

THE CIVIL-MILITARY ALLIANCE TO COMBAT HIV AND AIDS

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The Civil-Military Alliance to combat HIV and AIDS is developing a global agenda featuring conferences, policy research, training for prevention, international and civil-military collaboration, and a newsletter which is quarterly published. Members of the medical military are invited to participate in advancing the Alliance's MISSION.

THE PROBLEM

By now HIV/AIDS has probably touched the armed forces of every country, with infection rates surpassing 30 percent and reportedly even 40 percent in several armies. Peacekeeping soldiers have a higher probability of becoming infected with HIV than of being killed in military action.

Military populations are highly vulnerable because their occupation calls for taking risks and imparts a sense of invulnerability. Perhaps even more basically, soldiers are virile, mobile, have money, sometimes are lonely and crave sexual companionship, and lack the behavioral constraints of their home communities.

Globally, the military tends to have rates of sexually-transmitted diseases 2 to 3 times higher than those of civilian age-group counterparts. These rates multiply in wartime.

Within militaries, the HIV pandemic has caused losses of skilled manpower and senior leadership as well as reduced troop vigor, thereby undermining military capability, discipli-

ne and morale while negatively affecting civilian and national security. The disease's high concentration in young men impairs recruitment, while demobilization has the effect of spreading the disease to soldiers' home communities. HIV/AIDS causes the armed forces to face costs and policy issues associated with care, strain on hospital services, securing blood supplies, replacing trained manpower, testing troops and vaccines, keeping more medical records, and designing and implementing training programs to prevent infection. They also face the diversion of resources away from military preparedness as well as concerns about conducting joint exercises with allied forces and host country conditions for stationing peacekeeping or other foreign troops.

Until only several years ago, very few of the world's armed forces needed to pay much attention to HIV/AIDS. Today, there is a need in all the world's regions to address policy issues and to develop prevention training programs and materials. The questions about the policy and financial issues will be addressed by the Civil-Military Alliance to Combat HIV and AIDS (cf Table I).

Two premises are central. Because the HIV/AIDS problem for militaries stems largely from heterosexual interaction between civilian and military populations, and the impact affects both populations, **civil-military collaboration is essential.** Given the permeability of national borders, the international assignments of military forces, and the impossibility of national solutions to the problem, **there must be international cooperation.**

HISTORY

International collaboration leading to foundation of the Alliance began in June, 1993, in Berlin, Germany, as 58 individuals from 27 countries met to discuss military AIDS issues. They produced a major «Consensus Statement») on the impact of HIV/AIDS that urged civil-military joint effort and the collaboration of «military organizations around the world». Some of the Berlin attendees met again in December, 1993, in Marrakech, Morocco, during the XIII African Regional AIDS meeting, recruiting 36 additional individuals. Next, at the XXX Congress of the ICMM in Augsburg, Germany, in June, 1994, the emerging interest group proposed to form an «Alliance» with both international and regional secretariats to further a common set of goals. The organizing meeting followed in late November, 1994, hosted by the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine in Rockville, Maryland. By January, 1995, the Alliance was shaping an action program with worldwide reach.

MISSION/ORGANIZATION

The Alliance by-laws adopted in Rockville define the Alliance as «a worldwide interest group representing both civilian and military organizations.» It is also an organization of individuals, not of governments; individuals are the point of contact. Its purpose is «to promote global civil-military cooperation in combatting HIV/AIDS through the pur-

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*Table 1 : HIV/AIDS in the Armed Forces :
Aim and Policy Issues of the Civil-Military Alliance*

AIDS control and prevention

- . Development and promotion of prevention training programs
- . Acquisition of culturally appropriate training materials
- . Program and courses design
- . Research coordination

International (civil-military) cooperation

- Building and coordinating international network (WHO, UN agencies - UNDP, UNAIDS - PAHO, COPRECOS, World Bank...)
- Provide technical international assistance
- Collection, discussion and dissemination of information
- Participation to regional conferences
- Regional secretariats
- Participation to international conferences
- International secretariats
- Organization of satellite workshops
- Publication of reports and newsletters
- Programs evaluation

Issues and policy analysis

- Is it possible to have a consensus on the objectives, methods and models ?
- What are the expected financial costs ?
- When can the program be implemented ?
- How to assess the efficacy of the measures ?
- Who will provide for the international assistance and where will it be done ?

Organization

- . International headquarters
- . Regional secretariats (Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe)

suit of fair and effective policies, strategies and programs in both civil and military populations».

Alliance programs will champion «civil-military action, military to military assistance, peacekeeping operations, and military/political initiatives for regional stability»). Proposed activities will include initiatives targeted to improve global control of HIV/AIDS among military personnel and communities in which they live and work. The Alliance will assure that prepared materials are sensitive to cultural differences.

Organizationally, the Alliance's goal is to establish offices in four regions of the world. The Alliance will seek international support, resources, and working relationships as stated in

Table 2. In their commitments to the new UNAIDS program, the World Bank and WHO will pursue cross-sectoral approaches, including the military sector; in working with these organizations, the Alliance represents the military sector. USAID has followed up its grant with a cable informing all posts about the Alliance and encouraging cooperation with its efforts. Needing funding for core operations and program development, the Alliance will be preparing proposals to foundations and international organizations.

ACTIVITIES

In 1995, its first year, the Alliance has initiated survey research on HIV/AIDS has begun co-organizing

and participating in multi-country conferences. A Newsletter has also been elaborated.

An Alliance questionnaire on «HIV/AIDS Prevention, Testing and Care in Military Medical Practice» is being sent to 100 countries. It was prepared by Brigadier General Raffaele D'Amelio, Italy, Alliance Co-Chair for Europe, and by Lt-Colonel Raymond Wouters, M.D., of the Medical Service Belgian Armed Forces. WHO is analyzing the responses on behalf of the Alliance and to ensure confidentiality. The Alliance will ensure that the results will be sent to all those who respond and will be published in the Alliance Newsletter.

The Newsletter, edited by Professor Miller and Lt-Colonel Wouters, is an instrument of leadership and networking in focusing on HIV/AIDS issues and promoting international and civil-military collaboration. It will contain many informations relative to the various aspects of the HIV/AIDS problems (conference, training, prevention, literature, etc...).

The first five issues have been published in English and sent to individuals in more than 70 countries. The third issue includes a supplement on training models and materials. Early in 1996, special issues of the Newsletter Will be published in French and Spanish.

In 1995, the Alliance participated in six conferences (Table 2). While its strongest initial activity is in Africa, it reaches all world regions. The Alliance co-sponsored, with the World Bank's Economic Development Institute and WHO's Global Programme on AIDS, in consultation with the UNDP, a one-week Regional Training Seminar on AIDS Prevention and Military Populations in May in Harare, Zimbabwe. The Seminar attracted seven-person delegations from Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, including officials from the Ministries of Defense, the

Table 2 : Alliance's birth and activities

<i>Foundations</i>		
June 1993	Germany (Berlin).	Foundation
December 1993	Morocco (Marrakech).	XIII African Regional AIDS meeting
June 1994	Germany (Augsburg)	XXX Congress of the ICMM
November 1994	USA (Rockville, Maryland)	Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine
<i>International Conferences agenda</i>		
<i>(a) Africa and Latin America</i>		
February 95 :	Cameroon (-----)	First African Medical Conference of the Armed Forces and Police
May 95 :	Zimbabwe (Harare)	Regional Training Seminar on AIDS Prevention and Military Populations
		Co-sponsoring of the Alliance with UNDP, WHO, World Bank
November 95 :	Chile (Santiago)	Foundation meeting for the partnership Alliance - COPRECOS
		Co-sponsoring : USAID
December 95 :	Uganda (Kampala)	International Conference on AIDS in Africa
----- :	Peru (-----)	International HIV/AIDS Seminar for Latin American Military Forces and Police
		Declaration of Lima
<i>(b) Asia</i>		
	Thailand (Chan Am)	Five Day Training
		Co-sponsoring : UNAIDS, UNDP, World Bank
	Thailand (Chiang Mai)	3 rd International Conference on AIDS in Asia and in the Pacific
		Satellite workshop
		Co-sponsoring : UNAIDS, UNDP

military medical and nursing services, and the civil national AIDS programs. The outcome: the delegates concluded their examination of problems and issues by preparing a statement of conclusions and recommendations which they intended to implement.

These activities followed Cameroon's hosting of the First African Medical Conference of the Armed Forces and Police in February. The Alliance was represented at this gathering of 500 representatives from mainly French-speaking countries of Africa, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo,

Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia, in addition to four European countries.

In December of 1995, the Alliance carried out a series of activities at the International Conference on AIDS in Africa that was convened in Kampala, Uganda. Under the direction of Dr. Ben Mbonye and Dr. Soulymane Mboup, Alliance chairs for Africa, activities included a round-table discussion on HIV in military populations, a major satellite seminar attended by 125 delegates, and the management of an exhibition booth displaying Alliance

training and education materials.

In Latin America, Peru's Committee for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS of the Armed Forces and National Police (COPRECOS), took an impressive initiative, hosting the First International HIV/AIDS Seminar for Latin American Military Forces and Police. Participating were representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. An Alliance representative spoke on its mission and activities and on training models. Peru presented the COPRECOS integrated plan for all its armed services and national police; already the COPRECOS model has been adopted or adapted in Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras. Like those who met in Harare, the conferees produced a statement of findings and recommendations, which they issued in the Declaration of Lima.

The Alliance held its first meeting in Latin America in November in Santiago, with support from USAID. Represented were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Honduras and Peru. The planning session brought the Alliance and COPRECOS into partnership and emphasized the need to create models of civil-military collaboration and to develop policy knowledge. It created a regional advisory council consisting of generals and colonels from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Honduras and Peru. The Alliance will seek the appointment of a «point of contact» within the military medical service of each Latin American country in 1996. It is looking forward to regional conferences in South America and Central America in 1997.

During 1995 in Asia, the Alliance had two major activities. A major five day training seminar for senior delegates from six Asian nations was convened at Cha Am, Thailand, under the sponsorship of the World Bank and in cooperation with UNAIDS and the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations of the UN. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, in September, the Alliance co-convened with UNDP and UNAIDS a satellite workshop to the Third International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

The above activities signal not only a positive, multi-phase launch for the Alliance, but also a strong, global interest in the expansion and deepening of activities to combat HIV and AIDS within militaries and through civil-military collaboration. We face a pressing need that is now universally recognized.

THE: NEXT YEAR

Regional conferences are a crucially important activity, especially initially, because they are an efficient way to increase epidemiological understanding, address and discuss the issues stated in Table I. Also, they correspond to the aims of the Alliance by involving international organizations, bringing together the civilian and military sectors and prompting the national leaders to consider HIV/AIDS as a national priority. In many cases it will be most effective to organize satellite meetings in association with the large international conferences on STDs and HIV/AIDS.

Provide assistance, upon request, to

countries seeking to implement a training program appears as a key activity for the Alliance. In some regions, where there is a common language, a program of training trainers can be conducted at minimal cost on an international collaborative basis. In his setting, the Alliance will be consulting the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

The focus to date has been on the developing countries, which are experiencing the worst onslaughts of HIV and AIDS. With a sense of urgency, the Alliance will seek funding to initiate and sustain activities toward fighting HIV and AIDS in these world regions. At the same time, it will propose activities across all of Europe. In Eastern Europe the number of infections has been increasing rapidly and significantly, yet this region still has a chance to avoid the devastating impacts HIV/AIDS has caused elsewhere if preventive programs are put in place soon. It is timely to develop preventive partnerships among the European countries as well as in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

The Alliance is still in the early phase of building an organization and providing services and needs to continue to extend its core activities. A small international headquarters is envisioned, working with four small regional secretariats for the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe,

each working with a contact person in each country who will collect information, report on meetings, and assist with disseminating information to their regions. Altogether, the role of the Alliance is to stimulate and coordinate civil-military and military-to-military collaborations_

The challenge is universal, great and growing. We are all stakeholders in defeating the disease and thereby also its consequences. Success requires partnerships. The Civil-Military Alliance to Combat HIV and AIDS invites your help in meeting the challenge.

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Common abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency
ICMM	International Committee of Military Medicine
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases Virus
UNDP	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNAIDS	United Nations Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
WHO	World Health Organization