

One of the United States military's most experienced leaders in the field of MOOTW, General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Retired), has developed the following considerations for humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping, and peace enforcement operations:

- Each operation is unique. We must be careful what lessons we learn from a single experience.
- Each operation has two key aspects: (1) the degree of complexity of the operation, and (2) the degree of consent of the involved parties and the international community for the operation.
- The earlier the involvement, the better the chance for success.
- Start planning as early as possible, including everyone in the planning process.
- Make as thorough an assessment as possible before deployment.
- Conduct a thorough mission analysis, determining the centers of gravity, end state, commander's intent, measures of effectiveness, exit strategy, and the estimated duration of the operation.
- Stay focused on the mission. Line up military tasks with political objectives. Avoid mission creep and allow for mission shifts. A mission shift is a conscious decision, made by the political leadership in consultation with the military commander, responding to a changing situation.
- Centralize planning and decentralize execution of the operation. This allows subordinate commanders to make appropriate adjustments to meet their individual situation or rapidly changing conditions.
- Coordinate everything with everybody. Establish coordination mechanisms that include political, military, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and the interested parties.
- Know the culture and the issues. We must know who the decisionmakers are. We must know how the involved parties think. We cannot impose our cultural values on people with their own culture.
- Start or restore key institutions as early as possible.
- Don't lose the initiative and momentum.
- Don't make unnecessary enemies. If you do, don't treat them gently. Avoid mindsets or use words that might come back to haunt you.
- Seek unity of effort and unity of command. Create the fewest possible seams between organizations and involved parties.
- Open a dialogue with everyone. Establish a forum for each of the involved parties.
- Encourage innovation and nontraditional responses.
- Personalities often are more important than processes. You need the right people in the right places.
- Be careful whom you empower. Think carefully about who you invite to participate, use as a go-between, or enter into contracts with since you are giving them influence in the process.
- Decide on the image you want to portray and keep focused on it. Whatever the image, humanitarian or as firm but well-intentioned agent of change, ensure your troops are aware of it so they can conduct themselves accordingly.
- Centralize information management. Ensure that your public affairs and psychological operations are coordinated, accurate, and consistent.
- Seek compatibility in all operations; cultural and political compatibility and military interoperability are crucial to success. The interests, cultures, capabilities, and motivations of all the parties may not be uniform, but they cannot be allowed to work against each other.
- Senior commanders and their staffs need the most education and training in nontraditional roles. The troops need awareness and understanding of their roles. The commander and the staff need to develop and apply new skills, such as negotiating, supporting humanitarian organizations effectively and appropriately, and building coordinating agencies with humanitarian goals.