



## MARO

MASS ATROCITY RESPONSE OPERATIONS:  
A MILITARY PLANNING HANDBOOK

A Collaborative Effort Between the Carr Center  
for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School  
and the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability  
Operations Institute.



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for Human Rights Policy



U.S. Army Peacekeeping and  
Stability Operations Institute

The MARO Military Planning Handbook was  
published in May 2010, and is available for  
download at:

<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/maro/handbook.php>

For more information on the MARO Project:

[www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/maro](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/maro)  
[www.pksoi.army.mil](http://www.pksoi.army.mil)

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## The Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO) Project

The MARO Project, founded by Sarah Sewall, is a collaborative effort of the Harvard Kennedy School and the US Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute. The goal of the Project is to enable the U.S. government (and other governments) to prevent and halt genocide and mass atrocity, through the effective use of military assets and force, as part of a broader integrated strategy.

A MARO describes a contingency operation to halt the widespread and systematic use of violence by state or non-state armed groups against non-combatants. The term MARO is not yet enshrined in doctrine – but it should be. The MARO Military Planning Handbook explains why MAROs present unique operational challenges and provides framing and planning tools to prepare the military. While primarily intended for military planners, it is also useful for policymakers and other non-military readers interested in the prevention of and military response to mass atrocities. It compares and contrasts MAROs to other types of military operations, explores the specific dynamics of mass atrocity, and outlines the operational and political implications of an intervention to stop attacks upon civilians. The Handbook provides a guide to identify key aspects of a particular MARO environment, frame the problem holistically, develop response options, and design a comprehensive operational concept.

This handout is part of the MARO Project's ongoing outreach work to help socialize and institutionalize the MARO concepts within the US and internationally, and provides a summary of the main MARO concepts, key planning considerations and tools found in the MARO Military Planning Handbook.

## The MARO Concept Distinctions of a MARO Situation

- **Multiparty Dynamics:** MARO is defined by complex multiparty dynamics – perpetrators of violence, victims of violence, interveners, and other actors (positive, negative, bystanders) interact with results that are hard to predict.
- **Illusion of Impartiality:** Interveners may be acting for what they consider impartial reasons unrelated to the identities of the parties or the underlying conflicts – but the perpetrators and victims will view the intervener as anything but impartial.
- **Escalatory Dynamics:** Mass killings of civilians can potentially intensify and expand very quickly – but response is often slow.

### Operational and Political Implications of these Distinctions

- **Different Information from the Outset:** Non-traditional information from non-traditional sources will be necessary.
- **Advance Interagency Planning:** Given the potential rapid escalatory dynamic, this is critical.
- **Speed vs. Mass:** Rapid escalation may privilege speed over mass.
- **The Power of Witness:** Surveillance and other forms of high-tech and low-tech witness can deter or mitigate violence.
- **Symptoms or Root Causes—Can There be a Handoff?:** What will be the intervening force's measure of responsibility for the civilians it saves?
- **Immediate Non-Military Requirements:** Many non-traditional tasks will fall to military forces in the short-term.
- **Moral Dilemmas:** Complex dynamics create multiple moral dilemmas which can create significant political vulnerabilities.
- **Political Guidance:** Most of the vexing issues related to MARO need to be resolved by civilian authorities.

# MARO Approaches

These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and actual COAs will likely combine different features from multiple approaches. These are direct military intervention approaches; the Handbook lays out a series of Flexible Deterrent Options as well.

APPROACH	CHARACTERISTICS	CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Approach 1 SATURATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide area control</li> <li>Unit sectors</li> <li>Mobile patrols</li> <li>QRFs</li> <li>Outposts</li> <li>Mobile Operating Bases</li> <li>Similar to COIN in Iraq</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires adequate forces, extensive logistics and weak adversary</li> <li>Suitable when victim population is widely dispersed</li> <li>Extensive stability operations necessary</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 2 "OIL SPOT"</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear-hold-build</li> <li>Focused, systematic advance within capabilities</li> <li>"Mobile" forces clear; "static" forces maintain security</li> <li>Based upon classic Galula COIN approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer forces required than Saturation Approach</li> <li>Suitable with strong perpetrators and concentrated victim populations</li> <li>Cedes territory to perpetrators</li> <li>Extended commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 3 SEPARATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Controlled buffer zone between perpetrators and victims</li> <li>Outposts, patrols, QRFs</li> <li>Supporting fires as required</li> <li>Similar to traditional peacekeeping or DMZ operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited forces required</li> <li>Suitable when perpetrators and victims are separated</li> <li>Cedes territory to perpetrators</li> <li>Forces may be caught between belligerent groups</li> <li>Potential long-term division</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 4 SAFE AREAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect IDP camps</li> <li>Secure areas of victim concentration</li> <li>Defensive posture</li> <li>Security on migration routes</li> <li>Expect increased numbers of civilians who seek protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited forces required</li> <li>Suitable when victims are concentrated</li> <li>Cedes territory to perpetrators</li> <li>Large humanitarian assistance burden</li> <li>May "reward" perpetrators</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 5 PARTNER ENABLING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most ground forces from coalition partners or victim groups</li> <li>US provides security force assistance, equipment, or key enablers (deployment, air, SOF)</li> <li>East Timor or Northern Alliance examples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners bear most burdens</li> <li>Minimizes US footprint</li> <li>Helps build indigenous capability</li> <li>Partners may be less capable than US forces</li> <li>US relinquishes control of effort</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 6 CONTAINMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliance on air, maritime, cyber power and SOF</li> <li>No-fly zones, blockades, strikes</li> <li>Integrated with diplomatic and informational efforts</li> <li>Similar to Iraq containment in 1990s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalizes on US military strengths (air, sea)</li> <li>Limited in-country presence</li> <li>Does not provide direct protection to victims</li> <li>Risk of collateral damage</li> <li>Precursor to other approaches</li> </ul>
<b>Approach 7 DEFEAT PERPETRATORS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offensive focus against perpetrators</li> <li>Defeat perpetrator leadership and military capability</li> <li>Regime change or collapse if necessary</li> <li>Iraq 2003 model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large force required</li> <li>May be required for long-term resolution</li> <li>Extensive reconstruction and stabilization effort required</li> <li>High casualties and collateral damage</li> </ul>

# MARO Phases

**0 (Shape):** Prevent crisis or prepare for contingency

**I (Deter):** Manage crisis, deter escalation, FDOs

**II (Seize Initiative):** Initial deployments and actions

**III (Dominate):** Stop atrocities; control areas

**IV (Stabilize):** Establish secure environment

**V (Enable Civ Auth):** Transition to indigenous control

# MARO Planning Framework



**END STATE**  
Widespread mass atrocity is stopped (or prevented) and is unlikely to occur in the future.

**MILITARY OBJECTIVES**

- Vulnerable populations are secure from atrocities.
- Leadership of perpetrators is identified, captured, and detained.
- Humanitarian assistance is enabled where needed.
- Transition to appropriate civil entity that will promote good governance, permanent security, and social well-being is accomplished.

- Situation Understanding
- Strategic Comms & Diplomacy
- Unity of Effort
- Military Operations
- Force Gen & Sustainment
- Safe and Secure Environment
- Governance & Rule of Law
- Social & Econ Well-Being