Group to ensure that all organizations' activities would complement and support each other.

USAID's emphasis on coordination extends beyond the U.S. interagency community. Our experience in Afghanistan has underlined the importance of tight coordination between relief providers and local authorities, to maximize mutual understanding and cooperation. Following the Mozambique floods of 2000, the U.S. promoted such coordination by contributing civilian and U.S. Coast Guard expertise to the United Nations Joint Logistics Center. And prior to the current Iraq intervention, USAID offices met regularly with counterparts in the NGO community to brief them on DART deployment preparations. Humanitarian Operations Centers (HOCs) have proven very effective in facilitating logistical and security coordination among NGOs, international organizations, and U.S. Military and civil authorities. These centers have the capacity, for example, to arrange security escorts for relief deliveries and to facilitate NGO use of vehicles to transport supplies and personnel. A Humanitarian Operations Center was first established during the Somalia intervention in the early 1990s. The center has been replicated during several crises since then, improving each time by building on lessons learned.

A third lesson is that if we are serious about meeting humanitarian needs, we need to bring an adequate amount of resources to bear. And as we provide robust and timely support for emerging disasters, we must do so in a way that does not impair our existing humanitarian commitments to the rest of the world. Nor should humanitarian interventions be seen as solutions to political problems; this approach results in costly long-term relief engagements that simply cannot address the root causes of conflict.

On the positive side, we can maximize the effectiveness of our responses when we take advantage of the resources other federal agencies can offer. The U.S. Military in particular has been a reliable partner. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, many devastated areas in Central America were inaccessible by road. USAID relief efforts benefited greatly from airplanes and helicopters supplied by the U.S. Military. This logistical support enabled the delivery of critical water and shelter supplies to isolated villages and families. Military air capacity has been used to enhance civilian humanitarian responses in a number of other crises, including Bosnia and

Haiti, and also in Kenya, where military aircraft transported civilian emergency search and rescue teams to Nairobi following the embassy bombings of 1998.

A fourth lesson is that the U.S. Government must select external organizations with proven capacity to assist in the provision of humanitarian aid. When disasters occur, USAID often provides funding to NGOs, United Nations agencies, or the International Committee of the Red Cross to meet urgent needs. The process by which we select these partners is of great importance; the success or failure of a relief project is very often tied to the competence of the implementer. In short, USAID seeks out both secular and faith-based organizations that have demonstrated the ability to thrive in rapidly changing environments, with experienced staff, transparent financial systems, and a proven track record.

Next, our relief interventions must not be driven by outside influences, the media, or special interests. They should be based on impartial assessments conducted by U.S. Government experts and trusted humanitarian professionals. USAID's specialists from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Office of Food for Peace, Office of Transition Initiatives, and other units are highly trained in conducting field assessments, which provide an unbiased estimation of the location and size of vulnerable populations, along with a description of their needs.

U.S. military assets have facilitated these assessments on several occasions. After floodwaters rendered wide swaths of Mozambique inaccessible by land, U.S. Military aerial reconnaissance located isolated pockets of people and identified damaged infrastructure, providing information to responders that would ultimately save many lives.

When determining the types and amount of assistance to deliver to a crisis, our highest priority is first to address the most critical needs of those affected - emergency food, health services, water, sanitation, and shelter. After dealing with life-or-death issues, we shift our focus toward recovery and the re-establishment of self-reliance. This could involve limited infrastructure repair, seed resupply projects, or job training initiatives aimed at restoring a sense of normalcy to a severely affected country. Our ultimate goal is to restore the capacity of countries and communities to provide for the well-being of their own citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to share these observations today with the Committee. I look forward to continuing this dialogue, and welcome your questions.