



Disaster Relief

*Concepts, Interoperability and Capability Branch
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INTRODUCTION

This factsheet deals with the provision of relief operations during the rapid onset of disasters and the role of CIMIC officer in these operations.

“A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources.”¹

A disaster can be man-made, or natural. Man-made disasters include complex emergencies/conflicts, famine, displaced populations, industrial accidents and transport accidents. Natural disasters include slow onset disasters such as crop failure, drought, the spread of an agricultural pest, or disease and the rapid onset disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wind storms, wild fires, typhoons, floods, and avalanches.

The affected state has the primary responsibility to respond to natural disasters within its territory. However, if the magnitude of the disaster exceeds capability of the affected state, the international community can provide disaster relief assistance.

“Disaster relief is the organized response to render assistance to those affected by a disaster. It requires rapid reaction and often includes services and transportation, rescue and evacuation of victims, the provision of food, clothing, medicine and medical services, temporary shelter, technical assistance, and repairs to essential services.”²

IMPLICATIONS

MISSION IMPLICATIONS

1. In most cases, natural disasters can have cascading effects. Therefore, it is important to identify the historic frequency and magnitude of disasters which previously occurred in an area of operations in order to be better prepared for potential disasters during a particular mission. Besides cascading effects, factors like the weather condition, existence of any diseases and toxic animals need to be taken into account.
2. Confusion over the military’s role and presence as in relief operations can lead to suspicion and fear among the affected population due to fact that non-state armed groups could take advantage of the disaster by violating local rules and regulations. This may create mistrust from the affected population towards state and NATO military in the area affected by disaster. As a result, some people may not benefit from the provided relief. In this respect, gaining local population’s trust and acceptance is possible by constant communications and respect for local culture and traditions.
3. It is important to be aware of the effect that massive human casualties may have on mission troops operating in an affected area. This effect might lead to psychological problems of troops and may affect the mission. Therefore, provision of pre-/post deployment psychological assistance should be taking into consideration.

1: www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/what-is-a-disaster/
2: A.J.P-3.4.3



LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legally binding regulations directly related to natural disasters, although there are some universal regulations which are applicable to natural disasters:

- “Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)” Although not legally binding, this declaration defines key concepts such as fundamental freedoms and human rights, forming the foundation for other binding treaties, legislation and regulations with respect to fundamental human rights.
- “International Human Rights Law” Following the introduction of the UDHR, a set of legally binding treaties were developed in order to further define the “obligations and duties of states to respect, protect and fulfill human rights”. In addition to the aforementioned regulations, there are a number of non-binding regulations and guidelines which specifically address natural disasters. These include:
 - International disaster response laws, rules and principles (IDRL guidelines) aims to improve disaster laws of states and non-state actors with regards to incoming international relief in the context of natural disasters.
 - The Guidelines on the “Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster Relief” (Oslo Guidelines) aim to provide a framework for the use of military and civil defense forces in international disaster relief operations. NATO-led forces, as an EADRCC (Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center) asset may be requested to assist in disaster relief in accordance with the Oslo Guidelines, but only if no comparable civilian alternative is available.

Additionally, the legal status of military personnel during relief operations is established under the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). However, military assistance during relief operations is constrained by the laws of NATO members and participating partner nations. It is also important to be aware of national and local laws of the affected country.

LEADING ORGANISATIONS

NATO

Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the Euro Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU) are basic elements of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Capability which contributes and supports UN entities during disaster relief operations.

EADRCC was established at NATO Headquarters in order to conduct disaster relief operations in the Euro- Atlantic Partnership Council geographic area.

Volunteered by EAPC countries, the EADRU is a non-standing, multinational organization, consisting of national civil and military elements such as qualified personnel for rescue, medical, and other entities; equipment and materials; assets and transport. The EADRU can be stationed in support for international organization during disaster relief operations upon the request of the affected state.



UNITED NATIONS

A number of UN entities, funds and programs are directly and indirectly specialized in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. These include the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), World Food Program (WFP), the UN high Commissioner for the Refugees (UNHRC), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), and the UN Development Program (UNDP) as well as many others. The lead agency during disaster response operations is UN OCHA, which is responsible for mobilization and coordination of international humanitarian assistance.

EUROPEAN UNION

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is responsible for rapid and effective delivery of EU relief assistance in response to natural disasters. ECHO possess 48 field offices in over 40 countries, which enables it to acquire the latest information on the needs in a disaster affected region.

RELATED TOPICS

Disaster relief has several overlapping concepts: It links to the Protection of Civilians in the context of natural disasters. Natural disasters can cause and worsen protection risks for civilians, such as enhance discrimination and lead to unequal access to humanitarian assistance; family separation; enforced relocation and issues and disputes related to land and property rights.

The disaster situation can also result in sexual and gender-based violence and child trafficking. In this matter, disaster relief also links to Gender and CAAC, because it also deals with the protection of men, women, boys and girls.

Additionally, Cultural Property Protection is also one of the cross cutting issues as it is important not to harm any “movable or immovable cultural property” of the affected state during the relief efforts. Rule of Law and Good Governance are very important, the perception that the affected nation is in lead and respects as International human rights law as well as national and local laws will have a great impact on the perception the local population will have on their trust in their own government.



CIMIC TASKS

- Establish and maintain liaison with the affected state, civil population, IOs and NGOs:
 - Enable effective and consistent information sharing concerning disaster relief within the mission area as well as affected state, IOs and NGOs;
 - Engage in dialogue with the affected state or/and UN OCHA regarding their expectations of the military's role and responsibilities;
 - Analyze the impact a disaster has on the missions role;
 - Asses possible military contribution in support of a Disaster relief operation;
 - Learn about role and responsibilities of other actors with regards to disaster relief.
- Develop an exit and transition to civilian ownership strategy as early as possible.

Upon request only/ be prepared to

- Act as an intermediate between humanitarian actors and the military.
- Assist civil actors in the effective distribution of humanitarian aid within means and capabilities of CIMIC.
- Restore infrastructure and essential services and clear main supply roads.
- Provide safety and evacuation services for affected population.
- Provide security/protection for humanitarian actors.
- Assist dislocated civilians with the support for camp organization, basic construction and administration provision of care and placement.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Outside of J9 the different branches have the following responsibilities:

- J2 – provides comprehensive analysis of the affected state including security aspects of the potential NATO disaster relief mission;
- J3 – provides “mil to mil” coordination assets (it is important for the NATO CIMIC specialists to know the national CIMIC focal points);
- J4 – provides capabilities including medical and military engineering dedicated for the disaster relief mission;
- J5 – includes all CIMIC considerations into the disaster relief CONOP and OPLAN;
- J6 – provides the capabilities and assures all CIS aspects of the operation including the necessary assets for the CIMIC;
- J7 – provides disaster relief specialized pre-deployment training;
- J8 – assures all financial aspects of the disaster relief operation;
- LEGAD – provides advice on IDRL.



THE “DOs” AND “DON’Ts”:

DOs

- Military activities within disaster relief are always under civilian control.
- Clarify if direct assistance is foreseen by humanitarian actors; carefully consider indirect assistance and infrastructure support (unless your mission include direct assistance).
- Conduct joint civil-military assessments in order to support adequate planning and execution.
- Respect the culture, customs and gender related issues while providing relief operations:
 - Avoid cultural mistakes in relation to the affected state’s traditions;
 - Include woman CIMIC officers in relief efforts.
- Understand the mandates of the present relief actors.
- Respect the code of conduct and humanitarian principles.
- Make sure information exchange takes place between IOs/NGOs and the military.
 - Consider the information you are allowed to share with humanitarian actors and be aware that not all the information will be shared with you.
- Constantly liaise with the population and create trust and acceptance.

DON’Ts

- Do not make promises you can’t keep to local authorities or affected population.
- Do not evaluate humanitarian personnel by their age and ranks. Age, ranks and hierarchies are less important in humanitarian organizations.
- Do not assume western personnel are the decision makers.
- Avoid duplication activities of humanitarian actors.
- Do not take the leading role. Lead only if requested by the affected state or the leading IO.
- Do not endanger the Military mission by over extending the support within Disaster Relief.

“Coordination between civilian and military actors is essential during an emergency response. The increasing number and scale of humanitarian emergencies, in both natural disasters and conflict settings, has led to more situations where military forces and civilian relief agencies are operating in the same environment.”

*John Holmes, Emergency Relief Coordinator and
UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs*

REFERENCES

AJP-3.4.3 Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Humanitarian Assistance
AJP 3.4.2 Allied Joint Doctrine for Non-combatant evacuation Operations
CCOE CIMIC/CMI Field Handbook
UN-CMCoord Field Handbook
UN-CMCoord Guide for military

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