

## IASC principles on military-civilian relations

Some efforts have been made to establish a common policy for all humanitarian organizations, including both those members of the United Nations system with humanitarian mandates as well as humanitarian non-governmental organizations. In 1995, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group adopted the Report of the Task Force on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Support of Humanitarian Operations.<sup>1</sup> The Report did not refer to the use of armed or military escorts in particular, but did establish six general 'operating principles' with respect to the use of all military assets in support of humanitarian operations. These stated that:

- i. Decisions to accept military assets must be made by humanitarian organizations, not political authorities, and based solely on humanitarian criteria.
- ii. Military assets should be requested only where there is no comparable civilian alternative and only the use of military assets can meet a critical humanitarian need. The military asset must therefore be unique in nature or timeliness of deployment, and its use should be a last resort.
- iii. A humanitarian operation using military assets must retain its civilian nature and character. The operation must remain under the overall authority and control of the humanitarian organization responsible for that operation, whatever the specific command arrangements for the military asset itself. To the extent possible, the military asset should operate unarmed and be civilian in appearance.
- iv. Countries providing military personnel to support humanitarian operations should ensure that they respect the code of conduct and principles of the humanitarian organization responsible for that deployment.
- v. The large-scale involvement of military personnel in the direct delivery of humanitarian assistance should be avoided.
- vi. Any use of military assets should ensure that the humanitarian operation retains its international and multilateral character.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group, XIXth Meeting, 27 September 1995, Geneva: Summary Record'.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 'The Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Support of Humanitarian Operations: Report of the Task Force', 27 September 1995.