

# Achieving Civil-Military Unity of Effort: *Jordan Case Study*

**by William J. Hackenbracht**

## **Background**

Following a joint planning session comprised of representatives from Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Jordan Mission, the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan approved the integration of a four-man Civil Military Support Element (CMSE) into the U.S. Embassy in Jordan. CMSE-Jordan would be an extension of the Civil-Military Engagement (CME) program, a U.S. Special Operations Command program of record that “facilitates the U.S. interagency, host nation indigenous interagency authorities, select intergovernmental and nongovernmental partners, and the private sector to build, replace, repair, and sustain civil capabilities and capacities that eliminate, reduce, or mitigate civil vulnerabilities to local and regional populations.” The intent of the CME program is “to eliminate the underlying conditions and core motivations for local and regional population support to violent extremist organizations and their networks.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon their arrival in Amman, Jordan, in late March 2012, CMSE-Jordan team members immediately began coordinating with U.S. country team members to identify civil vulnerabilities in critical areas that were outside the scope of current U.S. interagency programs and activities. CMSE-Jordan, at the recommendation of USAID and other country-team members, began developing a close working relationship with the Regional Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) from the Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). As a result of these initial coordination meetings, PRM requested CMSE-Jordan begin planning how to mobilize resources to mitigate potential gaps in the U.S. interagency, international, and Jordanian assistance to Syrian refugees.

As the lead U.S. government agency for coordinating refugee response, PRM works primarily with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). PRM coordinates with these organizations, contributes to their programs, and monitors these programs for effectiveness and

**Captain William J. Hackenbracht is a U.S. Army Civil Affairs officer, currently assigned to the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) and serving as the Special Operations Civil Affairs Planner in Jordan. This paper is based on his experience serving as the Civil Affairs Team Leader for initial Civil Military Support Element Jordan from March until October, 2012**

compatibility with U.S. government policies.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the current Syrian crisis, PRM's RefCoord was based at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, Syria, and coordinated U.S. support to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. However, after escalating violence in Syria resulted in the February 2012 closing of the U.S. embassy, the RefCoord relocated to Amman. There the RefCoord began directly coordinating with UNHCR to address the growing number of Syrian civilians fleeing the Assad regime.

At the beginning of March 2012, UNHCR estimated the number of Syrians in Jordan at 140,000, including migrant laborers and others capable of sustaining themselves through private and personal donations. However, from March to April of 2012, the Syrian refugee population in Jordan requiring daily assistance doubled to approximately 10,000. In view of this dramatic increase and the potential for even further growth of refugee populations, the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan instructed U.S. government agencies in Jordan ("the interagency") to collaborate on the Syrian refugee issue and begin contingency planning for a whole-of-government response. Operating under this guidance, PRM and CMSE-Jordan began joint assessments of current and proposed Syrian refugee infrastructure and plans, including the planned location of the 100,000 capacity Zaatari Refugee Camp, to be based outside Mafraq City in the Mafraq Governorate.

While UNHCR and their implementing partners were willing to discuss the current refugee situation in Jordan and issues faced by their organizations, both CMSE-Jordan and PRM quickly recognized that UNHCR and other relief organizations were reluctant to directly include Department of Defense (DoD) elements in the refugee response. UNHCR explained that including the U.S. military in its response efforts risked creating the perception that the response effort was being militarized and could place humanitarian workers at risk.

To mitigate these concerns, PRM initiated a series of meetings and discussions among stakeholders. By limiting DoD involvement to providing infrastructure, assisting the Jordanian government, and partnering with Jordanian security forces, primarily the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) Border Guard tasked with receiving Syrian refugees, CMSE-Jordan received informal support and approval for projects. CMSE projects would be implemented only in the event that the response effort was overwhelmed; therefore, the U.S. military became a resource of last resort. Under these limitations, CMSE-Jordan began using the civil affairs methodology to develop a course of action that supported a unified U.S. government response to Syrian refugees in Jordan.

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### **Civil Affairs Methodology**

U.S. Army doctrine directs civil affairs soldiers to apply a specific planning process for conducting civil affairs operations, a process referred to as civil affairs methodology.<sup>3</sup> Civil affairs methodology consists of six steps: assess, decide, develop and detect, deliver, evaluate, and transition. Utilizing this planning process, CMSE-Jordan began working directly with PRM, UNHCR, and Jordanian officials to design programs and projects that would bring to bear the required organization and resources to identify and mitigate gaps in the refugee response.

#### **Assess**

CMSE-Jordan assessed the Syrian refugee situation and developed civil information

products that informed the interagency decision-making processes. After performing initial joint assessments in coordination with PRM, CMSE-Jordan conducted a series of meetings and discussions with Jordanian and UNHCR officials involved in receiving and processing

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Syrian refugees. During the time period being assessed (April to May 2012), UNHCR and the government of Jordan used a “bail-out” system, in which refugees underwent a security screening and were released into the community after a surety was provided by a Jordanian friend or relative. The bail-out process was based in the Ramtha District, across the border from the Syrian city of Da’ra and overseen by the Ramtha District Governor. When border crossings increased dramatically over a period of one to two nights, this system would experience a backlog. This backlog resulted in refugees being stranded at Jordanian military border control points, often overnight, until they could be transported to temporary UNHCR-administered housing, where they would remain in cramped and crowded conditions for days. While both the border control points and UNHCR-administered housing lacked the capability to handle large numbers of refugees, the Jordanian government was reluctant to authorize the resourcing and construction of planned Zaatari Refugee Camp due to concerns that camp construction could provoke the Assad regime.<sup>4</sup>

CMSE-Jordan and PRM assessed that a

sustained, significant increase in the numbers of Syrian refugees would result in a critical lack of water, food, and sanitation. Additionally, delaying the resourcing of Zaatari could result in a situation where a large influx of refugees would overwhelm the ability of UNHCR and other relief organizations to execute contingency plans, which included the rapid construction of a camp.

During this time period, CMSE-Jordan also conducted an assessment of host communities affected by Syrian refugees. At the invitation of the Mafraq Governor, CMSE-Jordan participated in an open discussion including local administrators of many Jordanian government agencies active in Mafraq, including the water authority, police, sanitation, and health. Participants at this meeting concurred that Syrian refugees were adversely affecting the delivery of essential services in host communities, sentiments that were echoed by Jordanian representatives in other border communities, such as the Ramtha District.

Jordanian officials also relayed constituent complaints that despite widespread poverty in Mafraq, international assistance was being provided exclusively to Syrians, while Jordanians were suffering from increased competition for employment and increased costs for water, food, and housing. CMSE-Jordan requested specifics from Jordanian officials, and were subsequently informed that water use and trash disposal within Mafraq City had doubled. Additionally, Jordanian government officials provided the team with a list of clinics affected by Syrian refugees, including the equipment required to continue serving an expanded population base. Using the pre-conflict population of Mafraq City (50,000) and civil information received from Jordanian officials, CMSE-Jordan estimated the current Syrian population in the Mafraq Governorate at 50,000, and determined that if the Zaatari Camp (100,000 capacity) were to open at

near capacity, the ability of Jordan to continue providing essential services in the area would be overwhelmed due to the 50 percent increase in population in the Mafraq Governorate (300,000 to 450,000). CMSE-Jordan compiled these assessments into information products that were rapidly shared and discussed with PRM, USAID, and other members of the U.S. country team, as well as recently arrived members of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC), an organization tasked to synchronize CENTCOM operations with nonmilitary stakeholders in Jordan.

### *Decide*

CMSE-Jordan coordinated with the interagency to determine appropriate programs and projects for the team to execute. Using the U.S. ambassador's instruction to support a whole-of-government response as planning guidance, CMSE-Jordan began designing potential programs and projects that could be synchronized with the Jordanian government, UNHCR, and other U.S. government plans. As a funding mechanism for these programs and projects, CMSE-Jordan intended to use the Overseas Humanitarian Disaster Assistance and Civic Aid (OHDACA) program, administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). DSCA grants approval and program management authority for minimal-cost projects to combatant commanders and established the minimal-cost threshold in Jordan at \$10,000. Based on assessed needs and PRM and UNHCR requests, CMSE-Jordan submitted minimal-cost OHDACA projects for water tanks, kitchen equipment, and electrical generators, and received approval for these projects to be held in abeyance for contingency purposes. Additionally, during this time frame, SOCCENT and CENTCOM planners overseeing CME efforts began a successful negotiation with DSCA to increase the OHDACA minimal-cost

threshold in Jordan to \$75,000, which would provide CME in Jordan greater flexibility in response efforts, including CMSE-Jordan.

CMSE-Jordan identified the Jordanian Special Operations Forces (JORSOF) Civil Military Company (CIMIC) as a host-nation partner for these potential programs and projects. JORSOF CIMIC had previously participated in episodic subject-matter exchanges with SOCCENT CME elements, to include instruction in basic civil military operations and tactical combat casualty care. Furthering this partnership, both JORSOF CIMIC and CMSE-Jordan were scheduled to participate in Eager Lion 12, a multi-national exercise that included dislocated civilian operations training. CMSE-Jordan designed and implemented a program

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of instruction that focused on displaced civilian operations training for JORSOF CIMIC, culminating in a refugee camp assessment validated by UNHCR protection officers.

In response to issues raised by Jordanian officials concerning the host community, CMSE-Jordan began publicizing these issues to the interagency and international relief community and conducted joint planning with USAID health officers to provide medical equipment to clinics affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. CMSE-Jordan and USAID health officers identified and selected twenty clinics and began coordinating with Jordanian Ministry of Health officials to ensure that equipment requested for these clinics was in accord with ministry plans and compatible with

current sustainment programs. Also, as a result of CMSE-Jordan's assessments, the USAID mission began conducting joint, sector-specific assessments of Jordan border communities, which included a joint assessment of Jordan's entire northern water distribution system and culminated in the opening of a new water pumping station and waste water treatment facility in September 2012.<sup>5</sup>

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*Develop and Detect*

CMSE-Jordan further developed rapport and relationships with organizations and individuals involved in the Syrian refugee response. In coordination with the interagency, CMSE-Jordan detected conditions that called for the employment of CMSE contingency projects.

After completing initial joint planning with PRM and USAID, CMSE-Jordan began developing relationships and rapport with Jordanian and UNHCR representatives in order to establish the capability to quickly identify when and where CMSE contingency projects were needed. On behalf of PRM and the U.S. country team, CMSE-Jordan attended bi-weekly Syrian refugee coordination meetings chaired by the Ramtha District Governor and UNHCR and NGOs delivering assistance to Syrian refugees. CMSE-Jordan also continued to meet with the Mafraq Governor, who asked CMSE-Jordan to provide humanitarian assistance to accommodate the increasing number of Syrian military deserters. PRM, UNHCR, and relief organizations active in Jordan were aware of

the food and water shortages faced by Syrian deserters, but were unable to assist due to organizational constraints preventing them from providing support to military populations. CMSE-Jordan received CENTCOM approval to utilize some of its contingency project funding for this population and rapidly provided refrigerators, kitchen equipment, and water storage tanks to the Jordanian officials administering the Syrian deserter camp. While this project was not technically part of the international response to the Syrian refugee situation in Jordan, it gave CMSE-Jordan the opportunity to demonstrate to UNHCR and associated relief organizations the team's ability to respond to a humanitarian situation in a rapid and flexible manner.

While building credibility and rapport with organizations and individuals responding to the influx of Syrian refugees on the tactical level, CMSE-Jordan also served as the eyes and ears for Department of State and DoD entities conducting strategic-level planning with Jordan and the international community. As a participant in the weekly U.S. Syrian Working Group, chaired by the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, CMSE-Jordan provided situational awareness and ground-truth reports to senior leaders on the U.S. country team. In addition to providing SOCCENT and CENTCOM planners with the same situational awareness, CMSE-Jordan also facilitated the establishment of the CENTCOM CMOC in Jordan, providing that organization with a tactical framework that could serve as a foundation for building operational compatibility with Jordanian military units identified as potential partner forces in the event of a humanitarian crisis. CMSE-Jordan provided CENTCOM CMOC with detailed assessments and introduced CMOC representatives to their counterparts in the Jordanian Armed Forces, specifically the border guard.

One result of its success in developing

tactical-level relationships was that CMSE-Jordan was among the first U.S. government entities to be informed of the massive influx of Syrian refugees during the evening of July 22, 2012. In the following days, refugee housing facilities in the Ramtha District would swell to eight times capacity, and the Jordanian government would request UNHCR assistance in constructing and establishing a refugee camp at Zaatari, which began receiving refugees a week later.

### ***Deliver***

CMSE-Jordan rapidly and effectively employed CMSE contingency projects. In the month before July 22, the average number of Syrians crossing each night slowly increased to approximately 400, placing a growing stress on the bail-out system then in place. When, over the following week, the average jumped to 1,100, Jordan decided to terminate the bail-out program and announced that Syrian refugees would be housed at a refugee camp to be constructed by UNHCR at Zaatari. UNHCR, suddenly burdened by the need to construct a camp and transport a growing number of refugees, requested CMSE-Jordan assistance to ensure that the Jordanian border guard had the infrastructure in place to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees crossing the border. CMSE-Jordan received approval from CENTCOM to activate plans for its remaining contingency projects and began to jointly plan with JORSOF CIMIC leadership to deliver water tanks and kitchen equipment to border control points.

During the earlier delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian military deserter camp in Mafraq, CMSE-Jordan had developed an informal relationship with USAID procurement officers. After receiving the U.S. ambassador's approval to design a process to expedite procurement and delivery of humanitarian assistance, CMSE-Jordan formalized this

relationship with USAID procurement and expanded the process they had developed to include contracting officers from the General Services Office at the U.S. embassy in Amman. The final process consisted of CMSE-Jordan identifying projects to mitigate critical vulnerabilities, PRM determining that these projects supported U.S. policy and UNHCR plans, USAID and General Services Office procuring and contracting the humanitarian assistance, and CMSE-Jordan executing these projects in partnership with JORSOF CIMIC, Jordanian officials, and UNHCR.

## **CMSE-Jordan rapidly and effectively employed CMSE contingency projects.**

This process allowed CMSE-Jordan to rapidly deliver electrical generators to the Jordanian government, which were then used by UNHCR to begin operations at the Zaatari Refugee Camp. Additional assistance included the delivery of kitchen equipment and water tanks to ten border control points along 150 miles of the Jordan-Syria border, as well as beginning the procurement process for over 50 pieces of medical equipment for Mafraq medical clinics.

### ***Evaluate***

CMSE-Jordan determined the effectiveness of delivered projects and identified follow-on actions in coordination with the interagency. Throughout the execution of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Zaatari Refugee Camp and along the Syrian border and during the subsequent evaluation of each project's effectiveness and sustainability, CMSE-Jordan continued to conduct joint assessments with PRM and USAID to evaluate the effects of

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each project and the situation at each location. As the tactical-level agent for both PRM and CENTCOM, CMSE-Jordan identified several humanitarian concerns within the camp, host community, and at the border:

- **Zaatari Refugee Camp:** As the population of the Zaatari Refugee Camp steadily increased and outpaced construction, Syrian refugees began protesting over living conditions within the camp.<sup>6</sup> Syrian refugees at Zaatari were primarily upset over the dusty conditions, a complaint validated by health workers who reported a growing number of respiratory illnesses. UNHCR had planned to lay a base course of gravel over the camp; however, international donors who had agreed to fund this activity had not yet delivered on their commitments.
- **Host community:** Within the Mafraq Governorate, Jordanian officials were concerned that school-age children in the camp would overwhelm the Mafraq public school system. As in the case of laying a base course of gravel, UNICEF planned to build several schools in the camp; however, no funds were currently available. Ministry of Health officials informed CMSE and USAID that clinics outside of Mafraq were also beginning to be affected due the strains placed on the health system in Jordan by Syrian refugees.
- **Syrian border:** Along the border, the lack of latrine facilities and shelter was causing an immediate sanitation issue and threatened

to put Syrian refugees at risk of exposure.

- In response to these issues, CMSE-Jordan began generating follow-on projects to mitigate these civil vulnerabilities: gravel and schools for the Zaatari camp, further medical equipment purchases, and latrines and shelter for the border.

A key factor in determining the effectiveness of CMSE-delivered projects was to evaluate its success in supporting U.S. government strategic objectives. During the weekly Syrian Working Group meetings, the U.S. Ambassador to Jordan expressed frustration with the difficulty faced by the U.S. government in publicly demonstrating its strategic commitment to Syrian refugees and the host community.

In support of meeting the ambassador's strategic intent, CMSE-Jordan began collaborating with the country team to ensure that future CMSE projects would also support the strategic objective of demonstrating U.S. commitment. Specifically, CMSE-Jordan coordinated between the embassy's public diplomacy office and public affairs officers from SOCCENT so that as future projects for the Zaatari Refugee Camp reached completion, they would include public press releases and ribbon cuttings.

While the \$450,000 total cost of CMSE-Jordan projects represented less than 1 percent of the over \$130 million in assistance provided by USAID and PRM to the overall Syrian refugee response, USAID and PRM assistance were largely intangible contributions that consisted of cash transfers to the Jordanian government, UNHCR, and implementing partners. CMSE-Jordan projects were tangible examples of U.S. assistance, and the U.S. ambassador along with representatives from PRM and USAID would use CMSE-Jordan projects to demonstrate U.S. commitment to Syrian refugees, while highlighting the leading role PRM and USAID

played in funding the international response.

### *Transition*

CMSE-Jordan completed follow-on projects and readied to transition future projects to follow-on civil affairs units, other military units, Jordanian government organizations, UN organizations, international governmental organizations, NGOs, and other civilian agencies as appropriate.

Prior to completing the initial CMSE-Jordan deployment rotation in October 2012, CMSE-Jordan was established as a persistent CME presence in Jordan. Before re-deploying, the team ensured that projects and programs within the Zaatari Refugee Camp, the host community in Jordan, and along the border were either retained by the follow-on CMSE or transitioned to the Jordanian government, UN agencies, and other U.S. military units:

- Zaatari Refugee Camp: Utilizing the established interagency procurement process, CMSE-Jordan used OHDACA funds to deliver and spread approximately 30,000 square meters of crushed gravel to the Zaatari Refugee Camp, as well as construct four pre-fabricated school buildings. These deliveries provided PRM the space and time to assist UNHCR in fully mobilizing the international donor community, resulting in transitioning these initiatives to UNHCR and UNICEF. Also, in support of demonstrating U.S. commitment to Syrian refugees in Jordan, CMSE-Jordan transitioned the publicizing of these projects to the U.S. embassy public diplomacy and public affairs offices, which culminated in a publicized ribbon cutting on March 17, 2013, by the U.S. ambassador at the Zaatari Refugee Camp.<sup>7</sup>
- Jordanian host community: As CMSE-Jordan assisted officials in publicizing the issues faced by the Jordanian government in

delivering essential services to communities affected by Syrian refugees, the effort to support the Jordanian government in the Mafraq Governorate transitioned to the international relief community.<sup>8</sup> This process allowed CMSE-Jordan to transition projects and programs to support the Jordanian government's delivery of essential services in communities outside of Mafraq to subsequent CMSE teams deployed to Jordan. As the current CMSE-Jordan finishes the delivery of medical equipment to Mafraq clinics, the team is developing relationships in southern Jordan and assessing civil vulnerabilities in these impoverished and disenfranchised areas. CMSE-Jordan projects within the Jordanian host community specifically address the public perception that all international assistance ignores Jordanians and is, instead, solely directed towards Syrians.

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- Syrian border: In support of the establishment of an operational CENTCOM CMOC in Jordan, CMSE-Jordan transitioned a number of initiatives along the Syrian border to the newly established organization. Since the transition of projects and relationships at the border, the CENTCOM CMOC has used the established interagency procurement process to deliver OHDACA funded mobile latrines, as well as to provide tentage and lighting from excess property (authorized by Defense Logistics Agency for transfer to the Jordanian Armed Forces).

## **Future of Civil-Military Engagement in Jordan**

Looking ahead, the SOCCENT CME effort in Jordan is postured to continue supporting interagency coordination, cooperation, and collaboration at the tactical level in areas of potential instability across Jordan. Through partnership with JORSOF CIMIC and other JORSOF units, CMSE-Jordan maintains the ability to conduct assessments along the border, in the Zaatari Refugee Camp, and in affected host communities throughout Jordan. CMSE-Jordan continues to contribute tactical-level situational awareness and a common operating picture to the interagency of the U.S. country team, which minimizes duplication of effort and ensures unified support to U.S. strategic objectives.

## **Regional Recommendations**

Partnerships between USAID, PRM, and the CME program have achieved measurable success in the U.S. government's civil-military unity of effort in the response to Syrian refugees in Jordan. Similar partnerships should be established across the region in areas affected by the conflict in Syria. CMSE Lebanon, as part of Special Operations Command Forward Lebanon, has already established a partnership with the USAID Lebanon Mission and would be an ideal partner for PRM. In other countries affected by Syrian refugees but without a CMSE, such as Turkey and Iraq, CME elements should be integrated into the U.S. country team, either through the deployment of liaison officers for information exchange and joint planning or via episodic engagement from the theater special operations commands. CMSE-Jordan could advise and provide a link between the PRM RefCoord and CME in the region to coordinate and facilitate unity of effort among all U.S. partners.

## **Institutionalizing Relationships**

As relations in Jordan between the CMSE and members of the U.S. country team evolved from informal to a more formalized relationship, as exemplified by the procurement process, CMSE-Jordan supported the transition of programs and projects by institutionalizing what would have otherwise been dependent on personal relationships. If members of the interagency agree that the CME effort in Jordan has been successful, relationships such as that between the CMSE and PRM should be formalized and institutionalized. Using the relationship between CME and PRM as an example, lessons learned in Jordan could serve as a starting point for discussing this relationship. For example, in areas with existing or potential refugee situations (Balkans, Africa, South Asia), CMSE-Jordan can provide a model for future interagency coordination. Furthermore, expanding the institutionalization of the relationships between U.S. civil affairs and the interagency writ-large would better facilitate joint planning and training and ensure a transition from personality-driven to institution-based coordination. This would better posture the interagency to achieve civil-military unity of effort in conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response operations.

## **Conclusion**

As demonstrated by the CMSE-Jordan, the CME program enables the interagency to anchor the civil-military domain within the National Security Strategy through the deployment of small-footprint CMSEs and similar units. CME provides the interagency with a means to ensure

unity of effort within civil-military operations and avoids the need to deploy larger units in an evolving resource-constrained environment. Ensuring that the CME program is fully integrated with the interagency provides both U.S. ambassadors and combatant commanders with an ideal resource for facilitating whole-of-government approaches to conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance. **IAJ**

## Notes

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- 4 James Halaby, "Jordan Opens New Refugee Camp," Associated Press, Fox News homepage, July 10, 2012, <<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/07/10/jordan-sets-up-refugee-camps-for-syrians/>>, accessed on March 29, 2013.
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