COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN DISASTERS-ANIMALS IN CONFLICTS AND POST-CONFLICT

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In a time of conflict or crisis, the first instinct is to save human lives and alleviate the suffering of innocent victims. Animals become the hidden victim of conflicts and war. War can cause suffering for native animals caught in the middle of a war zone. Companion animals and farmed animals are often abandoned - either left in enclosures to starve or else to wander the streets scavenging for scraps. In recent years, we have seen the horrific plight of animals trapped in zoos in war. In Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the zoos were the sites of fierce gun battles. After the conflict, animals were left to starve in their enclosures. During the recent Iraq war, over 300 animals went missing from Baghdad's main zoo. Many were taken by thieves, others released to attack US military forces, others left to wander the streets. Allegations that Iraqi soldiers were killing and torturing animals at the Kuwait national zoo were made public in September 1990 by the WSPA. Did we learn any lessons?

In Haiti, during Operation Uphold Democracy animals roamed the streets unvaccinated in a country where rabies is prevalent. Operation Uphold Democracy once again placed demands on the US Army's Civil Affairs (CA) branch for specialized talent to work with heads of a foreign government at the ministerial level in civil administration. The CA Ministerial Advisory Team (MAT) was formed in cooperation with the US Embassy and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to assist the ambassador in advising the Government of Haiti (GOH) in reestablishing government functions. American soldiers to include veterinarians became both warrior and constable. The Veterinary CA MAT worked with the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture in cooperation with USAID and was the bridge between the US government (USG) and the Government of Haiti animal health programs until Non-governmental organizations (NGO) and GOH could be brought online. The Veterinary MAT pursued USG and host country objectives to establish a safe, secure environment and promote conditions for economic growth. Operation Mad Dog was development from this process.

The initial build-up of a military mission will have little devastation to animal populations. Bombings are well planned in strategic areas during a build-up. When a war breaks out it is very difficult to protect wildlife and domestic animals from air strikes and the movement of tanks through fragile habitats. Causes of death of animals during conflicts include starvation, dehydration, intentional or accidental shooting, slaughter for food, and bombing.
Challenges in Post Conflicts

Most conflicts in the developing world take place in rural areas, displacing large numbers of civilians and disrupting their agricultural livelihoods. Rebuilding agriculture is an important strategy for post-conflict reconstruction. The support from NGOs and international organizations are important during post conflict reconstruction.

Using Iraq as an example, to be successful, an occupation such as that contemplated after any hostilities requires much detailed interagency planning, many forces, multi-year military commitment, and a national commitment to nation building. Animal health concerns have always gathered people around the table for a common goal.

Recent American experiences with post-conflict operations have generally featured poor planning, problems with relevant military force structure, and responsibility. An exit strategy in Iraq required the establishment of political stability, which was difficult to achieve given Iraq’s fragmented population, weak political institutions, and propensity for rule by violence.

The handover by the Coalition Provisional Authority highlights the good progress made in returning key Iraqi ministries to Iraqi control. The Ministry of Agriculture in Baghdad appears to be in better shape.