



Australian Government
Asia Pacific Civil-Military
Centre of Excellence

Senior-level Peace Operations / Disaster Seminar held by COE-DMHA and Australia-based Asia-Pacific Civil-Military Center of Excellence (APCM-COE)

HONOLULU, Hawaii (May 28, 2010) - The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management in Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA) and the Australia-based Asia Pacific Civil-Military Center of Excellence (APCM-COE) held a seminar focused on improving peacekeeping policy and training, May 24 to 27. The seminar's theme was "The Challenges of Multinational UN Peace Support Operations after a Natural Disaster."

"We focused specifically on disaster management and humanitarian assistance in peacekeeping operations, as well as transitioning into the larger peace-building process," said Greg Flick, COE lead for the seminar, explaining the expansion of the traditional peacekeeping role beyond the transformation of a ceasefire into a peace settlement. "We also looked at enhancing awareness of community approaches to these areas."

"It is important that peacekeeping forces understand how they can assist local communities devastated by natural disasters, such as recently occurred in Haiti," said Major General (Retd) Michael Smith, APCM-COE Executive Director, who was the Deputy Force Commander for the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). In that position, Smith was interested in exploring the role of peacekeeping troops in East Timor should a natural disaster have occurred during his tenure.

In his past time in Haiti, Afghanistan and Iraq, LtGen John (Retd) Goodman, COE Executive Director, also took an interest in the roles and responsibilities that military forces conducting peacekeeping, stability and security, or combat operations have in responding to natural disasters. This interest came in combination from his other experiences in responding to disasters in places as Central America, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Burma.

"Military commanders have an operational and inherent responsibility to protect, preserve, and assist local communities during the conduct of operations," he said. "Whether to maintain the integrity and momentum of operations, to manage perceptions of the local population, or to create synergy with broader operational or developmental goals, military forces must understand the need to save lives and relieve suffering when and where possible."

Fifty-eight participants from 16 Asia-Pacific countries with mid-to high-level military (Colonel to Major General) and senior-level civilian ranks were in attendance. Participating countries

included Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Tonga.

Subject matter experts included the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and former commanders of UN peacekeeping missions, ranking from Major General to four-star general.

Discussions included the latest policy initiatives at the strategic level from a UN Department of Peacekeeping (DPKO) perspective, including the recently launched New Horizon initiative between the UNDPKO and the UN Department of Field Support (DFS), and civil-military coordination. The conference was also aimed at facilitating regional cooperation in peacekeeping.

As part of its portfolio, COE has held over 25 mid- and high-level peacekeeping seminars focusing on policy issues and capacity-building among Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in the Asia Pacific since 2000. This week's seminar marks the first collaborative seminar in COE's ongoing partnership with the APCM-COE.

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The Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA) was established by the U.S. 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.

The Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence is an Australian Government initiative to contribute to the enhancement of peace and security, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region, through improved civil-military collaboration in disaster and conflict management. The Centre's mission is to support the development of national civil-military capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond more effectively to conflicts and disasters overseas.