The Evolving Humanitarianism
Essay: The changing concepts of humanitarianism in the past few decades

Reflections on the “Guidelines for Relations between U.S. Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments”

Japan Self-Defense Forces and their Reconstruction Support Operations in Iraq
Experiences and interactions with the civilian community, 2003-2006

Building Capacity Across the Civil-Military Spectrum
Increasingly, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations have become a prominent part of America’s diplomatic repertoire, and one in which its military forces are playing an ever more central role. Such operations have yielded numerous “lessons learned” that have yet to be embedded fully into our response strategies and capabilities. Consequently, there remain many organizational and operational challenges to relief planning and implementation that must be addressed if disaster diplomacy is to become a more effective activity in support of U.S. strategic interests. In particular, critical military assets must not be unduly diverted from primary warfighting missions, and an appropriate division of labor must be achieved between military and non-military (and between U.S. and allied/partner state) responders. Greater efforts must also be made to accustom the military and civilian disaster response communities to their quite divergent operational cultures. Over and above these considerations, major disaster relief operations have become highly complex and sophisticated exercises in international cooperation, requiring enormous managerial skill across diverse disciplines to link together and effectively leverage a dizzying array of military units, humanitarian agencies, international organizations (IOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private sector contributors. For this reason alone, integrating the multitude of actors now involved in HA/DR operations will require significant improvements in joint, combined, and inter-departmental planning to achieve unity of effort. There is a pressing need, therefore, to reform the current system of U.S. interagency coordination to make it less cumbersome and more responsive, all of which should also make multinational collaboration more successful.

By its very nature, the process of providing U.S. military support to foreign disaster relief … is an interagency act.

Current U.S. Interagency Process
By its very nature, the process of providing U.S. military support to foreign disaster relief operations, and associated humanitarian assistance efforts, is an interagency act. It is triggered traditionally by a request from the U.S. Department of State’s (DoS) Executive Secretariat to the Executive
Secretariat of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). In theory, DoS’ Executive Secretariat is informed by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that it has determined – as the lead federal agent (LFA) for foreign disaster relief – that such assistance is indeed required. DoS’ Executive Secretariat then forwards a formal request to its DoD counterpart. Upon receiving the request for assistance, the Executive Secretariat at DoD forwards the request to the office of Coalition and Multinational Operations (CMO), a sub-branch of the including the appropriate regional desk, the Joint Staff, the Office of the Comptroller, Legal Affairs, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), to organize and propose (or not) a military response. Even in cases involving a large-scale disaster and the prospect of major military commitment, this review can generally be done within two to three hours, after which a draft plan is sent back up the chain of command for final approval by the secretary and/or deputy secretary of defense.

Once such approval is given, the Joint Staff orders the proper regional combatant command (COCOM), such as Pacific Command (PACOM) or Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), and if necessary, a functional COCOM, such as Transpor-
tation Command (TRANSCOM), PACOM, or Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), to respond to the crisis and provide both humanitarian assistance and any needed on-site organizational support. Meanwhile, throughout this whole process, the DoD Executive Secretariat and the CMO office will have been coordinating planning efforts via informal back channels with the DoS’ Executive Secretariat, and through it, with USAID, the local U.S. embassy, and other relevant agencies and departments, to determine the necessary extent of the operation and the optimal military deployment, given the evolving situation within the disaster zone.

In practice, however, interagency coordination is often not so smooth or direct, whether it proceeds along the formal or informal routes described above. In certain situations, for example, local U.S. ambassadors in disaster-stricken countries have reached out directly to the regional COCOM to request military assistance well before the Executive Secretariat process has really begun in earnest, sometimes leaving OFDA and the CMO office totally in the dark. At other times, regional COCOM commanders, eager to be responsive and demonstrate goodwill, have deployed forces to a disaster zone and prepared to provide assistance well beyond the levels they are allowed to without prior DoD approval, and before OFDA and CMO experts have determined that such assistance is necessary and appropriate. Moreover, since a request for military assistance via the Executive Secretariat process must be sent from one cabinet-level office to another (in this case, from DoS to the DoD), USAID’s authority and interaction with the DoD has often been subordinated to that of the U.S. ambassador, the regional bureaus, and more specifically, DoS’ Executive Secretariat (which is populated largely by regional bureau/country team veterans, none of whom are normally well versed in HA/DR issues and procedures). As a result, the COCOMs sometimes provide services (or are pressed to do so) even when OFDA assessments have concluded (or would if asked) that such assistance, though useful, may be unnecessary.

Improvements in Interagency Procedures
Given these shortcomings in the DoS-DoD military assistance request process, disaster relief specialists in the CMO office have focused on introducing a higher degree of professionalism and standardization to the overall process.

Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie A. Kenney and Philippine Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon Jr., respond to questions from the press at a Philippine high school, Feb. 26, 2008. Philippine and U.S. forces involved in the bilateral exercise BALIKATAN 2008 were working together to rebuild classrooms that were damaged in a fire last year as part of civil military operations.
To a large extent, this has involved greater efforts on the DoD’s part to educate regional bureau and Executive Secretariat personnel at the Department of State (DoS) on the proper rules and procedures for assessing a foreign disaster and for organizing a properly scaled (and composed) response that includes the military. This is a vital first step toward improving DoS-DoD and broader interagency coordination, and it needs to be pursued on a regular, institutionalized basis, given that DoS has no established, functional equivalent to DoD’s CMO operation. Since defense spending on HA/DR activities began in earnest in 1996 via Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) funding, personnel now assigned to CMO have developed considerable expertise in HA/DR operations. In contrast, the non-USAID personnel they must interact with at DoS have relatively little background in HA/DR issues and procedures, including for many only a limited understanding of the DoS/USAID role as LFA. To help bridge this information gap, CMO has developed a detailed briefing entitled “Foreign Disaster Response” that it has been presenting primarily to regional bureau personnel. The briefing is essentially a primer on the overall U.S. foreign disaster response decision-making process, with an emphasis on the DoD’s role, authority, and organizational structure in the area of HA/DR operations.

The Executive Secretariat Process

In part as an outgrowth of these briefing activities, the DoD and the DoS (with CMO and USAID/OFDA, respectively, in the lead) have set up a joint working group aimed at reforming and professionalizing the somewhat convoluted Executive Secretariat process (Figure 1), which remains the preferred approach for larger-scale disasters. A key DoD objective in the working group is to promote reforms to current practice that would require the DoS to confirm that DoD assistance was in fact “necessary and essential” (and not simply “desirable” or “useful to have”) and to vest in USAID (and OFDA specifically) the authority to make that determination. At present, USAID/OFDA, despite their putative LFA expertise, are only required “to check a box” (along with other main Department of State offices) to confirm that military assistance would be “useful.” USAID/OFDA is generally quite willing to give this confirmation as it would normally mean fewer demands on the USAID budget to underwrite support that DoD and the military would otherwise provide. To help boost USAID/OFDA authority, the CMO office in DoD also supports the adoption of a national security presidential directive (NSPD) that would give USAID cabinet-level authority, given that the DoS-to-DoD request for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange. Clearly, this will not happen in the near term, but if it ever does, OFDA assessments of the need (or lack thereof) for military assistance under the Executive Secretariat process must proceed as a cabinet-level exchange.

This is not to suggest, however, that ambassadors, COMCOM commanders, and others on the front lines of a sudden disaster are wrong to try and expedite the process. Nor is it to suggest that following the Executive Secretariat process to the letter of the law will produce the best and most effective response when time is of the essence. Indeed, unless there is high-level political pressure moving the process along, as there almost always is for large-scale disasters such as the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, the Executive Secretariat process can be quite cumbersome and time-consuming, even when it unfolds as it should via the appropriate experts at OFDA and DoD. For the more common small- to medium-scale disasters, however, such
pressure is often absent, and requests for very specific, time-urgent military assistance can become unnecessarily bogged down in red tape, even if proper procedures are being followed. To some extent, this was the case during the Solomon Islands crisis in April 2007, and it seemed likely to become an ongoing problem during a rash of similarly small-scale, but nonetheless quite devastating, disasters that occurred within fairly narrow geographic zones during the summer and fall of 2007, including an August earthquake in Peru, flooding in Nicaragua in September as a result of Hurricane Felix, widespread wind and water damage in the Dominican Republic in November due to tropical storm Noel, and later in November the impact of Cyclone Sidr on Bangladesh. Clearly, relying on an Executive Secretariat review process that could take anywhere from 7 to 14 days to complete was not ideal for handling back-to-back disasters of this magnitude. Something had to be done to accelerate the provision of essential military assistance in these lesser but still serious cases, when essential aid cannot be found from local or international civilian sources, and the prompt and targeted provision of American military assistance could make a world of difference.

**New Two-Tier Process**

Fortunately, lessons learned from these back-to-back crises have prompted a real breakthrough in how requests for military assistance will be handled in the future for small- and medium-scale disasters. When such an event occurs, the appropriate officers from the DoS, USAID/OFDA, DoD, and the local regional COCOM will have a four-way dialogue to determine if military assistance is necessary. If the answer is yes, then USAID/OFDA will fax a one-page “letter of commitment” stating that this is indeed the case to the regional COCOM, a copy of which is sent simultaneously to the CMO office in DoD. CMO authorities then will expedite the intra-DoD coordination they would normally initiate when military assistance is requested, facilitate a DoD decision on a proper course of action, and forward that decision to the secretary or deputy secretary of defense for formal approval. The approval will then be transmitted to the COCOM, which will already be organizing the required response on the basis of the faxed letter of commitment. The goal is to complete this whole process (Figure 2), from initial request to deployment, in less than twelve hours, and recent experiences suggest that it can often be done even more quickly. Operating with only a skeletal crew the day before Thanksgiving in 2007, for example, it took DoD no more than 10 hours to get the military aid requested headed to Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr hit. It took only fifteen minutes to get the assistance needed on its way to the Dominican Republic during tropical storm Noel. For comparison’s sake, under the traditional Executive Secretariat format, it can take two to three days just to complete the DoS-USAID-DoD coordination process (Figure 3), and up to 7 to 10 additional days to get approved military assistance to the disaster zone.

Since late 2007, then, decisions on the DoD’s provision of foreign disaster relief have in theory been guided by a new two-tier process. In the event of a large-scale disaster, the more deliberative Executive Secretariat process will be followed. This makes sense given that the military component of any response is likely to be quite diverse and sizeable, and it will almost certainly play a prominent management role in the early relief phases of such operations, which must be carefully coordinated across interagency lines and in sync with broader international efforts. On the other hand, when one or more smaller disasters occur, the task is not so much one of marshalling a huge multi-agency, cross-institutional response over a wide geographical area, but one of getting very specific assets and supplies – such as search and rescue helicopters or fresh drinking water – very quickly on the scene. For this more limited, but still very essential, type of operation, the letter-of-commitment process will be preferred, as it allows a timely and targeted response.
Other CMO Efforts

Beyond these reforms, DoD efforts to improve HA/DR decision-making remain focused on educating the non-expert community at the DoS on the proper criteria for determining whether or not military assistance is essential, and on the correct procedural steps to request and secure such support. Toward that end, another key objective of the CMO office has been to develop a template for the DoS to use when requesting DoD assistance, so that such requests will be more useable from a DoD/military perspective. Rather than make a specific request for a particular military capability, the template would lay out a more detailed description of the situation on the ground, such as the scale and type of physical damage, the level and nature of casualties, the status of any displaced persons or refugees, the condition of transport infrastructure, and overall security conditions. The template would leave it to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, and ultimately the regional and functional COCOMs to determine what military assets to provide, where they should be drawn from, when they should depart or be supplied, and under what rules of engagement.

Working together with the DoS and USAID/OFDA specialists, CMO officials are also putting together a one-day training course and a longer course module on the foreign disaster relief decision process that will soon be integrated into the core curriculum of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Ideally, once the diplomats so trained are assigned to various regional bureaus and/or posted overseas, the ideas presented in these educational materials will be sustained by efforts now underway at the Department of State’s Bureau for Political-Military Affairs (PM) to publish a first-ever guidebook on HA/DR policies and procedures.

Broader Changes in DoD Guidance

At the Pentagon, recent efforts to update DoD policy guidance with regard to foreign disaster relief should also ensure a smoother, better-coordinated interagency process. For example, the CMO office is in the midst of substantially updating DoD Directive No. 5100.46, “Responsibilities for Foreign Disaster Relief Operations,” a key DoD document last updated in December 1975. The current effort will bring the department’s stated policy more fully into accord with the strategic realities of the post-9/11 world. It will also ensure that the sections detailing which DoD offices and agencies have lead responsibility for organizing and implementing any U.S. military support to a foreign disaster relief effort reflect the organizational changes instituted at OUSD(P) in January 2007. The updated directive will also require COCOMs to file carefully structured after-action reports following any disaster relief operation they are involved in, so that the primary lessons learned (with regard to operational challenges, capability needs, requirements for interagency/multinational coordination, and the like) are captured on paper and filed in a central location, if still not fully embraced by those responsible for disaster relief planning and preparedness.

Moreover, while DoD Directive 5100.46 has been undergoing revisions, the Partnership Strategy Office (PRT) at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Security Affairs (OASD/GSA) has been crafting a new DoD directive on humanitarian assistance, outlining procedures and assigning responsibilities for DoD relief efforts and disaster prevention programs that may be set in motion after an initial crisis response. Such a document (a final draft should be ready by mid-2008) has never existed before, and the need for one now is but one more illustration of DoD’s growing role in post-disaster recovery and capacity-building efforts, all of which must be closely coordinated with those of the Department of State, other federal agencies and international organizations involved in foreign disasters, and the NGO community.

At a broader policy level, the PRT office is also leading a DoD effort to integrate the secretary of defense’s Security Cooperation Guidance (which includes military training, exercise, and assistance projects by the COCOMs to help build foreign partner skills and capabilities) with his Contingency Planning Guidance (which focuses on military service requirements to cope with primary warfighting
scenarios). The end result, tentatively called Guidance for the Employment of Forces (GEF), would presumably grant non-warfighting, engagement-type missions – such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance – a higher degree of importance in military planning circles.

Whether the GEF (or some variant of it) will eventually be adopted and embraced by the military services and COCOMs remains to be seen. However, if it is, the incentives to develop better procedures and improved capabilities to support foreign disaster relief operations, including mechanisms to enhance interagency coordination among all primary participants in such operations, would certainly receive a boost. Ideally, this would also help to reinforce recent calls by Congress for DoD and the COCOMs to make greater efforts identifying potential capability gaps in the stability operations realm (which includes HA/DR missions), together with proposals for how to more effectively leverage existing DoD/military assets in concert with those that non-DoD/civil contributors may provide to foreign disaster relief.

Obstacles to Interagency Improvement
That said, clarifying capability needs and interagency coordination requirements will be no easy task. Moreover, as imperfect as the Department of State’s understanding of DoD procedures and capabilities for HA/DR missions may be, many of the roadblocks that now inhibit smoother DoS-DoD (and broader interagency) coordination can be traced to shortcomings in DoD policies and organizational structures. Among the COCOMs, for example, efforts to facilitate interagency participation in contingency planning for HA/DR missions and other stability operations – principally through each COCOM’s Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) – have met with limited success so far, partly because relatively few qualified personnel from non-DoD agencies and organizations are trained and available to participate in JIACG planning sessions. For example, CENTCOM’s JIACG, which is by far the largest in terms of proposed staffing, had a total projected membership of fifty-six personnel in 2007. Of these, forty-nine were DoD employees (forty-one military, eight civilian), two were FBI agents, and, to date, each came from DoS, DEA, Homeland Security, Treasury, and USAID. Similarly limited representation from beyond DoD was projected for the EUCOM and PACOM JIACGs, and in all cases competing commitments elsewhere and travel funding constraints rendered the presence of even these few non-DoD personnel an uncertain proposition. As one COCOM
“It’s awfully hard to promote interagency coordination when the people attending interagency meetings are almost all DoD personnel.”

Other DoD-related constraints include the fact that DoD policy generally discourages the sharing of DoD contingency plans with non-DoD agencies or offices unless the secretary of defense explicitly authorizes it. Moreover, COCOM commanders normally must pass the interagency elements of any contingency plan (including those for HA/DR operations) through the Joint Staff to the National Security Council (NSC) for interagency staffing and plan development. In addition to the coordination challenges that such a cumbersome and hierarchical process presents, the planning cultures of DoD and non-DoD officials are often quite divergent, leading to false expectations in DoD with regard to the approach that other federal agencies are likely to take in tackling a common problem and to underestimations with regard to the level of resources they would (or could) assign to its resolution. As noted in a 2007 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) on the interagency process, DoD maintains a very robust approach to planning, supported by dedicated career personnel with access to substantial resources (compared to what is available to other executive departments), and trained to anticipate and prepare for all manner of plausible scenarios in any given situation. The Department of State, by contrast, tends to focus more narrowly on current operations and the immediate task at hand, an approach that has left it with a relatively small pool of planners to draw on to support COCOM planning activities.

As partial remedy, Department of State officials have proposed that the COCOMs “virtually include” DoS planners using electronic communication tools. They have also suggested that DoD revise its policies to allow COCOM commanders to reach back directly to DoS and other government offices (bypassing the Joint Staff and the NSC) for input as HA/DR and other stability operations are being organized. COCOM is apparently testing the “virtual linkage” idea with DoS, but broader adaptations of DoD policy to allow for more direct COCOM access to non-DoD assets have yet to be taken.

Long-Term Solutions in Interagency Coordination

On the specific issue of interagency coordination for foreign disaster relief, there are signs of movement toward longer-term solutions, including the new interagency working group known for now as the Foreign Disaster Relief Standing Committee. This group was created in mid-2007 as a way for the true experts and practitioners from the U.S. government’s four main disaster relief offices (the CMO in DoD, USAID/OFDA, and both the PM and the Refugees, Population, and Migration (RPM) bureaus at DoS) to gather on a regular basis to compare notes, float proposals, coordinate policies, and identify key areas for further improvement. Within the Pentagon, the CMO office has also prepared an in-depth review section on HA/DR planning and operations for DoD’s standard action officer training course (held several times each year) that will provide new staff with a comprehensive overview of the key players and their roles, at both the national and international levels. A similar CMO brief (but with a more focused DoD pitch) will be integrated into USAID’s Joint Humanitarian Operations Course (JHOC) that OFDA regularly presents to COCOM staffs. According to DoD officials, these JHOC presentations, which began in February 2007, have helped to bring COCOM personnel up to speed on the HA/DR responsibilities and capabilities of non-DoD agencies, while ensuring that they also understand proper procedures and decision-making channels for requesting and approving DoD and COCOM assistance for foreign disaster relief (beyond the initial emergency response that any COCOM commander may authorize).

So, too, recent adjustments at the Department of State signal a more determined effort to foster DoS-DoD and broader interagency coordination in the stability operations arena, including HA/DR activities. In February 2007, the relatively new Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) was removed from the main Department of State’s organizational structure and placed under the foreign-aid coordinator (who also heads USAID), a shift that brought the S/CRS enterprise squarely within a policy planning community that is deeply committed to (if not always adept at) the civil dimensions of stability operations. With support from the foreign-aid coordinator, this consolidation should eventually help the
S/CRS office to attract much-needed funding increases and more personnel, both of which could help ease a number of the DoS-DoD coordination difficulties noted above (e.g., limited staff for JIACG meetings).

For example, S/CRS plans to have on hand by 2008 an active response corps of about 30 stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) technical experts, and perhaps as many as 250 sometime in the future, who could be deployed to crisis spots overseas within forty-eight hours. This plan, together with proposals for a much larger civilian reserve corps (possibly in the thousands) that could mobilize for deployment in four to six weeks, may eventually pave the way to closer and more effective civilian and military collaboration across a range of stability and reconstruction missions. By definition, this would include operations aimed at building up local capacity in countries that have been destabilized or have become vulnerable to instability as a result of natural or man-made disasters. The prospects for such collaboration seem particularly bright (if still somewhat distant) when noting the fact that S/CRS officials, in contrast to their Department of State’s “cousins,” appear to have adopted a robust approach to operational planning similar to DoD’s.

Conclusion

In the end, while there are clearly specific improvements to be made in current HA/DR planning and implementation procedures, solving interagency challenges at the broader stability operations level may be the real key to solving these same challenges at the more specific level of individual HA/DR operations. Both sets of activities, HA/DR missions and stability operations, confront a common underlying reality: that the tasks they must manage can not be done by the military alone, but rather require a multifaceted interagency, and often multinational, team. That team, moreover, must be tailored to fit the changing needs of the overall operation (e.g., moving from initial crisis response to stabilization, recovery, and reconstruction), drawing from a mix of civil and military, national and international, and governmental and NGO assets, including private-sector sources. However, the main point here is that policy reforms and organizational shifts now in place or proposed for the DoS/DoD disaster relief decision-making process will never be as effective as planned or expected unless (or until) the diverse interagency and institutional contributors that increasingly are drawn into foreign disaster relief operations – particularly large-scale ones – really learn to collaborate and achieve a unity of effort. As most American disaster relief specialists never tire of saying, this could require nothing less than the equivalent of a Goldwater-Nichols Act for the interagency and its likely partners outside the U.S. government.

Notes

1. In the U.S. government, the Department of State is the cabinet-level foreign affairs agency, equivalent to the foreign affairs ministries of other countries. The Department of State is administered by the Secretary of State, while the DoD is administered by the Secretary of Defense.

2. A unified combatant command (COCOM) is a military command composed of forces from two or more military services with a broad continuing mission under a single commander. The operational chain of command runs from the president to the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commanders. COCOMs are organized on a geographic basis (United States Africa Command, United States Central Command, United States European Command, United States Pacific Command, United States Northern Command, United States Southern Command) or on a functional basis (United States Forces Command, United States Special Operations Command, United States Strategic Command, United States Transportation Command).

3. Similarly, DoD never really wants to refuse a serious request from the DoS for military support. Increasingly, such support is seen as an important mission in what is now called phase 0 (pre-conflict).
military operations, which are aimed at shaping the security environment in key regional theaters, as well as engaging potential allies and coalition partners, to prevent future crises and/or to prepare for an effective response. Hence, the importance of ensuring that there is a real need, lest scarce DoD resources (including funding) for disaster relief be misapplied.

4. Though admittedly somewhat arbitrary, disaster response planners in DoD define small- to medium-scale disasters as events that cost around $2 million or less, and in which no more than 2,000 to 3,000 (and normally considerably fewer) people die and no more than a few thousand are displaced. In contrast, a large-scale disaster might involve tens of thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of displaced persons, while imposing costs of tens or hundreds of millions of dollars.

5. Interview with DoD disaster relief planners, November 30, 2007.

6. In 2007, OUSD(P) was reorganized to better address the growing emphasis on managing international military coalitions, equipping partner nations to fight terrorists, and improving U.S. and coalition responses to the global war on terror and humanitarian crises. As part of the OUSD(P) reorganization, a number of new assistant and deputy assistant positions were established, including the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Security Affairs (OASD/GSA). OASD/GSA is responsible for defense-related issues confronting building the capability of partners and allies; coalition on affairs; technology security policy; security cooperation; counternarcotics, counterrorism, and countering global threats; detainee affairs; and POW/MIA issues.

7. In November 2005, DoD issued Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations. The directive defined stability operations as all military and civilian activities conducted across the full spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in states and regions, such as restoring security, meeting humanitarian needs, developing representative government institutions, and reviving the private sector. Operations across the full spectrum from peace to conflict include humanitarian missions, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and peace building missions, conflict prevention, civil war, regional conflict, and general war. Most importantly, the directive elevated stability operations to the level of a core military mission on par (for planning purposes at least) with combat operations.


10. Interview with PACOM disaster relief planners, May 1, 2007.


12. Ibid. (2007, May), 32.

13. USAID personnel cannot form a fly present or explain DoD briefing material included in the over 8500 course material, but they can (and do) provide it to COCOM/JIOC attendees as a key “leave behind.” This would include organizational charts and decision trees, detailing primary POCs and telephone numbers/email addresses for key OSD officials who manage DoD/COCOM contributions to disaster relief operations. In testimony with DoD disaster relief planners, July 12, 2007.


15. David H. Gurney and Merrick E. Krause. (2006, July). “An Interview with Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution: Carlos Pascal,” Joint Force Quarterly 42. Ambassador Carlos Pascal was the first coordinator for the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

16. In this context, unity of effort could be defined as the existence a common understanding among the various participants in a disaster relief operation of the overall purpose and concept of operations, based on closely coordinated plans and policies and a solid foundation of mutual trust and confidence. See GAO. (2007, May), 24-25.

17. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 reworked the command structure of the United States military, placing new emphasis on joint, cross-service planning and operations (as opposed to service-specific activities that were often uncoordinated).

Dr. Charles M. Perry

Dr. Charles M. Perry is vice president and director of studies at the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA). He has written extensively on a variety of national and international security issues, especially with respect to U.S. defense policy, regional security dynamics, alliance relations, and strategic priorities in the post-9/11 security environment. Dr. Perry is currently directing a major IFPA study focused on the rising role of military forces in foreign disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and stability operations as a whole. He holds an M.A. in international affairs, an M.A. in law and diplomacy, and a Ph.D. in international politics from The Fletcher School, Tufts University. Dr. Perry can be reached by e-mail at cperry@ifpa.org.

Marina Travayiakis

Marina Travayiakis works as a research associate at IFPA. Her research interests include civil-military affairs, crisis management, and reconstruction and stabilization operations. Her most recent work at the Institute includes studies on civil-military coordination for disaster relief operations. Ms. Travayiakis holds an M.A. in law and diplomacy from The Fletcher School, Tufts University. She can be reached by e-mail at mtravayiakis@ifpa.org.