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
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