

CIVIL MILITARY COLLABORATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

The US military sector is one actor in a large cast of responders in disaster management and the management of complex emergencies. It can bring many unique capabilities to bear on these events, including logistics, command and control, organizational structure, rapid response capability, and advanced communication/information technologies. With the advent of the post Cold-War era the military has been increasingly involved in complex emergencies for which its strengths can contribute to the stabilization of an affected area. In addition, natural disasters affect greater numbers of people and country infrastructures than ever before, threatening to destabilize entire regions. The military sector recognizes a need to learn more about the vast array of actors engaged in emergency response, the technical issues driving the success of response interventions, and the social context of disasters in the developing world. To do so will allow it to understand its own role better, and to facilitate a more coordinated, and hence successful, response. Moreover, the military sector experiences rapid movement of personnel within the military system and consequently a rapid turnover in personnel in the various Areas of Responsibilities (AORs), which serve as the organizational frame for US military intervention. This is one more reason to continually train in the area of disaster relief. Military participation in disaster response and humanitarian interventions, however, has not been without growing pains. These include lack of knowledge and working relationships with the international disaster management community,

a strong and unique organizational culture that clashes, at times, with civilian organizational culture, and the fact that high turnover and lack of prestige of this type of activity within the military establishment may result in limited institutional learning in any particular command.

The purpose of this panel discussion is to present various perspectives on the direction of civil-military collaboration for disaster management and humanitarian assistance in the 21st Century. Papers presented will discuss university-based centers of excellence in civil military cooperation, civil military training, perspectives from civilian and military organizations, and ways ahead to improved collaboration. Civil-military collaboration is a useful approach to catalyzing both the new and old landscape of actors towards common and efficient solutions to disaster prevention and management.