

AFTER ACTION REPORT

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Cross-Sectoral Security Cooperation on Bio-preparedness and Disaster Response

Inception Planning Workshop

3-5 September 2013

Makati City, Philippines

Executive Summary:

A total of 85 delegates from nine ASEAN Member States, Australia, the United States and Host Nation Philippine Observers from a wide variety of government agencies convened on 3-5 September in Makati City, Philippines. The delegation from Myanmar had to cancel due to higher priority tasking at the last minute. This Inception Planning Workshop was put together to lay the groundwork and explore areas on how to best organize and plan the ARF Bio-preparedness and Disaster Response Workshop to be conducted in the first half of 2014. Intent is to strengthen each country's overall national bio-preparedness framework with a focus on the "whole-of-society" approach to mitigate biological events and natural disasters.

With a unique integrated approach that emphasized interagency cooperation and coordination, the planning workshop created a platform for participants to engage in an interactive activity to strengthen relationships, enhance information exchange, and improve planning among participants who rarely have the opportunity to work together unless a disaster occurs. The workshop also demonstrated the challenges that could occur in the region should an infectious disease outbreak occur. Two biological case studies and biologically related exercises provided the opportunity to identify the areas of concern and gaps in the existing national and local level bio-preparedness and response plans.

Workshop participants worked with their fellow country delegates with single representatives from Cambodia and Singapore being integrated into larger tables for most of the exercises. All groups were provided with the same two bio-scenario case studies: a plague outbreak and an anthrax attack. The scenarios were designed to raise the issues associated with such an event and create an atmosphere of urgency, thus mimicking the sense of stress inherent in an actual emergent situation. Facilitators provided guidance to the overall process as the participants worked the complex problems/issues the case scenarios presented. The three-day activity concluded with each country providing recommendations for future ARF bio-security topics, activities and methods for 2014 and 2015.

Director Noel Novicio, Senior Lead/Oversight, Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), provided closing remarks highlighting the workshop accomplishments. Of note, one of the principal findings that was mentioned by all countries was that a bio-preparedness program was needed, not just a bio-preparedness plan.

This workshop was hosted by the Philippines with lead/oversight from the DFA, and technical support provided by the Department of Health (DOH). The United States

Pacific Command (USPACOM) was the USG sponsor with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency-Cooperative Biological Engagement Program (DTRA-CBEP) Marine Forces Pacific was the Executive Agent/Coordinating Authority supported by the Center for Excellence (CFE) in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (DMHA).

Purpose and Objectives:

Engage ARF regional bio-security and disaster preparedness SMEs on the implementation of ARF Best Practices and response levels. The workshop objectives included:

- Assess relevance and effectiveness of ARF Best Practices Document
- Inventory ARF participants' assessment of their bio-preparedness and disaster response levels
- Validate roles and responsibilities at the national level for bio-preparedness and response.
- Explore roles, responsibilities and limitations of International (regional) community engagement during Biological events.
- Promote interoperability and capability of ARF nations (participants) in response to humanitarian emergency or regional security threats.
- Identify national and regional opportunities for improvement in the development of a multi-spectral/multi-sectoral response to Bio-preparedness and other hazards.
- Build on the review of source documents and make recommendations for agenda items for the 2014-2015 ARF bio-preparedness security assistance activities.

Summary of Accomplishments/Event Effectiveness:

It became clear to the participants by the end of day one and certainly by the middle of day two that the multi-sectoral "Whole of Society" approach to preparing and responding to a biological event was required in a national plan. This planning workshop aimed at increasing the national, regional and local capacity to prepare for, effectively mitigate, and respond to profound multi-sectoral impacts of a severe biological release. It is the initial step towards helping the country move forward in addressing the areas of concern that were identified; Specifically a lack of a national biological program. It further builds on the already existing partner nation/relationships in the USPACOM AOR with their ARF partners.

Summary of New Perspectives Gained/Formed:

This was a first "Planning Inception" workshop that will provide recommendations to the ARF ministers for a future event; the 2014 agenda. This in itself is a new type of event

that was developed. Judging from the evaluations from the ASEAN participants, this type of workshop was very helpful in preparing them for the larger ARF bio-security event in 2014. Some of the new insights that were shared during the out briefs that were common for almost all the countries attending included;

- The need for a Bio-preparedness national Program, not just a bio-preparedness plan at the national level. The request was for a Framework to be presented for all countries to consider that could be “customized” for use by each member state at the 2014 ARF meeting.
- Development of an integrated Civil-Military Contingency Plan for rapid response to a biological outbreak.
- Lack of Risk Communications Plan that addressed specific bio-hazard issues in a non-technical manner that could be used for the general public. Participants identified the lack of an established Risk Communication Plan for biological events as a current shortfall.
- Triggers for Engagement for bio-response. Participants identified a lack of “triggers” or thresholds for engagement of additional bio-response manpower as a factor inhibiting effective support to local authorities requesting assistance.

Outcomes, Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

This planning workshop was effective as a result of the wide variety of participants from the ASEAN delegates, Philippine DFA and the DOH, and US observers. The engagement of all participants and their experience in previous infectious disease outbreaks was critical to the success of the workshop and the ability to identify the critical plans, policies and procedures necessary to effectively respond to a complex humanitarian emergency brought on by a biological disaster.

The pre and post-survey questions for the ASEAN delegates helped guide the level of discussion. The analysis shows that the case studies, exercises and work accomplished during the workshop clarified roles and responsibilities for some of the participants and the desire to have a program with more detailed information was another finding in the data collected post workshop.

Expecting participants to read website pre-readings prior to attending a workshop may be ambitious at this time. Other approaches should be explored for the next event. It is estimated that only half of the participants read the website materials before arriving in Manila. There were a variety of reasons for that, some of which were not attributed to the participant/s, and can be well mitigated through timely planning and coordination of the next ARF activities IN 2014.

A summary of the country briefings included the following recommendations for the ARF 2014 agenda:

- All participating countries concurred that a bio-preparedness program, not just a national plan for bio-preparedness was needed, and that it should be linked with Chemical and Radiological events, not divided in to three separate plans. The

recommendation was for a comprehensive flexible biological program be presented at the next ARF session in 2014. One that is adaptable to different size countries that are at different levels of Disaster Management development.

- All participating countries saw that the Ministry of Health had communicable disease sections and the military and police had CBRN somewhere in their structures. The requirement for a national program was to merge health and security through a “whole-of-society” planning framework. This interagency approach was recommended to be part of a National Security Council government organization. All countries recommended some sort of government mechanism to coordinate response to a biological release and provide sample structures for responses.
- The recommendation was for each country to identify a “focal point” for biological issues. Each country “focal point” would exchange information quarterly with other ASEAN countries and neighbors. This surveillance process coupled with information would strengthen regional response capabilities which could be considered as an agenda item at the 2014 ARF workshop.
- More hands-on type workshop experience and table top exercise, less formal lectures. Provide pre-reading online similar to this workshop. Each country expressed an interest in getting more scenario type exercise materials for use in their countries. The recommendation is for an exercise format for biological case studies and exercises.
- Each country agreed to report back the progress they have made within their respective countries at the 2014 ARF workshop.

Philippines Points of Contact:

Ms. MA. Teresita C. Daza
Executive Director
Office of ASEAN Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Jahzeel Abihail G Cruz
Principle Assistant
Office of ASEAN Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs

U.S. Points of Contact:

Mr. Rey Tagorda
U.S. Pacific Command
Deputy, Southeast Asia Policy, J520
(808) 477-9491

Mr. J. Nelson D. Ramos
U.S. Pacific Command
ASEAN Relations Officer
Southeast Asia Policy, J523
(808) 477-9566