



# CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT & HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE BALIKATAN 2018, PHILIPPINES



## Balikatan 2018, CPX

The 34th iteration of Balikatan—an annual US-Philippine military exercise—concluded in late May 2018. A major goal of this year’s Balikatan, a Tagalog term meaning “shoulder-to-shoulder”, was to enhance interoperability between the US, Philippines, and other participating nations.

This goal was achieved through several mechanisms, including a Command Post Exercise (CPX), which tested the ability of US and Philippine military elements to form a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) to command and control multinational forces from a headquarters level. Using a fictional scenario, the 2018 Balikatan CPX focused on counter-terrorism and mutual defense. The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM) enhanced the CPX scenario by adding a multifaceted civilian component, presenting a complex humanitarian environment that a CJTF would encounter during a similar situation.

## Civil-Military Coordination in Complex Emergencies

Through both training and real-world operations, the US and Philippines have developed robust processes in responding to natural disasters in concert with civilian agencies. While disaster response is challenging in its own right, understanding the differing roles of domestic and foreign militaries and how they coordinate with humanitarian actors and potentially support civilian-led efforts in a conflict setting, present a myriad of other challenges.

To enhance the training of the CPX, CFE-DM worked closely with US Pacific Command and Armed Forces of the Philippines exercise planners, the Philippine Office of Civil Defense, and several humanitarian organizations to create realistic humanitarian scenarios that the military could encounter in a conflict environment. These challenging circumstances included events related to International Humanitarian Law, detention and handling of enemy combatants, differing civil-military coordination approaches, deconfliction of operations, as well as appropriate information sharing.

## Civilian Participants

Throughout the planning and development of the Balikatan 2018 CPX, CFE-DM incorporated input from a number of organizations. Leveraging the experience from a diverse group of actors helped enhance the realism of the CPX scenario. Humanitarian organizations that contributed to the development of the CPX, either during the planning phase or execution, included:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Philippine Office of Civil Defense (OCD)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- UN World Food Program (WFP)
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- US Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)



The events forced the training audience to respond to operational complexities found within the modern conflict landscape shared by civilian and military actors. Prior to the CPX, representatives from the ICRC and UN OCHA provided specialized academic presentations on the Rules of Armed Conflict and a UN Civil-Military Coordination best practices during complex emergencies.

## Creating Real-world Connections

Integrating humanitarians into military exercises has multiple benefits. It allows exercise planners to leverage the expertise from experienced humanitarian practitioners, who can incorporate their experiences into the exercise scenario for more realistic training. In addition to training, the networking aspect is invaluable. During the CPX, the exercise included meetings between ICRC officials, senior officers, as well as functional meetings with Civil-Military Operations and military legal specialists. As has occurred in other similar events, these newly formed connections will likely extend past the Balikatan exercise into real-world operations.

