

ANNEX G

ASEAN Regional Forum Security Policy Conference Danang, Vietnam on 19 May 10 Exploiting ARF Potentials in Dealing with Non-Traditional Security Challenges in the Region

1. Thank you, Mr Chairman. Please allow me to thank the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defence for organising the ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC) as well as for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation.
2. The ARF is a useful platform for us to further our discussions and cooperation as it brings together 27 countries from the Asia-Pacific region. ARF countries have accumulated a wealth of experiences amongst us and it is useful to share this knowledge and learn from one another.
3. Over the years, the ARF has done a lot of good work in addressing non-traditional security issues, notably in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, counter-terrorism and non-proliferation.
4. HADR is by far the most extensive area of cooperation in the ARF, and with growing momentum. Since the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, the region has undertaken significant efforts to strengthen our capacities in dealing with natural disasters. The ARF, in particular, has been active in enhancing regional cooperation in HADR with the 13th ARF in Kuala Lumpur in 2006 adopting the ARF Statement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, in which all ARF participating countries emphasised the importance of developing and strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacities at the sub-national, national, regional, as well as the international levels to support community capacities to reduce disaster risk.
5. Since then, the 14th ARF in Manila in 2007 has adopted the ARF General Guidelines on Disaster Relief Cooperation. Work is also in progress for the ARF to develop an ARF Strategic Guidance and ARF Disaster Relief Workplan as well as an ARF Model Agreement on Use of Military Assets in HADR.
6. In terms of practical cooperation, we have also progressed from a Tabletop Exercise that was co-hosted by Australia and Indonesia in May

2008, to a Voluntary Demonstration of Response that was co-hosted by the US and the Philippines in May 2009. Next year, Indonesia and Japan will also be co-hosting an ARF Disaster Relief (DiREx) in Manado – this will be the first live exercise within the ARF.

7. Separately, Australia and Singapore have co-sponsored the initiative on the ARF Disaster Relief Mapping Service (DRMS) in July 2009, which is expected to be operational by the middle of this year. The DRMS is a one-stop on-line map to plug in geospatial and topographic data and will allow ARF members to expedite the delivery of aid to disaster stricken areas by referencing a single, reliable and updated database.

8. These initiatives, in our view, are broad ranging and when implemented would certainly enhance the speedy delivery of aid in the event of a natural disaster.

9. Singapore's experience in participating in HADR missions overseas has taught us that militaries can make useful and significant contributions, provided that their efforts are properly directed and focused.

10. Very often, the militaries are the first responders in the immediate aftermath of major disasters because they are always on operational alert and are able to rapidly muster resources for emergency response. For example, in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 Dec 04, Singapore's proximity to the most severely affected areas put us in a unique position to play a useful role in the disaster relief efforts. Singapore's standby teams were deployable within 24 hours, and teams specially assembled for this disaster assistance mission were ready for deployment within 48 to 72 hours.

11. However, it is also important to bear in mind that the scale and complexity of the tasks to deal with the aftermath of any major disasters are simply beyond the capacity of any agency, or for that matter, any country to cope single-handedly.

12. In this regard, during the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami relief operations, Singapore's network of air and sea links made us a practical hub from which foreign Armed Forces, relief agencies, the UN and NGOs could stage their efforts. We had therefore opened our air and naval bases to foreign Armed Forces, and facilitated speedy diplomatic clearance to support multinational and multi-agency relief efforts by the UN and other

key NGOs. A Regional Coordination Centre was also established in Singapore to facilitate and coordinate efforts.

13. Perhaps this is one area that the ARF could look into in the future – how militaries, civil agencies and even civil society organisations can better cooperate and interface amongst themselves in HADR operations by leveraging on one another’s complementary areas of expertise, resources and niche capabilities.

14. In addition, it is important for us to look towards the longer term when planning post-disaster relief operations. When the initial response phase draws to an end, the utility of the militaries decreases, as civil agencies bring their massive resources to bear in the subsequent stabilization and reconstruction phases. Militaries cannot match these resources beyond the initial response phase. But close coordination between militaries and other agencies can create an “enabling environment” for subsequent phases of the HADR operation to succeed.

15. As a case in point, the SAF had initially deployed a 54- member medical team to West Sumatra to provide medical treatment following the massive earthquake in West Sumatra last October. The medical team set up a mobile medical clinic in Koto Bangko, a village about 20km northeast of Pariaman, and also manned the operating theatre and A&E clinic in the Pariaman Public Hospital. This helped to meet the immediate needs of those affected by the disaster.

16. However, in order to cater to the longer term healthcare needs of the locals, a 30-man engineering team from the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) worked together with personnel from the Indonesian Defence Forces (TNI) and the local government officials to construct two Modular Deployment Kits (MDKs). These are now being used by the local healthcare authorities as clinics to replace those that have been destroyed due to the earthquake.

17. To sum up, increased interactions and confidence-building measures between civil agencies and militaries would help to facilitate civil-military coordination for in-theatre HADR operations as well as longer term stabilisation and recovery efforts.

18. Trust and understanding cannot be established overnight. They have to be created and nurtured through regular interactions and exchanges. ARF events are therefore most useful for sustaining

engagement, for they bring people together across functional sectors and across national borders.

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