

Abstract

This case study discusses military-military coordination mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific, specifically the Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) and the Multinational Military Coordination Center (MNMCC). Because of the number of major disasters that have occurred in the region that have involved a multinational disaster response, the MNCC/MNMCC concepts provide a valuable coordination tool for the national military of the affected country to coordinate incoming Foreign Military Assets (FMA) as well as provide a platform to synchronize overall assisting foreign military response. The MNCC/MNMCC is looked at from the country-level perspective of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, countries that are considered “priority” countries by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Additionally, this paper will look at the MNCC concept from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional perspective. This case study also provides examples of the use of these coordination centers during real-world responses for Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Hagupit in the Philippines and the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

Introduction

It has been recognized that the Indo-Pacific region is an area that has been hit with a disproportionate number of major natural disasters in comparison to the rest of the world. According to the Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019, since 1970, natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific have killed two million people, or 59 percent of the worldwide death toll from natural disasters, averaging 42,000 fatalities annually while the average for the rest of the world was 28,730.¹ The region’s population continues to be vulnerable to natural hazards, exacerbated by mounting climate and ecological changes, a growing population, the explosive growth of cities, and economic migration.

Between 1970 and 2018, the Asia-Pacific region, with 60 per cent of the global population, nevertheless had 87 per cent of the people affected by natural disasters. Over this period, the average number of people affected annually in Asia and the Pacific was 142 million compared with 38 million in the rest of the world.²

The region has also been affected economically. Between 1970 and 2018, the Asia-Pacific region lost US\$1.5 trillion in economic damages, mostly due to floods, storms, droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis.³ Additionally, the report notes that “...the overall number of disasters is on an upward trend, largely toward an increase in the number of climate related events and the related environmental degradation.”⁴ Thus, the frequency and impact of disasters in the Indo-Pacific, coupled with severe economic losses, loss of livelihoods, and combined with worrying trends, has necessitated the need for increased disaster

¹ The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019_full%20version.pdf

² The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019_full%20version.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

response cooperation and coordination in the region. With a large and diverse mix of humanitarian actors and the relatively frequent deployment of military forces to assist with disaster relief, the need for a well-organized and coordinated response continues to be a key priority for civilian and military responders.

To assist with relief efforts, civil-military coordination and military-military coordination is crucial towards reducing duplication of efforts among all actors, facilitating critical information sharing, reducing gaps in coverage, maintaining a common operational picture, and contributing to more effective overall disaster relief.

Due to the number of disasters that have occurred in the Indo-Pacific region, military forces, civilian agencies and humanitarian workers have increasingly become more adept at disaster response coordination. This is not to suggest that civil-military coordination can now be performed seamlessly, rather it is a general observation that cooperation and coordination has steadily improved throughout the years. Clearly, improvements towards streamlining coordination in an ongoing effort to save lives and alleviate suffering will always be the ultimate goal for responders, no matter the progress made. The creation, modification, evolution and use of civil-military and military-military coordination structures has been key to this continued effort.

Coordination structures play an integral role in overall relief efforts, particularly at the operational and field level. Many civil-military coordination structures exist and have been used quite successfully in disaster response operations worldwide, including of course, in the Indo-Pacific. The following section will briefly discuss these existing coordination structures as the necessary and complementary coordination mechanism to military-military platforms.

This case study looks at current military-military coordination mechanisms and how some of these systems have been utilized successfully in past responses. As such, the use of the MNMCC in the 2015 Nepal earthquake, activation of the MNCC in the Philippines in response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and the following year, in 2014, for Typhoon Hagupit will be examined.

The study also looks at recent initiatives at the country level to explore what structures are planned to be used during the next disaster response which may necessitate the use of FMA. This would include the MNCC in Bangladesh and Indonesia which have been created and developed but have not yet been fully utilized in a disaster response. Lastly, on the regional level, a look at how ASEAN is incorporating the MNCC concept into its plans, procedures and response mechanisms.

This case study was inspired in part by the presentations and discussions at the last annual Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific in December 2019 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where participants from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines presented on the role of MNMCC's and MNCC's in their respective countries for disaster relief. The RCG was formed in 2014 as a regional forum to bring together humanitarian, civilian and military actors involved in planning for and responding to disasters in the Asia-Pacific.

Civil-Military coordination mechanisms

Several civil-military (or, civ-mil) coordination structures exist and have been used for years in the Indo-Pacific and throughout other regions during response efforts. Therefore, civil-military coordination platforms are quite mature at this stage in their evolution. There are several types of civil-military coordination structures that are utilized by the response community. The major ones are: the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC),⁵ its online counterpart called the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre VOSOCC, and a relatively new concept called the HuMOCC. Other civil-military coordination mechanisms exist, but these are the major platforms used in the Indo-Pacific. These types of platforms help facilitate communication and cooperation between domestic and foreign military and humanitarian actors. They are also the essential counterpart to the MNCC/MNMCC concept and are often the only field coordination mechanism during relief efforts where there is no sizeable assisting foreign military contingent and therefore no need for the creation of an MNCC/MNMCC.

On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)

The On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) is a coordination platform and physical location that is set up at the field level to help the affected nation coordinate civilian international relief. The platform is supported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The OSOCC was originally developed by UNOCHA and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) network. As defined by OCHA:

The On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) is a rapid response tool that provides a platform for the coordination of international response activities in the immediate aftermath of a sudden-onset emergency or a rapid change in a complex emergency. It is at the same time both a methodology and a physical location for on-site emergency response coordination. The OSOCC is designed to work in support of the Government of the affected country and is a tool promoted and supported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to carry out its mandate of coordination and information management in emergency response, particularly at the field level.⁶

The OSOCC is established as soon as possible by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team deployed by OCHA or by the first arriving international urban search-and-rescue team (USAR). The UNDAC is part of the international emergency response system and is designed to help the UN and disaster-affected countries during the first phase of an emergency. The UNDAC also assists in coordinating incoming international aid.⁷

Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC, or VOSOCC)

The Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC, or VOSOCC) is a web-based information management tool developed by OCHA, and is a partner of the Global Disaster Alert and

⁵ "On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)," <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/site-operations-coordination-centre-osoccc>

⁶ On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) Guidelines 2018, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/2018%20OSOCC%20Guidelines.pdf>

⁷ "UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC)," <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/un-disaster-assessment-and-coordination-undac>

Coordination System (GDACS).⁸ At a basic level, the VOSOCC can be thought of as the virtual “twin” of the OSOCC. While the VOSOCC has an online presence, the VOSOCC is not physically present at the site of an emergency such as an OSOCC is. However, the VOSOCC could still be used by the physical OSOCC as an additional online coordination tool.

The VOSOCC is particularly useful for pre-deployment coordination and is the primary information sharing and coordination platform used by the UNDAC Team, and deploying USAR teams and Foreign Medical Teams (FMTs).⁹ Generally speaking, usage of the VOSOCC declines after initial coordination has been set and as the OSOCC is set up in the field to assist with coordination of the emergency.

Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Concept (HuMOCC)

The so-called Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Concept (HuMOCC) is a relatively new humanitarian-military coordination platform. An increasingly used structure in the Indo-Pacific region, the HuMOCC can find its genesis following the Haiti earthquake in 2010. In the Asia-Pacific region, the HuMOCC has been utilized in the responses to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013), Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (2015), and the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.¹⁰

The HuMOCC concept aims to provide a “predictable platform” for civil-military coordination that can provide the physical space as well as a process to strengthen humanitarian coordination. In the HuMOCC, government, humanitarian actors and militaries are co-located to ensure optimal information sharing, task division and coordination of operational planning.¹¹ As seen in the 2015 Nepal earthquake case (see Nepal section below), HuMOCC’s are established to be complementary to the OSOCC and are usually co-located with the MNMCC.

The HuMOCC is sort of an evolutionary concept, employed when existing structures such as the OSOCC are not sufficient alone for ample coordination efforts required by the scale of the disaster and response.



Humanitarian and military staff members gather at the HuMOCC in Nepal to coordinate relief after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the nation.

Source: <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-VII-2.pdf>

⁸ “Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS),” <https://vosocc.unocha.org/>

⁹ Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Information Sharing, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=p3vGEsZBP0s%3d&portalid=0>

¹⁰ Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Affected and Assisting States, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=rsXqLAXBQPk%3d&portalid=0>

¹¹ Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Briefing Book, Third Session, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rcg3_summary_report_final.pdf

Subject to the scale of the emergency and military involvement, OCHA may deploy dedicated CMCoord Officers as part of the UNDAC team to coordinate humanitarian civil-military coordination activities within the OSOCC and/or sub-OSOCCs. Should the number of actors and identified needs increase significantly, a shift from the OSOCC based approach to the planning and implementation of a dedicated Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Concept (HuMOCC) may be necessary. The HuMOCC, comprising humanitarian and military representatives, will remain linked to the OSOCC and/or subOSOCCs.¹²

According to UNOCHA, the HuMOCC concept is designed so that military and humanitarian actors can conduct civil-military coordination at the Center. “The HuMOCC’s objective is to provide a predictable humanitarian-military-police coordination platform. Complementary to the On-Site Operations and Coordination Center (OSOCC), the HuMOCC provides the physical space dedicated to facilitating the interface between humanitarian actors, national and foreign military actors, as well as the national police present in country.”¹³ Ideally, the HuMOCC and MNCC/MNMCC are located in the same area to foster collaboration and cooperation.

It should be noted here that it is unclear if the HuMOCC concept will continue to be used as a civil-military coordination platform in the region.¹⁴ Over the past few years, the HuMOCC concept was an emerging practice in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly when it came to the UNOCHA five priority countries, or, the countries deemed most likely to experience a major disaster and/or accept international assistance. The HuMOCC was presented as a platform that could be adapted by these countries for use in future disaster relief. However, recently the HuMOCC appears to be less and less in use. It was not activated in the response to the Palu earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia in 2018 where most of the coordination appeared to take place at the national cluster level.

While the continued usage/adaptation of the HuMOCC as a platform for civil-military coordination in the Asia-Pacific remains unknown, it is highly likely that the MNCC/MNMCC will continue to be adopted by other regional countries and used as a viable mechanism to facilitate military-military coordination in HADR operations.

Military-Military coordination mechanisms

Often times, the military Liaison Officer role is sufficient enough to provide adequate coordination between the affected state military and assisting foreign militaries. However, during a large-scale emergency, the dynamic changes and a more robust coordination platform is needed. When FMA are requested or accepted, a joint and combined operation, or a multinational force (MNF) structure is created.¹⁵ For the MNF structure to be successful when multiple foreign militaries respond to a disaster, the need for a common coordination center for the assisting militaries becomes necessary. Military-military coordination mechanisms such as the MNCC/MNMCC provide a process for managing, tasking and promoting the efficient use of Foreign Military Assets (FMA). The MNCC/MNMCC works with its civilian counterpart, the OSOCC/HuMOCC which relays Requests for Assistance (RFAs) to the MNCC/MNMCC. The civ-mil and mil-mil platforms seek to complement each other, aiming to streamline requests and make the most efficient use of available foreign military assets.

It should be noted here that in comparison to civil-military coordination structures, military-military

¹² UN-CMCoord Field Handbook, version 2.0 (2018), [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/\[E-Version\]%20UNCMCoord%20Field%20Handbook%202.0%20%282018%29.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/[E-Version]%20UNCMCoord%20Field%20Handbook%202.0%20%282018%29.pdf)

¹³ “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination,” Issue No.5, May-June 2015, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CMCoord%20Newsletter%20-%20May%202015%20%28Issue%205%29.pdf>

¹⁴ UNOCHA ROAP

¹⁵ UN-CMCoord Field Handbook Version 2.0 (2018), [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/\[E-Version\]%20UNCMCoord%20Field%20Handbook%202.0%20%282018%29.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/[E-Version]%20UNCMCoord%20Field%20Handbook%202.0%20%282018%29.pdf)

coordination structures are less frequently activated, due to the reality that most responses are conducted and led by the affected state, civilians, and the humanitarian community without the need for foreign military forces. Response efforts are often augmented by the affected nations own military and police forces depending on the severity of the incident and/or the capacity of the civilian government response agencies and in cases where the nation's military is relied upon as a primary responder. Thus, in the majority of disasters in the Indo-Pacific, foreign military forces are often not requested as the national government is often able to manage the disaster response on its own, or civilian agencies and humanitarian organizations from the region are able to assist the affected state without the need for FMA.

For example, the U.S. government is able to respond to most U.S.-declared foreign disasters with civilian response assets and funds. The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) only assists the US Agency for International Development (USAID)/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in around 10% of US-declared foreign disasters on average annually. However, those events are usually major disasters where affected nations' resources are overwhelmed and civilian and military response capacity have been exceeded, thus the support of unique foreign military assets are requested.¹⁶

However, this reality can quickly change when a major or mega-disaster occurs, which unfortunately happens much too often in the region. As an example, out of the militaries in the Indo-Pacific, USINDOPACOM responded to at least 36 major or significant foreign disasters during the time period of 1991-2019. The vast majority of these were major disasters that often utilized a mix of foreign militaries from the region to assist with response efforts.¹⁷

When the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami struck the region in December 2004, it affected more than a dozen countries and led to the deaths of some 230,000 people. Around 35 foreign nations contributed military assets to assist with the massive response efforts. About 30,000 military personnel were also called upon to assist in total.¹⁸ In another example, years later in the response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, 29 responding foreign militaries provided 15,400 personnel for relief efforts.¹⁹

Although the response by both civilian and military organizations was largely considered successful in the 2004 disaster, with respect to the unprecedented magnitude of the disaster, it is likely foreign relief efforts could have been more efficient and streamlined had a military-military coordination center been established to coordinate the dozens of responding foreign militaries. In the case of Haiyan, a MNCC was established to assist with coordination (see below under the Philippines section for a discussion of the MNCC and Haiyan).

In either case, considering the effects of the disasters and the number of militaries and personnel on the military side of the equation, the difficulty in coordinating multiple foreign militaries operating bilaterally without a proper mechanism for effective multilateral coordination, is apparent. Here is where the MNCC/MNMCC concept can be effectively applied.

¹⁶ "U.S. Government Agencies & Military," <https://www.usaid.gov/partnership-opportunities/us-government-and-military>

¹⁷ USINDOPACOM Foreign Disaster Response in the Indo-Asia-Pacific June 1991 – June 2019, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=twmMY081NH8%3d&portalid=0>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ An Inside Look into USPACOM Response to Super Typhoon Haiyan, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=a2uLWdr66U0%3d&portalid=0>

Introduction to the Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC)/ Multinational Military Coordination Center (MNMCC)

A Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC)/Multinational Military Coordination Center (MNMCC) is a military-military coordination mechanism which is led by the Affected State, and provides the main collaborative interface for national and assisting foreign military forces to coordinate the delivery of relief during a disaster response.

As discussed, the MNCC is commonly referred to as a MNMCC and vice-versa, and the two are virtually interchangeable. However, most countries in the region seem to prefer using the term “MNCC” over “MNMCC.” Countries in the region that utilize an MNCC include Bangladesh, the Philippines and Indonesia, while Nepal calls its military-military coordination center the MNMCC. The coordination platforms perform the same key functions, which is to facilitate effective coordination, provide a viable platform for information sharing, and assist with developing a common situational awareness.

The MNMCC/MNCC play an integral part in various country’s national disaster response coordination frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region. Regionally, ASEAN has adopted the MNCC concept into its disaster response and preparation framework.

Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (RCG) forum and the MNCC

The RCG is a multi-stakeholder group that was created in 2014 to discuss humanitarian civil-military coordination for Asia and the Pacific. The RCG acts as a regional forum, where civilian, military, and humanitarian actors involved in disaster response and preparedness in the region discuss response preparedness planning, facilitate the exchange of information and ideas to enable well-coordinated disaster response, and strengthen linkages with other relevant platforms. The use of foreign military assets, military-military coordination and other issues related to humanitarian civil-military coordination are also discussed.

A good definition of the MNCC (and applicable to the MNMCC) can be found in the “Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Briefing Book, Third Session,” which reads:

As outlined in the Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOPs), the MNCC is established by the disaster Affected State to provide a center for all foreign assisting militaries to coordinate and plan operations with full information sharing relative to the ongoing operations and respective nation’s participation. The MNCC is an essential organization that integrates multinational partners in support of Multinational Force (MNF) contingency operations. The MNCC aids coordination of participating MNF militaries contributions to achieve unity of effort and avoid duplication of assistance during disaster responses.²⁰

During its Third Annual Session, the RCG forum provided general useful guidelines on the MNCC:

²⁰ Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Briefing Book, Third Session, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rcg3_summary_report_final.pdf

- “The key role of the platform is to facilitate military-to-military coordination of disaster responses under the overall direction of the affected state military.
- The MNCC will issue coordinating instructions in consultation with the assisting foreign militaries, who will retain command and control over their respective national contributions.
- The establishment of the MNCC should be context-specific and the geopolitical situation in particular countries can influence and determine which functions within the MNCC are activated.”²¹

The RCG Third session also noted that recent disaster response operations highlighted as a good practice that liaison officers from the humanitarian community should be seconded to the MNCC to facilitate information sharing and for common situational awareness. In turn, dedicated military liaison officers should be seconded to key humanitarian coordination platforms.²²

The MNCC in U.S. Military doctrine

For the US military member, the MNCC concept is discussed in U.S. military doctrine. In Joint Publication 3-16 “Multinational Operations,”²³ under Chapter II, Command and Coordination Relationships, 5. Multinational Command Structures, b. Coordination Centers,” the use of an MNCC is another means by which MNF coordination can be increased. The publication “provides fundamental principles and guidance for the Armed Forces of the United States when they operate as part of a multinational (coalition or allied) force.”

The Joint Publication encourages U.S. Commanders to “routinely advocate creation” of an MNCC early on especially if the MNF is operating under a parallel command structure. “It is a proven means of integrating the participating nations’ military forces into the multinational planning, operations, and assessment processes, enhancing coordination and cooperation and supporting an open and full interaction within the MNF structure.”²⁴

The publication also recommends the addition of a civil-military operations center (CMOC) “for coordination with the international humanitarian community indigenous populations and institutions (IPI) and interagency partners.” Other coordination centers may be created for “multinational logistics (MNL), functional areas, and media affairs.”²⁵

During disaster relief operations, under “Chapter V, Other Multinational Operations, 5. Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA) Operations,” an MNCC may be established by the senior commander in support of all JTFs, as an option for multinational coordination of FHA operations. In such contingencies, the MNCC also acts as a CMOC and/or CIMIC coordination center, in addition to providing coordination of military support operations.

During disaster relief operations, under “Chapter V, Other Multinational Operations, 5. Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA) Operations,” an MNCC may be established by the senior commander

²¹ Regional Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Briefing Book, Third Session, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rcg3_summary_report_final.pdf

²² Ibid.

²³ Joint Publication 3-16, Multinational Operations, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_16.pdf

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

in support of all JTFs, as an option for multinational coordination of FHA operations. In such contingencies, the MNCC also acts as a CMOC and/or CIMIC coordination center, in addition to providing coordination of military support operations.²⁶

Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP)

The MNCC/MNMCC likely finds its genesis in a regional effort to improve civil-military coordination—the Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), a multi-nationally developed SOP to provide guidelines for a multinational crisis response. Led by USINDOPACOM’s Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT), the MNF SOP was created after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami to enhance military collaboration in the Asia-Pacific. It is a non-binding regionally developed set of guidelines, containing a set of military procedures that are reviewed and tested each year. The MNF SOP is an evolving document, regularly updated that offers guidelines on civil-military coordination following a crisis. The MNF SOP aims to improve multinational response capabilities in the region and includes the concept of an MNCC for foreign militaries to better assist disaster-affected countries in the region.^{27, 28}

USINDOPACOM and MPAT developed the SOP with the combined efforts of 31 other MPAT participating nations and have long promoted the use of MNCCs in HADR operations through exercises and educational programs. The MNF SOP has also been used in real-world crises. Under the MNF SOP, the primary purpose of a MNCC is to “facilitate military to military cooperation and coordination.”²⁹



An MPAT Tempest Express exercise.

Source: Multinational Planning Augmentation Team – MPAT, 2016, PowerPoint presentation

The latest version as of this writing is “Ver_3.3_15,” released in November 2019. The MNF SOP is a substantial document, with this latest version being 1,318 pages.³⁰ Guidelines on foreign military support and the establishment of an MNCC is mostly found in “Part D – Chapter 1: MNF Missions: – Annex C: HA/DR” of the SOP.

Under Part D, section “3.8.5. Multinational Force Organization to Support HA/DR Operations,” the SOP states “Since a HA/DR mission will normally not have a CTF command activated, there is a need to have some sort of mechanism that permits FMF (Foreign Military Force) coordination and cooperation to support the Affected State with maximum unity of effort and minimum confusion, duplication, and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

²⁸ Collaborative Disaster Preparedness, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF300/CF337/RAND_CF337.pdf

²⁹ Joint Publication 3-16, Multinational Operations, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_16.pdf

³⁰ Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

difficulties for the Affected State. One option is exchange of liaison officers Another option when many nations are involved is activation of a Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) for FMF coordination....” However, the SOP cautions that the MNCC “should only be established if coordination requirements exceed the capability and capacity of liaison officers to coordinate military-to-military efforts.”³¹

So while the MNF SOP recognizes the value of the MNCC in large-scale operations, the MNCC is not recommended for smaller-scale crisis response. “While the MNCC is a proven means of improving coordination between parallel military efforts and with the humanitarian community in major operations, its utility may be duplicative in less demanding operations.”³²

According to the MNF SOP, the primary tasks of the MNCC “may range from just sharing information or de-conflicting the various military HA/DR operations to actively coordinating all multinational forces. The focus of the MNCC should be to maximize the FMF support to the Affected State.” Additionally, the MNF SOP recommends that the MNCC should be familiar with, and possibly engage with, other coordinating mechanisms within the government and humanitarian community.³³

Part D – Chapter 1 – Annex C: HA/DR also gives basic guidance on the establishment of an MNCC:

“iv-ii. Organization. The MNCC must be organized rapidly and efficiently to support the coordination for foreign military in the Affected State.

iv-ii-i. The Affected State should designate a senior military officer as the MNCC director, and provide appropriate space and infrastructure support (including communications links) for FMF representatives.

iv-ii-ii. While the MNCC director will not command the FMF representatives, he can recommend a proposed MNCC structure and establish a venue and focal point for the FMF representatives.

iv-ii-iii. MNCC members represent their countries’ militaries and generally should not be organized along a traditional staff structure. Nor should they necessarily be organized strictly along capabilities that their countries may be providing since many countries might be providing multiple capabilities. Instead, the MNCC members should retain their national identities with various cells, boards or committees formed based on the combined FMF capabilities.”³⁴

In “Appendix 6 Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Concept of Operations (CONOPS) Template,” the MNF SOP recommends that the MNCC should develop Cross-Functional Elements (CFE) to help coordinate operations:

“Multinational Staff Coordination Process Cross Functional Elements (CFEs). The following are suggested cells with the minimum required MNCC capabilities:

31 Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

1. Information Sharing Cell: Information management and sharing, establish local area network and internet connectivity, web site development and maintenance.
2. Public Affairs / Media Cell: Help determine common themes and messages; conduct press conferences as appropriate.
3. Request for Assistance Analysis (RFA) Cell: Validate request for military assistance; prioritize assistance, maintain sector or cluster visibility on what military assets can be provided to support DR operations; track and close out RFA. Should include affected state NDMO liaison officer to work RFAs in conjunction with military member.
4. Operational Cell, including but not limited to:
 - a. Situational Awareness Sub-cell.
 - b. Logistics Sub-cell.
 - c. Planning Sub-cell”

The MNF SOP provides a valuable framework and robust guidelines for the formation and activation of an MNCC. Due to its robust size, all the recommended actions and discussions for the establishment of an MNCC under the MNF SOP could not be included here. For more information please see: “Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019,” (<https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>)

The Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) in the Philippines

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has a key role in disaster response in the Philippines, with Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HADR) being one of the major mission areas. The components of the AFP include the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy, Philippine Air Force and the Philippine Marine Corps. The AFP also plays a role in reducing disaster vulnerability and also helps build resilience.

In the Philippines context, foreign military assistance is coordinated through the AFP and the Department of National Defense (DND), through either a Bilateral or Combined Coordination Center and/or a MNCC.³⁵

For civil-military coordination, the AFP Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) is the national mechanism for facilitating civil-military coordination in crisis situations that require the support of the AFP. The Office of Civil Defense (OCD)-AFP (OCD-AFP) Coordination Center was established to operate as a facility for OCD and AFP in implementing command, control and coordination during an HADR operation. The OCD-AFP is also responsible for coordinating with non-military organizations including NGOs and INGOs.³⁶

³⁵ “OPLAN Tulong-Bayanihan AFP Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR) Plan PowerPoint presentation, 2016,” Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

³⁶ Philippines Disaster Management Reference Handbook, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TAAbF2w1Kghw%3d&portalid=0>

The MNCC

The Philippines uses the MNCC concept to help the AFP to lead and coordinate foreign military forces and for the acceptance of FMA. In a large-scale emergency it is part of the role of the AFP task force to facilitate coordination with other militaries which have offered assistance. The MNCC provides a collaborative planning and execution mechanism between the AFP and foreign militaries that helps prioritize humanitarian needs with the available capabilities of foreign militaries. Since large-scale HADR operations can cover several provinces and regions, the MNCC assists in developing comprehensive plans for such operations.³⁷

The MNCC role is outlined in the AFP's HADR Plan, called: "OPLAN Tulong-Bayanihan." According to the plan, a Bi-lateral or Combined Coordination Center could also be stood up with an MNCC (or in place of one). These coordination centers can be stood up at the General Headquarters (National) level and can be replicated at the Unified Command level. The plan highlights that Joint and Combined Operations MNF concepts should be applied in the coordination of incoming foreign militaries.³⁸

The AFP Chief of Staff is the one who ultimately makes the decision on whether or not to activate a MNCC. Additionally, an MNCC should only be established if liaison mechanisms are insufficient to assist military-to-military coordination, as its utility may be reduced or duplicated in smaller operations.³⁹

As far as structure, the MNCC may be organized into functional cells to facilitate coordination. "These cells might focus on some of the following functions: information-sharing, requests for assistance, operations, planning, civil-military coordination and media."⁴⁰ Note that this is similar to what the Nepali Army recommended in its AAR to help improve the organization and structure of the MNMCC. The MNF SOP also suggests the use of functional cells within the MNCC construct.

At the national level, for civil-military coordination, the AFP establishes a CMCC. The MNCC coordinates with the CMCC, the NDRRMC and OCD to ensure assistance is streamlined and not duplicated.⁴¹ As the CMCC works with humanitarian organizations that might request the use of military assets, the MNCC works closely with the CMCC to coordinate such requests.⁴²

The MNCC concept in the Philippines finds its roots from the bilateral Philippine-U.S. Combined Coordination Center (CCC) according to the paper by PeaceWinds America, "Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative." "The CCC had been the concept of operations in place in 2009, and since 2012

37 Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

38 Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

39 Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

joint exercises had been conducted to test HA/DR contingency plans.”⁴³

The Philippines-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement has provisions for the creation of Joint Task Forces (JTF) and the exchange of liaison officers. These JTFs are designed to provide a mechanism for coordination between the two militaries (the CCC). This mechanism can be “upgraded” by the Philippines to a MNCC to connect the JTFs with military units of other assisting countries. The Philippine-led MNCC is designed to “prioritize, coordinate and de-conflict non-RP-U.S. military assistance and support.” The JTF or MNCC are also linked to the NDRRMC for coordination of tasks.⁴⁴

The publication, “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a More Predictable Model,” outlines 7 key functions of the MNCC in the Philippines context:

1. “Prioritize military assistance in support of NDRRMC and assisting states.
2. Coordinate unique military-specific support requirements.
3. Support efficient use of airspace, movement of forces, and deployment of logistics assets.
4. Develop or plan appropriate transition, engagement and disengagement criteria for military support.
5. Establish liaison with the NDRRMC and designated affected state civil government, relief agencies, military and other organizations as necessary.
6. Coordinate support for needs assessments with NDRRMC and other agencies.
7. In conjunction with the NDRRMC and assisting states, prioritize and coordinate foreign military assistance, including support coordinated by regional organizations such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre).”⁴⁵

The MNCC in the Philippines has been stood up and utilized in response to two powerful typhoons which affected the country in 2013 and 2014, Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Hagupit, respectively. In both cases, the MNCC was used as a coordination platform for military-military cooperation in the response to each disaster.



AFP personnel, along with USAID representatives, multinational partners, and U.S. service members assigned to Joint Task Force 505 (JTF-505), coordinate and plan Typhoon Haiyan relief operations in the multinational coordination center, at Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Republic of the Philippines, Nov. 27, 2013, during Operation Damayan. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by CWO3 Jonathan C. Knauth/Released)

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/3382872/operation-damayan-multinational-coordination-center>

⁴³ Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

Typhoon Haiyan

On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) first made landfall at Guiuan municipality of the Philippines' Eastern Samar province and made its way across the central Philippines. The typhoon proceeded to make landfall again in the Philippines a total of 8 times, leaving a path of destruction. The powerful storm had wind speeds of 235 km/h, with gusts of 275 km/h. Heavy rainfall was recorded at 10 to 30 mm an hour and storm surges up to six meters were recorded, according to OCHA.⁴⁶ The storm left more than 6,000 people dead, while the number of affected people was around 14 million across nine regions, including 4 million people who were displaced.⁴⁷ One of the hardest hit areas was Tacloban City, in Leyte province. On November 9, the Government of the Philippines (GoP) accepted an offer of international assistance through the United Nations.⁴⁸ In response to the government's acceptance of international aid, foreign assistance and responders began to arrive in the Philippines, including 57 countries and 29 responding foreign militaries.⁴⁹

Initially before the MNCC was activated, the AFP Joint Task Force Yolanda, the AFP's combined response to the typhoon, was the coordinating mechanism with the U.S. command team (JTF-505). AFP and U.S. liaison officers began exchanging information a week before Haiyan made landfall.⁵⁰ As the U.S. first provided logistical assistance to the AFP, this Command Coordination Center (CCC) was based on the bilateral mechanism on HADR cooperation with the US.⁵¹ However, with growing foreign militaries offering assistance following the typhoon's impact, the need for a multilateral coordination platform became clear, and the CCC was "upgraded" to an MNCC.

Thus, the AFP Chief of Staff activated the MNCC as part of JTF Yolanda, a few days after the storm made landfall. It was the first time the MNCC was led by the AFP.⁵² It was also reportedly the first time an MNCC was activated in a real-world operation in this region.⁵³ The MNCC was established to help coordinate FMA from the 29 foreign militaries that deployed to assist. In total, the assisting foreign militaries provided 15,400 personnel, 29 sea vessels and 145 aircraft.⁵⁴

The military headquarters of the AFP, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, hosted the MNCC. Located in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Camp Aguinaldo is also the home of the Philippines National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO), the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) of the Philippines. During the response to Haiyan, the MNCC "provided common situational awareness between the AFP and the assisting foreign militaries, facilitated information

46 Philippines Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Action Plan (November 2013 - May 2014), <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-typhoon-haiyan-yolanda-action-plan-november-2013-may-2014-how-you-can>

47 "Typhoon Haiyan - Nov 2013 disaster description," <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/tc-2013-000139-phl>

48 "Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan Situation Report No. 3 (as of 9 November 2013)" <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHAPhilippinesTyphoonHaiyanSitrepNo.3.9November2013.pdf>

49 Advances in Civil-Military Coordination in Catastrophes: How the Philippines Turned Lessons Learned from Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Into Best Practices for Disaster Preparedness and Response, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=EOPr2ycnjzs%3d&portalid=0>

50 Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

51 Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

52 Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

53 "Struggle for Success by Lao PDR & Japan: From Japan's perspective as a co-chair of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts' Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief," Liaison X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

54 "United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) Tempest Express 27 – Staff Planning Workshop," Power Point presentation, OCHA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Manila, Philippines, July 23-31, 2015

sharing, and ensured the efficient use of military support locations, capabilities, and coordination.”⁵⁵ AFP liaison officers were also said to be crucial to coordination of military-to-military assistance. Seventeen liaison officers linked the Area Commander and the foreign responding militaries.⁵⁶

Because other countries were not familiar with the Philippine operational environment, unlike the familiarity the U.S. had, the key tasks of the MNCC were initially: (1) to provide a common operational picture; and (2) to de-conflict flight schedules. The MNCC recommended that individual countries direct their assistance to areas which were not yet assisted, however, final decisions on where and what to deliver rested with each country’s discussion with the NDRRMC.⁵⁷ So, while the MNCC facilitated multinational coordination, military assistance was mostly made on a bilateral basis.

A sub-national MNCC was set up in Cebu, dubbed “MNCC-Cebu.” The creation of this satellite MNCC apparently arose after individual embassy representatives contacted the AFP about placing assets there. Thus, this sub-national MNCC was established from a significant demand for military logistics in Cebu. MNCC-Cebu was set up at the unified command level (AFP Central Command), given its location close to affected areas and the presence of suitable facilities for the distribution of relief. The base of operations was initially established at the Mactan airport but was later moved to a hotel.⁵⁸

The MNCC-National in Manila and the Cebu MNCC had different roles and responsibilities to avoid duplication and the two maintained constant communications to ensure smooth operations. The MNCC-National provided tentative flight schedules and situational overviews. The MNCCs notified incoming air assets on flight changes depending on operational requirements and decided that Philippine C-130s could accommodate un-palletized cargo while the foreign C-130s would prioritize palletized cargoes. The MNCCs were found to be critical to establishing the logistics chain for relief efforts.⁵⁹

Lessons learned from Typhoon Haiyan

The study, “Advances in Civil-Military Coordination in Catastrophes: How the Philippines Turned Lessons Learned from Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Into Best Practices for Disaster Preparedness and Response,” noted that: “By many accounts, civil-military coordination in Super Typhoon Haiyan was considered one of the better examples of large-scale disaster response operations. However, recurring challenges in past complex operations also reemerged such as lack of joint planning. The delay in setting up the MNCC also frustrated multilateral action on the ground...”⁶⁰

While the report noted that the initial delay in setting up the MNCC may have been detrimental, the report also concluded that: “The response in Super Typhoon Haiyan showed that the optimal use of defense assets is best coordinated through the MNCC.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ An Inside Look into USPACOM Response to Super Typhoon Haiyan, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=a2uLWdr66U0%3d&portalid=0>

⁵⁶ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

⁵⁷ Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Advances in Civil-Military Coordination in Catastrophes: How the Philippines Turned Lessons Learned from Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Into Best Practices for Disaster Preparedness and Response, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=EOPr2ycnjzs%3d&portalid=0>

⁶¹ Ibid.



Service members from Joint Task Force Yolanda; JTF-505; and assisting nations attend a brief at the multinational coordination center, Camp Aguinaldo, Manila, Republic of the Philippines, Nov. 24, 2013, during Operation Damayan. JTF-505 is coordinating efforts by all DoD services in the Pacific Command area of responsibility and working with the Philippine government to rapidly deliver humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the areas the Philippine government deems most in need. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by CWO3 Jonathan C. Knauth/Released)

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/3382840/operation-damayan-multinational-coordination-center>

The report, “Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines,” also noted that one of the main initial challenges during Haiyan was the absence of a coordinating mechanism for international responders. However, the eventual activation of the MNCC helped alleviate this.

At the MNCC, a one-stop shop was established to receive and process all necessary travel and clearance documents from international responders, while nightly ad-hoc briefings with all foreign military commanders were initially conducted in the first few days until the briefings became regular daily coordination meetings. Through the MNCC, the deployment of foreign militaries with their C130s and other logistical assets became systematic, organized and quick which accelerated the delivery of relief items and evacuation of survivors in the affected areas.⁶²

The MNF SOP was also credited with providing many assisting regional militaries with a working understanding of the MNCC’s roles and tasks.⁶³ While it was observed that there were multiple logistics challenges during the response, and that “a coordination cell within the MNCC was needed to synchronize operations,”⁶⁴ it also was noted that the military logistics system adapted to the operational

⁶² Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

⁶³ Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

⁶⁴ “Philippines Typhoons Haiyan and Hagupit,” Disaster Response Regional Architectures: Assessing Future Possibilities, <https://apccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/hadr-publication-web-version.pdf>

needs on the ground. Overall, it was acknowledged that military-to-military coordination and the MNCCs functioned well.

The report, “Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative,” noted that in after-action reviews, Philippine officers identified several gaps in the operation of the MNCC: 1) A shortage of qualified personnel with CCC or MNCC experience, 2) The MNCC was hindered by insufficient information sharing processes and procedures which led to the use of social networks and regular email; 3) Operational planning lacked timely data on things such as humidity, temperature, supply routes, and other critical information; and, 4) The MNCC suffered from a lack of geospatial capabilities for damage and needs assessments that could be shared quickly with assisting states.⁶⁵

Philippine officers also credited the effectiveness of the MNCC to the exercises and training done with the U.S. The MNCC conceptually closely resembled the combined coordination centers from the Philippines-U.S. CONOPS which aided familiarity.⁶⁶

The report also recommended that the AFP also prepare to establish satellite MNCCs: “As national-level AFP officers prepare to establish and run a Manila-based MNCC, they should at the same time prepare to establish and run multiple complementary satellite MNCCs, such as was created in Cebu. The case study noted that while the MNCC-Cebu performed a critical role running the logistics stream at Mactan airport, a comparable coordination center was lacking in Roxas.”⁶⁷

The report also identified three broad areas where lessons were observed: 1) personnel, 2) procedures, and 3) information. On the personnel level, MNCC officers from the AFP J-3/Operations and J-5/Plans offices said setting up operations at the MNCC took seven days and that senior officers with training or experience with MNCCs were unfortunately not always available. The experience of Typhoons Haiyan and Hagupit provided the AFP with a group of officers familiar with running an MNCC. However, the report noted that the officers will rotate and some will be lost through attrition, thus “the Department of National Defense should proactively ensure there is a wide pool of officers trained in the ASEAN SASOP, the Multinational Forces SOP, the U.S.-Philippines Concept of Operations, and versed in the lessons and strategies of these two disasters.”⁶⁸

At the procedural level, MNCC staff noted military assistance was first established bilaterally. “For each foreign military deployment, the foreign military’s attaché and Embassy staff created with DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs) a separate memorandum of understanding, terms of reference, or statement of intent for the deployment.” In the future, the MNCC could help expedite this process “by serving as a clearinghouse of information and focal point for embassy military staff. As foreign ministries of defense weigh military deployment, their Embassy attachés could obtain accurate and timely information regarding overflight, firearms restrictions, medical and pharmaceutical regulations, force protection, quarantine, and other basic information.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The report observed that a DFA presence in the MNCC would also make the process more efficient. Since the MNCC will be obtaining needs assessments from the NDRRMC Operations Center, these attachés could use that information to customize what is being deployed from their home country. With this information, the embassies could quicken the process for negotiating and signing memoranda of understanding or terms of reference, the report recommends.⁷⁰

The MNCC staff noted the lack of an open-access, unclassified communication system and information regarding weather, damages, and distribution routes. “Philippine disaster managers – particularly those who may be tasked with setting up international coordination centers – need to select in advance an appropriate information sharing platform.” The report recommends the DND should select an agreed-upon information sharing platform and should train within the AFP and with HADR partners at exercises such as Balikatan. “Establishing information-sharing protocols and dissemination systems in advance would increase the utilization of the MNCC in the future,” the report states.⁷¹

USPACOM International Coordination Team (ICT)

From the U.S. side, in the response to Haiyan, USPACOM established the International Coordination Team (ICT), a mechanism that was noted to have complemented the MNCC. The ICT was stood up by USPACOM before the MNCC to “pave the way” for its establishment.

The ICT served as a mechanism for USPACOM for the provision of military capabilities and resources to support international disaster relief efforts in the region. The ICT operated from USPACOM headquarters meeting daily during an ongoing crisis for the purpose of joint planning, information sharing, and creating common situational awareness of the region among USPACOM international military liaisons (LNOs).⁷²

Originally stood up in November 2013 in support of Operation DAMAYAN, the ICT serves as a “one-stop shop” for international LNOs to clarify their roles; help posture international military support appropriately before the urgent formal host nation request for assistance; and avoid potential confusion with the MNCC team during crisis situation. Intended to provide a proactive, strategic, and high level operational perspective, the ICT paves the way for the smooth establishment of the MNCC by alleviating the initial burden of the affected nation to collect, organize, and identify overlaps, gaps, and potential opportunities across the full spectrum of response operations during the critical life-saving rapid response phase.⁷³

Typhoon Hagupit: Learning from Haiyan

In addition to the response to Haiyan, the MNCC was also activated by the Philippines roughly a little over a year later in response to Typhoon Hagupit (locally known as Ruby). On December 6, 2014, Typhoon Hagupit made landfall at Dolores municipality, Eastern Samar province in the Visayas region with maximum sustained winds of 175 km/h and gusts of up to 210 km/h.⁷⁴ As the storm was of the same intensity as Haiyan and initially expected to take a similar path, many had feared similar destruction and loss of life as had been experienced in 2013, particularly in areas still recovering from Haiyan.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² An Inside Look into USPACOM Response to Super Typhoon Haiyan, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=a2uLWdr66U0%3d&portalid=0>

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Philippines: Typhoon Hagupit Situation Report No. 2 (as of 7 December 2014),” <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-typhoon-hagupit-situation-report-no-2-7-december-2014>

Typhoon Hagupit made a second landfall in the morning of 7 Dec in Cataingan municipality, Masbate province. Hagupit brought heavy rain to areas including the provinces of Cebu, Leyte and Samar, still recovering from Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. As of 8 Dec, an estimated 227,000 families (1 million people) were evacuated to 687 evacuation centers across seven affected regions and Metro Manila. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) reported that the typhoon had affected more than 4 million individuals in total, and claimed 18 lives.^{75, 76}

While the Philippine government did not issue an official request for assistance, Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States offered their support to the Philippines at the height of the storm on December 7, 2014.⁷⁷

As Typhoon Hagupit approached the Philippines, and in anticipation of the potential coordination of multiple foreign military responders, the national response agencies and the AFP began preparing as Hagupit approached the Philippines. In general, having quickly learned from the response a year earlier, national response authorities and the AFP were considered well prepared for Hagupit.

Although the response to Haiyan was generally well coordinated with respect to the magnitude of the disaster, some lessons learned were noted to improve future response in the Philippines. This included not only utilizing a MNCC for military-military coordination efforts, but establishing one early in the response. This lesson was applied for Hagupit.

Thus, as part of preparation efforts to activate an MNCC, a “high ranking AFP officer” who was instrumental in establishing the MNCC after Haiyan, “delivered a lecture on MNCC processes to relevant AFP officers who were assigned to manage the MNCC” before Typhoon Hagupit hit.⁷⁸

Additionally, a couple of days before expected landfall, the AFP stood up the MNCC. “Recognizing the need for the MNCC to operate at the strategic and operational levels simultaneously, the MNCC in Camp Aguinaldo became fully operational 48 hours before Super Typhoon Hagupit made landfall.”⁷⁹ It was noted that the earlier establishment of the MNCC eliminated the time lag that “compromised coordination” response that was observed during the Haiyan response. As part of preparatory efforts, the AFP alerted 476 sealift vessels from different parts of the country to deploy to the affected areas in close coordination with the MNCC.⁸⁰

The study, “Advances in Civil-Military Coordination in Catastrophes: How the Philippines Turned Lessons Learned from Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Into Best Practices for Disaster Preparedness and Response,” identified three major best practices resulting from the experience of responders to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and how these were utilized in the response to Typhoon Hagupit.

75 “Typhoon Hagupit - Dec 2014 Disaster Description,” <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/tc-2014-000160-phl>

76 DREF Final Report Philippines: Typhoon Hagupit, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRPH016drefFR.pdf>

77 “Philippines: Typhoon Hagupit Situation Report No. 2 (as of 7 December 2014),” <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-typhoon-hagupit-situation-report-no-2-7-december-2014>

78 Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

79 Advances in Civil-Military Coordination in Catastrophes: How the Philippines Turned Lessons Learned from Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Into Best Practices for Disaster Preparedness and Response, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=EOPr2ycnjzs%3d&portalid=0>

80 Ibid.

One of the best practices focused on the usage of the MNCC:

“Best Practice 2: Bilateral commitment executed multilaterally on the ground through the Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) promotes optimal civilian use of foreign defense assets.”⁸¹

Response clusters also provided clear requirements of consolidated needs assessments based on the Pre Disaster Risk Assessment – Action, Program, and Protocol (PDRA-APP) reports to the MNCC, which was ready to process and manage incoming foreign military assets.⁸² During the Hagupit response, “the MNCC, nested under a broader national HADR architecture, complemented existing relief mechanisms.”⁸³

Although it would be difficult to directly compare the response to Hagupit and Haiyan due to the slightly different nature of each disaster, many would agree that better preparation from lessons learned in the response to Haiyan, including lessons learned on the MNCC, greatly assisted the Philippines in dealing with preparing and responding to Hagupit. “The establishment and smooth operation of the MNCC during Typhoon Hagupit proved the MNCC is a worthy model that merits close scrutiny from other regional nations.”⁸⁴

Exercise Coordinated Response 2017 (Ex COORES 2017)

The Philippines MNCC concept has also been tested since the typhoons in multilateral regional exercises. This occurred during Singapore’s Changi RHCC’s Inaugural HADR Exercise in 2017 – Coordinated

Response (Ex COORES 2017) which involved 150 participants from 18 militaries from Europe and the Asia-Pacific region and observers from 12 international organizations, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The exercise was co-organized by the AFP and CFE-DM. Participants utilized a fictitious scenario to test the AFP MNCC concept. The exercise simulated two natural disasters that had struck the Philippines consecutively, involving a volcanic eruption at Mount Mayon, followed by a category 5 typhoon at Legazpi city.^{85, 86}



Ex COORES 2017: The Changi RHCC provides support to an affected state by facilitating the coordination of foreign military assistance. The Changi RHCC also provides a comprehensive situational picture to assisting militaries, thereby enhancing the efficiency of the disaster response.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/oursingaporearmy/photos/a.10154831936846063/10154831938261063/?type=3&theater>

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Frameworks and Partnerships Improving HA/DR in the Asia Pacific: The Japan-U.S. Philippines Civil-Military Disaster Preparedness Initiative, http://peacewindsamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Frameworks_and_Partnerships_Fulltext.pdf

⁸⁵ “Ex COORES 2017,” <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/20170125007/Infogfx%20Ex%20COORES%2017.pdf>

⁸⁶ “Singapore Partners Philippines and US to Co-Organise Multinational Exercise to Strengthen Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief,” https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2017/january/25jan17_nr

During the exercise, the AFP established its simulated MNCC to coordinate incoming foreign assistance, supported by the Changi RHCC. The exercise provided opportunities to test and exercise the processes in the coordination of a multinational military HADR effort. Participants were also able to get familiar with both the AFP MNCC and the Changi RHCC's concept of operations, in anticipation of cooperation in future HADR operations, according to the RHCC.⁸⁷

According to the RHCC, compared to past regional HADR exercises where a multinational military coalition headquarters would be designated as a generic MNCC, Ex COORES allowed the AFP to test its actual MNCC concept, which helped draw out concrete lessons for the AFP and international participants.⁸⁸

Exercise Balikatan

The MNCC is included for the HADR coordination and inter-operability aspect of the Philippine-US Exercise Balikatan joint military exercises. Within the Balikatan exercise framework, other allies such as Japan and Australia conduct exercises with the MNCC procedure.⁸⁹

Exercise Balikatan is an annual U.S.-Philippine military training event focused on a variety of missions, including HADR, counter terrorism, and other combined military operations. The exercise demonstrates cooperation and interoperability between the two countries, consistent with the Mutual Defense Treaty and Visiting Forces Agreement. At the last Exercise Balikatan 2019, Philippine and U.S. service members conducted humanitarian civic action (HCA) activities throughout Luzon. The exercise seeks to highlight the two militaries continued commitment to train and share information to improve their ability to coordinate a multilateral response to crisis.⁹⁰

The 2015 Nepal earthquake response and the MNMCC

On April 15, 2015, a powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, leaving over 8,700 people dead, over 21,000 injured and destroying over 600,000 houses. It quickly became clear that the scale and scope of the damage from the temblor overwhelmed the capacity of national authorities. Because of the extent of the damage, the Government of Nepal requested international assistance, including foreign military assets (FMA). Along with the international humanitarian community, which included the United Nations (UN), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and 34 assisting nations from across the globe, at least 18 foreign militaries helped respond to the earthquake.⁹¹

The 18 foreign militaries included Algeria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, China, Israel, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Poland, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK, and the US.⁹² The military forces added considerable response capabilities to the Nepalese-led response effort, particularly in the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Changi RHCC: Insights from the Nepal Earthquake & HADR Exercise Coordinated Response," Liaison 2017-IX, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2017-IX-2.pdf>

⁸⁹ Building Resilience from Within: Enhancing Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Post-Haiyan Philippines, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/NTS-Report-Building-Resilience-from-Within-Enhancing-Humanitarian-Civil-Military-Coordination-in-Post-Haiyan-Philippines-final.pdf>

⁹⁰ "Exercise Balikatan," <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/Balikatan>

⁹¹ A brief review of military response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake: A Nepalese Army and U.S. Pacific Command perspective, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=eeDNOSGh-Ss%3d&portalid=0>

⁹² "MNMCC daily update 0800 hrs 18 May 2015," https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mnmcc_morning_update_18_may_2015.pdf

areas of search and rescue (SAR), medical assistance, airlift and engineering support.

Under Nepal's "National Disaster Response Framework – 2013 (NDRF)" the Nepali Army (NA) is given prime responsibility for coordinating multinational and bilateral military humanitarian assistance. The NDRF is a guide for a coordinated national response in case of medium and large scale disasters in Nepal. The document also assigns primary and secondary responsibilities for key Nepalese stakeholders during a disaster response.⁹³

Additionally, the role of the MNMCC in Nepal is also outlined in the NDRF. "The MNMCC may be established at the General Headquarters (National) level, and can be replicated at subnational levels. The MNMCC facilitates information sharing between the Nepal Armed Forces and assisting foreign militaries, and coordinates the use of military resources. In Nepal, FMA coordination at the national level takes place at the MNMCC and is facilitated through liaison with the established civil-military coordination platform."⁹⁴

As the NA is charged with coordinating foreign multinational military response, per the NDRF, in an effort to effectively communicate and coordinate with the various foreign military elements on the ground, the NA established an MNMCC in NA headquarters soon after the earthquake struck. Most multinational military-military coordination occurred under the MNMCC. The MNMCC was chaired by the Nepali Army with the eventual participation of foreign military liaison officers from the 18 foreign militaries. This was the first time that the MNMCC was used in Nepal.⁹⁵

Early in the response, the MNMCC was vital in helping to coordinate the various international military search and rescue teams. A liaison officer from the NA was assigned to each of these teams to help mobilize them in a coordinated manner and gave updates to the MNMCC from the field. The Liaison Officers facilitate coordination between the MNMCC, NEOC and OSOCC.⁹⁶ Additionally, the MNMCC initially took the lead in coordinating incoming



The MNMCC and the HuMOCC in Nepal coordinated relief operations after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the nation.

Source: <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-VII-2.pdf>

international civilian SAR teams. Generally, the coordination of SAR teams is a function handled by the UNOCHA-led OSOCC, however it was necessary for the MNMCC to assume these responsibilities since the OSOCC was delayed and not yet established. The MNMCC undertook this function until

⁹³ National Disaster Response Framework (NDRF), <http://un.org.np/reports/national-disaster-response-framework>

⁹⁴ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

the OSOCC was stood up.⁹⁷ A total of seventy-six civilian search and rescue teams were deployed from 31 countries.⁹⁸ This new, unfamiliar yet pivotal role of having primary responsibility of the initial coordination of civilian SAR teams, was crucial to rapid relief efforts in the search for survivors.

As per the NDRF, the MNMCC and the OSOCC are two main components that tie into the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC).⁹⁹ As such, the Nepalese Army also appointed a dedicated liaison officer from the MNMCC in the NEOC of the Ministry of Home Affairs.¹⁰⁰ Per the NDRF, the MNMCC, aside from coordinating efforts between the national military and foreign military forces, also tied into the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC).

Additionally, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the Logistics Cluster urged the NA to establish an integrated planning cell (IPC) within the MNMCC that could:

1. Enable an integrated response in support of the Government of Nepal (GoN)
2. Ensure joint situational awareness
3. De-conflict support operations in the same geographical area of operations
4. Provide a single entry point to prioritize and task requests from the HC to access national /foreign military efforts in support of the GoN.”^{101, 102}

The IPC was eventually stood up a couple of weeks into the relief effort and became an integral part of the MNMCC.

Immediately following the quake, a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team was deployed to Kathmandu, with four UN-CMCoord officers. The United Nations Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) team was invited by the Nepal Army to have a permanent liaison function within the MNMCC to facilitate information sharing and coordination. As part of its civil-military coordination strategy, the team then established a Humanitarian Military Operations Coordination Centre (HuMOCC), also known as a Joint Command Center (HuMOCC/JCC), about a week after the quake struck,¹⁰³ established at and co-located with the MNMCC.¹⁰⁴ Ideally, the HuMOCC and MNMCC/MNCC are located in the same area to foster collaboration and cooperation, a concept known as co-location.

UNOCHA was also invited to have a permanent liaison function within the MNMCC to facilitate sharing

97 “Mission First & People Always”: The Nepal Army’s AAR on Operation Sankat Mochan,” Liaison 2016 VIII-1, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/liaison-2016-VIII-1.pdf>

98 Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

99 “Civil-Military Coordination after the Nepal Earthquake: Role of the HuMOCC,” Liaison 2016 VIII-1, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/liaison-2016-VIII-1.pdf>

100 “Nepal Earthquake: National and Foreign Military Air Assets (as of 12 May 2015),” https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NPL_FMDA_Snapshot_120515%281%29.pdf

101 “UN-CMCoord Response for Nepal Earthquake Humanitarian Military Operation and Coordination Center (HuMOCC) Meeting Minutes, 06 May 2015,” https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/humocc_meeting_-_6_may_2015.pdf

102 “CFE-DMHA Disaster Information Report, Nepal Earthquake, 15 May, 2015, CDIR No. 21,” <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=uARC08PMISk%3D&portalid=0>

103 Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

104 “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, Issue No. 5, May-June 2015,” <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CMCoord%20Newsletter%20-%20May%202015%20%28Issue%205%29.pdf>

of information and coordination of operational planning. In turn, representatives from the MNMCC participated in the HuMOCC.¹⁰⁵

A short note on the HuMOCC usage in Nepal: “The HuMOCC objective was to provide a predictable humanitarian-military-police coordination platform. Complementary to the OSOCC, the HuMOCC aimed to provide the physical space dedicated to facilitating the interface between humanitarians, national and foreign military actors, as well as the national police.”¹⁰⁶

The creation of the HuMOCC in Nepal facilitated the development of requests for assistance (RFA) and requests for information (RFI), allowing the humanitarian community to access military and civil defense assets (MCDA) and facilitating civil-military information sharing. Requests for MCDA were discussed and prioritized in the HuMOCC and then submitted to the MNMCC. According to UNOCHA, the MNMCC played the role of the “trading floor” for the tasking of assets.¹⁰⁷

In the case of Nepal, the role of the MNMCC was outlined in the country’s National Disaster Response Framework (NDRF) which allows the MNMCC to be established at the General Headquarters (National) level and could be replicated at subnational levels. Note that this is somewhat similar to the Philippines design in that the MNCC can be replicated to another level if needed.

The MNMCC held daily meetings to coordinate foreign military assets.

These daily meeting minutes were posted to UNOCHA’s HumanitarianResponse.info website.¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹ This information provided good situational awareness to organizations outside of the country as well as responding countries and organizations unable to physically access the MNMCC.

¹⁰⁵ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹⁰⁶ “The HuMOCC Typhoon Haiyan, Cyclone Pam and Nepal Earthquake: Observations and Lessons Identified in Humanitarian-Military Police Coordination and the Use of Foreign Military Assets,” Liaison Vol. VII, Fall 2015, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-VII-2.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, Issue No. 5, May-June 2015,” <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CMCoord%20Newsletter%20-%20May%202015%20%28Issue%205%29.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ “Nepal Earthquake: National and Foreign Military Air Assets (as of 12 May 2015),” https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NPL_FMDA_Snapshot_120515%281%29.pdf

¹⁰⁹ “HumanitarianResponse.info,” <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/>



A member of the Israel Defense Force, right, speaks with a Canadian soldier before a brief at the multi-national military coordination center May 8 in Kathmandu, Nepal. (U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Cpl. Thor J. Larson/Released)

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/1923971/nepal-earthquake-relief-countries-around-world-come-help>

The tasking of teams was also conducted at these meetings with national authorities and the Urban Search and Rescue Coordination Cell (UCC). The UCC provided daily reports to national authorities and the OSOCC, and maintained a strong working relationship with both the NEOC and the MNMCC.¹¹⁰

The MNMCC facilitated information sharing between the Nepal Armed Forces and foreign militaries and helped coordinate the use of MCDA. Sometimes the role of the MNMCC is outlined in detail in a country's disaster response plans or procedures, such as in Nepal, but this is not always the case. Lessons learned from Nepal and foreign militaries assisting the 2015 earthquake response can be utilized to use and improve the MNMCC as a coordination mechanism for future use by other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Some Lessons Learned from use of the MNMCC in Nepal

Ronaldo Reario, a Humanitarian Affairs Officer from UNOCHA, noted in his article, “The HuMOCC Typhoon Haiyan, Cyclone Pam and Nepal Earthquake: Observations and Lessons Identified in Humanitarian-Military Police Coordination and the Use of Foreign Military Assets,” some preliminary lessons learned on the use of the MNMCC stemming from the Nepal context (but could be universally applied):

“2. Military-military coordination mechanisms such as the MNMCC in the context of the Nepal earthquake response should have the capacity to contribute to achieving common situational awareness, facilitate joint planning and clarify task division. This means that humanitarian priorities are given the first opportunity for the use of FMA in the absence of civilian alternatives during the critical period.

3. Requests for the use of FMA at the sub-national (hub) level were passed through the MNMCC. Decision making and tasking normally takes place in Kathmandu at the MNMCC for use of FMA at the hub level. This was not seen as a robust mechanism that expedites decision on requests to the MNMCC for tasks that are carried out by FMA stationed at the sub-national (hub) level.”¹¹¹

Nepalese Army MNMCC Lessons Learned

Shortly after transitioning from response operations to recovery, the NA released a 52-page after action review (AAR) on “Operation Sankat Mochan”, the NA’s disaster relief operation for the earthquake. It has been generally expressed that the NA-led MNMCC successfully helped coordinate foreign military assistance. However, the NA did note some suggestions and lessons observed. For example, the NA AAR notes that in the future, the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) would provide the guidance to a military command center that would coordinate the operations of foreign military teams and the OSOCC would coordinate the efforts of civilian search and rescue teams.¹¹²

Other highlighted recommendations for the coordination of foreign military teams from the Nepalese AAR included the proposed development of Standard Operating Procedures for the MNMCC: “To effectively coordinate and utilize the resources brought in by foreign military teams Standard Operating

¹¹⁰ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹¹¹ “The HuMOCC Typhoon Haiyan, Cyclone Pam and Nepal Earthquake: Observations and Lessons Identified in Humanitarian-Military Police Coordination and the Use of Foreign Military Assets,” Liaison Vol. VII-2, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-VII-2.pdf>

¹¹² “Mission First & People Always”: The Nepal Army’s AAR on Operation Sankat Mochan,” Liaison Vol. VIII-1 2016, <https://www.cfedmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/liaison-2016-VIII-1.pdf>

Procedures (SOP) for the MNMCC must be developed. The SOP could be utilized to prevent problems faced in the past such as foreign military teams bringing weapons or not coming in self-sustained.”¹¹³

The Nepalese Army’s “lessons learned” report proposes some changes to the MNMCC structure and coordination. The proposed structure includes cells for: reception, operations, coordination with the NEOC and OSOCC, a liaison cell for the Nepalese Army and foreign military Liaison Officers, and an information management cell.¹¹⁴

The thesis, “Improvement of Coordination in the Multi-National Military Coordination Center of the Nepal Army in Respond to Disasters,” by Major Basanta Bahadur Gautam of the Nepalese Army, provides additional recommendations to the NA and Government of Nepal regarding the MNMCC after a review of the coordinating mechanism following the 2015 earthquake. The paper recognized that although in general, national and international observers and participants praised the MNMCC’s efforts, “there still is room for improvement in the coordination of the MNMCC to synergize better and better utilize the wide range of MNF resources during future disaster responses.”¹¹⁵

The author notes one of the shortcomings of the MNMCC was the lack of an information management cell which was a major factor in coordination challenges. This was also noted in the official Nepalese Army AAR. There was a need to provide real-time information, but since the MNMCC did not have an information management cell for this function, initial damage assessment and the identification of requirements was difficult to achieve. The lack of a suitable information management cell to assist MNCC operations is also brought up in reviews of the Philippines MNCC for Typhoon Haiyan (see Philippines section). Likewise, a lack of an effective airport coordination cell also severely hampered the MNMCC in coordinating the efforts of the assisting militaries.¹¹⁶

As the MNMCC is also established only during large-scale disasters, such sudden activation of the MNMCC only after the disaster may not be very useful due to a lack of staff experience. The paper suggests “it is better to have small but permanent (long-term) staffing of the MNMCC to facilitate early situational understanding.” It was observed that on the civilian side the OSOCC later in the response established regional offices and “this decentralization of the OSOCC facilitated better coordination.” The MNMCC on the other hand, was limited to the one central coordination center located in Kathmandu and was dependent on the liaison officers and the NA local units for coordination in other parts of the country. Thus, the report recommends the NA and the CNDRC should develop a plan to establish regional MNMCCs during crisis response.¹¹⁷ Note that sub-MNCC’s were also recommended to be established in the Philippines context.

Another challenge brought up by Major Gautam is that the MNMCC does not have the provision to coordinate with other branches of the Army HQ, although frequent coordination and exchange of information with the operation cells, intelligence cells, logistics cells and Directorate of Public Relation

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹¹⁵ Improvement of Coordination in the Multi-National Military Coordination Center of the Nepal Army in Respond to Disasters, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038685.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Improvement of Coordination in the Multi-National Military Coordination Center of the Nepal Army in Respond to Disasters, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038685.pdf>

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

(DPR) are essential. This lack in coordination created duplications and delay in allocating tasks as well as decision-making delays. Thus, it is recommended that the MNMCC should have a common information sharing platform with the Directorate of Military Operations (DMO) of the NA.

In terms of policy, the absence of bilateral and multilateral agreements, led to coordination challenges with assisting foreign militaries. Therefore, the author highly recommended the establishment of bilateral and multilateral agreements to facilitate better coordination between the NA and foreign militaries.

¹¹⁸ The establishment of agreements as a positive initiative is also noted in after action reviews of the Philippines response to Haiyan.

The author noted some best practices of the Philippines during their response to Typhoon Hagupit are beneficial for Nepal to implement during future responses. “The early establishment of the MNMCC, prior bilateral and multilateral agreements with potential supporting nations, conduct of disaster related exercises, and availability of multiple transportation access for receiving assistance are some of the important best practices of the Philippines during response to Typhoon Hagupit.”¹¹⁹

Best practices from Nepal during the earthquake response that should be retained and institutionalized for future disaster responses as recommended by the author include: “Conduct of various disaster related exercises including Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER)¹²⁰, early establishment of the MNMCC, coordination of non-military assisting teams in absence of the OSOCC, and establishment of the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) were some of the best practices that Nepal should retain for future disaster responses.”¹²¹

USINDOPACOM review of U.S. military response and the MNMCC

Under the direction of USINDOPACOM, the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM) conducted a Joint After-Action Review (JAAR) of Operation SAHAYOGI HAAT (the USPACOM response operation for the 2015 earthquake), completed in January 2016. The report analyzed the USPACOM response and the purpose for this review was to inform future operations, actions, and activities, and to help USPACOM to respond more effectively to future regional foreign disaster response events.

Much of the response lessons observed in both USPACOM and the NA after action reviews reveal mostly affected state or assisting state observations unique to each experience, however the USPACOM review identified a lesson observed on the MNMCC in common with the observations from the Nepali Army on the MNMCC as a coordination platform. Both reviews agreed upon the importance of the establishment of the MNMCC and the vital role it played primarily in military-military and also in civil-military coordination during the response¹²²: “...The Nepal Army’s Multinational Military Coordination Center (MNMCC) was the primary mechanism for coordinating the Nepali government and the international

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ PEER is a regional program that has been supported by USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) since 1998. The program aims to enhance local and regional disaster preparedness and response capacities of vulnerable countries within the region.

“Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER), Stage IV,” <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1861/program-enhancement-emergency-response-peer-stage-iv>

¹²¹ Improvement of Coordination in the Multi-National Military Coordination Center of the Nepal Army in Respond to Disasters, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038685.pdf>

¹²² CFE-DM Case Study Series No. 1: A Brief Review of Military Response to the 2015 Nepal Earthquake: A Nepalese Army and U.S. Pacific Command Perspective, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=eeDNOSGh-Ss%3d&portalid=0>

disaster response efforts during the chaotic first week after the earthquake struck.”¹²³

The report notes the support by assisting foreign militaries was vital in helping the response led by the GoN and Nepalese military, although Nepal bore much of the burden for coordination and relief efforts, and led the overall success of the response. Foreign militaries provided additional unique capabilities where the NA did not have the national capacity for, including search and rescue, additional airlift, and specialized equipment.

The AAR concluded that early establishment of a coordinating mechanism or center for military coordination, in this case, the MNMCC, as well as the establishment of other civil-military coordination centers—the HuMOCC and OSOCC—for the overall communication and coordination between foreign militaries and civilian responders, was key to the success of the response.

Exercises to test Nepal’s MNMCC concept

Two exercises in 2016 helped Nepal finalize its MNMCC concept. That year, two civil-military coordination exercises were held: Tempest Express 28 and a Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange (DREE). These exercises tested the progress of Nepal’s coordination mechanisms, as well as the coordination between the MNMCC, the National Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) and humanitarian coordination structures.

These exercises set the MNMCC as the national-level coordination platform for all FMA. Numerous policies were also consolidated including the finalization of SOPs for the MNMCC; drafting of national guidelines for international assistance; and revision of the NDRF.¹²⁴

The MNCC in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Armed Forces Division (AFD) and disaster management

The Bangladesh Armed Forces Division (AFD) plays a key role in disaster management in Bangladesh. AFD works closely with the lead ministry on disaster management, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), which develops requests for AFD assistance to deliver aid. The main role of AFD is to coordinate the employment of the armed forces in overall relief operations. During a disaster, AFD personnel are deployed to affected areas. AFD will then establish a monitoring cell to coordinate with government ministries. The revised 2019 Standing Orders on Disaster (SoD) also endorses a formal civil-military coordination platform for Bangladesh.¹²⁵

In addition to response, AFD takes an active role in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and management, including participating in and hosting disaster response exercises. The exercises bring together multiple nations, and government and non-government organizations to discuss and compare

¹²³ U.S. Pacific Command Operation SAHAYOGI HAAT Joint After-Action Review Executive Summary, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Publications/Reports/Nepal-EQ-JAAR>

¹²⁴ “5 Priority Countries,” Liaison X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹²⁵ Bangladesh Disaster Management Reference Handbook, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=OI7WaP1idxA%3d&portalid=0>

best practices for disaster relief.^{126, 127}

International military assistance in Bangladesh is generally coordinated bilaterally through the AFD and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) in consultation with the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC). However, in disaster contexts where a significant number of FMAs are deployed, a MNCC may be stood up “to provide common situational awareness between the AFD and assisting foreign militaries, facilitate information sharing, and ensure the efficient use of military support locations, capabilities, and coordination.”¹²⁸ This purpose is similar to other MNCCs/MNMCCs in the region.

A couple of major exercises have helped Bangladesh draft, develop and refine its MNCC SOP. These are the DREE and Exercise Coordinated Response (Ex COORES). According to the AFD, the early origins of Bangladesh’s MNCC SOP can be found following the establishment of the DREE program in 2010. The DREE is a multinational disaster exercise, one of the largest in the region, and the Bangladesh DREE is closely co-organized by the AFD, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) and U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC). During the DREES, the MNCC concept is regularly tested and improved upon.¹²⁹ One of the objectives of the DREE according to AFD is to “integrate international practices into national systems of disaster management.” Thus the concept of the MNCC was “put into practice.” Bangladesh’s MNCC concept was tested in October 2016 during the DREE and again at the 2017 DREE.^{130, 131}

Aside from the DREE, the SOP was created based on a variety of other things, according to the AFD, including documents on multinational force SOPs, country-specific MNCC SOPs and the “humanitarian coordination architecture of Bangladesh.”¹³²

The first Regional Consultative Group (RCG) session in December 2015 also provided additional impetus towards the development of the MNCC. At the first RCG meeting in 2015, the Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Armed Forces acknowledged a need for additional military-military and civil-military coordination mechanisms that could fit the needs of Bangladesh, namely the MNCC and HuMOCC. At that first session, a 2016 work plan for Bangladesh was developed focusing on three main areas: coordination mechanisms; the use, allocation and tracking of foreign military assets (FMA); and coordination of logistic planning.^{133, 134}

The MNCC concept was put through final testing and validated at the 2019 Exercise Coordinated Response (Ex COORES). Ex COORES, held every two years since it began in 2017, is primarily hosted by the Singapore Armed Forces Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Coordination Centre (RHCC) and also co-organized by CFE-DM.¹³⁵ Bangladesh was invited to be a co-organizer for COORES 2019 where it was held at the Multinational Operations and Exercise Centre at

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ US Army Pacific cohosts international Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange, https://www.army.mil/article/229535/us_army_pacific_cohosts_international_disaster_response_exercise_and_exchange

¹²⁸ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹²⁹ “Disaster Response Exercise and Exchange-2019,” <https://dreebangladesh.com/event-slug/disaster-response-exercise-and-exchange-2019-6>

¹³⁰ “5 Priority Countries,” Liaison X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹³¹ Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) of Bangladesh Multinational Coordination Centre, <https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/Standing%20Operating%20Procedure%20of%20Bangladesh%20Multinational%20Coordination%20Centre.pdf>

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ “5 priority countries,” Liaison, Vol. X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) of Bangladesh Multinational Coordination Centre, <https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/Standing%20Operating%20Procedure%20of%20Bangladesh%20Multinational%20Coordination%20Centre.pdf>

the Changi Command & Control Centre in Changi Naval Base. The exercise started off with academic presentations on key topics such as the MNCC's standard operating procedures and its concept of operations.

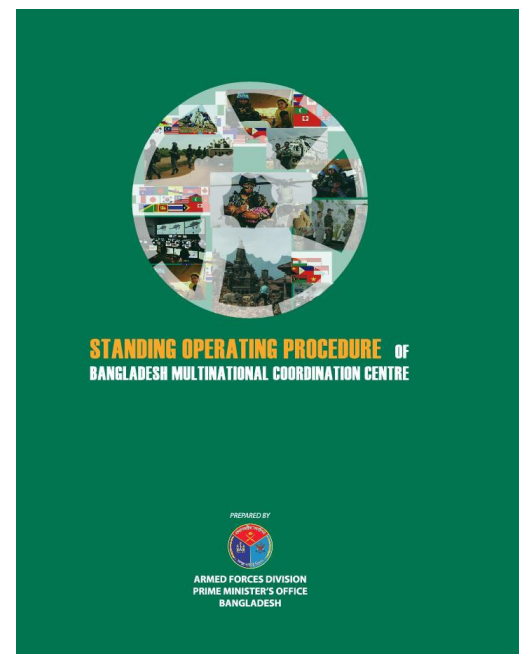
The exercise was designed to test the MNCC's response in a scenario where a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck along the Madhupur fault line about 60km north-northwest of Dhaka, Bangladesh in Tangail town. The three-day exercise involved more than 200 participants from over 25 militaries and 19 humanitarian organizations. Ex COORES greatly assisted Bangladesh in finalizing its SOP. At the end of COORES 2019, the AFD said the review and testing at the exercise validated the MNCC SOP for Bangladesh and its finalization.^{136, 137}

Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) of Bangladesh Multinational Coordination Centre (2019)

Following the Ex COORES, later in 2019 Bangladesh finalized its SOP for its MNCC and presented the plan at the RCG5 in Chiang Mai Thailand in December 2019. The SOP was written by the AFD and the Prime Minister's Office.

In developing its SOP, the AFD and PM's office considered these main points:

- The National HADR Architecture
- The Legal framework of Bangladesh
- Role of AFD in National Disaster Management
- The Existing Setup of AFD
- Examples of Foreign Countries' MNCC's
- An Easy Orientation for Foreign Militaries
- Develop a Country Specific plan¹³⁸



Additionally, the SOP made these general assumptions:

- The MNCC will be activated with the approval of the Bangladesh Government only
- The MNCC will engage with any foreign military after agreement by both the countries' Governments at the "strategic level"
- Bangladesh shall continue to exercise its sovereignty and lead the response
- Bangladesh will participate, prioritize, and coordinate requirements, and make these requirements known to international disaster response agencies and other nations
- Foreign Military Forces (FMF) will comply with the requirements of Bangladesh, operate using accepted humanitarian principles, and be willing to participate in the MNCC for as long as Bangladesh determines that the MNCC is required

¹³⁶ "Exercise Coordinated Response 2019 – Coordinate Better, Better Together," https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/army/our-stories-and-publications/our-stories/story-detail/2019/april/exercise_coores_19

¹³⁷ Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) of Bangladesh Multinational Coordination Centre, [https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/](https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/Standing%20Operating%20Procedure%20of%20Bangladesh%20Multinational%20Coordination%20Centre.pdf)

¹³⁸ "Bangladesh," RCG5 Country Organizations Update, Power Point presentation, December 2019

- International and regional humanitarian organization will be coordinating their efforts following the existing HCTT structure of Bangladesh
- International and regional coordinating mechanisms need to be coordinated by the MNCC¹³⁹

According to the SOP, the MNCC headquarters will be led by a Director and Deputy Director(s) and will consist of five wings: Planning Wing, Operations Wing, Logistics Wing, Media Wing, and the Research and Development Wing. A total of 137 personnel will staff the MNCC from the AFD side. A daily briefing will also be held at the MNCC.

Although “finalized,” the AFD plans to periodically review the MNCC SOP. To enable international military coordination, the AFD says that information about the operating procedures of the MNCC will be made available to all national and international MNCC members.

For additional information, Bangladesh’s “Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) of Bangladesh Multinational Coordination Centre,” can be found here in its entirety: <https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/Standing%20Operating%20Procedure%20of%20Bangladesh%20Multinational%20Coordination%20Centre.pdf>

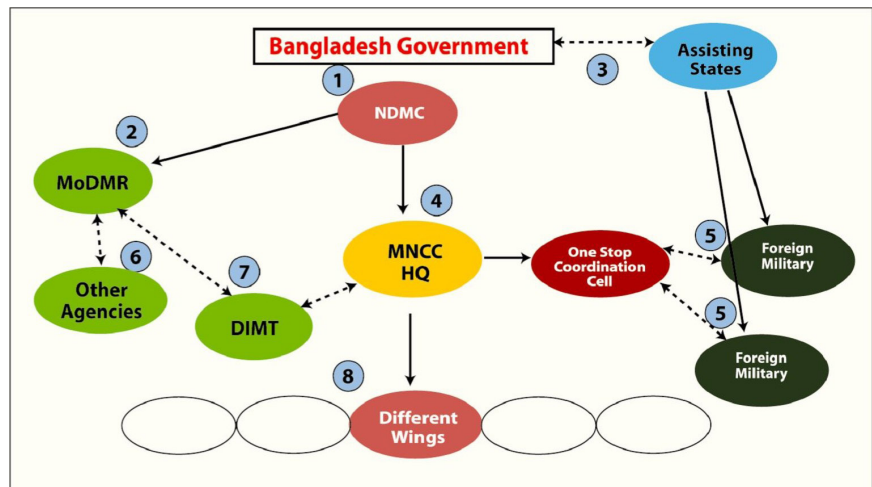


Figure 1: Operational procedure of the Bangladesh MNCC

Source: <https://www.afd.gov.bd/sites/default/files/2019-11/Standing%20Operating%20Procedure%20of%20Bangladesh%20Multinational%20Coordination%20Centre.pdf>

Indonesia: The MNCC and Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Center

The Indonesian Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) and disaster management

The Indonesian Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) has an important role in disaster response in Indonesia. In the Indonesian national disaster management structure, the TNI is a primary response agency. TNI members have been deployed to provide disaster relief for many years. TNI is also responsible for reducing the vulnerability and exposure of communities and to build community capacity to reduce risk and cope with the impact of disasters.¹⁴⁰

There are seven key functions for the TNI during a disaster response. They are:

¹³⁹ “Bangladesh,” RCG5 Country Organizations Update, PowerPoint presentation, December 2019

¹⁴⁰ Indonesia Disaster Management Reference Handbook, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=YUdeVhttp3ns%3d&portalid=0>

1. Lead Search, Rescue and Retrieval Operations.
2. Leadership in managing disaster response through the Incident Command System (ICS).
3. Provide assistance in the transportation of relief goods and rescue and medical teams.
4. Deployment of medical teams.
5. Support to logistics functions.
6. Deployment of equipment, materials and other facilities.
7. Coordinating member of the Satuan Reaksi Cepat Penanggulangan Bencana (SRC PB) or Indonesia Rapid Response & Assistance (INDRRA) Team.¹⁴¹

MNCC in Indonesia

In its 2018 report, “Contingency Plan: Indonesia Earthquake,” the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Indonesia notes that although a regulation is yet to be developed to specifically guide coordination mechanisms among military forces by TNI and between military and civilian organizations, recent HADR exercises by TNI, Indonesia’s National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), the Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB), foreign military forces and some Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) members indicate the coordination platforms that will be activated will be the MNCC and the National Command.¹⁴²

As part of its duties during a disaster response, the TNI is responsible for establishing and leading the MNCC. A MNCC may be established at the national level, but can also be replicated at the subnational level. Joint and Combined Operations/MNF concepts will be applied in the coordination of incoming foreign militaries. In short, “the purpose of the MNCC is to facilitate information sharing between TNI and assisting foreign militaries and ensure the efficient use of resources.”¹⁴³

The MNCC will be chaired by the TNI, and will be part of the National Command function to coordinate foreign military assets. “The MNCC coordination meeting will be participated by BNPB and OCHA as processors of the Requests for Assistance (RFA) from civilian partners and the humanitarian community. OCHA will deploy a Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) team to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the combined efforts, while WFP will also mobilize its Logistics CMCoord officers to specifically deal with logistics operations involving civilian and military organizations,” according to the plan.¹⁴⁴

The National Command chaired by the BNPB, will house civil-military coordination which will facilitate information sharing, situational awareness and task division. Coordination meetings will include the humanitarian community, AHA Centre, TNI and foreign military liaisons. The coordination meetings will help clarify the process of RFA from civilian organizations to military forces. This comes out to a multi-step process:¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹⁴² Contingency Plan: Indonesia Earthquake, https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/indonesia/non-who-publications/indonesia-hct-contingency-plan-2017---earthquake-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=7be98619_2

¹⁴³ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹⁴⁴ Contingency Plan: Indonesia Earthquake, https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/searo/indonesia/non-who-publications/indonesia-hct-contingency-plan-2017---earthquake-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=7be98619_2

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

- OCHA will ensure that requests for the use of national and foreign military forces from the humanitarian community will first be validated by the Task Force Coordinators and then submitted to the Emergency Response Commander.
- The Commander or his/her representative will subsequently validate the requests that will then be submitted to the MNCC for planning purposes.¹⁴⁶

According to WFP, under logistics plans for an earthquake scenario, another one of the response first priorities would be that the MNCC (or Command Center) will coordinate and control international air assets supported by WFP UN-CMCoord coordinators.¹⁴⁷

Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MAC)

In the Indonesian context the MNCC is part of a larger national coordination mechanism called the Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Center. In large-scale emergencies, the MAC Center will be established and coordinated by the BNPB at the disaster area. The MAC Center is composed of the BNPB, the MNCC, and National Forward Coordination Center, the OSOCC, cluster leads and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre).

According to the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), if the response involves international assistance, both from civilian and military sources, then the response will also include the AHA Centre with support from the OSOCC (for managing international non-military assistance) and the Coordination Centre for Military Assistance (or the MNCC, for managing international military assistance, which will be coordinated by the TNI with the Ministry of Defense).¹⁴⁸

An ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) under the AHA Centre, can establish the Joint Operations and Coordination Centre for ASEAN (JOCCA) following a disaster. Similarly, if UNOCHA stands up an OSOCC, the JOCCA and OSOCC will be co-located and will work under the coordination of the MAC Center together with the MNCC and the National Forward Center. (See ASEAN section for more information on the AJDRP, ASEAN-ERAT and JOCCA)¹⁴⁹

The MAC Centre has the following functions:

- Provide decisions and strategic direction for the improvement of emergency response in the affected areas;
- Assist in determining priority needs or support for the affected areas;
- Acquire and mobilize support for extreme resources that are still needed and not available in the affected areas;
- Facilitate the acceptance of international assistance and support, and address regional or international issues that arise;
- Develop an integrated information management system that involves all humanitarian actors, both civilian and military.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹⁵⁰ ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

Both the MAC and MNCC support BNPB and Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah (BPBD) (Regional Agency for Disaster Management) response operations. The MAC may also be used as a coordination platform to optimize the use of military assets by humanitarian agencies.¹⁵¹

Exercises

The MNCC has been tested in Indonesia during the annual bilateral Indonesia-U.S. Gema Bhakti (“Echo of Good Deeds”) HADR exercise. Gema Bhakti is a joint exercise which focuses on operational-level planning for a HADR scenario. A key aspect of the past few exercises has been the implementation of the MNF SOP. The exercise has gone through seven iterations with the last exercise being held in 2019 in Jakarta, Indonesia.¹⁵²

At Gema Bhakti 2014 the TNI hosted staff officers from Indonesia’s military services, the Hawaii National Guard, Hawaii Air National Guard and III Marine Expeditionary Force in the operational-level disaster response exercise using the MNF-SOP and United Nations humanitarian civil-military coordination (UN-CMCoord) guidelines during the five-day event. At the exercise, participants learned how to establish, organize and operate a MNCC.¹⁵³



Capt. Jodi Verklie, U.S. Air Force medical planner and TNI legal planner Capt. Ardy Mahendra discuss multinational coordination centers during exercise Gema Bhakti. (U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. Joel Banjo-Johnson/Released)

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/176665/air-force-members-gain-professional-development-during-gema-bhakti>

Gema Bhakti 2015 was a 10-day, bilateral joint operational-level exercise between U.S. service members and the TNI, working through a HADR scenario. The exercise focused on four lanes of efforts within the context of HA/DR: the MNCC, Rules of Engagement (ROE), Humanitarian Operations and Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) and Urban Search and Rescue. The exercise focused on an earthquake scenario.¹⁵⁴

Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) and the MNCC

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and disaster management

The oldest regional grouping in the Indo-Pacific is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established on 8 August 1967 with the signing of the ASEAN declaration. Ten member states comprise the regional bloc: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines,

¹⁵¹ Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

¹⁵² “Hawaii National Guard leads joint Gema Bhakti 2019,” <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1970042/joint-exercise-gema-bhakti-2019/>

¹⁵³ “CFE-DMHA supports Gema Bhakti 2014,” <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/News/2014/20140701-CFE-DMHA-supports-Gema-Bhakti-2014>

¹⁵⁴ “Air Force captain participates in ‘An Echo of Good Deeds’,” <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/176476/air-force-captain-participates-echo-good-deeds>

Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.¹⁵⁵

ASEAN has several intra-organizational groups that address disaster management and response in the region. The ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM), established in 2003, is the main ASEAN body that oversees the operational implementation of the “ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER),” which is the main ASEAN pact on disaster response and management. The ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) is a major exercise of the ACDM which aims to test, practice and review ASEAN’s disaster management and response mechanisms.¹⁵⁶

The ACDM also functions as the governing board for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). The AHA Centre was set up to facilitate cooperation and coordination among ASEAN States and also with the international community for disaster management and response in the ASEAN region. The AHA Centre helps facilitate joint emergency response; establishment and review of regional standby arrangements for disaster response and relief; and, the review of regional standard operating procedures (SOP).¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁸ The main SOP on HADR for ASEAN is the “Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP).”

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established in 1993 as a key regional forum for peace and security dialog in the region, including ASEAN nations and 17 other nations in the region. ASEAN exercises for disaster response, like the ACDM, also fall under the ARF. In particular, since 2009, the ARF’s Disaster Relief Exercise (ARF DiREx) is a biennial simulation exercise designed to enhance the effectiveness of regional disaster response operations and strengthen civil-military coordination.¹⁵⁹ The MNCC has been exercised under the ARF DiREx.

In September 2016, ASEAN members signed the “ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region.” The declaration reflects ASEAN’s readiness to achieve quicker and collective response to disasters by utilizing the individual and collective strengths of the regional bloc to respond to disasters not only within the ASEAN region but outside Southeast Asia as well.^{160, 161}

In the ASEAN region, military forces are often one of the first to respond to disasters as a primary responder. Additionally, other militaries from within the Indo-Pacific are also likely to respond to a call for assistance or to offer aid to an ASEAN Member State (AMS). With military forces playing such a prominent role in disaster relief it is obvious to see the need for a coordinating mechanism such as the MNCC for assisting militaries from ASEAN, and including assisting militaries outside of ASEAN.

¹⁵⁵ “ASEAN,” <https://asean.org/>

¹⁵⁶ “Post ARDEX Review Meeting,” <https://ahacentre.org/news/post-ardex-review-meeting/>

¹⁵⁷ “Cooperation: An Introduction to Regional HADR Cooperation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific,” Liaison X-2, 2017, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2017-IX-2.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ “The AHA Centre,” <https://ahacentre.org/>

¹⁵⁹ “Cooperation: An Introduction to Regional HADR Cooperation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific,” Liaison X-2, 2017, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2017-IX-2.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ “ASEAN Regional Forum Gears Up for a Stronger Civil Military Coordination and Disaster Relief Operation,” <https://asean.org/asean-regional-forum-gears-up-for-a-stronger-civil-military-coordination-and-disaster-relief-operation/>

¹⁶¹ “Cooperation: An Introduction to Regional HADR Cooperation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific,” Liaison IX-2, 2017, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2017-IX-2.pdf>

Through the MNF SOP and other means, ASEAN saw the MNCC as a viable military-military coordination platform for the region. ASEAN incorporated this concept into its plans, procedures and disaster relief mechanisms, starting first with the development of MNCC SOPs through the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus (or, ADMM-Plus).

ADMM-Plus HADR EWG and the ASEAN MNCC SOP

The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight “Dialogue Partners,” collectively referred to as the “Plus countries.” These countries include: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States. The ADMM-plus forum was created to “strengthen security and defense cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.” The Inaugural ADMM-Plus was held in Vietnam, in October 2010. The ADMM-Plus focuses on seven areas of practical cooperation, including HADR and Military Medicine (MM). Experts Working Groups (EWGs) were established for these areas: the Experts' Working Group on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, or EWG on HADR, and an Experts' Working Group on Military Medicine, or EWG on MM. The EWGs are each co-chaired by one ASEAN Member State and one Plus Country, for a three-year cycle.¹⁶²

In the first 2011-2013 cycle, chaired by Vietnam and China, there were five EWGs, including HADR and MM. In the 2014-2017 cycle, chaired by Laos and Japan, the areas of cooperation were expanded. The Standard Operating Procedures on the MNCC, was developed during this cycle, and was adopted by the 11th ADMM in 2017. In the 2017-2020 cycle, chaired by Malaysia and the U.S., the areas of cooperation were further expanded. One of the primary initiatives of this cycle was the development and adoption of SOPs for an ASEAN Militaries Ready Group (AMRG) (see below for more information).¹⁶³

Probably the first time the MNCC concept was tested within the ASEAN context was at the ADMM-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) and Military Medicine (MM) Exercise in June 2013 in Brunei Darussalam, during the first cycle (2011-2013). This exercise was jointly organized by the EWG on HADR and the EWG on MM. The scenario revolved around a nation hit by a large typhoon and needing military disaster relief and medical assistance. An MNCC was created and tested to receive requests for assistance and to coordinate military assistance.¹⁶⁴ In the exercise, Brunei's request for assistance was routed through the AHA Center, which established a MNCC to process military aid.¹⁶⁵ During the first cycle Japan was co-chair with Singapore for the EWG on military medicine.¹⁶⁶

The second cycle (2014-2017) focused on the EWG on HADR developing and adopting an ASEAN SOP for a MNCC. During this cycle co-chairs Laos and Japan led the preparation of a SOP and built upon the progress of the 2013 Brunei exercise to further develop the MNCC concept and integrate it into ASEAN's “Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations,” or SASOP. It was hoped the MNCC SOP would “maximize

¹⁶² “About the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus),” <https://admm.asean.org/index.php/about-admm/about-admm-plus.html>

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ “(ADMM)-Plus Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) and Military Medicine (MM) Exercise,” https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_3-3-1_web_1031.pdf

¹⁶⁵ “Southeast Asian Rivals Work Together in Disaster Relief Exercise,” <https://news.usni.org/2013/06/24/southeast-asian-rivals-work-together-in-disaster-relief-exercise>

¹⁶⁶ ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000386070.pdf>

the effects of military contributions made by assisting foreign forces in response to large-scale natural disasters.”^{167, 168}

In August 2015, a table top exercise (TTX) was conducted in Lao to test and develop the draft MNCC SOP. At the conclusion of the second cycle, the draft ASEAN MNCC SOP was tested during September 2016, in Chonburi, Thailand, where the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Military Medicine (MM) / Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise, or AM-Hex, was held.

AM-HEX was a multinational exercise on coordinating MM/HADR operations in response to disaster scenarios involving tsunamis and earthquakes, while utilizing the MNCC to coordinate military assistance. About 2,000 personnel from 18 nations took part in the exercise held over 11 days. One of the main objectives was to test the draft ADMM-Plus HADR SOPs established by Laos and Japan; especially to evaluate the structure, mechanisms, administrative arrangement of the MNCC in support of HADR missions. The objectives also included Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, evacuation of casualties and delivery of medical aid. The exercise also tested the SOP of the newly established ASEAN Centre for Military Medicine (ACMM).¹⁶⁹

The MNCC was the command center of the exercise operations. At the MNCC each military’s contributions were collated and the appropriate response to each request for assistance was coordinated. A team from the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) in Singapore set up the RHCC’s OPERA Computer Information System (CIS) (see below section on the RHCC for more information) to assist the MNCC in its coordination efforts.¹⁷⁰

Later that year, the MNCC SOP was successfully tested and validated through a command post exercise (CPX) jointly conducted by the HADR and Military Medicine EWGs.¹⁷¹ At the 9th EWG meeting on HA/DR in December 2016, the SOP was adopted and it has been involved in ongoing discussions in the framework of the ADMM-plus since then.¹⁷²

In the current third cycle, one of the primary objectives is to operationalize the AMRG and to integrate EWG on HADR initiatives into the ASEAN disaster relief mechanisms. The third cycle seeks to also refine the MNCC SOP under which the AMRG will interface during a disaster relief operation.¹⁷³

Although not under the ADMM-plus construct, other ASEAN exercises during this time period have also tested the MNCC concept and SOP, these include AREDX-16 and Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) Table Top Exercise with ASEAN.

¹⁶⁷ “Struggle for Success by Lao PDR & Japan: From Japan’s perspective as a co-chair of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts’ Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Liaison, Volume X, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Mark Swayne, Acting Deputy Assistant, Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Liaison X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹⁶⁹ “ADMM-Plus EWG on MM and EWG on HADR Joint Exercise 2016,” PowerPoint presentation, <http://mod.gov.la/10thADMM/assets/4.8-thai-am-hex-2016-ipc-result-as-of-20-apr-16.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ “2016: 18-country disaster relief exercise concludes in Thailand,” <https://www.facebook.com/notes/ministry-of-defence-singapore-mindf/18-country-disaster-relief-exercise-concludes-in-thailand/10155233144919535/>

¹⁷¹ “Struggle for Success by Lao PDR & Japan: From Japan’s perspective as a co-chair of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts’ Working Group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief,” Liaison, Volume X, 2018 <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

¹⁷² ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000386070.pdf>

¹⁷³ Interview with Mark Swayne, Acting Deputy Assistant, Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Liaison X-1, 2018, <https://www.cfe-dmha.org/Portals/0/liaison/Liaison-2018-X-1.pdf>

The concept of “One ASEAN One Response” was first tested during ARDEX-16 in Brunei Darussalam from 29 November – 2 December 2016. The ARDEX-16 objective was to provide an opportunity to practice, evaluate and review the ASEAN SASOP, including the then newly-endorsed Chapter VI on Facilitation and Utilization of Military Assets and Capacities, which provides general guidelines for the MNCC concept in the ASEAN context. ARDEX-16 also tested regional response mechanisms, the ASEAN -ERAT, the AJDRP, and the JOCCA.¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵

In January 2019, representatives from ASEAN militaries as well as the ASEAN secretariat visited Japan’s NIDS for Table Top Exercise (TTX) on HADR. The TTX was aimed at learning Standard Operating Procedures for the MNCC concept, drafted by Japan and Laos during the second cycle of the ADMM-plus EWG on HADR. TTX participants actively discussed roles and missions of the MNCC in different phases of a typhoon scenario and proposed suggestions to improve the MNCC SOP.¹⁷⁶

While the ASEAN MNCC SOP has not been finalized, a Proposed Generic MNCC Layout in MNF or ASEAN MNCC SOPs was presented at the RCG 5th annual meeting in December 2019 in Chiang Mai Thailand.¹⁷⁷ See Figure 2 below for more details.

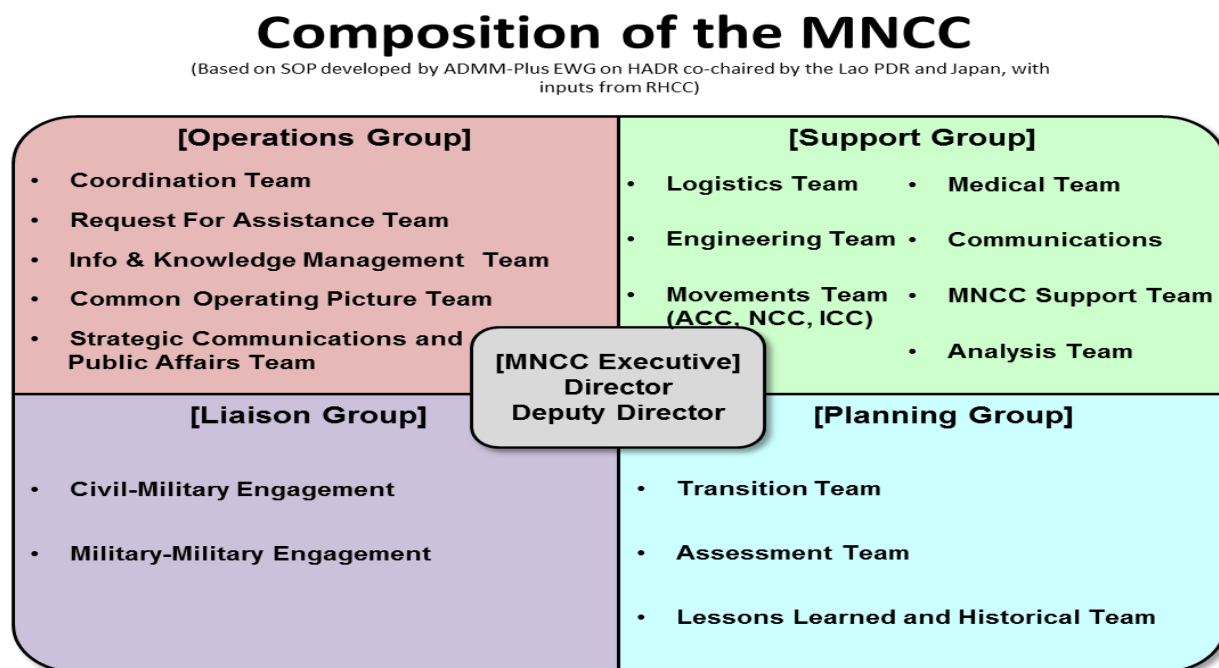


Figure 2: Proposed Generic Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC) Layout in MNF or ASEAN MNCC SOPs

Source: RCG5, *Thematic Discussion 2: Coordination Mechanisms (Civil-Military Coordination)* PowerPoint presentation

¹⁷⁴ Operationalizing One ASEAN ONE Response, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AHA-GDE-One-ASEAN-One-Response-FINAL-1810318-1.pdf>

¹⁷⁵ “ASEAN strengthens its emergency response mechanism,” <https://asean.org/asean-further-strengthen-its-emergency-response-mechanism-through-the-asean-regional-disaster-exercise-ardex-2016/>

¹⁷⁶ “Table Top Exercise with ASEAN (30 January 2019),” <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/announcement/index.html>

¹⁷⁷ “RCG5: Coordination Structures,” PowerPoint presentation to the RCG5 annual meeting, December 2019, Chiang Mai, Thailand

ASEAN plans, procedures, response groups and coordination mechanisms

ASEAN's SASOP and a relatively recently completed ASEAN disaster response plan discuss the MNCC concept under ASEAN's collective response framework. The plan is the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP). In addition, the MNCC concept is also integrated into at least three ASEAN mechanisms related to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). These are the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT), the Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA), and the ASEAN Military Readiness Group (AMRG).

The MNCC under ASEAN's Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP)

ASEAN Member States signed the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in July 2005. One of the two main objectives of the AADMER is for ASEAN Member States to “jointly respond to disaster emergencies.” The other is to “provide effective mechanisms to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses.”¹⁷⁸ The agreement also required the preparation of the “Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP)” that guides, among other things, implementing “(ii) the utilization of military and civilian personnel, transportation and communication equipment, facilities, good and services, and the facilitation of their trans-boundary movement.”¹⁷⁹

Activation and use of the MNCC in the ASEAN context comes under Chapter VI of the SASOP, “Facilitation and Utilization of Military Assets and Capacities,” it states: “This SOP sets out the principles and procedures to governing the use of military assets in the provision of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and is based on AADMER.” While there are no specific guidelines, SOP or instructions on the setting up of an MNCC, the SASOP does provide some general guidance on the establishment of a MNCC.

“In large-scale emergencies, military-to-military coordination from the Assisting States will be done through the Multi-National Coordination Centre (MNCC), as indicated in SASOP Chapter VI. If the affected AMS requests military assistance or accepts the offer of military assistance from Assisting States, the MNCC will support the affected AMS’ disaster response effort by coordinating Assisting States’ military capabilities to promote efficient military support for the overall disaster response...”¹⁸⁰

The potential establishment of an MNCC in the SASOP is mentioned first under “B. Role of the Requesting or Receiving Party” under Chapter VI, where the MNCC “could be established by the Requesting or Receiving Party’s military as a coordinating platform to facilitate assistance from militaries of the Assisting Parties.” If a MNCC is established, the SASOP states that the MNCC shall support the National Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and work under the direction of the National Focal Point (NFP).

¹⁷⁸ ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), <https://ahacentre.org/publication/asean-agreement-on-disaster-management-and-emergency-response-aadmer/>

¹⁷⁹ ASEAN's Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP), , Version 2.0, April 2018, <https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/SASOP/2.-SASOP-Revision-V2.0-April2018.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ ASEAN-ERAT Guidelines, <https://ahacentre.org/publication/asean-erat-guidelines/>

Under the paragraph “J. Military-Military coordination” in Chapter VI, the SASOP says that military-to-military coordination is usually undertaken by the Receiving or Requesting Party’s military in support of the NFP. Additionally, when there are multiple militaries from assisting parties, they are asked to “liaise, communicate and coordinate with the Receiving or Requesting Party’s NFP and military, civilian Assisting Entities, and with each other.” However with large-scale emergencies, the MNCC is utilized to coordinate militaries of assisting parties.

For military-military coordination, the SASOP Chapter VI also encourages liaison officers and/or planning teams be placed at the MNCC and AHA Centre. Additionally, in regards to civil-military coordination, the SASOP says that the military will work with civilian partners through the civil-military coordination cell of the MNCC.¹⁸¹

Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA)

The Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA) is an on-site coordination system that can be established to enhance and support the implementation of a collective ASEAN response, otherwise known as “One ASEAN One Response,” particularly during large-scale disaster emergencies in the ASEAN region, to effectively support the government of the affected member state. The JOCCA is the civil-military coordination component of the ASEAN response, and functions complementary to the MNCC.



JOCCA and OSOCC working together to simulate disaster response

Source: <https://twitter.com/ochaasiapac/status/803794197819969537>

When an ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) is deployed, and depending on the scale of the disaster, the team can activate a JOCCA. The ASEAN-ERAT is composed of trained members who have experience responding to disaster incidents in the region. The role of the team is to respond quickly to a disaster or man-made emergency in one or more ASEAN Member States. The main function of the ASEAN-ERAT is to support the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) of the disaster affected Member State/s in the initial phases of the disaster. ASEAN-ERAT members have been deployed throughout the region and prior to impending disasters, such as during Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.¹⁸²

After an ERAT is deployed and a JOCCA activated, the JOCCA will work with the UN’s OSOCC and both centers will support the NDMO. The JOCCA is “essentially a home for ASEAN on the ground” and a central point for all ASEAN response entities to meet at and coordinate. In the ACDM’s view, and

¹⁸¹ ASEAN’s Standard Operating Procedure for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP), , Version 2.0, April 2018, <https://ahacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/SASOP/2.-SASOP-Revision-V2.0-April2018.pdf>

¹⁸² ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

ASEAN context, the JOCCA is seen as playing a lead role with the OSOCC in a supporting role.¹⁸³ The JOCCA is seen as primarily focusing on coordinating assistance from within the ASEAN region, while the OSOCC enhances the capacity of the JOCCA by facilitating international assistance from outside the region, according to the AJDRP (see below for more information the AJDRP).¹⁸⁴ If both the OSOCC and JOCCA are to be set up, the AJDRP notes that the default preference prior to establishment would be to co-locate the two coordination centers to facilitate inter-operability.

According to the AJDRP, the JOCCA will be established when the following criteria are fulfilled: “1) Large scale disaster emergency in the ASEAN region, and 2) with the consent from the NDMO of the affected country.”¹⁸⁵

The JOCCA has three primary objectives:

1. “To support the NDMO or Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA) of the affected Member State to establish an on-site coordination system in receiving and coordinating incoming relief assistances in a large-scale disaster emergency in ASEAN region;
2. To establish a physical space as a single point of service for state actors, civil society organizations, the private sector and other ASEAN responders involved in the emergency response operations in the affected country; and
3. To establish a coordination platform at the ground level with relevant United Nations and other international organizations including civil-military coordination.”¹⁸⁶

During a response when an MNCC has been stood up, one of the functions of ASEAN-ERAT team members from the JOCCA is to liaise with military officers from the MNCC. The ASEAN-ERAT member trained in civil-military coordination will perform the role of liaising with the relevant military officers representing the CIMIC function of the MNCC. SASOP Chapter VI supports this by suggesting that it is “encouraged that liaison officers and/or planning teams be placed at the MNCC and the AHA Centre” which, by extension, is the JOCCA, at the ground level. The interface between JOCCA and the MNCC is essential to ensure an effective coordination platform on the ground, allowing not only for the optimal use of military assets and capacities, as well as to prioritize needs.¹⁸⁷

The two main coordination elements between JOCCA and MNCC are the following:

- “Information sharing – exchange of situational information and analysis including security information. This includes facilitating access to assessment results, identified priorities, needs and requirements.
- Task division – identifies humanitarian activities that can be supported by military resources based on priorities identified by the NDMO of the affected AMS.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ ASEAN-ERAT Guidelines, <https://ahacentre.org/publication/asean-erat-guidelines/>

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP)

Finalized in September 2017, the goal of the AJDRP is to “provide a common framework to deliver a timely, at-scale, and joint response through mobilization of required assets and capacities.” This goal will be achieved, to paraphrase ASEAN: through increasing the speed, expanding the scale and enhancing the solidarity of the ASEAN response.¹⁸⁹

Under civil-military and military-military coordination in the AJDRP:

In large-scale responses, the NDMO of the affected Member State will set up an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) that will provide the overall strategic coordination with government agencies and military resources. The Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC) will be led by the national military and will liaise with the EOC to provide operational coordination of Foreign Military Assets (FMA) provided by Member States in support of humanitarian operations. Based on the Terms of Reference of the AMRG during an AMRG deployment, the AMRG may assign liaison officers to be stationed at the AHA Centre’s EOC in Jakarta to support in the coordination with ASEAN Member States militaries, and another military liaison officer to be based at the capital of the affected Member State and located at the Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC) to coordinate military resources from assisting ASEAN Member States...¹⁹⁰

In addition the MNCC is mentioned under “ASEAN Response Procedures,” under the AJDRP. The procedures are categorized into different phases of emergency. According to the AHA Centre’s guideline, there are three activation levels: Hazard Monitoring and Risk Analysis (Green), Standby (Yellow), and Active Response (Red). During the red phase (within 6 hours) it is the responsibility of the Affected Member State for “MNCC Liaison Officers to coordinate with the AHA Centre’s In-Country Liaison Team (ICLT) at the national level and JOCCA at the field level.”¹⁹¹

ASEAN Militaries Ready Group (AMRG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

The AMRG envisions sort of a standing military ready group to respond to natural and man-made disasters. The concept aims to provide an ASEAN military team ready for quick deployment to crisis areas, allowing for better coordination of a multilateral ASEAN military response. Foreign militaries, including ASEAN militaries, have been deployed bilaterally to assist relief operations in previous responses. However, according to ASEAN, “the AMRG aims to strengthen the coordination of joint services at the national level under a single ASEAN banner, and at a multilateral level, taking into account the existing regional response mechanism as coordinated by the AHA Centre. In some situations, the AMRG could also serve as a preventative mechanism before a crisis occurs.”¹⁹²

Participation in the AMRG is flexible, non-binding and voluntary. The AMRG concept is building on and complementing existing arrangements under AADMER and works under the coordination of the AHA Centre, and in cooperation with other relevant regional and international HADR partners. The AMRG will have representatives at the AHA Centre, which will serve as the process owner of the AMRG. The AMRG will assist the AHA Centre to facilitate in deploying the group.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² ASEAN-ERAT Guidelines, <https://ahacentre.org/publication/asean-erat-guidelines/>

¹⁹³ ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP), <https://ahacentre.org/files/AJDRP.pdf>

A Concept Paper on the AMRG was first presented at the 9th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) on March 2015 in Malaysia, where Defence Ministers adopted the paper. The following year, Terms of Reference (TOR) of the AMRG was accepted at the 10th ADMM.^{194, 195} The drafting of an AMRG SOP and refinement of such a proposal has occurred during the ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR 2017-2020 cycle, where co-chairs US and Malaysia held a series of working groups and several exercises to test the concept. A tabletop exercise (TTX), held in 2018, tested the AMRG and the SOP was further refined after the TTX and tested again in 2019 with a staff exercise (STAFFEX).¹⁹⁶

The final draft of the AMRG SOP is to be presented at the next ASEAN Defence Senior Officer Meeting (ADSOM) expected to be held in October 2020. The final document will outline “the guiding principles; scope of assistance; structure and arrangement; concept of operation; command, control and coordination; administration; logistics; communication; and training and exercise in support of the implementation of the AMRG on HADR.”¹⁹⁷

While as of this writing, the AMRG concept has not yet been finalized and approved, it is worth noting because it is expected that the AMRG may likely be an essential component should an MNCC be activated during a crisis involving one or more ASEAN Member States. Exactly how the AMRG will interface with an MNCC is yet to be determined. However, right now the AMRG is expected to interface within the MNCC with other foreign assisting militaries. See Figure 3 below for illustration. (This was presented at the RCG5, Thematic Discussion 2: Coordination Mechanisms (Civil-Military Coordination) in December 2019 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.)¹⁹⁸

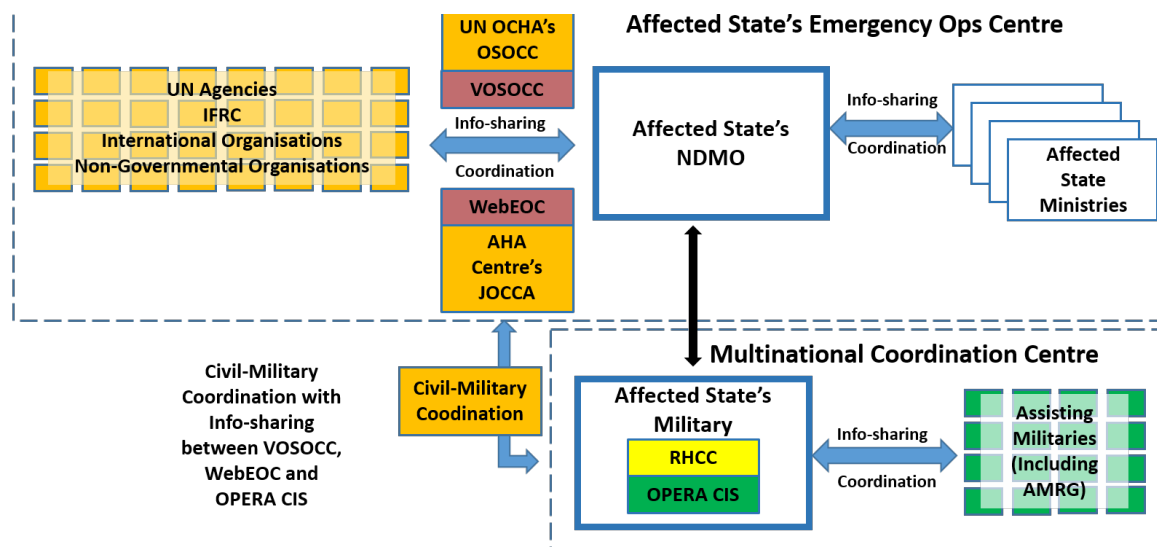


Figure 3: Regional Disaster Response Coordination Mechanism

Source: RCG5, Thematic Discussion 2: Coordination Mechanisms (Civil-Military Coordination) PowerPoint presentation

194 Ibid.

195 Terms of Reference (TOR) of the AMRG on HADR, <https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/TOR%20on%20AMRG,%20Final,%20as%20adopted%20by%20the%2010th%20ADMM.pdf>

196 “Structuring ASEAN Military Involvement in Disaster Management and the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group,” https://apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/N2450_Canyon_Kunce_AMRG_Paper.pdf

197 Ibid.

198 “RCG5: Coordination Structures,” PowerPoint presentation to the RCG5 annual meeting, December 2019, Chiang Mai, Thailand

The AMRG SOP's when finalized are likely to provide additional guidance on the AMRG interaction with the MNCC, as well as other civil-military coordinating centers, including roles and responsibilities.

Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Coordination Centre (RHCC)

Within the ASEAN region, the Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Coordination Centre (RHCC), provides another key coordination center in the region. Launched in September 2014, the RHCC is located at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) in Singapore. The RHCC helps to facilitate military-to-military coordination in HADR, focusing on supporting the disaster affected state's military in coordinating assistance provided by foreign militaries. This assistance can be achieved through a network of International Liaison Officers (ILOs) based at the RHCC and a scalable coordination unit (the RHCC Forward Element) that can be deployed to support the Affected State military in coordinating foreign military assistance. If the Affected State establishes a MNCC, the RHCC can assist to support MNCC operations.¹⁹⁹

The RHCC also provides day-to-day monitoring of crises in its operations center, and also utilizes its facilities for large-scale multinational operations and exercises, including the Ex COORES and AM-HEX to test and review the MNCC among other things. The RHCC aims to support and complement other existing regional coordination actors such as UNOCHA and the AHA Centre.²⁰⁰

RHCC also provides their web-based OPERA Computer Information System (CIS) for use by AMS which is a platform for information sharing and coordination. The aim of the system is to provide a comprehensive situation picture, or Common Operating Picture (COP), to facilitate coordination, and minimize gaps or duplication among responders.²⁰¹ In a real-world response, OPERA has been utilized to assist the MNMCC in Nepal during the multinational military response to the 2015 Gorkha earthquake.



Participants of Ex COORES 19 actively engaged during a training session on the use of the RHCC's OPERA CIS.

Source: https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/army/our-stories-and-publications/our-stories/story-detail/2019/april/exercise_coores_19

The Changi RHCC plays an important role in helping ASEAN nations in capacity building through

¹⁹⁹ Multinational Force Standing Operating Procedures (MNF SOP), Version: 3.3, November 2019, <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

²⁰⁰ "Fact Sheet: Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC)," https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2017/december/06dec17_fs

²⁰¹ Ibid.

exercises, including developing and testing their own MNCC concept and SOP every two years. Aside from using its own facilities for exercises to test the MNCC, OPERA has been utilized during Ex COORES to help test the MNCC concept and country MNCC SOPs. The Philippines MNCC was tested at Ex COORES in 2017 while Bangladesh tested its SOP in 2019.

Conclusion

The MNCC concept, although not yet in wide usage in the Indo-Pacific, has been slowly adopted and operationalized by some countries that are at risk of a major disaster, and where there is a reasonable expectation that foreign military assistance may occur. As we have seen, Nepal and the Philippines have utilized the MNCC/MNMCC for major disaster responses for the 2015 earthquake and with disaster relief efforts for Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Hagupit, respectively. The military-military coordination mechanism afforded by existing MNCC concepts, though not perfect, worked effectively overall in each response.

The biggest concerns arising from these real-world crises was that there was an initial delay in the establishment of the MNCC during relief efforts for Haiyan, however, this was quickly observed and corrected in response procedures. In the response to Typhoon Hagupit the following year, the Philippines was extremely well prepared and the MNCC was set up well before the storm made landfall and in time to coordinate any potential multinational military response. In regards to Nepal, it was observed by many that overall, the MNMCC was an effective coordination platform for the response and had even incorporated an extra task—the coordination of incoming SAR teams—a key civil-military coordination function, into its duties as there was the delay in the establishment of the OSOCC. Despite the favorable outcome, the Nepalese Army in its AAR recognized the need for improvement and a set of procedures to help guide the formation and operation of the MNMCC. This is being worked on and can be accomplished utilizing the examples of other countries in the region. Namely, this would primarily be the Philippines, to review what has worked there effectively, and to model Nepal's MNMCC SOP accordingly, with respect to the country's unique situation. Otherwise, so far with respect to the typhoons and earthquake disasters faced, the MNCC/MNMCC is considered a tested, valid and effective platform.

Elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific region, and learning from experiences from other countries, Bangladesh developed its own SOP for the MNCC in 2019, and tested and validated the coordinating center in regional HADR exercises. The MNCC concept has also been adopted by Indonesia in preparation for any major disasters that might incorporate multiple foreign militaries in relief efforts. Indonesia has incorporated the MNCC concept under its own unique MAC system, complementary to government response mechanisms and other civil-military coordination platforms. Utilizing the MNCC concept in conjunction with established civil-military and other coordinating platforms is a wise move by governments and militaries in a region commonly afflicted by unpredictable geological hazards and severe meteorological events.

In many ways ASEAN's support of the MNCC concept by integrating the MNCC into its plans and procedures, has helped the MNCC develop further in the region. In Southeast Asia, where militaries are

considered to be a primary disaster responder, the use of military forces to support and assist civilian and humanitarian entities is reflected in the policies, plans, procedures and practices of the ASEAN Member States (AMS). Regionally, ASEAN exercises have greatly assisted in the development, testing and eventual validation of the MNCC concept. It is likely only a matter of time before other ASEAN members draft, test and finalize their own MNCC plans.

The ongoing and timely revision of regional guidance on procedural issues such as the MNF SOP, and guidelines provided by regional agreements such as the ASEAN SASOP, will continue to help shape the MNCC concept. Regional exercises such as Ex COORES can help countries test, review, revise and validate any MNCC SOPs created, much as the Philippines in 2017, and the AFD in Bangladesh has done most recently in 2019. Other regional multilateral HADR exercises should follow the lead of exercises such as Ex COORES, and incorporate the MNCC into exercise scenarios to allow further review and testing and to allow other countries to field new MNCC concepts.

The MNCC concept must remain flexible to the extent that each country that uses this as a FMA coordination mechanism can tailor its usage to its own unique circumstances. The MNCC must be quickly established following a disaster where it is expected there will be a request for or the participation of a sizable number of foreign militaries; have clear operating procedures preferably completed beforehand; and, must be seamlessly connected and complementary to national and international civil-military coordination mechanisms, whether this is through the HuMOCC or OSOCC, or other civil-military platform. This will allow military liaison officers to connect with civilian and humanitarian responders and vice versa; to share information, appropriate requests for assistance properly, and promote common operational understanding.

The growing adaptation and utilization of the MNCC concept by countries is testament to its viability as a military-military coordination mechanism in the Indo-Pacific region, both for disaster relief and in disaster preparation through plans and SOPs written by countries as part of their strategic framework in planning for HADR operations. It is the prerogative of each country to review what has worked best for other countries during disaster relief efforts, look at what other countries have incorporated into their own MNCC SOPs, and lay the foundation for the evolution of their own distinctive national MNCC plans.

Questions for Discussion

1. *When is it appropriate for an Affected State to utilize/establish a MNCC?*
2. *What are the most important lessons learned from the setting up of the MNCC in the Philippines in response to Typhoons Haiyan and Hagupit? In what ways was the establishment of the MNCC in the Hagupit preparation better than for Haiyan?*
3. *How important are bilateral agreements between nations before a disaster strikes?*
4. *What are the most important lessons learned from the MNMCC in Nepal during relief efforts for the 2015 earthquake?*
5. *If the MNCC was not activated in the Philippines during the response to Typhoon Haiyan and Typhoon Hagupit, and the MNMCC was not established for the 2015 Nepal earthquake response, how do you think that would have affected the international response?*
6. *If you were to advise on the creation of an MNCC what key features would you suggest it implement?*
7. *What features make the MNCC an appropriate counterpart of civil-military coordination mechanisms?*
8. *What is the importance of establishing a military-military coordination center early on in a multi-nation military response? How important are the other civ-mil coordination centers? (i.e., OSOCC, HuMOCC, etc.)*
9. *How are prior bilateral and multilateral military engagements and exercises useful when faced with responding to a real-life natural disaster? Should these engagements include MNCC exercises?*
10. *What are some suggested best practices for establishing a MNCC/MNMCC?*



Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance
456 Hornet Avenue, Joint Base Pearl Harbor - Hickam, Hawaii 96860-3503
Telephone: (808) 472-0518
<https://www.cfe-dmha.org>