



## **Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA)**

### **Hazardous mining scenario the focus of Mongolia's Gobi Wolf exercise**

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia (April 12, 2010) – The second annual “Gobi Wolf” disaster management exercise, held by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the Mongolian government, ended with a mining disaster scenario field exercise involving hazardous materials on April 8. Gobi Wolf spanned three phases which began on March 5.

Mining is a major industry in Mongolia, making up a large part of foreign direct investment and government revenues, because of country's significant mineral deposits. Mongolia's industry sector, which includes mining, slightly accounts for more of the GDP than agriculture, making mining safety a critical issue.

Gobi Wolf is executed by the U.S. DoD's Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), a direct reporting unit to the U.S military's Pacific Command (USPACOM) in Hawaii.

“This year, we've incorporated the participation of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Microsoft and the Asia Foundation on mining safety. This is part of our effort to reach out to involve more civilian organizations,” said Greg Flick, COE lead for Gobi Wolf. “We also looked at how to request international assistance. This includes policies and procedures involving visas, customs and the process of expediting personnel from abroad.”

T.S. Amgalanbayar, the Director of Mongolia's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), gave opening remarks at the start of Gobi Wolf's phase 2, a senior leaders' table top exercise on March 29 to April 2. U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Jonathan Addleton, and COE Director LtGen (ret.) John Goodman also gave opening remarks.

Phase 2 of the exercise built upon training for NEMA staff in Phase 1 (March 1-5). The mining disaster scenario involving hazardous material, the third phase of the exercise involved a wide range of Mongolian government, military and civilian responders on April 8.

The State of Alaska and the Alaskan National Guard have also been participating in Gobi Wolf due to their close affiliation with Mongolia under the U.S. National Guard State Partnership Program. Other participants included the Mongolian Ministry of Mines, the Mongolia Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Army War College.

Next year, Gobi Wolf will focus on an earthquake scenario. Although Mongolia is far from plate boundaries, significant seismic activity has occurred in the landlocked country. According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), there were three earthquakes of approximately M8 (magnitude) and another six of about M7 in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“There were a lot of firsts in last year’s [inaugural] Gobi Wolf, with a lot of media coverage, which helped to build...confidence in the leadership of Mongolia at the [government and ] community level,” said Flick. Not only is the exercise series aimed at boosting Mongolia’s disaster management capacity, as well as providing lessons learned for US experts as well.

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*The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA) was established by the US Congress in 1994 to facilitate civil-military management in international disaster management and humanitarian assistance. It partners with a wide variety of national and international governmental, non-governmental and international organizations to provide relevant education, training, coordination and research.*

*COE-DMHA, a DoD organization, is a direct reporting unit to the US Pacific Command (USPACOM) and is establishing field offices at global Combatant Commands (COCOMs) to promote global disaster preparedness and resiliency.*