

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Thai government for providing the venue for this conference and for making U-Taphao airbase available for our use during the Tsunami relief effort.

I am truly honored to be invited to be a speaker at this conference. Although I realize that WHO and other medical and public health organizations are still deeply involved in the ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts in the tsunami-affected areas, what I am going to discuss is the area where the military and the civil disaster relief community most closely interact: during the immediate response to the event.

While many would not think of the similarities between the military and an organization such as the World Health Organization, they are there. The U.S. military deployed with a mission to minimize loss of life and mitigate human suffering. That is what WHO does 365 days a year around the world. We had a common mission. One only has to look at the concurrent symposia being held by our two organizations in Thailand to see that we are thinking along the same lines. As you spend the next two days assessing what you have learned from the December 2004 tsunami response, right now, to the north in Chiang Mai, the combined Thai, Singapore, Japanese and U.S. militaries have

invited a whole range of international civil and military personnel to gather and spend two weeks conducting our own learning effort.

That both of our organizations consider it important to learn from our experiences underlines my main point to you: that we must learn from each other—to understand one another and to know how best to work together. This understanding and shared education must come before the next disaster strikes, because as we have seen, the time spent learning in the face of an actual crisis can cost not only time and valuable resources, but the lives of those we are trying to save.

I will couch my comments under two broad headings:

First, The role of the military and what we bring to the initial stage of a relief effort. And, then,

Breaking down the barriers between our organizations through better efforts at education and training.

In each of these, I will give a few salient remarks with some possible recommendations for your consideration. I look forward to your questions and comments at the end of my remarks so that I may take your valuable input back to our effort in Chiang Mai.

The role of the military and what we bring to the table

First off, I am going to be talking about the military in a generic way, but understand that I come from the perspective of the U.S. military operating on foreign soil in support of affected nations. This is a wholly different perspective than that of the militaries of the affected nations who are operating on their home soil or even other foreign militaries who contribute forces in support of the relief effort. The relationships and responsibilities are far different, and as we found in the three nations that we provided direct assistance to, Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, each internal civil-military relationship is unique. So, although I introduced this point as a caveat to my following statements, you can also take it as my first lesson observed—and let me make the distinction between a lesson observed and a lesson learned. A lesson is not learned until you put it into practice. Until then, it is only a lesson observed. So you must understand that not all militaries operate alike or even have the same perspective. More specifically, each military, whether from an affected nation or from a contributing nation, will come to a crisis with the specific missions, constraints, and restraints placed upon it by its national

government. This guidance and these “red lines” will shape the level and character of their involvement.

But back to my subject—what the U.S., and selected other militaries, bring to disaster relief is an ability to rapidly respond with unique capabilities. Transportation and other logistics capabilities such as engineering and medical treatment assets are probably the most well-recognized and tangible contributions, but equally, if not more important, is our command, control and communications infrastructure.

The first key characteristic that enables all the others is our speed of response. Our military capability to quickly plan, organize and move great distances to fight also translates to a great capability to plan, organize and move great distances to provide relief in response to a natural disaster. We are also a self-sustaining organization, if we need to be. In the quick response, or expeditionary forces, we are largely self-contained with our own transportation, support, command and communications assets. Our ability to get to the scene quickly with our whole range of capabilities saves lives in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and it fundamentally buys time for the civil

response effort to organize and deploy more effectively than if it was moving into a vacuum.

As I mentioned, of all the capabilities the military provides, our ability to provide logistics support is the most publicly visible form of support. In terms of distribution capabilities we have:

- Airlift: both long-range fixed wing, and shorter-range helicopters;
- Sealift: such as our aircraft carriers, amphibious ships, military sealift ships, and smaller vessels such as air-cushioned landing craft; and finally,
- Ground transportation, primarily trucks.

In support of distribution are our significant engineering capabilities to clear debris, improve or build roads, and improve or build airstrips.

In terms of medical support, we have acute and surgical assets, but more useful due to the nature of the tsunami, was our capability to support public health, sanitation, immunization, and epidemic surveillance and control efforts.

With all our significant, and vitally important logistics capabilities, however, the really unique capability that we bring is our rapidly deployable

command, control and communications infrastructure—an infrastructure that is designed to operate in an austere and chaotic environment. This is a capability that the civil humanitarian response community should strive to understand. It is not only our ability to set up communications networks, but our structured organization supports and encourages setting up capable coordination centers and pushing information up, down and laterally in a complex organization. I'd offer that this capability is something that you could utilize as a backbone to enhance your own internal capabilities, especially in the early stage of a crisis.

We saw this in our hosting of interagency coordination at U-Taphao, where our regional headquarters was, and also at each of our locations in the affected nations. These Combined Coordination Centers, or CCCs, were really the heart of what I think the CSF provided to the Tsunami relief effort. Through the CCCs, the CSF and the CSGs provided, at both a regional and a local level, a broad range of civil and military participants a venue, and an opportunity, to conduct their planning, coordination, and de-confliction—not only with the CSF, but more significantly, with each other.

Merely identifying a common meeting room, however, did not create the CCC's. They required the full support of our military command, control and communications infrastructure. This infrastructure includes well-trained military staff personnel capable of sustaining 24-hour operations, and established operating procedures as well as the physical communications and information processing hardware.

It was primarily our command and control capability that provided the foundation for our ability to support the WHO-led medical assessment in Aceh Province conducted at 40 different locations. It was also this capability that allowed us to provide detailed transportation assessments, engineering assessments and infrastructure assessments. I would re-emphasize that understanding the military command and control capabilities would allow the civil relief community to take better advantage of it, and sooner advantage of it. More awareness would also better inform the direction of the overall military support to operations.

Now that I've discussed a little of what we, the military have to offer, let me hit a more contentious subject: the role of the military. In the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, we are in support of the host

nation's efforts. For the U.S. specifically, we are in support of the U.S.

Ambassador in the affected nation, and in general, we support the U.S.

Agency for International Development and the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster

Assistance. What does this mean? It means that all of our efforts must be

planned and executed to support their plans and objectives for the relief effort

in support of the host nation—not the other way around. This is easy to put

into words, but difficult to translate into practice. The military is an

organization that operates by employing personnel and equipment, while

USAID and OFDA primarily operate by providing financial resources.

The military as a supporting organization may translate in many ways.

One important point is that it is not the military's role or responsibility, except

in unique circumstances and in a limited way, to conduct needs assessments of

affected areas—we have the capabilities and some expertise, but the bottom

line is that needs assessments is the job for the host nation, U.N. agencies such

as WHO, and other recognized relief organizations. What the military can do,

and did do quite successfully in the tsunami relief effort, is support the Needs

assessments: with transportation and other logistics support, with planning

expertise, and, as necessary, with subject matter experts. I believe that better

civil-military cooperation and planning for the needs assessments would be a great leap forward in anticipation of the next crisis. A more rapid and more accurate needs assessment up front will result in better and faster resource allocation.

As I stated up front, our primary role is in the initial response, not the long-term recovery and reconstruction—the military is a temporary fix. It buys time for professional and host nation relief organizations to establish themselves. There are many factors that drive the temporary nature of effective military support. First, obviously, disaster relief is not our primary mission. We are committed to disaster relief operations only on the order of our civilian leadership, and they must balance that commitment with the requirements of our other missions. Second, as grateful as they may be, no nation wants foreign militaries operating on its sovereign soil for any longer than necessary. This is understandable and is a function beyond our control—when we are asked to go, or the time is right, we will go, so as to not overstay our welcome. Lastly, to be honest, long-term, military involvement likely impedes the long-term recovery and reconstruction. This must be a civil effort for it to succeed. The presence of military capabilities just hinders the

development of the civil capabilities that must necessarily take over for the long haul.

As I have broached the subject of why the military is most appropriate in the early response phase of disaster relief, let me go into some detail on how and when the military transitions out of a humanitarian relief effort. Transition is something that we begin planning from the very start of our operation—not because we desire to get out as soon as possible, but because an effective and properly timed transition requires extensive planning and coordination. While picking the right time relies on a great deal of objective data: how well the civil relief effort is meeting requirements, measuring the amount of requests for assistance from military assets, etc., it is mostly influenced by subjective factors: agreement of our U.S. Chief of Mission and the host government, capabilities of the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations on the ground, and the presence and plans of other supporting militaries, primarily the host nation's. To my mind, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, the Honorable Mr. Lynn Pascoe, put it best when he stated we needed to, “Get off the stage while the audience is still clapping.”

My last comment on the role of the military in support is one of caution. Every situation is different. In U.S. military jargon, the tsunami relief effort was a “simple” contingency. That is, the military’s only mission was to support relief efforts. This is in contrast to a “complex” contingency where the military’s support to relief efforts is combined with a role in peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or outright conflict. To put it another way, we were dealt a good hand in our ability to act and cooperate in the tsunami relief operations—and we played that hand well. We in the Combined Support Force were able to do many things such as share information and operate largely over open, unclassified communications lines that we possibly would not be able to do, to such an extent, in a complex contingency. So awareness of the environment and the other missions of the military as you engage for their support are important factors to consider.

Now I want to turn to my second major heading:

Breaking down the barriers between our organizations through better efforts at education and training.

When we study each other, our tendency is to look at the organizational charts—the “wire diagrams” as we call them. From there we try to understand

how the organization is structured to operate, given its stated purpose. Well as we all find out, every organization has a chemistry that cannot be accurately described in wire diagrams, or organizational literature. Beyond the personality aspect, which we are all afflicted with, each organization has a unique culture and perspective—this is the reason that we will both look at the same situation and come away with different impressions of what is important and what is not. To say that in this hotel is easy. I believe that it's something that both the military and the international relief community recognize. To do something about it, other than shake our collective heads in frustration, is the challenge.

I think that the conference going on here, and the one going on in Chiang Mai are a good start to meeting this challenge. We need to do more however. The military conducts numerous exercises in the Pacific theater alone. I suspect that WHO and other international agencies hold numerous conferences and training activities. We must be involved in each others activities before another disaster drives us back together in a shotgun wedding.

This understanding cannot only take place at the higher levels, with generals like myself speaking at conferences and meeting your leadership. We must get the mid-level and lower level personnel, those who do the real work, together to learn from one another, and if possible, work out some common procedures and relationships. I want our Colonels, Majors, Captains and Sergeants to understand the motivations and culture of the WHO field representatives, the headquarters liaisons, and the leadership at all levels so that the military can more effectively work at common purposes with them. This common understanding must run both ways. The civil relief community must strive to understand the motivation and culture of its military partners. I would ask that this type of effort be one that you consider for concrete actions as you map your way ahead from this conference.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this conference. I look forward to your questions and comments.

Thank you.