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BEST PRACTICES FOR JOINT TASK FORCES (JTFs)



Series of Best Practices Pamphlets by CFE-DM



- Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Affected & Assisting States
- Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Information Sharing
- Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Joint Operations Centers (JOCs)
- Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Joint Task Forces (JTFs)
- Civil-Military Coordination in Foreign Disaster Relief: Best Practices for Logistics
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- Best Practices for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in Pandemics
- Best Practices for DoD to Increase Readiness for Climate Change Impacts on HADR Related Missions
- Best Practices to Support Locally Led Responses

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Executive Summary

Purpose: To provide a condensed set of best practices for civil-military coordination during foreign disaster relief (FDR) missions for joint task forces.

Key Points:

- Set up the Joint Task Force (JTF) to operate as part of a broader coalition and U.S. government (USG) interagency approach.
- The U.S. Lead Federal Agency in foreign disaster response is USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).
- For the JTF Commander, a key counterpart is the leader of the Disaster Assessment and Response Team (DART), deployed by BHA.
- JTFs in foreign disaster response will likely interact with third party nations also responding to disaster in affected state. They should plug into whatever multinational coordination center (MNCC) the host nation establishes for coordinating international military responders.
- Be prepared to deploy various Liaison Officers (LNOs) who ideally have some experience working in foreign disaster relief, in a multinational environment, and/or with humanitarian organizations.
- Response personnel who participated in international military exercises with a FDR scenario may also be beneficial.
- In this 24/7 information environment where transparency is a critical part of public messaging, Public Information Officers (PIOs) are a critical part of the mission and should be staffed adequately at all levels.

Introduction

Need for civil-military coordination: There has been a proliferation of humanitarian actors, as well as more frequent deployment of military actors as part of international disaster relief assistance (IDRA). Increasing numbers and types of actors on the ground lead to a complicated response environment -- a “fog of relief.” Civil-military coordination is critical in reducing duplication of efforts, reducing gaps in coverage, and contributing to a more effective response.

Definition: Civil-military coordination is the coordination between military and civilian actors - including national populations, local authorities, and international, national and non-governmental organizations - in support of disaster response.

For the consideration of Affected and Assisting States, civil-military coordination should take into consideration:

Coordination within the military structures of all issues related to a response by multiple-actors, including relevant local interests.

Coordination of military efforts with those of civilian actors to avoid duplication of efforts and minimize gaps, but also to prevent undesired cross-interference, in order to mutually increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Commanders are increasingly required to take into account political, social, economic, cultural, religious, environmental, and humanitarian factors when planning and conducting operations. Furthermore, commanders recognize that operational areas contain the presence of a large number of civil actors with their own mandates, aims, methods, principles, structure, roles and perspectives that might have an impact on military operations and vice versa. Thus, civil-military coordination is not applicable solely to FDR missions but is particularly important in these instances.



(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Codey Underwood)

BEST PRACTICES

Disasters by the Numbers

Annually, hundreds of disasters are reported, tens of thousands of people are killed and hundreds of millions affected. Billions of dollars of economic damage result from disasters, including floods, storms, droughts, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, temperature extremes, volcanos and human flight. The number of disasters has increased over the past 20 years.

In the 2000s, about 150 major floods were recorded worldwide, triple the number that occurred in the 1980s. According to insurance groups, the incidence of Category 5 storms—the most severe—also tripled when compared decade-upon-decade. The Asia-Pacific region has borne the brunt of this trend: natural disasters are now four times more likely to affect people in the region than Africa, and 25 times more likely than Europe. One climate change vulnerability index indicates that all seven cities globally classified as at “extreme risk” are in Asia: Dhaka, Manila, Bangkok, Yangon, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh and Kolkata. Financially, Asia accounts for almost half of the estimated global economic cost—close to \$1 trillion—caused by natural disasters since the early 1990s.

**Number of Natural Disasters (by Type) -
ADB Members and the Rest of the world (1980-2012)**

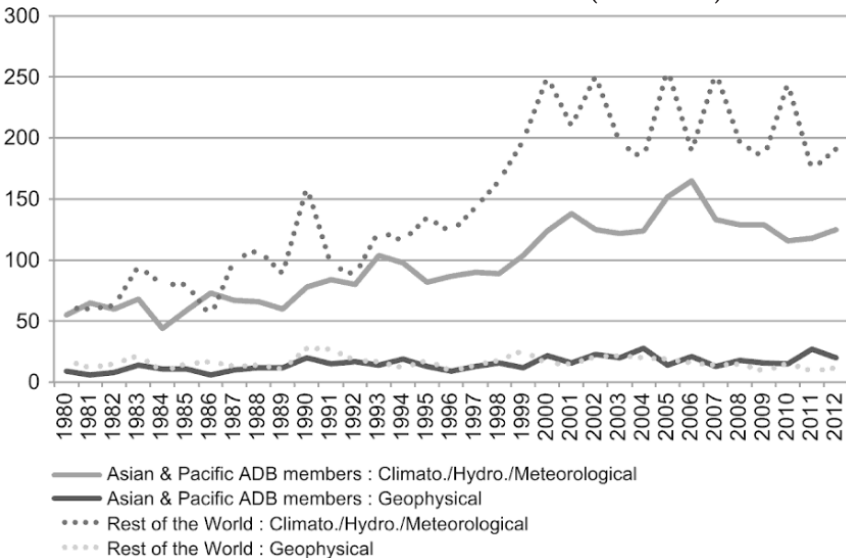


Chart: Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Despite these trends, experience shows that better disaster preparation and prevention can significantly mitigate losses.

Role of Foreign Military Assets (FMA)

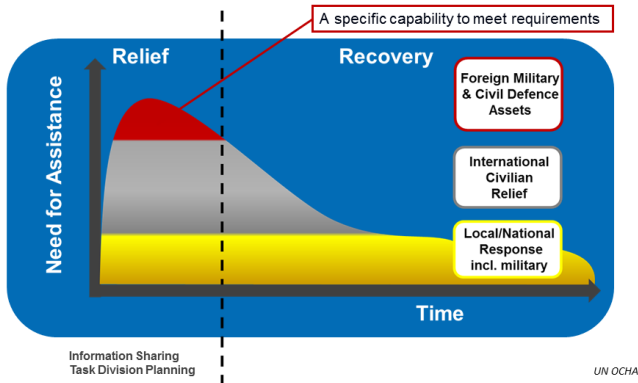
Best Practice: Foreign military assets (FMA) should be used when:

- Specific capability cannot be met with available civilian assets; &
- FMA would help meet requirements and provide unique advantages in terms of capability and timeliness; &
- FMA would complement civilian capabilities.

FMA are the most effective and beneficial when providing assistance in accordance with the above criteria. During large-scale, peacetime, international disaster responses, FMA often provide suitable assistance, particularly with airlift and other transportation assistance.

Foreign militaries are most effective at the start of disaster response, and are among the first to leave as they handover operations to the Affected State or international humanitarian responders. Thus, the Affected State should prepare to coordinate a large influx of assistance at the beginning, and receive transitioned operations upon their departure.

FMA help most at start of international disaster responses



An Affected State has a sovereign right to deploy its armed forces internally, thus guidelines about FMA don't apply domestically. National military or civil defense units are often primary responders in domestic emergency responses. However, the humanitarian community still evaluates whether and how to coordinate with a domestic military in line with humanitarian principles. If the environment is at all insecure due to conflict, foreign military assistance will raise more concerns, especially from the humanitarian community.

Assisting States – Whole of Government approaches

Many Assisting States’ foreign disaster responses are led by a civilian arm of the government, including when they deploy militaries. Awareness of various Assisting States’ whole-of-government approaches aids overall coordination efforts.

USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance is the U.S. Lead Federal Agency in Foreign Disaster Relief. When the U.S responds to an international disaster deploying civilian or military assets, the lead federal agency is the USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, with the **DoD in a supporting role.**

Best Practice: DoD works closely in support of BHA, receiving guidance on effective use of DoD assets in foreign disaster relief.

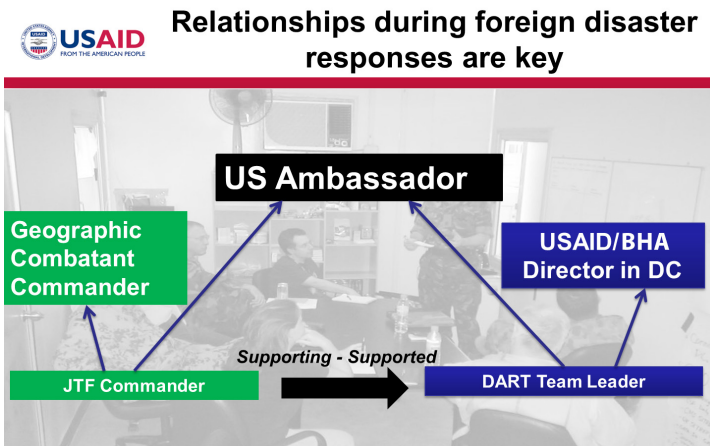
BHA’s core competency is foreign disaster response. They are critical in ensuring appropriate, effective use of DoD assets in FDR. BHA saves invaluable time in helping the DoD navigate among the wide array of humanitarian actors and connecting with those most relevant.

Best Practice: Get BHA’s input early in planning process.

Planning is driven by desired end-state. Mission, goals, and end-state are clearly defined in early planning. Exit strategy based on assessments. A JTF’s plan must be predicated on the actual situation and the goal of military forces acting in support of civilian organizations. BHA’s expertise in FDR and needs assessments is critical in providing realistic input to guide planning early in the process.

Best Practice: JTF Commander closely links with DART Team Leader.

BHA deploys a Disaster Assessment and Response Team (DART), usually within 48 hours of a major foreign disaster. The JTF Commander should liaise closely with the DART Team Leader – a critical counterpart.



One of BHA's roles is to provide civil-military coordination with the DoD, conducting liaison with the various coordination mechanisms on the ground. BHA has FDR expertise, and can mitigate problems typically seen when the US military on its own tries to engage the various international coordination mechanisms multilaterally.

Best Practice: All responders should support and aim to follow the humanitarian principles and code of conduct.

The core humanitarian principles are the first four principles in the code of conduct that guides humanitarian planning and operations, including civil-military coordination. Supporting these principles will de-conflict response efforts, and reduce risk to humanitarian actors and beneficiaries:

The Humanitarian Principles:

1. Humanity - Aid is provided to save lives and alleviate suffering, based on need.
2. Impartiality - Aid is provided regardless of ethnicity, race, tribe, religion, etc.
3. Neutrality - Aid is provided regardless of political allegiances.
4. Operational Independence: Humanitarian actors must retain the lead role in humanitarian activities. They must not implement tasks on behalf of a foreign government or military. They must be free in movement, conducting independent assessments, selecting staff and identifying recipients of assistance.

The rest of the humanitarian code of conduct is lessons learned on doing aid right from decades of experience. Following these standards result in enduring, community-owned solutions, not short-term fixes by outsiders:

Remaining Humanitarian Code of Conduct:

5. Respect culture and custom
E.g. Distribute rations without pork in Muslim communities
6. Build disaster response on local capacities
E.g. Foreign doctors should work with local doctors and enhance local clinics - not displace local medical personnel
7. Involve beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
E.g. Hire and train local staff, who can also help with the transition when aid providers leave
8. Strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster while also meeting basic needs
E.g. Share information, from early planning to after-action reviews, with local/development actors, so they can build upon relief activities as it transitions to recovery and development.
9. Accountable to beneficiaries as well as donors
E.g. Deal with donors and beneficiaries openly and transparently. Report on activities' finances as well as effectiveness.
10. Do not objectify disaster survivors, but recognize their dignity
E.g. Do not publicize sensational images of suffering to raise funds for objects of pity; but depict survivors as actively involved in their own recovery as equal partners

Role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinates humanitarian actors in international disaster responses. OCHA plays a critical role in liaising with military actors on behalf of the humanitarian community, including by deploying UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) Officers.

Best Practice: While BHA will advise the DoD in civil-military coordination and vet requests for support, UN-CMCoord officers can amplify BHA's efforts.

UN-CMCoord reflects how OCHA coordinates with militaries on behalf of most of the humanitarian community. UN-CMCoord is the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency and, when appropriate, pursue common goals.

UN-CMCoord Officers deployed by OCHA are trained and resourced to have appropriate information and contacts, to “translate” between humanitarians and militaries, to bundle and validate requests for support, and to be an interlocutor for NGOs who do not want to be directly associated with military actors. While BHA will advise and guide the DoD in civil-military coordination, and will critically vet requests for support, UN-CMCoord officers can be a “force multiplier” for BHA.

Presence of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC) is the largest global humanitarian network, with almost 100 million staff and volunteers, comprised of three components:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) – works to protect and assist survivors of armed conflict and promote international humanitarian law (law of armed conflict)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) – assists survivors of natural disasters; supports national societies
- National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – 192 worldwide, almost one in every country, play auxiliary roles to governments

Non-government organizations (NGOs) are not part of the UN or RCRC, but all humanitarian actors from these organizations conduct planning and operations guided by humanitarian principles.

Best Practice: Understand and train to key humanitarian considerations.

Humanitarian Space: Refers NOT to geographical area, but to an operating environment in which humanitarians can access beneficiaries to deliver aid, and beneficiaries can receive aid regardless of political allegiance.

Humanitarian Access to Beneficiaries: Humanitarian agencies must maintain the ability to obtain access to all vulnerable populations in all areas and to negotiate such access with all parties to conflict. Coordination with the military should facilitate, secure and sustain - not hinder - humanitarian access.

Perception of Humanitarian Action: Humanitarian assistance must come without political or military conditions. Civil-military coordination must not jeopardize trust in humanitarian agencies or their beneficiaries' safety.

Civilian-Military Distinction in Humanitarian Action: A clear distinction must be maintained at all times between combatants and non-combatants, who are granted immunity from attack. Military personnel must refrain from presenting themselves as humanitarian workers, and vice versa.

Security of Humanitarian Personnel: Any perception that humanitarian organizations may have become affiliated with a military could impact negatively on the security of their staff and on humanitarian access.

Do No Harm: Humanitarian action, including civil-military coordination, must not have negative impacts on the people it seeks to help.

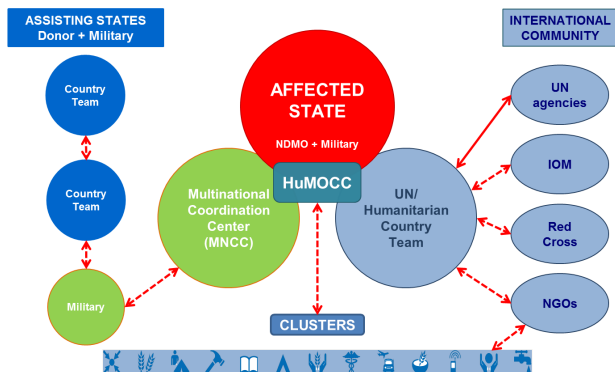
Avoid Reliance on Military: Humanitarian actors should avoid reliance on military resources or support, to prevent creating a dependence on a short-term resource.

Coordination Structures

Best Practice: All responders plug into national/local mechanisms.

The Affected State has primary responsibility to coordinate foreign aid and responders. All should integrate into national and local mechanisms.

International Response Coordination



Source: UN OCHA

UN-CMCoord
UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN
CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

Multinational Coordination Center (MNCC) - If multiple Assisting States deploy military assistance, the Affected State often sets up a MNCC led by its military personnel to coordinate foreign military responders. Additionally, coordination mechanisms may be established through liaison arrangements between a civil-military operations center and the humanitarian community, or through the placement of military liaison staff in humanitarian structures (or vice-versa). Several mechanisms under differing organizations are possible.

Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Concept - Applies in peacetime only. OCHA implemented its Humanitarian-Military Operations Coordination Concept (HuMOCC) as a center in a few major disaster responses, particularly the 2015 Nepal Earthquake and 2013 Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines. As the humanitarian community influences its evolution, different versions may be seen in future responses.

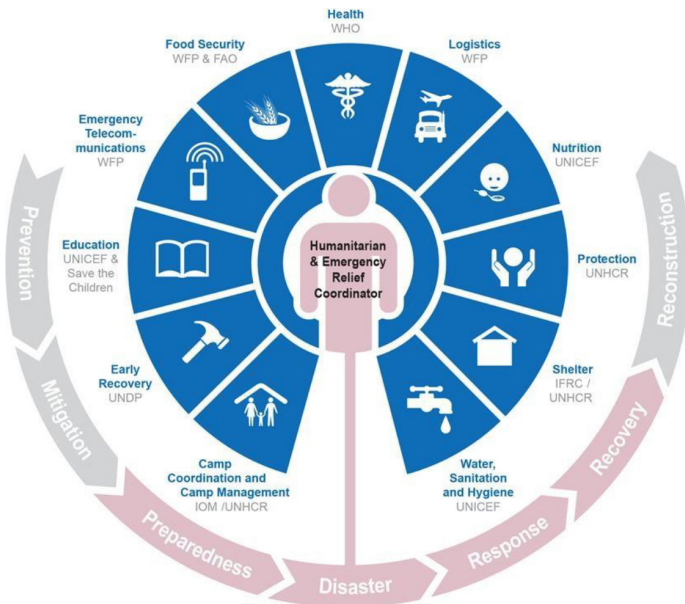
ASEAN's Joint Operations and Coordination Center for International Assistance – In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region – encompassing Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – the Joint Operations and Coordination Center for International Assistance (JOCCIA) has performed OCHA's HuMOCC function in the response to the 2019 Central Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia. In that response, OCHA played more of a supporting role to the ASEAN-deployed JOCCIA. The role JOCCIA plays in future disasters may vary, depending on the ASEAN member state and the disaster situation.

The Cluster Approach

The humanitarian community usually coordinates via the cluster approach in large-scale, international disaster responses. This approach separates out technical specialties – logistics; shelter; food; health; water, sanitation & hygiene (WASH); protection, etc. – under a lead coordinating agency. Cluster leads are responsible for ensuring response capacity is in place and assessment, planning and response activities are done in collaboration with partners and in accordance with agreed standards. Cluster leads are often UN agencies, and in many countries the affected state actively participates as cluster leads or co-leads. UN OCHA has the responsibility for inter-cluster coordination, including humanitarian civil-military coordination.

Best Practice: BHA guidance determines best clusters for DoD to engage with – and the appropriate protocol for doing so.

Foreign military personnel have attended cluster meetings, usually logistics, but should be invited first. BHA can facilitate invitations for DoD personnel. BHA can also advise on protocol (e.g. attending unarmed) for cluster meetings or any other meetings involving humanitarian actors (e.g. civil-military coordination meetings).



The US usually conducts disaster relief operations by supporting the Affected State bilaterally, and coordinating multilaterally. BHA will liaise with coordination centers and facilitate civil-military coordination, as they lead US responses and advise DoD on military support to foreign disaster relief.

Best Practice: BHA provides guidance to critical coordination points.

Regardless of the coordination mechanism, JTF-level participants can expect to use liaison officers (LNO). The number of LNOs required to support a significant FDR operation can be substantial and even escalate over time. The challenge is where to position LNOs among the lead agency, other government agencies and NGOs, in order to achieve maximum mutual benefit. BHA can guide the DoD on where the critical coordination points are. Furthermore, military members who have participated in multi-agency exercises have found it easier to identify the priority coordination points where LNOs should be positioned.

The Coordination Spectrum

Civil-military coordination occurs along a spectrum from co-existence to cooperation, depending on the security situation. The more insecure the environment the less closely humanitarian actors will coordinate with the military, to protect their perceived neutrality and independence.

- In peacetime natural disasters, military forces may be deployed to assist relief operations with a similar mission to the humanitarian, in which actors cooperate to save lives and assist affected people.
- In insecure environments, where the causes of a humanitarian crisis are conflict-related, many humanitarian actors will lessen or avoid association with

military actors to protect their perceived neutrality. In insecure environments, military actors share operational space but not necessarily objectives with humanitarians. UN-CMCoord officers play a heightened role to liaise with military actors on behalf of the humanitarian community.

Achieving Unity - The vertical organization of military forces does not mesh well with the horizontal organization of humanitarian organizations. Military members usually prefer a clear objective and take decisive action. Relief workers take a slower approach to what they see as complex problems. Improved cooperation depends on understanding and respecting each institution.

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[Image: Patrick McManus/OECD]

Best Practice: Humanitarian needs determine aid (“PULL” not “push”). BHA should advise on humanitarian needs.

Pull v. Push: Aid sent should be determined by needs. This is a “pull” model. Aid should not be “pushed” out based solely on politics, DoD capacity or what is conveniently warehoused, without a needs assessment. Post-disaster logistics pipelines are already reduced, and inappropriate aid is a large source of further blockage. One of BHA’s core competencies is to advise DoD on assessed and probable humanitarian needs.

Best Practice: Conduct needs assessment JOINTLY with affected state and/or humanitarian actors.

Timely and accurate assessments feed all levels of the response by helping determine command and control requirements, providing damage estimates and establishing priorities. Instead of conducting needs assessments autonomously, it is preferable for foreign military personnel to be included on local and international organizations’ assessments teams. This is in line with a best practiced acknowledged by the international humanitarian community to reduce multiple assessments. Joint assessments also benefit civil-military coordination by informing civilian authorities of what military assistance can be requested and facilitating swift transition away from a military-heavy relief effort.

Initial responders to the 2010 Haiti earthquake had few local connections. The absence of Haitian contributions to assessments and analysis led many responding agencies to assume minimal to no local capacity. As a result, responders’ plans included unclear roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and replaced, rather than supported, local actors. The relief effort used almost exclusively imported material and personnel.

This assessment-planning weakness in Haiti mostly affected civilian organizations. Consequently, organizations, particularly the US military, which had better focus - if not better assessments - became de facto leads, contrary to best practices and putting those military units/assets at risk because they are performing tasks outside their areas of expertise. Post-emergency evaluations found that most agencies worked well with the US military. In fact, many sought assistance from the US forces, beyond managing the airport and airspace. For weeks, military personnel and assets were asked to provide armed escorts for humanitarian agencies rather than to clear roads. The situation later improved and the military could focus on core tasks.

Joint Humanitarian Assessment Support Team (JHAST)

DoD's JHAST works with the Affected State and BHA to frame how specific military capabilities can be used to assist in a crisis. JHAST can inform BHA's DART of DOD capabilities and available assets. The team is comprised mostly of Marines and Sailors with operations, planning, logistics and law backgrounds, but also has an BHA representative and additional enablers from other components.

Strategic Communications

Best Practices:

- Form a comprehensive public affairs (PA) strategy early.
- Deploy PA personnel early with forward command element, and with appropriate authority to release images, sounds and stories.
- Provide early guidance on media themes and messages from the MEB commander, key staff and counterparts at HHQ. Conduct needs assessment JOINTLY with affected state and/or humanitarian actors.

Effective strategic communication supports both the immediate foreign disaster relief operation and broader US national security goals; it is essential that communications are coordinated and synchronized across the US civil-military response effort and, as possible, with implementing partners. Note that some affected communities will have relatively weak capabilities. If not handled properly, this will result in a lopsided public face of the FDR effort. While it is important to tell the story of an effective FDR response, deliberate messaging and assessment of strategic communication efforts will help avoid pitfalls and overcome obstacles.

USMC "Operation Damayan" in response to Typhoon Haiyan (2013) effectively used strategic communications. Themes, messages, potential media questions and answers, and interview instructions were developed in early public affairs (PA) guidance, sent via III MEF and MARFORPAC to PACOM and OSD PA for review, and an early version was approved.

The comprehensive USMC effort risked overwhelming the local Philippines' effort. Overcoming this issue requires messages and themes to be more closely aligned with local players' themes. To achieve this, either co-location or more frequent interaction would be appropriate.

Social Media - Web and social media networks provide the quickest means by which widest possible dissemination can occur. The use of social media should not be discouraged as it can contribute both the strategic communications efforts and, in return, situational awareness. However, this use must fall clearly within plans for such use. Social media should not be considered a primary source of information, but an additional tool.

Perception Management - The sudden appearance of a military force has the potential to cause alarm, but it can also be as reassuring. JTF planners must be mindful that without proper media management, perceptions can detract from achievements. The early inclusion of media professionals in operational planning is essential to timely coverage and public awareness.

Communication Links - Achieving reliable communications across the disaster area between LNOs and HQ can be problematic. Mobile and landline networks are often not available immediately. Military VHF communications are limited. Satellite phones and power sources may be critical equipment.

Resourced For Role - An LNO with insufficient resources to perform his/her function will result in uneven coordination and could impact the entire relief effort. LNOs must be able to remain with the agency they support for several days, released them from tasks other than liaison activities. They should also be provided with appropriate equipment and SOPs that assist in rapid orientation.

Sharing Data

Best Practices:

- Keep information unclassified (UNCLAS) as much as possible.
- Share information widely, including on humanitarian platforms.

For a JTF, this will include information about the JTF's mandate, objectives and program and about the operational environment. It is understood that some information - relating to Force Protection or personnel - may be off limits. However, the provision of orientation information, assessments and SA should be done in an unclassified venue as often as possible. Not only will this help all partners, but it will ensure that other agencies are willing, in return, to provide information.

Best Practice: Establish early guidance on foreign disclosure.

Policies regarding release of data, particularly geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), may vary by country and COCOM. Communicate early with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) for their foreign disclosure officers (FDO) to provide clear policy as early as possible on releasability of data to foreign governments and international humanitarian actors for the particular foreign disaster response DoD is supporting.

Information

For local, national and foreign entities responding to a disaster, access to timely and accurate information is crucial for two reasons: 1) it helps prioritize who undertakes what relief actions where; and 2) it allows responding entities to ensure the safety and security of their own personnel in swiftly changing environments. Military actors plan and implement in coordination with relevant authorities and civilian organizations, working together for maximum coverage and effectiveness. Thus, infrastructure and policy foundations for the operation's information needs should be clear.

In the US response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines:

- Initial IM structures consisted of pre-existing III MEF IM procedures - posting critical information to the III MEF NIPRNET SharePoint portal and use of organic III MEF chat functionality; it quickly became apparent that users outside the III MEF NIPR domain and those without DoD CAC could not access this information.
- Eventually, a combination of a NIPRNET open domain SharePoint portal, along with APAN, was established for interagency and other coalition partners who needed to collaborate.
- Without information shared across agencies, the mission was put in jeopardy. Philippine partners in the multi-national coordination center (MNCC) employed an information 'pull' methodology, heavily reliant on mobile phones until the JTF requested APAN support to the MNCC. Once in place, the web-based portal allowed unclassified information exchange to better inform decision-making. Philippine command of the entire operation was improved.

C4 - Early establishment of robust communications (bandwidth and policy) is crucial. Global Broadcast Service (GBS) is critical for retrieving large volumes of data, such as with GEOINT. International mobile devices often are a fallback for telephone and unclassified e-mail; this may suffice initially, but expect external information access to be constrained for 24-72 hours. This can be an obstacle to identifying affected populations, locations and ongoing relief activities. Crisis action planning must identify operational communications requirements knowing the scope of the response will include forward portions. Simultaneously handling available bandwidth and maintaining visibility on emerging requirements will challenge responders.

Strategic Considerations

- Plan for transition — handover to civilians — before deploying
- What military liaisons/structures are needed at all levels to support the JTF commander?
- What civil-military coordination structures do the Affected State and humanitarian community primarily use, and how can the military plug into that?
- Have military planners been included alongside other agency personnel in the assessment team? Can this be arranged?
- What is the transition plan? What agencies have been identified to conduct what tasks?
- What key civil actors are operating in the disaster area? (May never get 100% common operational picture (COP) on all humanitarian actors in a disaster response – determine when “good enough” COP achieved.)
- How will the humanitarian community’s end-states, culture and methods affect the military operation?
- How will JTF actions impact the local economy?

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