

Roundtable on Civil-Military Coordination Summary Note

Civil-military coordination in natural disasters: Americas region

Canne A Sucre, Port au Prince, Haiti, 7 March 2013

The Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) organised a half-day roundtable meeting on 7 March 2013 as part of the US Southcom/OCHA *Conference on large scale emergencies and disasters*. The meeting brought together regional disaster management, military/security and humanitarian actors to consider the role of civil-military coordination in regional disaster response in the Caribbean. Speakers presented the experience of their countries and the mechanisms used to coordinate disaster response, the challenges they faced and how they see the way ahead. The benefits and drawbacks of a multilateral or regional response were also described.

The roundtable was the fourth in a series of events held as part of HPG's two-year research and public affairs project 'Civil-military coordination: the search for common ground'. In order to promote an open and frank debate, the meeting was held under the Chatham House rule and participation was by invitation only. What follows is a summary of the discussion.

The need for regional coordination

Participants agreed that in the Caribbean region natural disasters are relentless, frequent and locally highly destructive. These disasters affect people who already suffer chronic vulnerability and this calls for both mitigation of their effects and establishing procedures for response. As such, it is crucial to ensure that everyone with a role in disaster response is able to contribute to the best of their ability, and that roles and responsibilities between civilian actors and disciplined forces are clearly understood at national and regional scale.

International guidelines and concepts on civil-military coordination exist but it is not always obvious how to apply them. For example, the Oslo Guidelines and the UN-CMCoord concept of 'cooperation' were developed to deal with a natural disaster in peaceful environment. The MCDA Guidelines, an IASC reference Paper and the concept of 'co-existence' were developed for complex emergencies. Adding to this complexity, some natural disasters strike in situations which fall outside binary categories of conflict or natural disaster and it is important to reflect on how conduct should be guided in such 'grey areas'.

The example of Haiti was put forward as a place where natural disasters struck in the midst of a highly insecure environment, which had necessitated the development of civil-military coordination guidelines specific to Haiti. Emerging regional frameworks such as the Risk, Emergency, and Disaster Task Force Inter-Agency Workgroup for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) seem to offer greater scope for regional integration and improved disaster response.

The HOPEFOR initiative based on the Dominican Republic¹ likewise has broad support and the first regional meeting saw wide representation. During this first meeting, it was outlined that according to the Dominican Proposal, the HOPEFOR initiative has four components:

1. The design and establishment of a training plan to be used by civil and military actors, along with centers of operation, involved in disaster response at the national level.
2. To improve operational capabilities, including those which will allow for better information exchange and coordination between military and humanitarian actors involved in disaster relief such as a regional early warning mechanism.
3. The development of a model of preparedness for disasters through the creation of agreements and procedures, which involves defining tools in order to quickly and efficiently request, receive, and utilize foreign aid resources.
4. The design and implementation of a Center of Excellence in the Caribbean Region, to be located in the Dominican Republic. This will be a site to provide further cooperation between humanitarian and military groups in the Caribbean Region, through exchange of lessons learned and best practices with the necessary equipment for simulations and training models for various disaster scenarios.

To ensure that the HOPEFOR Initiative continues to progress in a positive and useful direction, OCHA will support the Dominican Republic in the organisation and preparation of the Third International HOPEFOR Conference in December 2013 and will provide technical support to the draft proposal for the establishment of the Caribbean Regional Civil-Military Centre.

Civil-military coordination in national disaster response

Jamaica was presented as a case study of civil-military coordination before, during and after disaster response. In Jamaica disaster response operates at three levels: national, parish (federal), and community levels. The National Disaster Committee (NDC), a civilian-led body, is tasked to establish disaster management policies and guidelines. The NDC encompasses a broad range of actors with a role in responding to disasters: government departments, national and international humanitarians and development NGOS, and the Jamaican Defence Force and Police. Actions are delegated down from this body to the local government level.

The core role of the Jamaican military is protection of the people and the State, and securing the integrity of national territory. However, in time of major disasters the military, along with civilian government agencies and institutions, undertakes activities aimed at saving lives, preventing needless suffering, protecting property, and minimizing damages during disasters and emergencies. The military has a clearly defined secondary role in disaster response, mainly by way of providing assistance to civilian administration. In order to fully realize this role, the Chief of Defence Staff is a member of the NDC.

Amongst the three phases of disaster management – preparedness, response and recovery – the military's role is most needed and accepted in the response phase, and to some extent in the recovery and reconstruction phase. Previously, military involvement was limited to response but it

¹ See http://www.hopeforturkey.org/dokuman/hopefor_concept_paper.pdf

also has a growing role in disaster preparedness. In recognition of the importance of having the military involved at all stages, they have been integrated into planning structures.

The Jamaican military performs specific functions before, during and after disasters. During the pre-disaster phase, a military liaison officer is assigned to the NDC (with a rank of major). The military is involved in preparing and reviewing disaster plans and in training of disaster response personnel. The military takes part in drills and exercises and assists in disseminating public information on disaster prevention, control and safety, as well as alerts and warning messages to local communities. During the response phase the military provides emergency services such as search and rescue, air transport of supplies and personnel, engineering support, evacuations, medical relief and first-aid. Lastly, in the post-disaster phase the military undertakes functions such as repairs and reconstruction of public buildings, roads, bridges, dams, harbors, and other facilities damaged during the disaster. These activities are all undertaken in coordination with the local disaster councils and the field offices of the different national agencies in the affected areas

Moving to the international realm, Jamaica also has procedures in place to determine when to deploy military assets. A combination of factors will influence the government's decisions regarding what, if any, military assistance to offer or request. These are: the scale of the disaster and the humanitarian needs it creates; Jamaica's policies regarding the deployment of its military assets for international disaster relief; whether the affected country has requested foreign military assistance; the availability of military assets that are not engaged in higher priority tasks; how quickly and easily those assets can reach the disaster; and lastly, diplomatic and historical relations with the affected country. Jamaica has been involved in regional disaster response several times in the last decade, including the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and in the response to volcanic eruptions in Montserrat in 1997 and 1995. In addition, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) has developed a model for regional response based on four Sub Regional Focal Points (SRFPs), within which Jamaica is the lead country for the North Western Group. Therefore, in case of disaster, Jamaica will be requested to provide assistance to Bahamas, Belize, Haiti and Turks and Caicos Islands.

While Jamaica has elaborated, established and tested mechanisms for civil-military coordination within the country and in foreign deployment, this is not the case for all countries in the Caribbean.

Haiti was presented as a case of a mechanism in transition, with discussions on the differences between civil-military coordination in times of peace and in times of civil unrest and conflict. Participants emphasised the importance of preserving humanitarian principles and outlined the differences between the types of civil military relations that would be appropriate in situations of peace or unrest.

This challenge of adapting procedures to a changing situation is addressed in several ways in Haiti. The first example of adaptation to the country's particular civil-military coordination challenges was the development of the *Guidelines for the engagement and coordination of military and police actors in Haiti*. These Guidelines cover 'gray areas' raised by the political and security context in Haiti that global guidance would not otherwise cover and promote a coherent and consistent humanitarian approach to interaction to be applied amongst UN Agencies and the wider humanitarian community. To begin with, they clearly state that a strategy of cooperation should be followed for civil-military coordination during disasters occurring in peacetime. In a cooperation approach, there is a common

goal and agreed strategy, and all parties agreeing to work together. However, the Haitian context is also characterized by a highly insecure environment. Therefore the guidelines state that whenever the security situation deteriorates, even if there is no ongoing conflict, civil-military relations should be guided by a strategy of coexistence. In this approach, coordination with the military is characterized by circumstances where there are no common goals to pursue and actors merely operate side by side. The Guidelines highlight that due to this unique context, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Haiti shall make a situation-specific decision on the strategy to be adopted should a change in the operational environment occur. Another key element of civil-military coordination in Haiti has been the creation of a Joint Operation Centre (JOC) that created a forum and procedure for regular, systematic meetings between the military and police actors, the prime-minister's office, the Direction de la Protection Civile (DPC)², OCHA, World Food Programme (WFP), and other members of the UN Country Team. The JOC monitors and conducts a periodic review of operations, supports information sharing and ensures transparency about what activities are being undertaken as well as the coherence of the overall vision of the disaster response effort. When an emergency is declared, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) activates the Expanded Joint Operations Centre (EJOC), which is composed of the same players that take part in the JOC with the addition of some other players that may be requested to take part in the EJOC to strengthen coordination of efforts.

In Haiti the civil-military coordination function is gradually being transferred to national actors. Therefore, within the Haitian government, the Directorate of Civil Protection will gradually assume greater responsibility for ensuring the predictable and efficient use of Military and Civil Defence Assets by the Government of Haiti at national and department level. The DPC, supported by OCHA, will also ensure that civil-military coordination principles are progressively integrated into national policies for emergency preparedness and response. Finally, the DPC will contribute to the development of a regional strategy for civil and military coordination.

A Task Force composed by the DPC, OCHA, UN Agencies, NGOs, Civil Society was recently established in Haiti to engage in the revision and update of the *Guidelines for the engagement and coordination of military and police actors in Haiti*, drafted in 2011. The revision is needed to reflect this gradual process of transition and the greater engagement of national actors in civil military coordination mechanisms.

The discussion focussed on how, given their different resources, assets, human capacity, history and institutional processes, different countries will have varying roles and responsibilities in regional disaster response.

Multilateral organisations and civil-military coordination in disaster management

The discussion began with a description of the challenges of regional disaster response in the Caribbean, with a look at CDEMA's role in response. Only nine of the 18 countries in the Caribbean have defence forces or militaries, and three of these nine are small with limited manpower and assets. However some countries have police services with dedicated 'special services units' which

² The DPC is part of a Task Force formed by OCHA to revise the Haiti-specific guidelines on civil-military coordination to reflect changes in the domestic context as well as the gradual transfer of the civil military coordination function from OCHA to national actors (DPC and Haitian National Police).

train and operate as paramilitary units. In the Caribbean 'disciplined forces' include the defence forces, coast guards, police services, and fire departments. Their roles and responsibilities are covered in national disaster plans and in disaster-related legislation. These units regularly train and exercise with the civilian authorities. There is commitment at the highest level to regional disaster response as the head of government in most states is also the head of the national emergency management system and the direct signatory to the CDEMA agreement. Civilian and 'disciplined forces' are forced to work together due to scarce resources – both in terms of civilian capacity and assets and the small scale of 'disciplined forces' – at both the national and regional level.

As in all regions, effective civil-military coordination faces certain challenges and requires preparation of structures and procedures to ensure efficient outcomes. In order to build these institutions an understanding is needed of the key actors and their role to determine who is best equipped to lead the process of civil-military coordination. The disaster management community and their partners need to determine, firstly, how best to prepare for complex disasters with the military in a supporting role and secondly, when it is efficient and effective to use foreign military assets. Stakeholders should also consider what kinds of resources are needed to support coordination, how timeframes for preparedness and response activities should be determined, and what type of coordination & cooperation arrangements are necessary.

In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)³ has established the Caribbean Disaster Relief Unit (CDRU) to address these challenges. The CDRU's mission is to conduct disaster response and relief operations on behalf of CDEMA in support of any CDEMA participating state affected by natural or technological hazards. The CDRU's main tasks include the management of relief supplies, emergency telecommunications support, and the provision of appropriate personnel for supporting the national emergency operations centres. The CDRU is made up of 35 members of the 'disciplined forces' (military, police and fire services) but is unarmed and possess specialist skills (such as in engineering, medicine, search and rescue, logistics etc.) The CDRU is trained by CDEMA and deployed at the request of an affected state for 2-3 weeks.

CARICOM has a long history of engagement in civil-military dialogue and accepts in principle that the military responds in support of the needs of civilian systems. Civil-military cooperation began over 20 years ago in response to devastation caused by Hurricane Gilbert (1988) in Jamaica and Hurricane Hugo (1989) in the Eastern Caribbean. During this period, civil-military interaction was ad hoc and not governed by protocols or a system of coordination. Procedures have evolved in the region in the intervening period and a few countries, including Haiti, now have a liaison.

The deployment of foreign military assets in disaster response is made easier through the Regional Security System (RSS) which, prior to the 2007 Cricket World Cup in the West Indies, developed 'Status of Forces Agreements' with several countries. The RSS Headquarters can be reinforced with liaison officers during an emergency, which is easier than setting up a new headquarters to coordinate the Defence Forces in the Eastern Caribbean.

Challenges to effective civil-military coordination remain, such as difficulties that arise in coordinating foreign military interactions when the affected state does not itself have a military or defence force. Civilian and military structures also possess different jargons and management

³ CARICOM is an organisation of 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies

cultures. Military actors are used to investing heavily in scenario planning and not having their instructions questioned, which runs counter to the approaches of less hierarchical and more response-oriented civilian organisations. There is unfamiliarity on both sides with their respective systems, constraints and needs. There is also a lack of clarity about the costs of the logistics, transportation, training and other services which civilian agencies often rely on militaries to provide.

The need for effective coordination procedures is however crucial, as the use of “disciplined forces” in disaster management in the Caribbean is not a last resort, but entrenched in legislation and disaster management plans across the region. Experience has also shown there is also a need to ensure that any foreign assistance and foreign assets reinforce national response plans.

The mechanisms for humanitarians to coordinate with militaries during multinational disaster responses were explored through a case study of WFP Haiti’s experiences. In 2008, there was coordination between WFP and foreign militaries to respond to flooding in Gonaives (Haiti), involving military forces from the US, DPKO-MINUSTAH, the Canadian Navy and the French Navy. In 2010, during the earthquake response and later cholera response, logistic coordination had to span many more militaries, including bilateral actors such as Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba, and a large number of civilian relief NGOs.

To undertake this coordination WFP has dedicated civil-military logistic liaison officers. Given the number of actors, such logistic coordination places a heavy burden on an organisation and requires many meetings with different entities, often from different branches of the armed forces of the same country on the same day.

In the case of Haiti, such logistics has at times been challenging. Military assistance has often entailed the provision of logistic assets as a means of last resort, based on needs, when all realistic alternative civilian capabilities have been explored and/or when civilian capacities are insufficient or incapable of filling a serious “humanitarian gap”. There is a need to ensure that humanitarian actors do not become dependent on logistic resources or support provided by the military.

Despite the challenges, achievements were made, such as the establishment of direct lines of communication in the form of a Flight Operations and Coordination Center composed of aviation experts from the Government of Haiti, WFP as well as military representatives. The center eventually ensured effective air traffic control and the implementation of an agreed prioritization system.

In the future, in any natural disaster that overcomes Haitian Government’s to respond, logistic systems will be activated to support the Haitian Government including air lifts for the first seven days after a major emergency, sea transport for the first 10 days and distribution site security. In general, WFP also collaborates with military actors to give emergency logistic planning and to support the radio and communication network run by the local authorities (specifically, the Department of Civil Protection).

Concluding remarks and recommendations

Closing remarks noted the existence of good collaboration between ‘disciplined forces’ and disaster management agencies in the region and the promising evolution and refinement of mechanisms for regional cooperation.

Placing these strengths into context, experiences coming out of disaster responses in many parts of the world show that civil-military dialogue and continual engagement is crucial before, during and after crises. Even in relatively benign peace time contexts, there are frequent challenges to the civil-military relationship in disaster response situations due to difficulties in communication stemming from different jargon and different analyses of the situation, organisational set up and culture. Many post-disaster after-action reviews have highlighted not just insufficient coordination between military actors and humanitarians, but also amongst humanitarians, and even between different militaries contributing assets and troops. Structures to facilitate better interaction are often weak and there are substantive gaps in international legislation as well as tension between the approaches of the international humanitarian system and regional culture, including the role of militaries as first responders. This has necessitated a need to understand disaster response at regional level and to contextualise global guidance at national level. Roundtables, such as this one, allow relevant stakeholders to consider how existing mechanisms and practices support or impede greater regional preparedness and response to natural disasters.

The day's discussion highlighted how countries in the region have different histories, different economic and political systems, and different military resources – all of which impacts their capacity and approach to civil-military coordination as well as the intervention of disciplined forces in disaster response. Moving towards greater regional integration of response capacity would require discussing key questions about roles and responsibilities and ensuring procedures were in place for multilateral responses. In the interim period, it is important to act between disasters to prepare communities and responders, to build relationships and lines of communication between military/security actors and civilian agencies, and to establish procedures for doing so. In this regard, the elaboration of country-specific and regional civil-military coordination guidelines stand in good stead in terms of facilitating coordination, communication, and problem solving and thereby more effective and efficient humanitarian action. Such work is already on-going in many countries in the region and, to some extent, between them. Ongoing initiatives such as extending CDEMA membership and the HOPEFOR initiative are promising in terms of promoting regional and sub-regional cooperation.