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Canadian Civil-Military Coordination in Disaster Responses Abroad

**18th ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional
Meeting on Disaster Relief**

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Civil-Military Coordination: Defining the Issue

- Natural disasters are becoming more frequent and more complex.
- The use of military assets in humanitarian responses has also grown considerably.
- Maintaining an open dialogue between civilian and military stakeholders is essential.
- How and when military assets should be used in a humanitarian context requires careful guidance.

Civil-Military Coordination: Defining the Issue

- Canada recognizes that there are areas where the military possesses unique capabilities that can be called upon in response to a natural disaster.
- When calling on military assets to provide support, Canada's response underscores **respect for humanitarian principles and the operating environment.**
- The use of military assets remains a last resort and based on needs.

Use of Canadian Military Assets: Criteria

- Exceptional/**catastrophic** natural disaster/emergency;
- As a provider of last resort;
- **Request** by impacted government;
- Based on **needs assessments**: Information from deployed Canadian Disaster Assessment Team (CDAT) on appropriateness of military assets;
- **Permissive environment; and,**
- Decision of Prime Minister based on joint recommendation from Global Affairs & DND

Use of Canadian Military Assets: Potential Support

- Airlift;
- Naval assets;
- Logistics;
- Intelligence & Reconnaissance;
- Essential engineering;
- Command/control/communication; and,
- Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)
 - 300 personnel (in uniform), approx. 40 day deployment
 - Light engineering; medical and water purification.

Canadian Guidelines on Humanitarian Action and Civil-Military Coordination

Canadian Objectives:

- Ensure civilian character of humanitarian assistance;
- Effective, highly coordinated civilian/military coordination useful to address gaps in civilian response – needs based **not** supply driven;
- Last resort – Canadian Forces assets one element of Canadian response toolkit;

Canadian Guidelines

- Adhere to international guidelines:
 - Oslo (natural disasters);
 - MCDA (complex emergencies);
- Promote **integrated government approach**:
 - GAC & DND developed guidelines together;
- Underscore key **humanitarian principles**;
- Identify areas where Canadian Forces and humanitarian actors may need to cooperate;
- Provide guidance on ensuring respective operational imperatives do not conflict;
- Consistent with CAF policy, doctrine and operational practices;

Some Key Principles

- To the greatest extent possible, CAF operations should be conducted with a view to respecting the humanitarian operating environment.
- CAF provision of direct humanitarian assistance in response to emergency needs **should be the exception, not the rule.**
- Humanitarian activities supported by CAF indirect humanitarian assistance or infrastructure support must retain their civilians nature and character.
- Plan a transition and exit strategy to avoid the creation of dependencies or humanitarian response gaps.

Civil-Military Coordination in Action: Typhoon Haiyan Response

Observations and Best Practices:

- Multi-faceted CDAT membership facilitated development of civil-military recommendations for humanitarian response;
- Immediate contact with local/provincial authorities and the United Nations invaluable in identifying local humanitarian needs;

Transparency

- Co-location of DART HQ in the local Coordination Centre essential in informing humanitarian actors of Canadian intentions;
- GAC civilian liaison officers embedded with DART to provide guidance/advice on how to support humanitarian action;

Coordination and Transition

- Worked closely with OCHA and other humanitarian actors, local authorities, donors to ensure effective transition strategy;
- CAF Operations were needs driven and did not duplicate other efforts;

Information Sharing

- Shared planned interventions and reported on daily activities.

Some Challenges Ahead

- Multiplication of initiatives dealing in civil-military issues - potential for duplication of efforts;
- Maintaining civilian nature of humanitarian action;
- CNN effect:
 - Response should be needs-based, not media-driven; and,
 - Pressure (media, public, etc) to deploy CAF assets (should be measure of last resort)
- Each context is unique, international guidelines often do not provide degree of specificity required (hence usefulness of country-specific guidelines pre-disaster).



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Thank You!