

Department of Defense Approach to Foreign Disaster Relief & Preparedness



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Defense Policy Precepts

- DoD supports foreign governments develop resilience before a disaster strikes, and helps in the recovery following a disaster.
 - Congress provides dedicated funding for this purpose

- DoD's response to disasters is addressed through:
 - Disaster preparedness
 - Disaster relief

- DoD works in partnership with USAID, host nations, and others to ensure best practices, accountability, sustainability, and the effectiveness of these efforts.



Why does DoD undertake this mission?

- Primary Goal: Save lives and reduce human suffering
- Additional Goals:
 - Support other USG agencies in disaster response
 - Strengthen regional stability
 - Promote goodwill in host nation and region
 - Gain trust/confidence of the affected population
 - Opportunity to partner with other responders (including foreign militaries)
 - Training benefit for multiple military specialties



Engagement in Foreign Disaster Relief

- U.S. military may be involved when:
 - The military provides a unique service,
 - Civilian response capacity is overwhelmed, or
 - Civilian authorities request assistance

- DoD supports the priorities of USAID (designated lead federal agency) during a response

- When the U.S. military does become involved:
 - Military mission should be clearly defined
 - Risks should be evaluated
 - Impact on other core DoD missions should be carefully considered
 - Host nation support should be firm
 - Potential for unintended impacts should be minimal
 - Differential between DoD and lower cost options should be justified



POLICY

Questions Asked by DoD Leadership

- How strong is host-nation support for DoD assistance?
- Size of the “footprint” and impacts upon other DoD missions?
- Views of key USG and other stakeholders?
- Strategic messaging concerns?



Increasing Focus on Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction

- Lessons from large-scale disasters:
 - Importance of early warning systems, emergency evacuation procedures, and military and civil defense assets in disaster relief
 - Construction standards and emergency preparedness measures can significantly mitigate the impact of disasters
- Reduced budgets and limited resources:
 - Emphasis on “whole of government” approaches
 - Importance of partnerships: foreign governments, relief agencies, the private sector and the military

