Regional Coordination in Disaster Management

ASEAN Builds Trust as a Regional Leader

Coordinating International Search & Rescue Teams

RHCC leading Military-Military Coordination
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Recent disasters have devastated nations worldwide. In just this year alone earthquakes have rocked Mexico and Italy; hurricanes have devastated Puerto Rico and numerous Caribbean nations, while Hurricane Ophelia traveled further east than any previous hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean, reaching Ireland; floods have claimed lives in Sri Lanka, China and Bangladesh, and this is by no means an exhaustive list.

While each of these nations have the ability to respond to disasters within their own borders, assistance from neighboring countries has become a near mandatory necessity as the severity of disasters increase. This makes regional partnerships much more important to the resiliency and recovery of communities.

This issue focuses on some of those regional organizations that are building coalitions to improve preparedness, resiliency and coordination during response efforts. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which turned 50 this year, has taken large strides to lead the effort through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management, or AHA Centre (stories on page 7 and 23). Articles like “CDRU: A Model for Regional Multilateral Deployment of Militaries During Disaster” (page 43) show lessons from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency’s successful operationalization of the CARICOM Disaster Relief Unit, which may be applicable to the AHA Centre as they work to operationalize the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group.

Singapore’s Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) focuses specifically on military coordination in support of the affected state, experiencing its first test during the Nepal earthquake. Lessons from the earthquake and the RHCC’s first exercise aimed at enhancing interoperability during HADR operations are discussed on page 13.

These organizations, along with working groups, training and exercises, can’t stop the next disaster from occurring; however, they can help mitigate some of the effects and confusion that occurs in the aftermath. Disasters are merely one of many problems affecting us in the Indo-Asia Pacific region, and these alliances acknowledge that nations are “stronger together,” and only together can we tackle the next disaster.

Aloha,
LIAISON provides an open forum for stimulating discussion, exchange of ideas and lessons learned – both academic and pragmatic – and invites active participation from its readers. If you would like to address issues relevant to the disaster management and humanitarian assistance community, or share a comment or thought on articles from past issues, please submit them to editor@cfe-dmha.org. Please specify which article, author and issue to which you are referring. LIAISON reserves the right to edit letters to the editor for clarity, language and accuracy.

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• **Format.** All submissions should be emailed to the editor as an unformatted Microsoft Word file. Footnotes are the preferred method of citation, if applicable, and please attach any images within the document as separate files as well.

• **Provide original research or reporting.** LIAISON prefers original submissions, but if your article or paper is being considered for publication elsewhere, please note that with the submission. Previously published articles or papers will be considered if they are relevant to the issue topic.

• **Clarity and scope.** Please avoid technical acronyms and language. The majority of LIAISON readers are from Asia-Pacific nations and articles should be addressed to an international audience. Articles should also be applicable to partners in organizations or nations beyond that of the author. The aim is for successful cases to aid other partners of the disaster management and humanitarian community.

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• **Biography and photo.** When submitting an article, please include a short biography and high-resolution photo of yourself for the contributors’ section.
Arnel Capili is the director of operations for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management (AHA Centre). He has 15 years’ experience in emergency response planning, humanitarian coordination and response operations in Dubai, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan and Viet Nam. Prior to joining the AHA Centre, he served as the Corporate Emergency Management Specialist of the Dubai Municipality, Emergency Services Officer of the Asian Development Bank and Regional Director of the Philippine Office of Civil Defense. Arnel takes pride in being the first Philippine national to receive the distinction of being a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®), the highest professional recognition in the field of emergency management. He is also a certified and trained United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination member. Arnel holds a Masters in Development Administration degree from the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia and Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration degree from the University of the Philippines.

Peter Colvin specializes in the application of geospatial data and information sharing, and has over thirty years’ experience in applying information technologies to improve the development and delivery of unique information services in support of HADR and human security missions within the DOD, civil agencies, and internationally. Since 2009, he has been based on Oahu, Hawaii, working with the University of Hawaii, the Pacific Disaster Center, and United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) and its service components. Representing the U.S. Government, the DOD, and academia, he has worked with regional government and nongovernmental organizations to implement information resources and capabilities key to effective disaster and risk management. This has included supporting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in its work with the Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs integrating geospatial information tools (DisasterAWARE) and methodologies leading to more effective disaster management at the national and community levels. Under the sponsorship of the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy and in collaboration with USPACOM, Colvin supported a trilateral HADR initiative between the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan. This initiative facilitated strategic level HADR planning and engagement addressing natural and human-induced hazards in the Pacific focusing on HADR engagement as a means to address Theater Security Cooperation objectives. He has been an adjunct faculty at the University of Hawaii leading graduate-level courses on humanitarian assistance.

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Jason Hoac is a network engineer on the U.S. West Coast for Cisco Tactical Operations, Cisco’s primary technological response team for disaster and humanitarian crisis. Jason started in TacOps in 2015 and is responsible for the design, and implementation of secure emergency networks to support first responders, NGOs, government, and critical infrastructure restoration. Although still early in his career, he has already responded to two major wild fires here in California, the Louisiana floods, and most recently the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Europe. Currently residing in San Jose, California, he is also a first responder and also a volunteer for the American Red Cross FAST team, Silicon Valley Chapter.
Senior Lieutenant Colonel (SLTC) LIM Kok Kheng “SLim” is currently serving in the Singapore Armed Forces as the Head Plans and Coordination Senior Officer in Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC). Launched in September 2014, Changi RHCC seeks to assist the Affected State’s Military in coordinating with its military partners in a multinational response to a major regional disaster. SLTC Lim has been actively involved in the development of this capability to foster stronger military-military coordination. Prior to his current appointment, SLTC Lim served in Joint Operations Department, and was engaged in operational planning of HADR and Peace Support Operations. He was deployed to Nepal as part of Singapore’s response in the aftermath of the major earthquake in April 2015. A Super Puma helicopter pilot by vocation, SLTC Lim has served in the Republic of Singapore Air Force for 29 years.

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Ron Snyder is a senior network engineer for Cisco Tactical Operations, a dedicated crisis response team that establishes emergency networks in the aftermath of a disaster. He deploys and provides engineering support of mobile communications platforms such as the Network Emergency Response Vehicle (NERV) and small kits such as the Rapid Response Kits and Emergency Communications Kits. Ron has deployed to provide communications support during disaster responses including the 2016 Ecuador earthquake, European Refugee Crisis in Slovenia, Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, and Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Ron previously worked at the Camp Roberts SATCOM facility in Paso Robles, creating the Standard Operating procedures and training program for Regional Hub Node operators serving the U.S. Army.

Colonel Borworn Wongsaengchantra is the director for the Disaster Relief Division, Office of Civil Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning (OPP), Thailand Ministry of Defense (MOD). He is responsible for coordinating, directing, monitoring and proposing MOD plans, policies, guidelines and regulations related to HADR issues. He also was appointed as a member of the sub-committee on drafting telecommunication plan for disaster response for The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission and the sub-committee on drafting national disaster prevention and mitigation plan. COL Borworn entered the Royal Thai Army (RTA) as a signal officer in 1995 after completing the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy. He earned a scholarship from RTA to pursue his study and graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering (Communications). In 2007, he was promoted to colonel as a deputy director of the Plan and Organization Division, OPP. He was promoted to be the director of Disaster Relief Division, Office of Civil Affairs, OPP in November 2010. As director, he initiated programs and activities to strengthen and promote the coordination and cooperation between civilians and military such as an annual short course on Civil-Military in Disaster Response, an annual workshop/TTX on Civil-Military Coordination, and an annual international workshop called ASEAN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Workshop. He is also drafting a MOD guideline on Civil-Military Coordination in Disaster Response (ThaiLand Model), a MOD guideline on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, and MOD Disaster Relief Plans.
The ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Teams (ERAT) come from a pool of trained experts on emergency assessment to respond to disasters in ASEAN countries. One responsibility is to coordinate with the AHA Centre for the mobilization, response and deployment of regional disaster management assets, capacities and humanitarian goods and assistance to the disaster-affected areas.

By Arnel Capili, Director of Operations, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance in disaster management

Trust. For a regional organization such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), trust is one of the most important key ingredients for effective coordination at the regional level. For coordination to work effectively, there must be a common sense of trust among all the stakeholders; most importantly, with the national disaster management authorities of all the ASEAN Member States. It is equally important to have the trust of all partners from different sectors, including the private sector and civil society organizations.

So why is trust really that important?

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) defines coordination as “working together in a logical way toward some common result or goal.” IFRC further suggests, “coordination of independent organizations is undertaken for the purpose of eliminating fragmentation, gaps and duplication in services.”1 The UNOCHA defines the purpose of humanitarian coordination as to “improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response by ensuring greater predictability, accountability and partnerships.”2 Essentially, coordination aims to synergize actions of various independent organizations towards a common goal. Trust becomes important because in coordinated systems, organizations, which have different mandates and reporting lines, will

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have to work together to achieve a common or defined purpose.

**AHA Centre: The Primary Regional Coordinating Agency**

The AHA Centre was established on 17 November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia, by 10 ASEAN Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The birth of the AHA Centre is the embodiment of a common desire of ASEAN countries to establish a disaster management center that will work to facilitate cooperation and coordination among the ASEAN Member States, with other organizations including the United Nations, and other international organizations to promote regional collaboration in disaster management and emergency response.

The need to establish a regional coordinating agency became apparent after the signing of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The AADMER is a landmark policy document that aims to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in the lives and in the social, economic, and environmental assets of the ASEAN Member States. As such, it defines how the Member States should jointly respond to disasters through concerted national efforts and intensified regional and international cooperation.

Five years after the birth of AHA Centre, the Heads of State/Governments of ASEAN recognized the vital role that it plays as the primary regional coordinating agency on disaster management and emergency response through the ASEAN Declaration of ‘One ASEAN, One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disaster as One in the Region and Outside the Region.’

**The Need for Coordination**

Coordination is essential because it generally brings some semblance of order in an otherwise very chaotic situation. From the different levels of coordination, which will be described in the next paragraphs, ASEAN’s coordination mechanisms are aimed at promoting a shared vision of needs and priorities, identifying resource gaps, as well as reducing duplication of efforts. By getting all the actors at different levels to understand the need for a coordinated response, it is hoped that ASEAN can provide a more targeted and value-adding response to the affected communities.

**Three Levels of Coordination**

In order to align efforts in pursuit of a common goal, coordination must be done. As the primary regional coordinating centre of ASEAN, the AHA Centre will coordinate at three levels:

At the *strategic* level, information sharing for a common operational picture will be organised at the highest ranks including briefings for the ASEAN Secretary General in preparation for a possible activation of his role as ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (SG-AHAC). In his capacity as SG AHAC, he has the important role of communicating with the Head of State of the affected Member State to offer assistance, report to the ASEAN Chair at the Head of State level on the disaster situation and overall status of ASEAN’s response, and to call for support from ASEAN leaders to mobilize resources to assist the affected Member State. At the same time, ASEAN Member States Permanent Representatives, ASEAN Defense Attaches, senior officials of the ASEAN Secretariat including representatives from international organizations, particularly the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and partners from international nongovernmental organizations (INGO) will also be invited to the AHA Centre’s Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Jakarta, Indonesia, for a summarized analysis of the situation and mapping of priorities that will inform the direction of ASEAN response.

At the *operational* level, coordination is established at the national level for joint planning with emphasis on the primary role of the affected country’s national
disaster management office (NDMO). AHA Centre will provide coordination with the other ASEAN Member States, partners, and other international organizations such as the in-country U.N. or INGO teams. In the event of a disaster or imminent threat, such as in the case of a typhoon or cyclone, the AHA Centre will take a proactive stance and deploy its personnel to the EOC of the affected country to coordinate closely with the government at the national level. At this stage of coordination, national decisions can be used to determine the size of response, priority geographical areas, as well duration of engagement, among others.

 Coordination at the field level or nearest the disaster site is very important because this is where the outcomes of the preceding levels of coordination are expected to be realized. AHA Centre deploys coordination tools, e.g. the ASEAN-Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ERAT), and the Joint Operations and Coordination Centre of ASEAN (JOCCA). The JOCCA, or the home of ASEAN on the ground, should be co-located with the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA), which has jurisdiction over the affected area.

 These levels of coordination are linked to one another and are mutually reinforcing. Roughly, this three-level approach to coordination is a simultaneous top, middle and bottom strategy to ensure alignment of objectives across different organizations, levels, and sectors.

**ASEAN Collective Response: One ASEAN, One Response**

The ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ is both a vision and a strategy to enhance cooperation during emergencies affecting the region and outside. This vision and strategy became a reality with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration on ‘One ASEAN, One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region’ by the Heads of State/Governments of ASEAN. The ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ envisions quick and well-coordinated deployment of the full-range of capacities of ASEAN Member States, regional institutions, and humanitarian actors in the region to save the lives of disaster affected communities and help them quickly rebuild their lives.

 The ‘One ASEAN, One Response’ commits to increasing the speed, scale and solidarity in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected member countries. Previous responses coordinated through AHA Centre has proven the region’s capacity to take action at a respectable pace, arriving even before the disaster strikes when possible, pre-positioning staff and deployment of preparedness missions, and locating within the national emergency operations centre. Finally, it is envisioned that ASEAN will make its leadership role a demonstration of solidarity with affected communities through effective regional coordination, preparedness, and support to the affected country.

 There are still a lot of challenges that lay ahead for ASEAN to fully realize its aspiration of a bigger, stronger ASEAN response. For one, ASEAN will have to start thinking horizontally to ultimately demolish the walls between sectors such as defense, health, private sector, civil society, and others. There should be an alignment of efforts through stronger coordination to truly add value to an affected member state. ASEAN should be able to look past sectoral boundaries and be comfortable with working together to achieve a shared vision of needs and priorities in disaster management.

 ASEAN nations today are stronger than ever. Nevertheless, they are also cognizant that there will be disasters that can be overwhelming, at least in the initial phases. It is this recognition that the presence and support of other ASEAN Member States can be made truly meaningful.

 Indeed, an affected state will always have its own capacity to respond. But the support of ASEAN as a regional block is more than just cash donations, rescue teams or tents; ASEAN’s presence and support is a symbol of solidarity that will ultimately strengthen relations between nations and their people. This is the kind of spirit of mutual trust that is shaped among ASEAN Member States. One ASEAN, One Response.
As the most disaster prone region of the world, the Indo-Asia-Pacific region cannot afford to be ineffective and inefficient in its regional management of disasters. While the sub-regions of Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, South Asia and Oceania have separately evolved and are at differing disaster response developmental stages, all four sub-regions share common thematic issues, trends and challenges for improved response cooperation. Constrained by financial and human resources, varying degrees of political leadership and will, and unequal national capacities, all sub-regions face a future complex humanitarian landscape with a proliferation of actors and response mechanisms, and are thus challenged to find innovative ways to address common and contextually driven solutions. The evolving humanitarian landscape’s increasing complexities challenge states and organizations to seek new ways to elevate national and regional response capabilities throughout the region.

Integration and National Capacity Building

Among the four sub-regions, Southeast Asia is considered the most advanced in regional disaster management cooperation. Over the last five years, the centrality of the AHA Centre enabled clear political will and leadership with a more focused approach towards collective disaster management in the region. Last year’s One ASEAN, One Response Declaration made widely acceptable the AHA Centre’s operational capacity to respond to in-region disasters. Coupled with the newly proposed stand-by ASEAN Military Ready Group (AMRG) for operational development this year, ASEAN is demonstrating greater regional solidarity and progress towards greater self-reliance. International partners and donors welcome and support these developments that signal strong ASEAN self-determination and empowerment. However, the emergence of sectoral and other response-focused efforts such as the ASEAN Center for Military Medicine and the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Center raises synchronicity questions and highlights the need to complement the existing regional response framework. Bridging the emerging sectoral approaches, whether originating from member states or external actors, will prove to be a challenging responsibility for ASEAN and its AHA Centre. In addition to advancing the One ASEAN, One Response capability, the AHA Centre also benefits from its efforts to integrate new contributions and independently developed mechanisms to serve the overall Southeast Asia response regional...
Although the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management recognizes other priority needs beyond collective response, actionable steps to enable collaboration and implement efforts to minimize member states’ capacity gaps are required. Currently however, the thinly stretched AHA Centre human and resource bandwidth cannot accommodate simultaneous promotion of operational response capability with significant progress in other areas of capacity development. Without concrete plans to achieve these other important goals and until AHA Centre addresses its bandwidth limitations, a primary push to operationalize a collective response will serve to monopolize resources to the disadvantage of other priority areas. Potential partnership links will be under-developed, facilitating a multi-stakeholder contributing environment, and plans for a people-centered approach via non-governmental networks will develop slowly.

Prioritize by Resource Optimization

Similarly in part, South Asia disaster management activities, as observed through SAARC and its DMC, are also slow to progress regional cooperation. The region, with lingering political sensitivities, varying states’ population sizes, and consensus requirement for collective authority to respond within the SAARC regional architecture received criticism of passiveness and inactivity during mega disasters such as the Nepal Earthquake. Currently, SAARC does not have legal agreement or capacity to respond in a disaster. Therefore, individual states such as India have bilaterally responded to assist Nepal during the recent earthquakes. While some consider the lack of collective response and organizational inability to act as a shortfall to the regional cooperation architecture, SAARC has made progress in the realm of risk reduction. Proactive efforts to increase effectiveness of the SAARC DMC response capability will boost South Asia’s regional cooperation but the organization’s support to increase national capacities should not be underestimated. Given the region and SAARC’s limitations, gains in national capability building and response preparations may prove be a more efficient approach to resource management when compared to the high cost required for collective regional response capabilities. It is widely accepted that response operations are expensive endeavors and more lives and cost savings occur during the pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness stages in the disaster management cycle.

As SAARC’s DMC efforts looks to the ASEAN example to advance their regional response framework, the questions of resource efficiencies and life-saving effectiveness should drive future regional response developments. For South Asia, addressing issues of leadership centrality through integration of disaster centers and limiting mediocrity of focus via prioritized areas of efforts contribute to a more deliberate and strategic approach for greater disaster regional cooperation. Challenged by the need for consensus to act, lack of human and financial resources and disparate leadership and regional will, South Asia’s main stay to promote greater disaster response may remain in the pre-disaster and response preparedness phases. ASEAN’s achievements in Southeast Asia may not be appropriate to replicate in the South Asia region due to its differing regional dynamic, history and context. While improvements in centrality of effort and authority can help streamline effectiveness, program emphasis on preparedness and response should not be in competition.
to prove or measure regional organizational success, abilities or effectiveness.

**Progress towards Greater Regional Cooperation**

In Northeast Asia, despite the existence of many serious obstacles for cooperation amongst the governments in the region, the nations are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing many of their current and emerging transnational non-traditional security challenges collectively. Through the year, the increased economic relationship amongst these countries has fallen short in building trust within the region, despite recognition that trust and confidence building are principle requirements for sustainable regional cooperation. However, the more frequent occurrences of catastrophic disasters such as the 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake, tsunami and the Daiichi Fukushima nuclear meltdown, have heightened the urgent need for increased regional disaster response cooperation. As such, disaster response and relief in Northeast Asia region have become an optimal area to exercise regional cooperation.

From China, Japan and South Korea conducting trilateral ministerial meetings on disaster management under the trilateral summit process that began in 2009 to the TCS, a permanent inter-governmental organization established in 2011 to promote continuous trilateral cooperation, the region is moving towards greater disaster response cooperation, to include an annual Trilateral TTX. The emergence of the NAPCI and the UB Dialogue also demonstrated a positive move towards wider regional cooperation to include disaster management and response. Although still lacking a regional organization or body to centralize these efforts, the countries of Northeast Asia appear to be making a concerted effort to develop a regional cooperation architecture to address current and future transnational security challenges collectively, to include disaster management.

**Policy and Other Considerations**

Compared to other sub-regions, Oceania is still in early maturation with regard to a robust disaster management regional architecture. While organizations exist to promote greater regional cooperation in Oceania, much like Southeast Asia, the challenge again is integrating collaboration among the existing bodies to avoid duplication of responsibilities and oversight. Oceania has achieved varying degrees of success in this endeavor. Additionally, in the realm of disaster response, the FRANZ agreement has been in effect for France, Australia and New Zealand to offer response assistance to nations in disaster need. Therefore, Oceania, unlike Northeast Asia, is not devoid of a regional framework for disaster relief and cooperation.

Much like the other sub-regions, Oceania shares the common challenges of limited financial and human resources, political will and leadership as translated into continuous commitments or buy-ins of the island states to a common regional disaster management approach. Unique to Oceania however, is the challenges of geographical distances and perhaps most differing of all are environmental threats such as climate change and sea level rise that exacerbate disaster and humanitarian needs in the future. Recent signing of the inter-governmental Pacific framework is a positive achievement and dovetails into many other global frameworks to incorporate climate change and environment impacts as part of the disaster management landscape. The Pacific framework provides common guidelines to address strategic direction and unity of concerns but also offers each state the freedom to determine its own disaster management priorities and approaches to empowering its indigenous communities. The trend in Oceania is to localize disaster management for the communities to increase ownership and culturally appropriate solutions and approaches. However future successful developments of the Pacific Framework hinge on good leadership practices, shared understanding, the connection between capacity building, practice and research and development of technical expertise. Analogous to the other sub-regional challenges, it is not always a problem of lack of resources, but it is often an issue of how the region manages these limited resources.

The Indo-Asia Pacific region is as diverse as it is similar. Geographical, political, economic, cultural and historical contexts present complex and challenging landscapes from which regional disaster response cooperation occur. Issues, trends and challenges as experienced individually or commonly shared should be assessed in the context of each region’s dynamic to be appropriately prioritized and addressed. Whether each sub-region’s architecture develops in parts or in whole however, states and organizations should aim to measure cooperation impact by the number of saved lives before, during and in the aftermath of disasters.

*The article was reprinted with permission from the author. The original publication can be found here: http://apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/hadr-publication-web-version.pdf*
On 12 September 2014, Singapore launched the Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre (RHCC) in the Command and Control Centre (CC2C) on Changi Naval Base to coordinate military and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) during major disasters in the Asia-Pacific region. The Changi RHCC aims to provide assistance to the affected state military in coordinating foreign military assets/assistance (FMA) offered to the country during a disaster response.

This past January, Changi RHCC hosted its inaugural multinational HADR table-top exercise, co-organised by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), U.S. Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) called Exercise Coordinated Response, or Ex COORES 2017. This inaugural three-day exercise brought together 18 military partners and 12 international and regional organisations to explore how militaries can work together in response to two separate disasters in central Philippines.

**Changi RHCC’s Inception**

Singapore’s Minister for Defence, Dr. Ng Eng Hen, recognised the need for militaries to work together to strengthen regional HADR capabilities. To accomplish that goal, he offered Singapore’s CC2C to host a regional HADR coordination event while attending an April 2014 ASEAN-U.S. Informal Defence Ministers’ Meeting in Hawaii.

The Changi RHCC was subsequently established in September 2014 to provide an open and inclusive platform for militaries within and outside of ASEAN to work together and enhance practical cooperation in disaster relief. In particular, Changi RHCC was to focus on military-to-military coordination in support of the affected state military by providing critical information and enhancing coordination through its network of military partners. This allows the Changi RHCC to complement and support the work of existing organisations like the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre), which support coordination with other critical humanitarian actors, such as the civil society, and international and nongovernmental organisations.

The Changi RHCC has come a long way since its establishment. At the operational level, the Changi RHCC has expanded its network of military partners. To date, 12 military partners† have officially supported Changi RHCC.

† They are Australia, Brunei, China, France, India, Laos, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, United Kingdom and Vietnam.
Singapore Armed Forces’ Changi Regional HADR Coordination Centre works to improve military to military coordination in disaster response operations. RHCC with international liaison officers (ILOs) and points-of-contact (POCs) from their respective defence attaché offices in Singapore or Joint Headquarters back home. With the U.S., Changi RHCC recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CFE-DM to deepen the strong partnership between the two centres, which includes building disaster preparedness and response capacities for the region.2

Changi RHCC’s Value Propositions

By leveraging facilities available in Singapore’s CC2C, Changi RHCC offers three value propositions in a multinational disaster relief operation (See Figure 1). First, its web-based, in-house OPERA computer information system can provide a comprehensive situational picture and specialised modules for coordination. Second, its established network of ILOs and linkages with operations centres of regional militaries can further enhance information-sharing and operational coordination for a more targeted response. Third, with the consent of the affected state, Changi RHCC can deploy a scalable forward unit into theatre to support the military in its Multinational Coordination Centre (MNCC).

Changi RHCC’s Concept of Operations

Changi RHCC conducts its operations in four phases. During the Readiness phase, Changi RHCC will monitor and provide timely analysis and projections of natural disasters when they occur in our region. These situational reports will be shared with all military partners and humanitarian agencies to facilitate early planning when necessary.

When a disaster has occurred, Changi RHCC will collate information on the disaster’s potential impact from various disaster monitoring systems, as well as the affected state’s disaster response plans from the ILOs or POCs of the affected countries. At the Disaster Onset phase, Changi RHCC will assist to identify possible military capabilities that may be needed. In preparation for a multinational military response, Changi RHCC may start initial planning with military and humanitarian partners, and liaise with the relevant authorities of the affected state.

Using the December 2014 Typhoon Hagupit as an example, Changi RHCC was closely monitoring the Category 5 super typhoon as it was approaching the Philippines. On 4 December 2014, Changi RHCC contacted the Philippines to offer its assistance as the typhoon moved closer. Personnel and resources were placed on standby and ready to deploy. Changi RHCC also reached out to its network of liaison officers, ops centres and other operational linkages for disaster relief and shared assessment reports in case of a multinational response. The French ILO assigned to Changi RHCC informed the Centre that there was a French Navy frigate near the French Polynesia in the Pacific at that time, and that it could be diverted to respond and assist the Philippines should the need arise. This offer was only possible due to the close rapport established, even before the typhoon made landfall.

The Kumamoto Earthquakes in Kyushu, Japan, provides another example. In April 2016, Changi RHCC promulgated five spot reports on the earthquakes. The Changi RHCC stood ready to send a team to help Japan coordinate foreign military assistance and assess the situation in the affected areas if needed.

In the Disaster Response phase, after Changi RHCC’s offer of assistance has been accepted by the affected state, or when its government has requested international assistance, Changi RHCC will deploy an Advance Team into the disaster zone to look at military support requirements. This Advance Team will also liaise with the affected state military to enable rapid decision-making and an effective response. If requested or consented, a scalable forward element comprising of RHCC personnel and OPERA equipment can quickly be deployed to the affected country to support the military in coordinating foreign military assistance.

In the Exit phase, Changi RHCC will draw down its operations and redeploy to Singapore once the affected
state’s military indicates that it has no further need for the Changi RHCC’s support.

Changi RHCC’s First Operational Experience - Nepal Earthquake Response in April-May 2015

One day after the magnitude-7.8 earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, Changi RHCC, together with a Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) medical team and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART), departed Singapore in three C-130 military transport aircraft for Nepal. However, it took another two days before the three aircraft landed on the single-runway at Kathmandu’s Tribhuvan International Airport. This delay was due to a few factors, including overcrowded air traffic, insufficient parking apron space and limited cargo handling equipment like fork lifts and low-loaders to turnaround the huge number of aircraft. The arrival of 36th Contingency Response Group from U.S. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) on 5 May 2015 did bring much needed relief and assisted by improving airfield operations and cargo handling capacity. In the end, the Nepalese airport authority managed to overcome the initial chaos, and handled nine times the average daily air traffic.

Observations and Insights from Nepal Mission

Many lessons from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake were studied and documented by the academics and international humanitarian community. From its first operational mission in Nepal, Changi RHCC has also gained a few insights.

Need for Accurate and Timely Information

In the first few days after the Nepal earthquake struck, information was readily available on the Internet. There were many unsolicited sources of information, and at times to the brink of “information overload.” Therefore, it is important for humanitarian responders to identify reliable information sources, and to ascertain whether the information presented is accurate and timely. In Nepal’s case, the latest situational updates could usually be obtained from the Nepal Army’s Multinational Military Coordination Centre (MNMCC). The Changi RHCC team shared the OPERA common operating picture daily during the morning operations brief at MNMCC. The team relied on the MNMCC Medical Cell for the locations and capabilities of all field hospitals, medical posts and mobile medical centres, so as to collate the latest locations of these medical assistance spread across the disaster region.

Need for Robust Communications Systems

In the aftermath of the earthquake, there were limited and intermittent mobile and data networks available in Kathmandu. It was near impossible to purchase mobile SIM cards as many telecommunications shops were closed. As a result, it was crucial that Changi RHCC had a mobile satellite communication system to communicate back home and ensure that vital data and voice communications were established. However, a key challenge most humanitarian responders faced was getting this communications equipment across borders due to bureaucratic requirements, border controls and customs clearance processes. The early rapport that Changi RHCC had established with the Nepal Army’s liaison and customs authority facilitated the clearances for our equipment. Building such relationships early and understanding the special clearances needed were crucial in ensuring a quick disaster response.

Good Media Management to Build Public Confidence

As expected, there was a huge international media presence in Nepal. All kinds of media were working tirelessly, eager to get the latest and often most dramatic news out as soon as possible, which could sometimes portray the humanitarian response in a negative light. It was crucial for the Nepalese authority, particularly the Nepal Army, to manage the media well, and not allow sensational news to dominate the public sphere. One
memorable example happened during a press conference held by the Nepal Army, five days after the earthquake: a foreign journalist queried the Nepal Army about a convoy of trucks transporting relief supplies being looted by disgruntled locals en route to a distant town that was badly damaged by the earthquake. The reply from the Nepal Army representative was remarkable, instead of attributing the unfortunate incident to a lack of control and security, the representative explained that poor communications to the local populace was the root cause. He admitted that the Army did not foresee their initial plan to first reach out to the more affected regions further away from Kathmandu would cause such dissatisfaction among those living nearer to the capital and who were also badly affected by the earthquake.

The Nepal Army then increased communication with the locals to reassure them that all affected areas would receive proper assistance. In addition, a few more trucks were added to each convoy to stop by pre-identified towns or badly hit villages to distribute some relief supplies to the locals there. In fact, the Nepal Army managed to reverse the initial bad publicity through effective public communications efforts. It is therefore important to understand and manage media well, so as to use it to build public confidence and boost the morale of the humanitarian responders.

Changi RHCC’s Inaugural HADR Exercise in 2017 - Coordinated Response (Ex COORES 2017)

For three days, 150 participants from 18 militaries from Europe and the Asia-Pacific region – with observers from the humanitarian community – came together in Singapore’s CC2C for a table-top exercise aimed at enhancing military-to-military coordination and interoperability during HADR operations. Co-organised by the AFP, CFE-DM and SAF, this multinational HADR exercise was the first exercise hosted by the Changi RHCC since its launch in September 2014. The exercise simulated a scenario where two fictitious natural disasters had struck the Philippines consecutively – first a volcanic eruption at Mount Mayon, followed by a category 5 typhoon at the city of Legazpi.

The AFP then established its simulated MNCC in CC2C to coordinate incoming foreign assistance, supported by the Changi RHCC. The challenging and realistic scenario provided valuable opportunities to test and exercise the working processes in the coordination of a
multinational military HADR effort, from the perspective of both the affected state and the assisting militaries. Participants could learn about AFP’s MNCC concept and Changi RHCC’s role in supporting the MNCC. CFE-DM contributed by providing expertise in the development of the scenario and in exercise control, as well as facilitating discussions on best practices in HADR operations. UNOCHA ROAP also demonstrated the operations of its Humanitarian Country Team, which helped deepen understanding of the international aid process.3

On the last day of the exercise, Philippine Secretary of National Defence Delfin Lorenzana, who visited with Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Singapore’s Minister for Defence, noted the importance of effective coordination in a large-scale disaster citing the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan as an example: “There were a lot of organisations that stepped forward to help, but we did not have the infrastructure to receive all of them promptly.” He elaborated, “although we have made great strides in disaster management since then, I feel that this exercise was still a great help to us as we learnt about the alternative, and perhaps more effective, disaster management methods which will allow us to be better prepared in the future.”4

Key Lessons from Ex COORES 2017

Based on feedback from the participants, an important factor to the success of Ex COORES 2017 was its realism. Participants generally agreed that the scenarios were well thought through and there were sufficient exercise injects to realistically test the AFP’s MNCC concept. This was made possible by the strong commitment of the co-organisers, who had begun preparations nine months ahead of the exercise. With the exercise objectives and desired outcomes decided early on, the co-organisers could work closely together to refine the exercise scenario through multiple planning conferences.

As compared to past regional HADR exercises where a multinational military coalition headquarters would be arbitrarily designated as the MNCC, Ex COORES allowed the AFP to test its actual MNCC concept, which helped draw out concrete lessons for AFP and international participants. This is important as countries often have different national disaster response mechanisms and different ways of coordinating foreign humanitarian assistance.

Another key lesson learnt from Ex COORES 2017 was the importance of having international and regional humanitarian organisations participate as observers in this military-centric exercise. This allowed the military participants to better understand the humanitarian landscape and existing best practices, and also helped to foster closer civil-military coordination. In fact, many observing organizations have requested to participate in the next Ex COORES and suggested the exercise test various civil-military coordinating mechanisms.

Way Ahead for Changi RHCC

Changi RHCC’s focus is on military-to-military coordination, in support of the affected state military during critical windows of need. To this end, Changi RHCC will continue to expand its operational linkages and contacts with humanitarian actors to enhance information sharing and operational coordination for a multinational military response.

Through initiatives like Exercise COORES, Changi RHCC will also continue to provide platforms for practical cooperation among humanitarian actors and build regional capacity in disaster response. While we cannot predict what disasters we will face in the future, we can certainly prepare ourselves better to deal with such uncertainties, through preparedness exercises and training.
Interview with retired Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, Director for Operations, U.S. Pacific Command

LIAISON Staff

After 32 years of honorable service in the United States Navy, Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery retired in August 2017. He most recently served as director for operations for U.S. Pacific Command, but his notable career spanned the globe.

In 2013, Montgomery was the commander of the George Washington Carrier Strike Group when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines. Ending a port call in Hong Kong early, Montgomery steamed the strike group toward Samar Island, where the devastating typhoon first struck land.

The USS George Washington (CVN 73) was one of eight American ships in the region as part of Operation Damayan, playing an important role in air transport when most Philippine airports were non-operational in the aftermath of the storm. During the critical first days, the task force provided more than 335,000 liters of water and 36,360 kilos of food and supplies in support of Government of the Philippines relief efforts.

Liaison staff was fortunate to sit down with Rear Adm. Montgomery in July to discuss his experience in the Philippines, and other pressing topics in the Asia-Pacific region.

LIAISON: What do you believe are the key challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation in disaster management, both military to military and civilian to military, in the Asia-Pacific region?

Rear Adm. Montgomery: I think the most important traits you want to have in regional cooperation for disaster response are relationships. Have you established ahead of time the preexisting relationships, whether it’s with other militaries, whether it’s with the U.S. civilian structure – State Department’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) – or with host nation governments and nongovernment organizations (NGOs), to work as...
smoothly as possible in the midst of a crisis? Can you move in and provide the most efficient and effective services?

The second one would be to maintain and utilize standardized procedures. Do you have a set of standard operating procedures to work under so you can work effectively - initially unilaterally, and then bilaterally with the affected nations, and multilaterally with the other countries who fall in and also provide assistance? And then, under-gridding that, do you have the training programs multilaterally, and the exercises programs, bilaterally and multilaterally, that work the standard operating procedures; that work the challenges?

Finally, most importantly, build the relationships that will make you successful.

L: ASEAN in particular seems to be trending towards a multilateral (regional) response process. The U.S. process has been described as responding bilaterally, but coordinating multilaterally. How do you see these trends?

MM: Clearly, you have to be asked by a country, usually through your Embassy country team or the Ambassador, to initially respond. There is always going to be an important bilateral aspect to any humanitarian assistance operations. Equally importantly, no single country brings all the capabilities and capacities that might be needed in a significant event. Exercising for, and being ready to execute a multilateral response, is always the most optimal plan. Always be ready to act bilaterally, but train and exercise multilaterally to maximize your opportunity for success.

L: U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) is home to various types of threats. Can you discuss the USPACOM approach to addressing a humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) event within a combat situation?

MM: Our most skilled and effective HADR force is our III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), who is routinely deployed as Joint Task Force 505 for disaster response. They are a unique force that can move fluidly from humanitarian assistance to full combat operations with ease. That’s critical if you are talking about a humanitarian assistance problem in the midst of a broader crisis or contingency. By ensuring that our largest and most effective humanitarian force is able to move fluidly through the varying degrees of complex combat operations ensures our ability to conduct humanitarian assistance even during a complex crisis.

L: As commander of the George Washington Carrier Strike Group when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, can you describe your experience during that response operation?

MM: We were immediately ordered out to sea from a port visit in Hong Kong. On the way to the disaster site we conducted a great deal of planning, and we benefited significantly from the training efforts that the United States Navy puts into our carrier strike groups. We were able to make some quick initial decisions, such as flying off two-thirds of our strike fighters, or Hornet aircraft, that would have had no significant benefit in this kind of crisis, and fly on additional helicopters. We knew that vertical lift would be one of the key elements the U.S.
military would bring to this kind of disaster response. At the peak, between all the U.S. naval assets, I think we had 26 helicopters operating each day, which is a pretty significant force.

We arrived at the scene and immediately, as the maritime component commander, were assigned most of Samar Island relief operations around the town of Guiuan up to Tacloban City and all of the outlying islands. What I found was that the opportunity for pre-planning, the work we’ve done with OFDA, which is a significant element of U.S. international humanitarian and disaster response, was critical. We were able to establish good situational awareness, build an unclassified network where we could share the intelligence that we gathered, and begin to establish a prioritized list of work to do. Immediately upon getting there, I was able to work closely with the III MEF team that was coming into Tacloban from Manila, and with the nongovernmental organizations, which in some cases arrive faster than us. That put us in a position to very quickly provide a significant amount of life-saving assistance, and immediately in the aftermath, follow-on food and water delivery that was critical.

We worked very hard to effectively serve as the road infrastructure for the region. With the roads washed out and unavailable, our helicopters and ships served that role moving food, water and shelter to various drop points throughout the Samar peninsula and throughout the various outlying islands. A highly successful effort predicated on a strong training and exercise program run by the joint force, but very explicitly in this case the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

L: What are the key lessons from that response?

MM: The biggest successes were obviously having good training and education programs ahead of time, having a good relationship with OFDA, having a preexisting relationship with most of the Philippines senior officers involved, which we did.

I think the establishment of an unclassified network – we used APAN run out of the Pacific Warfighting Center by USPACOM – was a good lesson. That APAN network allowed us to create SharePoint sites where unclassified intelligence from our (reconnaissance) flights could be posted. This intelligence could reveal a great deal of information: areas of beleaguered or isolated personnel concentrations; places where food or water had recently been delivered; sites where food or water was not yet available; and indications where there had been significant wind or storm surge damage. The utility of an unclassified network is critical. I’d say one of the biggest challenges conversely is that naturally we build sensors for use on classified networks, so the U.S. military always has to always consider, ‘This data you are gathering, if you had to make this unclassified, how would you do this in a way that doesn’t require superhuman effort each time?’ Which is what happened in our case, and I think APAN is the logical solution. I’m not sure if it’s the final solution. I’m not sure how you get each sensor to it, and whether we’ve worked through all the glitches completely, but I know that it was both a success and a challenge for us.

Our relationship with OFDA is always a success. Over time we’ve learned that OFDA is worth its weight in gold. Those individual OFDA officers come in and align with specific military units, like ships, or specific sites like
airfields, and begin to provide the kind of guidance and leadership we need from the State Department to effectively execute an HADR event. Without OFDA we’d be slower, less efficient and probably break the law. Three things you don’t want to do as a task force commander. I found OFDA to be, as I said, worth their weight in gold. Much like USAID, that’s one of these resources of the United States government, that without a whole lot of public attention, does a great job for the United States. In my assessment, every place in the world that OFDA has worked disaster response is left with a more positive, supportive feeling towards the United States and our government. USAID and OFDA represent the best face of America as an indispensable nation.

L: How do these lessons inform best practices?

MM: The most important lesson we produced out of Operation Damayan was the recognition that flying rotary missions was the most important thing a maritime disaster response force can bring to the crisis. I did pay a lot of attention to our after action report. While it is nice to talk about the things that went well – there is minimal value in that – on the other hand, there is a lot of value in talking about the things that didn’t go well. For me, getting those back into the system so that the Multinational Force Standard Operating Procedures, the MNFSOP, could be rewritten, edited or corrected to catch some of the lessons we learned. The helicopter lesson is a great one, understanding that vertical lift is very unique to the U.S. military. One of the things we sometimes lose sight of is that the U.S. military should ONLY participate in humanitarian assistance and disaster response when the U.S. military provides a unique capability that can’t be bought or sourced easily by the host nation country, and one of those capabilities is: rotary wing, right now. ‘Rotary wing, right now’ is something that’s very hard to find in the world and the U.S. military brings it. Frequently that is the first thing we have to do. Being in the position to be able to provide that assistance is critical. Understanding that and preparing your flight deck. I would not have thought about that on my own, clearing the Hornets off; someone on my planning staff did. Making sure we capture that in the MNFSOP is an important step, with an aircraft carrier or an (amphibious assault ship) being one of the optimal maritime support ships for it.

Another thing I learned was that although there is a strong desire to provide medical response, it is the one place the NGOs are on scene in big numbers. There was already a sufficient medical capability there. What we needed to provide was lift to the medical capability, maybe some medical stabilization out in the field, but the reality was that we moved more doctors from NGOs than we moved our own doctors around.

There is a natural inclination to provide our medical services when it’s really not what is required; understanding that was an important after action point for us.

L: How do you think about entry and exit strategies from a disaster?

MM: When I was a commander in Operation Damayan, I was surprised and disappointed that after my first night’s report of what we’ve done – moved 1,200 to 1,500 people, distributed 50,000 pounds of food and water, etc. – the first message back was ‘tell us your exit strategy.’ I was a little disappointed. I thought, ‘we’re saving lives, we’re making things better, and you want to know how I’m going to get out of here.’ But, now that I sit at the PACOM J3, as the guy that sends that email, I understand why.

The reason the United States public is extremely open with it’s wallet and it’s heart to a disaster like Damayan is that they trust and believe there is a set of business rules about how you do it. And only when the United States military is the best tool do we use it – after all we’re an expensive organization, when you hire us to do something it costs some money, and so you only use us when you have to. We don’t charge the host nation; it is the U.S. taxpayer that picks up the bill. What we do is ensure that when we’re needed, when we are the right tool in the OFDA kit, we are what the State Department orders up. The day we are not the right tool, we need to be exiting the mission and allow the right tool to be brought in. The other tools that OFDA have are often a lot cheaper than the military.

It really is important that the United States military understand its role. That we execute our role as best we can, and that when our role is done, we leave. Sometimes it’s hard. When I left the Philippines, Guiuan was not fixed. We always think in the military that we fix things. It looked better than the first day after the crisis hit, but it sure didn’t look like the day before the storm. The U.S. military has to understand when it is time to leave and let the HADR recovery experts take over.

The United States demonstrates its role as an indispensable power and as a country to be relied upon with our consistent and robust responses to humanitarian assistance crises throughout the world. Whether it’s earthquakes in Haiti or Nepal, tsunamis in Indonesia, typhoons in the Philippines, nuclear disasters in Japan, there is one country that is always at the forefront of the international military and civil response, and that’s the United States. It’s a mixture of our military, our State Department, and our civilian charitable nongovernmental organizations, which speaks volumes to the American public’s commitment to the good health of the international community.
ASEAN
Working to Improve Civil-Military Coordination

By Col. Borworn Wongsaengchantra, Director, Disaster Relief Division, Office of Civil Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning, Permanent Secretary for Defence, Ministry of Defence, Kingdom of Thailand, & Lloyd M. Puckett, DMHA Advisor, Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance
With active volcanoes, tsunamis and typhoons afflicting its members regularly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become a leader in shaping international responses to natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies.

Experience has taught ASEAN officials that no single nation or organization has the capability to address all the challenges endemic to large-scale disasters. Thus by necessity, responses to such catastrophic events become a team effort that draws on the capabilities and expertise of a vast array of local, national, and international governmental, nongovernmental, and private organizations. Integrating diverse capacities into a cohesive team requires mutual understanding and knowledge to ensure effective delivery of assistance.

Once a year, ASEAN nations come together for a civil-military coordination workshop to improve the integration and cohesion between the member states. In 2016, the Ministry of Defense of the Kingdom of Thailand initiated and conducted the first ASEAN Civil-Military Coordination Workshop in Bangkok as part of a continuing international coordination collaboration to enhance ASEAN member states and plus countries’ response capability as partners.

Thailand’s Ministry of Defense also hosted the most recent effort in April 2017. In addition to all ten ASEAN member states, representatives from Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States participated in the workshop. Staff from nongovernmental organizations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Save the Children Foundation, ASEAN’s Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies attended.

The workshop proposed civil-military coordination mechanisms in designated countries based on the ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan (AJDRP). To achieve that goal, the workshop was organized into two phases: a knowledge construction and foundation phase, and a knowledge application phase where participants applied what they had learned through specific disaster scenarios. The knowledge application phase was further broken down into two main areas: national disaster response and civil-military coordination mechanisms.

**National Disaster Response Mechanisms**

Each nation’s national disaster response plans may or may not fit into the AJDRP. For example, a country may possess a given capability to provide a certain asset, (e.g., heavy airlift), but may be unable to provide it because the affected state may not have the capability to receive it. This is an area where ASEAN member states could develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) reflecting their capabilities to receive foreign aid. Furthermore, this SOP could potentially complement the SOP for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP), which already contain forms to request aid by affected states and offer aid by assisting states.

Currently, ASEAN member states are in various stages of development regarding policies or SOPs to receive international assistance from humanitarian actors and military forces. Some countries strictly use the SASOP or ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) with no national SOP. Other countries may not have national SOPs, but have policies. Receiving international assistance can depend on the political will of the country; to circumvent this, assessments should be another subject addressed in the SOPs. By including assessments in the documents, the affected states can determine what support to request, while assisting countries know what relief to offer. AHA Centre Emergency Response Assessment Teams (ERAT) and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams can be called upon to conduct the assessments.

Comparing and contrasting the On-Site Operations and Coordination Center (OSOCC) and the Joint Operations and Coordination Center for ASEAN (JOCCA) was another consideration of response mechanisms. The JOCCA is in many ways an equivalent of an OSOCC, but has more of an ASEAN flavor. The two would generally work together, but the OSOCC would likely support JOCCA if the disaster occurs in an ASEAN country.

The main coordinating platforms for incoming support from ASEAN would likely be the JOCCA and/or OSOCC on the civilian side and the MNCC for the military. The platform for support coming from the broader international community would vary from country to country. Generally, the platforms would cover civilian, military and civil-military coordination needs.

Early warning mechanisms are critical for any disaster response. Within ASEAN, there are various platforms: the JOCCA would likely use WebEOC, while the OSOCC would employ the Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Center (VOSOCC), and the military contingent in the MNCC would probably use the Regional Humanitarian Coordination Centre’s (RHCC) OPERA system.

**Civil-Military Coordination Mechanisms**

Indonesia’s Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Centre provides a good civil-military coordination model for other ASEAN member states. Aspects that are valuable include composition of staff, the roles and responsibilities of a military assistance point of contact, and its capability
Experts from the military, government, humanitarian and civilian disaster management community gathered at the ASEAN Civil-Military Coordination Meeting in Thailand.

to serve as a satellite extension of the National Disaster Management Office.

Through its sound organizational structure, the MAC Centre functions as the National Forward Coordination Center, Joint Information Center, and Coordination Center for Military Assistance. It was agreed that the addition of a detailed membership roster including role definitions would help facilitate task divisions of the coordination centers, response clusters and Multi-National Coordination Center (MNCC). This could also potentially enhance coordination with the private sector.

The private sector faces unique challenges when responding internationally, especially in their efforts to do need assessments and identify the most vulnerable assets and gaps in services. This is complicated due to non-specific guidelines for ASEAN member states and the fact that many civil-society organizations (CSOs) and international organizations (IOs) have their own reporting mechanisms. Unlike a military force, it is very difficult for the private sector to gain timely access to an affected state due to bureaucratic related delays. Nations should revise plans to incorporate the private sector and also refer to the “Grand Bargain,” an international agreement focused on improving efficiencies in humanitarian response and the importance of the private sector.

It is critical in the preparedness phase to have pre-designated lists of private sector organizations, CSOs and IOs who have the capacity to provide international assistance. Militaries and private organizations have vastly different response timelines and efforts should be made to expedite assistance from private organizations. Although private sector coordination remains a challenge, it is a key element of the disaster response enterprise.

Information sharing between ASEAN nations and between the civilian and military sectors also presents significant capabilities and challenges. Each country within ASEAN receives external (outside their country) and internal (within their country) information in a manner slightly different than the next. External information examples are the Pacific Disaster Center, Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System, Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Center (VOSOCC), AHA Centre Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), Reliefweb and Humanitarian Response. Internally, countries primarily receive information through their respective Ministry of Information, Information Sharing Committees, RHCC’s Infoweb, the AHA Centre EOC, email, radio, television and social media. As there are many websites dedicated to information sharing, it would be ideal for a gateway to be developed as a single point to link to the multiple information sharing sites.

Overall, ASEAN member states civil-military coordination should be as simple as possible, although the shape and operations of coordination centers will vary from country to country. There are existing processes within each country that facilitate civil-military coordination, despite the absence of any formal civil-military national guidelines; however, the workshop succeeded in proposing specific civil-military coordination mechanisms for Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar which could be applied to other nations in the region.

Responses to disasters are by necessity complex multinational and multiagency civil-military affairs. Thousands to millions of lives are at risk and even more are left in hunger, pain and a state of suffering. The rapid and timely delivery of the right critical supplies to the right place is essential to saving lives and providing citizens a stable quality of life until the afflicted area’s public services can be restored. This requires teamwork from the start and an intimate knowledge of who is responding, what they are bringing to the crisis and how to coordinate with them. Such knowledge and teamwork can only be built through enduring relationships, constant practice and regular contact to ensure all parties know the latest developments that may affect the disaster response and humanitarian assistance operations.
On a rainy and humid night in Bang Saen, Thailand this past August, we found ourselves stranded. We were staying at the Royal Thai Strategic Studies Centre and had ventured into the town for a leisurely evening, only to discover that transportation – and English speakers – were in limited supply after dark.

After what seemed to be a prolonged amount of time embarrassingly gesturing and sharpening our charade skills with the locals, a kind woman approached us and asked if she could help translate. Amid the confused expressions all around, she swiftly deciphered our predicament and offered us a ride back to our lodging at the Centre. We were mortified – not by the charity of a stranger, but that we were fulfilling the stereotype of hapless American tourists.
Protection of Civilians

Although Protection of Civilians (POC) comes directly out of the framework from the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, we steered our discussions to expand on that foundation and make the concept applicable to a wider range of military operations, from peace enforcement operations in conflict to peacetime disaster response as appropriate.

The primary role for military forces is typically providing physical protection. There is a growing understanding that civilians are not simply accidental victims caught in the crossfire during conflict, but that some armed groups increasingly target civilian populations deliberately as part of their strategy. Addressing the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and the use of rape as a weapon of war, as well as sexual and gender-based violence across a range of crisis situations, is particularly challenging.

Although the military’s primary role is physical protection, military personnel also need to be aware of how various civilian actors on the ground will approach protection differently. Some civilian actors will take a rights-based approach, which promotes justice and the rule of law – including humanitarian actors who want to ensure beneficiaries have access to humanitarian relief.

Other civilian actors will approach protection by focusing on the long-term political process, and engage diverse stakeholders in dialogue, negotiations, and reconciliation activities, in order to build a lasting political solution that supports durable peace.

Military forces often quickly grasp their protection role providing a stable environment, which enables civilian actors to perform their rights-based and politically-oriented protection work. The larger challenge for the military is usually how to proactively approach their protection role with effective operational and tactical activities, which reinforce civilian actors’ protection activities, to include being mindful that their own actions do not have unintended consequences or harm the local population.

Part of the challenge is having awareness of the various vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by the crisis. While the host nation always has primary responsibility to protect people in their territory, if it is unable or unwilling to do so, other military forces may have a greater protection role.

Civilian vulnerabilities also vary by context – with considerations for gender; ethnic, religious or political minorities; the elderly; persons with disabilities, etc. It can be particularly challenging to maintain awareness of vulnerable groups that may be less visible due to displacement, which often accompanies crises. Migrant workers and mobile populations are particularly at risk to human trafficking and exploitation during and after a crisis, especially those whose identification documents are with-
held by their traffickers. Response efforts must account for pre-existing vulnerabilities, and also factor in how crisis dynamics exacerbate vulnerabilities of a population, leading to increased risk of exploitation and abuse.

Looking out for the most vulnerable populations will require modifying approaches based on context, especially across operational environments as diverse as natural disaster to conflict. Regardless, appropriate military personnel communicating with civilian protection actors will go a long way in ensuring all protection actors’ efforts are mutually reinforcing.

Operationalizing a Gender Perspective

Operationalizing a gender perspective essentially means incorporating gender considerations throughout all phases of an operation. The United Nations Council Resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted by all U.N. member states in 2000 and formally addresses the disproportionate impact conflict has on women and girls. Operationalizing a gender perspective across all operations is critical for identifying needs in a community, and increasingly, for mission effectiveness and as a force multiplier. In terms of affected populations, considering a gender perspective is not just about ensuring the protection of men and women, boys and girls; it is critical to the security and success of operations and fundamental to post-crisis stability.

But this cornerstone of modern Women, Peace and Security is not just about protecting women. Significantly, it also seeks greater meaningful inclusion of women in both domestic and international processes – such as conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding – which has been shown to lead to a longer lasting peace. Although sometimes treated as separate conversations, it is just as important to consider gender factors in peacetime disaster management activities – ranging from disaster risk reduction, needs assessments, and disaster response – as this better identifies more affected people in need and, following initial relief activities, can lead to a more durable recovery and follow-on development.

Conducting a gender analysis before an operation is paramount – and though the level of detail may vary according to the operation, planning factors will typically include, but are not limited to: identifying the most vulnerable; understanding the societal role and perception of men, women, boys and girls, and how they are being affected differently by a situation due to their gender; how their roles may have changed as a result of the crisis; and determining the effects of not addressing the threats to, and vulnerabilities of men, women, boys, girls, and other vulnerable populations in crisis situations.

As this range of considerations illustrates, gender analysis is not simply “add women and stir.” It is about analyzing how a crisis – whether conflict or peacetime disaster – differently affects women and men, boys and girls. The critical next step is to feed the results of gender analysis into operational planning, including how it would shape operational tasks across the various military headquarters directorates (e.g. J1-J9). There are a wealth of examples of how different national militaries approach this. It can be enlightening to see unique solutions working elsewhere, and simultaneously challenging to work through what can actually be successfully applied within our respective national contexts and environments.

The MNF SOP is a living document, valuable for gathering input from multinational stakeholders and providing a product for end-users. There are several benefits to the regional cooperation underpinning MNF SOP workshops’ collaborative approach in revising extracts of the SOP handbook. The most tangible, of course, is the actual SOP end-product used by multinational audiences.

However, arguably, the longer lasting benefit is the ownership among multinational contributors resulting from the exchange of ideas. It’s about the backroom conversations among multinational partners and finally mutually agreeing upon definitions, roles, responsibilities, and operational tasks. It’s about putting frameworks in place for help – protection, security, and stability – to be delivered effectively.

The collaborative process can admittedly be a challenging experience working with various individuals coalescing different ideas among different national objectives. Nonetheless, it results in a deeper understanding of the issues by stakeholders, who can apply knowledge in future efforts, and ensures multinational contributors have the opportunity to play a meaningful role in a regional planning process.
The immediate chaos following the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti left the country in utter disarray. The world watched in horror as buildings turned to rubble. Member states of the United Nations (U.N.), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental agencies, and local forces arrived in the hardest hit areas to help save lives and aid survivors. In addition to the hundreds of disaster relief organizations that came to offer aid, over 30 countries sent urban search and rescue (USAR) teams with more than 1,800 rescuers.1

A significant contributor to operational field coordination was the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). Having forged its mission after two devastating earthquakes in the 1980s, INSARAG quickly set up a system of operational coordination for USAR in Haiti. International USAR teams rescued 132 people from collapsed structures, the second highest number ever saved by international teams.2 However, the coordination needed to save lives in Haiti took years to accomplish.

More than 5,000 lives were lost in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake; nearly 45,000 perished in Armenia after an earthquake struck in 1988. While teams from around the world came to aid with search and rescue, they worked independently without any coordination or communication, and often clashed over the correct approach and procedure.

The search and rescue community agreed that something needed to be done to improve coordination between the teams. Delegates from 15 countries and seven organizations came together to establish INSARAG in 1991, with a goal of maximizing rescue activities, building a common language and standard operating procedures, and saving lives through coordination.

By 1999, the first INSARAG publication was released providing a common language for international teams, and in 2002 the U.N. General Assembly passed resolution

2 ibid
57/150 which endorsed the INSARAG Guidelines as the principal reference for coordinating international USAR response.3

For more than twenty years, INSARAG has worked to define a set of international standards for interaction between search and rescue teams. The goal is to deconflict and coordinate roles and responsibilities for the local response teams, municipality principles, military organizations, and NGOs.

INSARAG has worked diligently with over 80 countries to establish readily deployable teams who can operate independently or as part of a network. Establishing “ready teams” requires participating nations to receive U.N. approved INSARAG training for effective coordination, planning, and execution of operations. Like a heart surgeon, INSARAG members surgically operate within the darkest environments, often where hope is fading. INSARAG teams are often first on the ground and work hand-in-hand with local responders. They bring additional expertise and technology when local resources are lacking or are overstretched, and assist where needed.

To meet these demands, INSARAG’s began an INSARAG External Classification (IEC) process – a voluntary, independent peer review process of classifying international USAR teams by skill level – in 2005. The IEC process ensures each team meets the minimum standards set forth by the community, and allows for INSARAG to match capabilities to needs and priorities in the affected nation.4

The importance of these teams to accurately respond was displayed during the efforts in Haiti. According to Joe Bishop, an emergency management consultant, “[search and rescue] was a free-for-all, there was no commonality at all... the tools were totally inappropriate for the job, all to the detriment of the affected people.”5 Bishop notes that a key benefit of INSARAG is that the institution helped unify USAR groups while recapturing the essential time needed to “save more lives.”

However, there was still room for improvement in Haiti. According to U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports, only eight of the 60-70 USAR teams in Haiti were IEC classified, while another eight were in the IEC queue for classification.6

As an integral part of the existing framework for humanitarian coordination in the U.N., INSARAG has also taken the lead to help nations prepare for future disasters, and preparedness success stories can also be told: In 2015, Chile escaped a devastating 8.4-magnitude earthquake and follow-on tsunami. Only 13 people were killed while thousands of people have been lost to far weaker earthquakes elsewhere in the world.7

This was due, in part, to the tragedy in Haiti. Ricardo Toro, a retired Chilean Army general, and now director of the Chilean disaster relief agency, ONEMI, was stationed in Haiti with the U.N. when the earthquake struck. One of the many lives lost to the quake was Toro’s wife.

Upon returning to Chile, Toro revamped the earthquake alert system and began a series of full-scale emergency evacuation exercises called SIMEX. Organized by the U.N. Humanitarian Affairs Office and INSARAG, these exercises have engrained preparedness and response to earthquakes into the daily lives of Chileans. Now, the combination of preparedness, response practices and strict building codes has made Chile an example for other nations to follow.

In addition to supporting exercises such as in Chile, INSARAG has become an advisor for countries working with NGO’s and U.N. organizations during crisis conditions. In the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, 31 countries sent 76 USAR teams. Of these, only 18 were IEC classified,8 however, INSARAG provided coordination support, guidance and assistance to all USAR teams despite classification status.

During INSARAG’s history, it has transformed the international search and rescue community. Global coordination exists where it did not before, and operational coordination mechanisms have saved lives in the aftermath of tragedy. Never again will the world face rubble with disorganization and confusion –INSARAG’s dedication to coordination of USAR teams in disaster response has guaranteed that.

3 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/insarag_poster_timeline.pdf
5 http://news.trust.org/item/20110112185726-69pr8
8 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/USAR_Snapshot_070515.pdf
It is not uncommon for people around the world to come face to face against the forces of nature. When disaster strikes, a great number of lives could be lost or adversely impacted. Amidst the chaos and destruction, people band together to provide humanitarian relief. One critical service, that requires coordination for a successful response, is reliable communication. This is where Cisco’s Tactical Operations team, or TacOps, lends a helping hand. TacOps is a small team of highly skilled and dedicated individuals who can respond globally to crises and provide emergency communications for first responders, critical infrastructure, or the affected population when normal communications infrastructure has been severely degraded or destroyed. Trained to work in challenging environments, the team can respond with the Network Emergency Response Vehicles (NERV) in the continental United States, or with portable solutions, such as the Emergency Communication Kits (ECKs) and other communications infrastructure. The team operates during the acute phase of an emergency to provide temporary IP-based voice, video and data services free of charge as part of Cisco’s Corporate Social Responsibility efforts.

On Friday, November 8, 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan, known as Yolanda in the Philippines, tore through the Visayas region. Just prior to making landfall in the Philippines, maximum ten-minute sustained winds were measured by the Hong Kong Observatory and China Meteorological Administration at 270 – 275 km/h (165 – 170 mph), with the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) estimating the system’s one-minute sustained winds at 315 km/h (195 mph), making it the strongest typhoon ever recorded to make landfall. The town of Guiuan in Eastern Samar was the first to be hit by the typhoon at 4:40am that Friday. The storm made five additional landfalls across the Philippines before crossing the South China Sea and striking Vietnam as a tropical storm on November 10, then dissipating the next day over China. Catastrophic damage was seen across the Visayas region of the Philippines, especially on the islands of Samar and...
After the Cisco Tactical Operations (TacOps) team established satellite internet connectivity, Armed Forces of the Philippines personnel used Emergency Communication Kits to coordinate with disaster relief agencies and view images of the destruction. (Bottom left) They may not look the neatest, but Emergency Communication Kits allow organizations and first responders to communicate after a disaster.

Leyte. There were 6,000 confirmed fatalities and over 14 million people affected in over 12,000 barangays (villages). Damages were estimated at over $1.5 billion.

The initial request for assistance came through the TacOps 24/7 emergency hotline. The Philippine government asked for help setting up command centers in order to establish communications and coordination between government agencies, relief operations, and other response groups. Once communication requirements were gathered, TacOps deployed personnel and equipment to support the Philippine government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the affected regions.

Team 1 was on the ground just four days after Haiyan had passed through, but they immediately ran into a problem. Equipment and gear from California, North Carolina, and Hong Kong was sent ahead of personnel, but had not yet arrived. The shipments were not given priority status as requested, thus delaying them from getting to their destination. While waiting for the arrival of the gear, Team 1 immediately began coordinating logistics and planning for the deployment sites. The initial priorities were Roxas City and Tacloban City, but due to the fluidity of the situation, those priorities changed several times. Ultimately, the AFP selected Guiuan and Borongan as having critical emergency communications needs that TacOps could support.

Once the equipment arrived in Manila it was immediately set up and tested to ensure proper operation prior to field deployment. A
Cisco’s Tactical Operations personnel deploy a GATR satellite dish and networking equipment to support relief efforts underway in Borongan, Philippines, after Typhoon Haiyan struck the nation.

Local service provider also assisted the team by providing local telephone numbers for the kits.

On the morning of November 20, 2013, arrangements were made with the Philippine Air Force to transport TacOps personnel and equipment to Guiuan. After an initial site survey, the team began staging equipment on the airport tarmac. An ECK was deployed with an inflatable satellite dish for backhaul to provide local telephone lines and data services to first responders. Once the setup was complete, AFP incident commanders were able to make phone calls to other sites in neighboring towns for the first time since the typhoon hit. This allowed much more information to be relayed between neighboring sites, and the local tactical air traffic control officer to receive up-to-date flight information from Manila.

Two days later, the AFP secured two trucks to transport TacOps personnel and equipment to a site in Borongan, where another ECK and portable inflatable dish were deployed to provide local telephony and data services. Unlike Guiuan, the deployment site at Borongan was a public community center used for staging relief goods and manned by AFP, Philippine National Police (PNP), and local provincial officials. Due to limited TacOps personnel an engineer could not be on-site to monitor the system; however, it was apparent that the wireless connection would become overwhelmed, therefore minor modifications were necessary to enhance remote troubleshooting and provisioning capabilities by TacOps engineers. The decision was made to hard-wire the AFP and PNP and disable the wireless. Before returning to Guiuan, TacOps members trained AFP communications personnel on TacOps equipment to include basic troubleshooting steps and preventive maintenance on the portable generator. A second TacOps team rotated into the field to continue operations as the first team returned home, and eventually a third team was also deployed. In the end, this TacOps deployment lasted a total of 84 days supporting numerous sites within the affected region.

TacOps learn lessons from each deployment and makes operational improvements accordingly. The team made process improvements to enable more timely and efficient international shipping. Although the information received when on the ground differed from what was gathered pre-deployment, this is an unavoidable problem that is faced with every disaster. The nature of disasters is that they are very dynamic situations. As more information comes in, the mission priorities will change. For example, it was difficult to remotely troubleshoot and resolve technical issues over the phone with non-technical personnel. This led to the development of the Rapid Response Kit - a cloud-managed connectivity kit that enables a TacOps engineer to easily monitor the systems and perform troubleshooting remotely.

Fortunately, the core technology delivered by the kits remains the same and can provide essential connectivity for a coordinated response no matter where the solution is needed, and the TacOps team is trained to be flexible and adapt to the changing response objectives. Challenges are inescapable, especially in the acute phase of a disaster, but this is the time when people need information the most to escape danger, to find the nearest evacuation center, to find food, or to text a loved one. TacOps recognizes the importance of quickly providing connectivity to those that need it, and is dedicated to providing communications vital to the response and relief efforts.
Information Sharing and Collaborative Decision Making in Southeast Asia

By Peter Colvin, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Consultant, Cubic Global Defense

Comprehensive disaster management has been described as “an integrated approach to disaster management. It is viewed as the management of all hazards through all phases of the disaster management cycle (prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation).”1 Although this definition continues to be reviewed and modified to support specific institutional objects, the approach to anticipating and dealing with disaster events remains a key goal of response and development organizations. Sharing information is fundamental to achieving this goal.

Disaster management requires an operational understanding of hazards, vulnerable populations and institutions, and their capacity to deal with extreme events. To establish and maintain situational awareness, high-quality, actionable information is vital. Information sharing and its use in support of timely assessment and decision making is critical as the impact of population growth and extreme natural and human events increases the number and severity of disasters. Acquiring relevant information at the temporal and spatial scales is needed to support disaster preparedness, mitigation and response requires reliable information products often obtained from collaborating providers. New data collection capabilities, cloud-based data analysis, and information sharing networks are realizing the promise of on-demand access to data and information supporting all phases of disaster management, enhancing recovery and resilience development in regions at risk.

Nations, intergovernmental organizations (IGO), nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and regional organizations have established information resources that are increasingly accessible via the Internet and dedicated information networks. Resources include:

- United Nations Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) Knowledge Portal
- Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) (United Nations and European Union)
- ReliefWeb (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
- ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) Disaster Management and Response System
- Pacific Disaster Center (PDC) Emergency Operations (EMOPS) System

These organizational systems, and others like them, are acquiring and sharing regional geospatial and attribute information. Some organizations, like the PDC, are developing collaborative decision support networks focused both on disaster response and mapping regional risk and resilience.

Pacific Disaster Center: Supporting Regional Disaster Information Sharing and Collaboration

Funded by U.S. government agencies, the PDC has been affiliated with the University of Hawaii since 2006. The organization is at the forefront of enabling the access and use of disaster-related information for decision making by southeast Asian national disaster management organizations (NDMO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The primary mission of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) is to

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1 Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)
Activities in the Asia-Pacific

Through U.S. organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State (DOS), and the Department of Defense (DOD), IGOs including UNOCHA, regional organizations such as ASEAN, and several NGOs, information sharing and collaborative decision making continues to develop in Southeast Asia. Baseline and time-sensitive hazard Information products and resources are made available to disaster management institutions.

Information sharing and collaborative decision support tools and methods are also being used to guide DOD’s humanitarian assistance activities in the Asia-Pacific. The United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) Pacific Outreach Directorate (J9), in collaboration with USPACOM’s Security Assistance and Cooperative Program Division (J45) and USAID, are applying hazard, risk and resilience information to determine the best types and locations of projects routinely supported through Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) funding. These funds, managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), are used by USPACOM and its service components to support disaster preparedness and risk reduction efforts in the Asia-Pacific. USPACOM’s All Hazard Division (J91), within the Pacific Outreach Directorate, manages USPACOM’s All Hazard Line of Effort (AHLOE) and is responsible for monitoring the execution and impacts of OHDACA activities that address hazards such as natural and human-induced extreme events, non-attributable chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear events, and environmental security issues such as climate change. Using PDC’s DisasterAWARE™ platform, J91 has established the Visual Representation of All Hazard Events (VRAHE) web-based resource. Through VRAHE projects are mapped and monitored to determine where activities are taking place and how they are addressing AHLOE strategic objectives.

Moving Forward

Challenges still remain for regional information sharing and collaborative decision support reaching their full potential.

- Continued outreach and engagement – effective collaboration requires persistent engagement with organizations and institutions that derive value from working toward common outcomes.
- Establishing information sharing agreements and collaboration networks – while information is constantly being collected and stored, agreements that establish the basis for access and sharing of this information are needed.
- Continued enhancement of communication and information sharing infrastructure – information sharing and collaborative decision making requires a robust information infrastructure spanning provinces, nations and regions.
- Establishing data/information standards – the value of information depends on the ability of others to understand and use that information for disaster risk resilience, response, and recovery. Adhering to established data/information standards will permit information from various sources to be used effectively.
- Ongoing development and implementation of operational concepts – concepts of operation (CONOPS) are documented methods of approaching and solving an operational mission using technical capabilities and methods. The development and sharing of these CONOPS permit other national and regional organizations to better work together when dealing with disasters and their impacts.

As collaborative information-sharing networks continue to develop in the Asia-Pacific region, the impacts of extreme natural and human-induced events will be reduced and regional security enhanced.
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lthough the Indo-Asia-Pacific region has experienced many headline grabbing mega-disasters, the majority of disasters in the region do not make the front page of global media outlets. Local populations and governments are often able to respond to the disasters effectively, thereby not garnering international attention. However, damaging floods, cyclones, earthquakes, drought, and a myriad of other natural hazards occur all too frequently. Many of these disasters are adequately handled by those directly affected, with support and assistance from their local, provincial and national-level first responders, civilian disaster management agencies and national military forces. However, when the disaster is too large for the local populace and the national government, international assistance is required.

During an international response, regional intergovernmental organizations, multinational forums, regional centers and disaster response agreements play an important role in helping to coordinate disaster relief. These regional groupings, organizations and mechanisms cooperate together to not only assist affected nations with a response to a disaster, but also play an important role in regional preparation for future disasters. This article aims to briefly discuss some of the major regional organizations, forums and agreements involved in disaster management and preparedness in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.
Regional Intergovernmental Organizations

There are several intergovernmental groupings in the region that involve the sub-regions of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Oceania, respectively. These are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). These Indo-Asia-Pacific groupings provide a valuable platform and forum for cooperation and collaboration, supply tools and mechanisms for more effective joint preparation and response, and often produce unifying agreements on disaster management that help provide a more potent response for member states.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The oldest sub-regional grouping 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 sub-regional bloc: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. ASEAN recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.1

ASEAN has several intra-organizational groups that address disaster management and response in the region. A couple of the main ones are mentioned here:

ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM)

Established in 2003, the ACDM is the main ASEAN body that oversees the operational implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). The ACDM consists of the Head of each Member State’s National Disaster Management Office (National Focal Points) and meets at least once a year.

The ACDM fulfills other important roles including: overseeing the development and implementation of the AADMER Work Programme; strengthening coordination with relevant ASEAN bodies; collaborating with ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners, multilateral agencies, NGOs, and the private sector; and also functions as the governing board for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) (See information on the AHA Centre below in the section “Regional HADR Centers”).2

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The ARF was established in 1993 as a key regional forum for peace and security dialog in the region. The current participants in the ARF are the 10 ASEAN nations as well as: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and the United States.3

Since 2009, the ARF 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. Some of the objectives of the exercise are to assess and review the capacity of ARF members and regional civil-military coordination, evaluate the effectiveness of existing HADR mechanisms and procedures for cooperation, and build ARF participant capability to respond more effectively.4, 5

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 as well.6

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

The SAARC was established on 8 December 1985 with the signing of the SAARC charter in Dhaka, Bangladesh. SAARC is comprised of: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Like other regional organizations, there are many areas of collaboration for SAARC. Collaboration for disaster response is included under “Environment, Natural Disasters and Biotechnology,” one of the areas of cooperation. This area of cooperation also covers climate change and the environment.7

There are 11 SAARC regional centers in member countries in order to promote regional cooperation, several of which cover the environment, climate change and natural disasters. The SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) was first established in 2006 in New Delhi, India. In November 2016, the SDMC was moved to the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management Campus. The SAARC Meteorological Research Centre in Dhaka, Bangladesh; the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre in Male, Maldives; and the SAARC Forestry Centre in Bhutan, were then merged with the SDMC.8

1 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), http://asean.org/
2 ACDM, http://ahacentre.org/acdm/
3 ACDM, http://ahacentre.org/acdm/
5 ASEAN Regional Forum Gears Up for a Stronger Civil Military Coordination and Disaster Relief Operation, http://asean.org/asean-regional-forum-gears-up-for-a-stronger-civil-military-coordination-and-disaster-relief-operation/
7 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, http://saarc-sec.org
8 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, http://www.saarcsec.org/regional-centres
Regional intergovernmental organizations – ASEAN, SAARC, SPC, and nations that are members of both SPC and PIF - depicted by color. Note: France and the United States are members of the SPC but not shown on the map.

SAARC policy documents and plans on disaster management include:
- The SAARC Action Plan on Climate Change (2009-2011) identifies areas of cooperation covering adaptation; mitigation; technology transfer; finance and investment; education and awareness; management of impacts and risks; and capacity building for international negotiations.10

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)
The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is a grouping of 18 Pacific countries.11 The PIF was originally founded in 1971 as the South Pacific Forum but renamed in 2000. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is based out of Suva, Fiji.

The PIF has 18 Dialogue Partners with which to hold Post Forum Dialogues at the Ministerial level.12, 13

To address disaster risk management and climate change issues for the region, the PIF produced a framework document titled: “An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP) 2017 – 2030.” The framework “…provides high level strategic guidance to different stakeholder groups on how to enhance resilience to climate change and disasters in ways that contribute to and are embedded in sustainable development.”14

Pacific Community (SPC)
An older and slightly larger grouping in the Pacific is the Pacific Community (SPC), originally called the South Pacific Commission, which has 26 country and territory members, and was first started in 1947.15 While primarily concerned about development, the SPC also focuses on DMHA issues such as climate change, disaster risk management, and food security.

The headquarters of the SPC is in Noumea, New Cale-

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10 Ibid
11 Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
12 The PIF Dialogue Partners include: Canada, People’s Republic of China, Cuba, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States
15 SPC members include: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna
donia, and there are regional offices in Vanuatu, FSM and Fiji.16

The SPC’s Disaster Reduction Programme (DRP) seeks to strengthen disaster risk management in the Pacific. The main policy guidance for the DRP is the Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005-2015, which is linked to the global Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015. The Pacific Plan and the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006 – 2015, are other policy documents that also help guide the DRP.17

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Regional Centers

Along with the intergovernmental groupings, there are some regional centers in the region with a focus on HADR. Among these are the Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (RHCC) in Singapore and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), located in Jakarta, Indonesia.

ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre)

The ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (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 Center was established in November 2011 and is based out of Jakarta, Indonesia. The AHA Centre is governed by the members of the ACDM. The Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) mandated the creation of the AHA Centre as the mechanism to operationalize the AADMER (see information on the AADMER below in the section “Regional Agreements on HADR”).

Among its many functions, 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.18

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

The Changi Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (RHCC) is located at the Changi Command and Control Centre (CC2C) in Singapore and was launched in September 2014. The RHCC was set up to support the military of a disaster-affected state by helping to facilitate military-military coordination. The Centre also aims to support and complement other existing regional coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the AHA Centre in the coordination of overall relief efforts.

The RHCC provides daily monitoring, assessments and shares information on regional disasters. During a response operation, the RHCC can help support the coordination of a multinational military response. It can support this through various tools available including its OPERA Command and Control Information System (CCIS) web portal. The RHCC also seeks to build regional capacity for HADR by establishing networks with partner militaries and by participating and hosting in training, education and exercises.19,20

Regional Forums

Along with the intergovernmental regional groupings and HADR centers, there are multinational forums or working groups that also focus on regional cooperation and civil-military coordination on HADR in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. These forums provide a collaborative discussion and coordination platform for preparation and response.

Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific

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 and other issues related to humanitarian civil-military coordination are also discussed. Participants from more than 25 nations participate in this forum.

Sessions of the RCG took place in December 2015, October 2016, and scheduled for December 2017 in Singapore.21,22

ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Experts’ Working Group (EWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

16 Pacific Community, http://www.spc.int/
17 SPC Disaster Reduction Programme (DRP), http://gsd.spc.int/index.php/gsd-programmes/disaster-reduction-programme
18 AHA Centre, http://ahacentre.org/
The ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM)-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight dialog partners, or “Plus” countries, to strengthen security and defense cooperation. The “Plus” countries include: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States. The first ADMM-Plus meeting was held in October 2010 where Defense Ministers agreed on five areas of cooperation under this new platform: maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine. Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) were established to help facilitate cooperation in these five areas.

Co-chairs for the EWG-HADR change every three years, building on the previous cycle’s work. Malaysia and the U.S. are the current co-chairs. The last ADMM-Plus EWG-HADR meeting was held in September 2017 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Currently, the EWG is focused on the development of the ASEAN Militaries Ready Group (AMRG) for HADR concept and information sharing.\(^{23,24}\)

In addition to the EWG on HADR, the ADMM-Plus also holds a military medicine/HADR exercise. The last ADMM-Plus Military Medicine and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise (AMHEx) was held in Thailand in September 2016.\(^{25}\)

### Regional Agreements on HADR

In an effort to more efficiently and collaboratively respond to disasters in the region, several regional agreements on disaster management and response have been signed over the years. These include but are not limited to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), the FRANZ Arrangement, and the SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters.

#### ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)

The AADMER is a legally binding regional agreement for ASEAN that was signed in July 2005 with the objective of providing mechanisms to reduce disaster losses in the region and jointly responding to emergencies through regional and international cooperation. The agreement was ratified in December 2009. The agreement serves as a platform for cooperation and coordination in all aspects of disaster management. The ACDM executes the agreement, while the AHA Centre serves to operationalize the AADMER.\(^{26}\)

Two work programs have been implemented which aim to translate the AADMER into actions and initiatives. The AADMER Work Programme for 2010-2015\(^{27}\) and the current Work Programme for 2016-2020\(^{28}\) seek to build resiliency, reduce disaster losses and assist with building capacity for joint response to disasters in the region. The current work program was concurrently developed with the “ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management.”\(^{29}\)

#### The France, Australia, New Zealand (FRANZ) Arrangement

The FRANZ Arrangement is a trilateral agreement between France, Australia and New Zealand, signed in December 1992. FRANZ is a civilian-led arrangement that is supported by defense forces of the three nations. Under the Arrangement the three countries will coordinate disaster reconnaissance and relief assistance in the Pacific when requested by partner countries. There are 12 partner countries and territories in the South Pacific.\(^{30}\)

FRANZ Partners coordinate disaster response with the affected countries and with the Pacific Humanitarian Team, which includes humanitarian and development partners from the U.N., the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs. Recent coordinated responses under the FRANZ Arrangement include the response to Cyclone Winston, which hit Fiji in February 2016 and Cyclone Ian, which struck Tonga in January 2014.\(^{31,32}\)

#### SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters

The SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters was signed at the Seventeenth Summit in the Maldives in November 2011. The agreement was ratified by all members and entered into force in September 2016. Under the agreement, the establishment and operationalization of the SAARC Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism would institutionalize regional cooperation among members in natural disaster response in the region.\(^{33}\)

#### Regional Humanitarian Organizations

Lastly, even a brief discussion of the landscape in the Indo-Asia-Pacific would be remiss if regional humanitarian organizations were not discussed. There are thousands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and...
international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) throughout the region. Below provides a quick description of a few of the major ones.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

UNOCHA plays a key role in coordinating international preparedness and disaster response in the region. There are two offices in the Asia-Pacific region: the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Regional Office of the Pacific (ROP).

UNOCHA ROAP

UNOCHA in Asia and the Pacific is focused on mobilizing and coordinating effective and principled humanitarian response in partnership with national and international actors, promoting preparedness and prevention, conducting humanitarian analysis and facilitating sustainable solutions, and advocating for the rights of people in need.

ROAP delivers OCHA’s mandate through five core functions: coordination, advocacy, information management, humanitarian financing and policy. ROAP supports 27 countries in total and is located in Bangkok, Thailand, with country offices in Myanmar, the Philippines, as well as Humanitarian Advisory Teams (HATs) in Japan and Indonesia.34,35

UNOCHA ROP

UNOCHA established the Regional Office for the Pacific (ROP) in 1999. The office is located in Suva, Fiji and supports 14 Pacific Island nations. Another office in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea reports to the ROAP in Bangkok.

ROP’s work is focused around emergency response, preparedness and humanitarian financing. In an effort to promote timeliness and effective response in the region, ROP established the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) in 2008. Using a regional cluster approach, the PHT brings together humanitarian actors in the region to help support Pacific Island nations.36

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world’s largest humanitarian network. The IFRC was founded in 1919, and comprises 190 member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, as well as a secretariat in Geneva and more than 60 delegations across the globe. The IFRC’s work focuses on four key areas: disaster response, disaster preparedness, promoting humanitarian values, and health and community care.

The Asia Pacific Regional Office supports 38 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the region. The office provides coordination, financial and technical support for disaster operations and development programs. The regional office is based out of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.37,38

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is an independent and neutral organization that helps people affected by conflict and armed violence and promotes laws that protect victims of war. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the ICRC was established in 1863 and operates worldwide. The ICRC works in at least 27 countries in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

The ICRC and IFRC as well as 190 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement which is a worldwide humanitarian network that helps with disasters, conflict, health and social problems.39

The disaster management and humanitarian assistance landscape in the Indo-Asia-Pacific is multi-layered and complex, and involves many different entities, encompassing both civilian and military responders. This short introductory article was meant to give a brief introduction to some of the major regional disaster management and response organizations in the region. However, there are many other regional organizations, forums and mechanisms in the region that play a very important role in disaster management in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region that were not covered in this article.

As one of the most disaster-affected areas in the world, regional cooperation and partnering in disaster preparedness and response remains vital. Sustained and robust regional cooperation helps all to be more connected and better prepared for the next disaster. The various intergovernmental organizations, HADR centers, response agreements, and regional humanitarian organizations maintain a dynamic and capable front to assisting with this goal. Continued engagements, cooperation and coordination between these groups, and the maintenance and development of solid partnership agreements will continue to help mitigate the effects of man-made and natural disasters in the region.

34 About OCHA in Asia and the Pacific, http://www.unocha.org/roap
35 UNOCHA ROAP brochure, https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Mainpage/This_is_ROAP_Email.pdf
37 IFRC, Who we are, http://www.ifrc.org/en/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/
38 IFRC Regional Office for Asia Pacific, https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/where-we-work/asia-pacific/
Over the next three years, the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM-Plus) Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Experts Working Group (EWG) will work toward operationalizing the ASEAN Military Ready Group (AMRG) concept, which calls for multilateral deployment of ASEAN militaries in response to natural disasters in Southeast Asia.

This article revisits a project conducted in 2017 by a team of students from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs through a partnership with the Department of Defense’s Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. The project was conducted in an effort to identify models of multilateral military deployment for disaster response to inform the development and implementation of the AMRG. Desk research identified a suitable model for analysis: the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Disaster Relief Unit (CDRU), overseen by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).

The team traveled to Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad to conduct key informant interviews with CDRU and CDEMA staff, and other relevant stakeholders that participate or facilitate CDRU operations. Lessons learned and best practices from multiple CDRU operations were collected. Recommendations for addressing the identified challenges and areas for improvement were developed specifically for ASEAN as it seeks to operationalize the AMRG. An in-depth analysis of the data culminated in a PowerPoint presentation of key findings to the 10th ADMM-Plus EWG on HADR in Malaysia providing a comparative case study on the CDRU and the AMRG concept. These findings will also be utilized in the future EWG meetings to inform ASEAN’s development of a standard operating procedure for the AMRG.

Background on the CDRU

The CDRU, one of the primary response units within CDEMA, is composed of 35 regional military, fire, and police officers that provide humanitarian assistance in direct support to the civil authorities of an affected state.

The CDRU services are for two-years commitment, one year on active duty followed by a one-year reserve commitment, giving CDEMA a surge capacity if needed.1

The CDRU’s operational plan, standing operating procedures and a memorandum of understanding guide its operations between the CDEMA and Regional Security System (RSS). Operated jointly by CDEMA and RSS, the CDRU operates as a non-combatant (unarmed) disaster response unit specifically tasked with providing relief to impacted citizens in a disaster area. CDRU functions include, but are not limited to, managing relief supplies, providing emergency telecommunications support, and repairing critical facilities.2

The CDRU selection process is led by RSS who sends out the initial request for personnel with particular skillsets. Once a state receives the request, the police, fire, and military chiefs decide amongst themselves which personnel would best fit the criteria. Certain positions require that prospective CDRU members be of a certain rank in their respective organizations.

All CDRU members must attend an annual week-long training exercise (typically in June), run by CDEMA. The training aims to orient members to CDRU operations and bring the unit together as a team. Training is facilitated by professionals and subject matter experts, and consists of lectures, practical application exercises, tabletop exercises, and concludes with a field training exercise. The field exercise provides an opportunity for members to simulate a CDRU deployment and validate standard operating procedures.3

Regarding financing the operation, the CDEMA Agreement states that the costs of aiding impacted states shall be defrayed by the sending state.4 In addition to the financial support from the sending state, CDEMA’s disaster management activities are often funded through a combination of membership contributions and donor funds with the latter responsible for a larger percentage.

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1 Standing Orders for Activating the CDRU, 2012.
2 CDEMA, "CDRU 2016 Training Workshop Facilitator’s Handbook”.
3 CDEMA, "CDRU 2016 Training Workshop Facilitator’s Handbook”.
4 CDEMA, "Agreement Establishing CDEMA, Article 25”. 
Challenges, Findings, and Recommendations for AMRG

The research has collected lessons learned and best practices from multiple CDRU operations including the Haiti earthquake (2010), Hurricane Matthew (2016), and several other disasters including flooding, landslides/mudslides, earthquakes, and hurricanes. The analysis below reveals key challenges, findings, and recommendations as ASEAN seeks to apply lessons learned to their context. It is important to note that in addition to challenges below, the CDRU also face other general challenges that are representative of challenges that most disaster response operations face including the presence of divergent political motivations, insufficient resources, and differing capabilities.

Coordination

Challenges

Power struggles may exist between the host government and the CDRU team, resulting in gaps in coordination on the ground. The grueling process of determining priorities should be addressed to ensure that such partnerships between the host government and the CDRU can deliver maximum benefits to the affected state. The lack of coordination not only made it difficult for the CDRU to conduct any disaster management activities but also resulted in time being wasted and the abuse of resources due to unnecessary duplication of efforts.

Findings

Although there is no formal mechanism for resolving such power struggles, the CDRU team typically follows the fundamentals of a regional disaster response support doctrine, deferring all authority and control of response priorities and operations to the affected state government. Many interviewees echoed this sentiment.

5 The RDRSD states “accepting external assistance does not imply handing over control of coordination of the national response and responsibility to regional or international entities. All external responding parties shall ensure that their response to an affected state will always be in support of the national mechanism and will not undermine or compromise the sovereignty of the receiving state.”
6 In-depth interview, Barbados, March 2017.
and emphasized that CDRU team members are deployed to provide advice and support, rather than direct or give commands to the host government. They claimed that by deferring to the affected state, the team would be able to avoid issues related to control, and coordinate more effectively with the host nation.\(^7\)

**Recommendations**

AMRG members should remain under operational control of the affected state to enhance and support their capabilities. Preferably, it should operate as a team under one commander who ultimately falls under the command of the affected state.

Consider harmonizing statutes and national plans for disaster response at the regional level as this would allow for greater coordination and efficiency.\(^8\)

**Operations**

**Challenges**

Deploying the previous year’s reserve CDRU team can be challenging, as the time lag between training and deployment may restrict members from acting in their full capacity. The transition from “soldier to humanitarian” can also be challenging for some, especially in places with a need for security assistance.

While all CDRU training is related to the tasks performed in disaster response scenarios, the missions they must prepare for vary widely in size and complexity. CDRU deployments typically deal with significant devastation in a relatively small area, with limited numbers of casualties. For example, Hurricane Ivan (2004) destroyed much of the island of Grenada, killing 12 people. By contrast, the 2010 Haiti earthquake killed 200,000 people in a country 80 times the size of Grenada, leaving many unprepared.

**Findings**

The CDRU is expected to respond to a wide variety of tasks, and individual members are often asked to perform in roles outside their assigned positions. Those with unique skillsets such as advanced medical training or language skills will likely be pulled out of their assigned CDRU roles. Anticipating working in such an environment, training to a wide variety of circumstances, and building a team with diverse skillsets were cited as ways to ensure operational success.

Obtaining detailed needs assessments and situation briefs prior to deployment were essential as they allowed the team to understand the situation on the ground. Several interviewees stressed the importance of needs assessments, as some had deployed to a disaster area with insufficient information.

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\(^7\) In-depth interview, Barbados, March 2017.
**Recommendations**

Work closely with affected state and regional response teams to gain situational awareness prior to deployment.

Conduct annual training and exercises covering essential disaster management knowledge and skills, standard operating procedures, application of technologies and telecommunication for relief work, and orientation training on humanitarian principles and conduct.

Ensure a robust field component is included in any training evolution to ensure AMRG members are prepared for an austere operating environment.

Provide training and exercises for responding to a variety of missions varying from small scale intervention to large scale deployment and ensure team members are capable and able to complete tasks out of their assigned billets on the AMRG.

**Logistics**

**Challenges**

There is no established and structured regional transport framework dedicated to disaster response activities. Instead, ad hoc measures are adopted after a disaster hits the region. The lack of direct flight between certain countries within the region not only slows down the speed of response but also poses customs and immigration challenges. The lack of dedicated air and maritime assets in the region also makes it difficult for the CDRU to deploy equipment and supplies.

**Findings**

Lack of dedicated transportation resources has forced CDEMA to get creative about how it transports CDRU members to the affected state. For example, CDEMA has formed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with commercial airlines and shipping companies such as LIAT and Tropical Shipping in order to transport personnel and assets for disaster response. Challenges associated with the movement of military equipment are mitigated by traveling light, by shipping minimal equipment via air, and sending remaining gear via ship. For example, CDRU members receive vehicles from affected states or are given petty cash by CDEMA for in-country car rental. This reduces the expense of owning, maintaining, and transporting vehicles to affected countries.

**Recommendations**

Develop a dedicated regional air and maritime transport for use in disaster response to mitigate movement challenges. MOUs with commercial airlines and shipping companies could be considered if dedicated air and maritime transport cannot be achieved.

**Communications**

**Challenges**

Language barriers existed during the operation in Haiti (2010) where French and French Creole are spoken, making communication very difficult between the Haitians and the CDRU team that came to assist them.

**Findings**

Since Haitians speak French and French Creole, interpreters from Dominica were needed to accompany the CDRU team on the ground during their Haiti deployment. However, not only did it take time for Dominican interpreters to arrive in the affected areas, the dialect of French Creole spoken by the Dominicans is different from that spoken in Haiti, which led to difficulty for the CDRU team in communicating with the locals. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that local interpreters, despite their limited number, were very supportive due to their familiarity with the local environment.

Communication within the team proved to be more efficient when there was a set of standard disaster relief terminology used by everyone.

**Recommendations**

A common language should be used among members of the team during training and operations. As AMRG team members come from a variety of countries and backgrounds, operational cohesion necessitates the use of a common language.

Ensure all ASEAN countries are represented in the AMRG and participate in trainings and operations to ensure diverse representation. This would spread training and operational knowledge amongst Member States, and would aid in the recruitment of a wide variety of skill-sets needed to respond to the flexible nature of AMRG’s operations.

The above recommendations serve as a starting point for developing a standard operating procedure for the regional response force capable of providing humanitarian assistance during disasters in a highly effective, efficient and coordinated manner. Moving forward, ASEAN, taking into account the challenges CDRU have faced, needs to address several remaining issues such as the composition of AMRG team, its roles and responsibilities, financing resources, the command structure, and the liaison mechanism. Their work toward regional multilateral deployment of militaries during disaster has just begun. ASEAN countries need to actively participate and contribute to the development of the AMRG concept so that it can lead to stronger and more effective regional military coordination.

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9 In-depth interview, Antigua, April 2017.
10 In-depth interview, Barbados, March 2017.

11 In-depth interview, Trinidad, March 2017.
12 In-depth interview, Trinidad, March 2017.
1. **Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance & James Cook University College of Public Health, Medical and Veterinary Sciences**
   - **Health and Humanitarian Action in Emergencies Course**
   - **February 1 – 2, 2018**
   - **Honolulu, Hawaii**

2. **U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**
   - **Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for the Asia-Pacific**
   - **December 6 – 7**
   - **Singapore**

3. **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**
   - **ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Experts’ Working Group on HADR**
   - **February 1 – 2, 2018**
   - **Honolulu, Hawaii**

4. **RedR Australia**
   - **Essentials of Humanitarian Practice Course**
   - **February 7 – 12**
   - **Dookie, Australia**

5. **U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**
   - **Civil-Military Coordination Course for the Pacific**
   - **March 11 – 16**
   - **Asia**

6. **Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance**
   - **Humanitarian Assistance Response Training (HART) Course**
   - **March 19 – 22**
   - **Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA**
U.S. Naval War College
Improving Civil-Military Coordination in Humanitarian Response Elective
March 22 – May 24
Newport, Rhode Island

Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
Humanitarian Response Intensive Course
April 17 – 29
Cambridge, Massachusetts