

NATO'S INVOLVEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS/DISASTER RESPONSE

UDZIAŁ NATO W OPERACJACH HUMANITARNYCH/REAGOWANIU NA KLĘSKI ŻYWIOŁOWE

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Abstract: The article analyses NATO's role in humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations. It presents NATO structures, tools and examples of operations coordinated by NATO. It underlines the added value offered by NATO in the environment and in relation to other major humanitarian actors such as the United Nations and the European Union.

Streszczenie: Artykuł analizuje rolę NATO w zakresie akcji humanitarnych i operacji niesienia pomocy ofiarom katastrof. Przedstawia natowskie struktury, narzędzia, jak również przykłady operacji, które były koordynowane przez NATO. Podkreśla wartość dodaną oferowaną przez NATO w środowisku i w stosunku do innych głównych aktorów dostarczających pomoc humanitarną, takich jak Organizacja Narodów Zjednoczonych oraz Unia Europejska.

Keywords: disaster relief, humanitarian aid, NATO, EADRCC, EDRCC.

Słowa kluczowe: pomoc w przypadku katastrof, pomoc humanitarna, NATO, EADRCC, EDRCC.

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This article reflects the personal views of the author and does not represent the views of any institution or organisation.

“At the moment of truth, you will not rise to the level of expectation,
you will fall to the level of training.”

Archilochus

Introduction

There are fundamental differences in purpose, roles and capabilities among the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN), however they are committed to providing disaster response in a timely and efficient manner and to ensure assistance meets the real needs in the population affected, whether in Europe, Euro-Atlantic area or beyond.

NATO is a political and military alliance of USA, Canada, and most of Europe. The EU is a primarily a political and economic union of European states. Many countries are members of both organisations. Both organisations share common values and strategic interests. The UN is intergovernmental organization promoting international cooperation. It also holds the primary role in the coordination of international disaster relief operations.

Both NATO and the EU are well established in disaster response. They have a long track of achievements. Hence, in this article are presented analysis of mechanisms established in NATO that allow to respond to a disaster in relation to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as well as to EU tools and activities in this regard. NATO has supported stricken countries numerous times. NATO's capabilities, including civilian and military structures have played an important role in providing humanitarian-relief and disaster-aid during major disasters in recent years.

1. The United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

The UN holds the primary role in the coordination of international disaster relief operations. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is a UN body. The Office was established in December 1991 by General Assembly Resolution 46/182². The resolution provides that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. It was designed to strengthen the UN's response to complex emergencies and natural disasters. OCHA is the part of the UN Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also

² UN OCHA Website, (2018), <https://www.unocha.org>.

ensures a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), created in 1993, is part of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the international emergency response system for sudden-onset emergencies. It helps the UN and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency and also assists in the coordination of incoming international relief at national level and/or at the site of the emergency. UNDAC teams can deploy at short notice anywhere in the world. They are deployed upon the request of the United Nations Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator and/or the affected Government and work free of charge in the stricken country.

2. The European Union Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

The European Union is very active in the field of helping victims of disasters worldwide. In fact, the EU and its member countries are the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid, for which the Treaty of Lisbon provides the legal basis.

As from 2010, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) deals with both humanitarian aid and civil protection. Humanitarian aid is provided through over 200 partner organisations and agencies, including: non-governmental organisations (NGOs); international organisations; Red Cross societies; and UN agencies.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism operates together with EU funding for humanitarian aid to tackle aftermath of conflicts or disaster. The Mechanism's devices are: the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC); Common Emergency and Information System (CECIS)³; training programme for civil protection teams; and civil protection modules.

The EU has worked in all major crisis areas: Syria, South Sudan, Ukraine, West Africa, the Central African Republic, and the Ivory Coast. Europeans provide drugs, food to people in need, help rebuild the affected areas.

In 2013, the ERCC was established⁴. The purpose of the Mechanism is to smooth cooperation in civil disaster interventions. The ERCC acts as a coordination centre between participating states, the affected country and field experts. Any country in the world stricken by a major disaster can make a request for assistance through the ERCC. The Centre analyses the needs, plans and execute the form and size of assistance that can be immediately deployed. The ERCC monitors emergencies

³ CECIS is a web-based alert and notification application enabling real time exchange of information.

⁴ European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (2018), Website, <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/>.

around the globe on a 24/7 basis and coordinates the response of the participating countries in case of a crisis. It is active all year around.

The Commission can enable delivery of assistance to the stricken country within a few hours by co-financing transport costs. It can also pool and consolidate shipments from various countries to the affected country, which boosts the efficiency of the European response.

The ERCC supports a range of prevention and preparedness activities, from awareness-raising to field exercises simulating emergency response.

The Centre has monitored over 300 disasters and has received well over 200 requests for assistance. It assisted in some of the most tragic disasters, including: the earthquake in Haiti in 2010; the triple-disaster in Japan in 2011; typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines in 2013; the floods in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ebola outbreak, the conflict in Ukraine in 2014; the earthquake in Nepal in 2015; the conflict in Iraq, hurricane “Matthew” in Haiti in 2016; fires in Europe in 2017 and the refugee crisis.

In November 2017, responding to the high number of recent emergencies the EU Commission announced new plans to strengthen the EU’s civil protection response to support Member States to better respond and prepare for natural and man-made disasters. This includes the creation of rescEU, a reserve of new civil protection capabilities.

3. NATO’s Involvement in Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response

NATO is not a major humanitarian actor. However, NATO has always placed great emphasis on the protection of civilian populations. In 1953, NATO agreed a disaster assistance scheme recognising that the capabilities to protect populations during a potential conflict could also be used to protect them against the effects of natural or man-made disaster⁵.

NATO’s involvement in disaster response and humanitarian operations has a long history. In 1953, NATO assisted Belgium and the Netherlands that were hit by storm floods. Until 1960’s, there were relatively few major disasters in Alliance member countries which exceeded national capabilities and which required NATO coordination or assistance. In May 1976, NATO’s coordinated involvement took place in connection with an earthquake in Italy. By 1958, the North Atlantic Council had established procedures for NATO coordination of assistance between member countries in case of disasters, which remained in effect until May 1995. Then they were revised and also became applicable to Partner countries.

⁵ NATO’s Role in Disaster Assistance, NATO 2001, <https://www.nato.int/eadrcc/mcda-e.pdf>.

4.1. The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)

On 17th December 1997, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in Ministerial Session endorsed a proposal to create a Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Capability. On 3 June 1998, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) was opened. The EADRCC is NATO's principal civil emergency response mechanism in the Euro-Atlantic area. It is active all year round, operational on a 24/7 basis⁶. The other important tool is Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of Vital Civil Cross Border Transport (MoU)⁷ that will be dealt with later on.

The Centre supports 5 CEP roles in NATO: civil support for Alliance operations under Article 5; support for non-Article 5 crisis response operations; support for national authorities in civil emergencies; support for national authorities in the protection of populations against the effects of weapons of mass destruction; and cooperation with Partners. The Centre is staffed through personnel seconded by NATO and partner countries. During an actual disaster, the EADRCC can temporarily be augmented with additional personnel from the EAPC delegations to NATO, or NATO's international civilian and military staff. In addition, the EADRCC has access to national civil experts that can be called to provide the Centre with expert advice in specific areas in the event of a major disaster. These are international experts from industry, science and administration provided by nations, selected and trained, available free of charge at a short notice⁸.

The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre is open for 70 nations. There are 29 NATO Allies and 22 Partners⁹, the 7 "Mediterranean Dialogue Countries", the 4 "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Countries", and the 8 "Partners across the globe Countries".

The main tasks of the EADRCC include: coordinating the response of NATO and Partner countries; dealing with the consequences of Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBR(n)) incidents, including terrorist attacks¹⁰; guiding consequence management efforts; information-sharing on disaster assistance; conducting annual large-scale field exercises with realistic scenarios; organizing seminars to discuss lessons identified from NATO-coordinated disaster response operations and exercises; organizing workshops and table-top exercises to provide training for local and international participants.

⁶ The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), 12/09/2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52057.htm.

⁷ A. Jacuch, NATO Press Release (2006)109, 13 Sept. 2006, <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-109e.htm>.

⁸ A. Jacuch, *Zasoby cywilne w służbie NATO. Kim są eksperci Sojuszu?* [ANALIZA], 20 marca 2017, <http://www.defence24.pl/zasoby-cywilne-w-sluzbie-nato-kim-sa-eksperci-sojuszu-analiza>.

⁹ On 1st April of 2014, NATO has stopped cooperation with Russia over Ukraine's crisis.

¹⁰ This task was given to the EADRCC Shortly after the tragic events of the 11th of September 2001.

It should be stressed the UN retains the primary role in the coordination of international disaster relief operations. The EADRCC only complements and provides additional support to the UN role within the EAPC area. The stricken country remains responsible for disaster management. The EADRCC has coordinating role, which takes place at government level. The EADRCC works in close consultation with the UN OCHA.

The EADRCC's activities are closely coordinated with other international organizations, including: the UN, International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Office for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the World Health Organization and the European Union, in particular the UN OCHA. The EADRCC also closely cooperate with NATO Military Authorities.

3.2. HOW DOES EADRCC WORK?

The EADRCC acts only upon request. A request for assistance can be received from: a stricken EAPC Nation; the UN OCHA; exceptionally from a stricken non-EAPC Nation; and from another organizations working in the field of international disaster response. Next, and after receiving political guidance as appropriate, the EADRCC coordinates, in close consultation with the UN OCHA, the responses of Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) countries to disasters occurring in the EAPC area. It acts as a focal point for information-sharing on disaster assistance requests among EAPC member countries and maintains close liaison with the UN, European Union and other organizations involved in international disaster response.

The EADRCC acts as a clearing house for information. The Centre prepares and circulates daily Reports. It also identifies outstanding requirements and possible solutions to them. It maintains a roster of pre-declared Inventory of national capabilities for CBR consequence management. One of EADRCC tools is the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU), which is a non-standing, multi-national mix of volunteered national civil and military elements (qualified personnel of rescue, medical and other units; equipment and materials; assets and transport). When deployed they will act in cooperation with the UN and other international organisations in disaster response. The EADRCC maintains an inventory of multilateral and bilateral agreements, in the area of disaster response, data on visa requirements, border crossing arrangements, transit agreements, procedures for customs clearance of disaster relief goods in EAPC countries, Points of Contact of customs authorities in EAPC nations, and agreements on the status of foreign relief personnel in EAPC area.

Over the past years, the EADRCC has been responding to more than 60 requests for assistance from nations. These have included floods, forest fires, dealing with the aftermath of earthquakes, heavy snow, pandemic flu, refugee crisis, and with other crises. Below at table 1 you can find numerous disasters for which the EADRCC

coordinated responses. The EADRCC organizes workshops, table-top exercises and seminars on response to emergency situations. The EADRCC also conducts annual large-scale field exercises with realistic scenarios, organizes workshops, table-top exercises and seminars on response to emergency situations to improve preparedness and capabilities of stricken and assisting nations, enhance interaction between allies and partners, between civilians and military – at table 2 are presented some examples. You can find more information on the EADRCC website.

Table 1. List of disasters that the EADRCC has been dealing with

Year	Disaster
1998	Floods, Ukraine
1999	Landslides, Moldova; Earthquake, Azerbaijan; Earthquakes 1&2, Turkey
2000	Floods, Hungary and Romania; Drought, Georgia; Extreme weather, Ukraine and Moldova; Forest fires, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia *
2001	Floods, Ukraine
2002	Floods in Central Europe
2003	Forest fires, Portugal
2004/05	Tsunami, SE Asia
2005	Floods Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan
2005	Hurricane Katrina
2005/06	Earthquake, Pakistan
2006	Floods, Algeria; Snowfall, Kyrgyzstan; Floods, Slovak Republic; Floods; Bulgaria; Fires, Georgia
2007	Forest fires, Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*
2008	Floods, Moldova and Ukraine; Forest fires, Bulgaria; Earthquake, Kyrgyzstan
2009	Floods, Tajikistan; Earthquake, Georgia; Pandemic Flu, Ukraine, Bulgaria
2010	Floods, Albania;
2010	Pakistan 2010 Monsoon Floods
2011	Tech. disaster, Ukraine; Earthquake Turkey; Floods, Pakistan
2012	Severe snowfall, Montenegro, Albania
2012 /14	Influx of Syrian Refugees, Turkey, Jordan
2013	Forest fires, Bosnia and Herzegovina
2014	Floods Bosnia and Herzegovina; Outbreak of Ebola in West Africa; Iraq IDPs
2015	Floods in Albania; Influx of refugees in Serbia
2016	Forest and wild fires, Israel
2017	Forest fires, Georgia, Montenegro; Hurricane Harvey, US; Floods, Albania

Table 2. EADRCC exercises

Year	Exercise
2000	Trans-Carpathian, Ukraine, Flood scenario
2002	Taming the Dragon – Dalmatia 2002, Croatia, Wild fire scenario
2002	Bogorodsk 2002, Russia, Terrorist initiated chemical incident
2003	Ferghana 2003, Uzbekistan, Earthquake, floods, mud slides and chemical incident
2003	Dacia 2003, Romania, Radiological Dispersion Device (“Dirty Bomb”)
2005	Joint Assistance 2005, Ukraine, Chemical Weapon
2006	Lazio 2006, Italy, Joint NRC / EADRCC exercise, „Dirty Bomb“
2007	Idassa 2007, Croatia, Earthquake, chemical & biological incidents
2008	Uusimaa 2008, Finland, Floods, CBR incidents
2009	Zhetysu 2009, Kazakhstan, Earthquake, chemical incidents
2010	Armenia 2010, Armenia, Earthquake, chemical & radiological incidents
2010	Izmir 2010, Turkey, Regional Urban Search and Rescue exercise
2011	Codrii 2011, Moldova, Earthquake, water rescue, chemical & radiological incidents
2012	Georgia 2012, Georgia, Earthquake, water rescue, chemical & radiological incidents
2015	EADRCC consequence management field exercise in Ukraine
2016	EADRCC “Digital exercise and seminar on civil-military cooperation in health disaster response”
2016	Consequence Management Exercise “CRNA GORA – 2016”
2017	Consequence management field exercise “BOSNA & HERCEGOVINA 2017”

Since 1998, the collective use of military capabilities under NATO command in a humanitarian operation has happened only a few times. Three operations could be pointed out: NATO’s intervention in response to Hurricane Katrina in the United States in August 2005; NATO’s assistance to Pakistan following the earthquake in Kashmir in October 2005 and NATO support to Monsoon Floods Relief Efforts in Pakistan in 2010. In the three cases the EADRCC played a central coordinating role in NATO’s humanitarian relief.

3.3. HURRICANE KATRINA¹¹

Hurricane Katrina did more damage than any other natural disaster in U.S history. It displaced 770,000 residents. Katrina’s death toll was 1,836 people. It destroyed or rendered uninhabitable 300,000 homes. Katrina damaged 19 percent of U.S. oil production.

¹¹ OPS(EADRCC)(2005)0111, 3 October 2005.

On 3 September 2005, the USA sent a request for assistance to NATO/EADRCC. Immediately, the EADRCC dispatched its liaison officer to Washington. In total thirty nine EAPC nations have offered assistance to the US. Twenty-three nations communicated their offered assistance directly to the EADRCC; twelve nations informed the EADRCC about their offers through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Additional four EAPC nations made their offers of assistance directly to the USA.

On 9 September 2005, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved a NATO transport operation to help move donations from Europe to the United States. NATO established air-bridge from Ramstein, Germany to Little Rock, Arkansas. It delivered 200 tons of relief goods. With the completion of the NATO air transport operation on 2 October 05 all donations accepted by US authorities were delivered.

3.4. NATO's Assistance to Pakistan Following the Earthquake in Kashmir¹²

On 8 October 2005 a devastating earthquake hit Pakistan, killing an estimated 73,000 people and left up to four million people homeless in the affected area. In certain districts, 90 percent of the houses were destroyed and all of the school buildings collapsed.

On 10 October 2005, the EADRCC received from Pakistan an urgent request for assistance in coping with the aftermath of the devastating 8 October earthquake. In addition, the United Nations asked NATO for assistance in putting together its own relief operation. In response, the NAC approved a major air operation to bring supplies from NATO and Partner countries as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Pakistan. The NAC approved a two-stage Alliance response. The first stage focused on the air-bridge.

The EADRCC, acted as a single point of contact. The EADRCC worked in conjunction with NATO Military Authorities, Pakistan authorities, UN-OCHA and the European Union. The Centre coordinated all offers from NATO and Partner nations that requested NATO transportation assistance. The SHAPE Allied Movements Coordination Centre (AMCC) was responsible for the execution of the movement.

NATO conducted air transportation through two air bridges, from Germany and Turkey. NATO Response Force (NRF) aircraft were used for repositioning aid supplies within Europe and also in delivering aid directly to Pakistan, mainly UN goods from Turkey. A total of 42 EAPC nations provided assistance to Pakistan, either on a bilateral basis, through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or through the EADRCC. In total, some 168 NATO flights delivered almost 3,500 tons of relief supplies. The airlift came to an end on the 9th of February 2006. The NATO relief flights constituted the largest single contribution to the airlift relief effort. The NATO air-bridge was used by 19 EAPC and 2 non-EAPC nations and by the UNHCR, the

¹² OPS(EADRCC) (2006)0005, 15 February 2006.

World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN OCHA and NGOs. NATO military liaison officers and civil experts augmented the EADRCC.

The second stage of the operation included NATO's deployed elements of the NATO Response Force: a headquarters command and control structure, engineering units, helicopters and military field hospitals. Altogether about 1,000 NATO engineers and supporting staff as well as 200 medical personnel worked in Pakistan during the operation. NATO forces worked closely with both the government of Pakistan and the United Nations on a daily basis. The 90-day mission ended on the first of February 2006.

3.5. Pakistan 2010 Monsoon Floods¹³

The 2010 monsoon floods in Pakistan were the worst in recorded history. They killed more than 2,000 people and affected 18 million – more than a tenth of the population. An estimated 11 million people were made homeless by the disaster. The floods destroyed hundreds of thousands of hectares of cultivatable land and crops in the traditional food-basket regions of Sindh and Punjab, and many farmers lost their seeds. And at least 1.2 million livestock died.

On 20 August 2010, in response to the request submitted by Pakistan, the NAC decided that NATO would, with immediate effect, commence flood relief support by means of airlift/sealift operations in coordination with other stakeholders engaged in the relief operation. EADRCC was approved as a Clearing House for information sharing and donations coordination. NATO Civil-Military Assessment and Liaison Team went to Islamabad. As of 22 November 2010, which was the last day of NATO's air bridge to Pakistan, twenty four humanitarian relief flights delivered 1019.55 metric tons of relief items. NATO donated to Pakistan an emergency bridging equipment (234 meters), delivered by Turkey sponsored ship in January 2011. The operation was terminated after 90 days.

3.6. The Use of Military Assets in Response to Humanitarian Situation

NATO established the policy for the use of military assets in response to humanitarian situations¹⁴. The policy stresses that the use of military assets should, as appropriate, be in line with the relevant UN guidelines, namely the Guidelines on the use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) in Complex Emergencies and

¹³ OPS(EADRCC) (2011)0005 Dtg : 24 January 2011.

¹⁴ G.W. Bretschneider, *Cooperation in Natural Disaster Management and Prevention Coordination between States and between Military and Civilian Actors*, 22nd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum "Responding to environmental challenges with a view to promoting cooperation and security in the OSCE area" First Preparatory Meeting Vienna, 27-28 January 2014, EEF.IO/8/14/Add.1, 30 January 2014, <http://www.osce.org/eea/110808?download=true>.

the “Oslo Guidelines”, in particular to safeguard compliance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality. The responsibility for disaster response rests with the stricken country. However, when the magnitude of a disaster exceeds the national response capability, there may be a need for international assistance, including, if requested, assistance by or through NATO.

The use of military assets and capabilities available in the Alliance's Command and Force Structures will only be provided on request by the stricken nation or by an appropriate international organization and upon decision of the NAC. It can happen when the scale of the disaster is so great that national authorities and first responders are overwhelmed.

4. Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of Vital Civil Cross Border Transport (MoU)

The other important NATO's tool, which aims at improving the speed and efficiency of assistance to victims of humanitarian crises or disasters, is the Memorandum of Understanding on The Facilitation of Vital Civil Cross Border Transport. The MoU was agreed by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in September 2006.

The MoU has been developed under the supervision of the NATO Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee (SCEPC)¹⁵ in close cooperation with the NATO Planning Board for Inland Surface Transport (PBIST)¹⁶, in particular by legal, emergency, and customs experts from Finland, Germany, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.

The MoU is a multilateral instrument which provides the general framework for the facilitation of vital civil cross border transport movements across the territories of the signatories. It is applicable for the provision of humanitarian assistance in response to disasters, including those triggered by a Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) event.

The MoU does not constitute a legally-binding agreement. It doesn't create any new regulations above the national or international legislation. It has several specific features that make it extremely suited for that purpose, in particular:

- the MoU aims at the speeding up and simplification of existing national border crossing procedures, and not at their abolishment;
- no new privileges and/or immunities are foreseen and/or requested for any of the participants in the relief operations;

¹⁵ In 2010, NATO's Committee Reform, the SCEPC was re-named to read Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC).

¹⁶ A. Jacuch, *Harbour Protection Through Data Fusion Technologies*, CEP and Transport PB&Cs, Springer 2009.

- it includes a confidence-building measure by ensuring that full compliance with national regulations, bi- and multilateral agreements, international laws and conventions is recognized by Participants of the MoU.

The MoU is a multilateral instrument signed by individual nations. It is the common understanding that the MoU does not constitute a legally-binding agreement. Therefore, it is not qualified for registration under Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations. The understanding of the MoU does not create any new regulation above national as well as international legislation.

The MoU has been signed and entered into force between more than 30 NATO Allied and Partner for Peace nations, including Poland.

The MoU marks a considerable achievement in improving international response to crisis and emergencies. In 2016, the MoU was released to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as well as to the OSCE, UN-OCHA, and the World Customs Organization. It was further referenced in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies publications.

5. Remarks about Disaster Response/Crisis Management in Poland

In Poland the emergency management, which includes disaster response, has four levels: state/government, voivodship, county and district. The national firefighting and rescue efforts are the key part of the crisis management system. Several services and structures also support or make part of the wider Polish crisis management system, including (but not limited to): the Police; the Border Guard; the State Inspection for Environment Protection; the Institute for Meteorology and Water Management; the National Atomic Energy Agency; the mining rescue stations; the maritime search and rescue service; the naval rescue service; NGOs, and others. It is regulated by the Act of 26 April 2007 r. on crisis management, published in Dz.U. from 2017.

In Poland, the Government Centre for Security (RCB) is an operational element that carry out a full risk analysis, based on data from all possible' crisis centres' within the public administration and data from international partners. The RCB coordinates cooperation with the NATO Civil Emergency Planning Committee and the EADRCC, including on disaster response. In addition, it develops solutions for emerging emergencies and coordinates the flow of information on threats.

Conclusions

Today, natural and man-made disasters are part of the environment in which we live. In most cases, we are not fully prepared when it occurs. In a disaster situation

prompt and appropriate reaction is crucial. It is indispensable to ensure coordination among all actors providing responses, between civilian lead and military support, as well as the interoperability of civil and military assets.

The UN OCHA serves as the primary focal point for the coordination of international disaster relief operations. It brings together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. The UNDAC, which is part of the UN OCHA, helps the United Nations and governments of disaster-affected countries during the first phase of a sudden-onset emergency.

The European Union helps victims of man-made and natural disasters worldwide. Collectively, the EU and its member countries are the world's leading donor of humanitarian aid. The EU established its centre, the ERCC, that monitors emergencies around the globe on a 24/7 basis and coordinates the response of the participating countries in case of a crisis. It is active all year around. The ERCC manages a pre-committed assistance from participating states that can immediately be deployed.

NATO's role and added value is to be in respect of short term disaster relief. NATO's support – at the request of a stricken country, the UN OCHA, exceptionally from a stricken non-EAPC Nation or another organizations working in the field of international disaster response – should be aiming at improving the conditions for recovery, a task to be implemented by other more appropriate actors.

NATO established its coordinating centre, the EADRCC, which is NATO civil emergency response mechanism in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Centre maintains a database of national capabilities. The EADRCC is active all year round, operational on a 24/7 basis. The other important tool is Memorandum of Understanding on the Facilitation of Vital Civil Cross Border Transport (MoU).

As to the use of NATO military capabilities, the EADRCC and the Alliance's military structures provide coordinating, liaising and facilitating functions. These enable smaller Allies to contribute capabilities, such as a military hospital or water purification unit, that they would not be able to contribute on their own. In addition, this coordination role that characterizes NATO-led operations has proven useful both to the authorities of the receiving country and to the United Nations, who were thereby able to deal with a single actor rather than many.

No other national or international organization has a comparable capacity to mobilize, use and sustain, in an organized manner, human and material assets that the military. Military contributions can be made through NATO but also on a bilateral basis.

An efficient use of all available disaster response assets, including military assets can be necessary when the scale of the disaster is so great that national authorities and first responders are simply overwhelmed.

From the lessons identified during disaster response operations, we can stress that emphasis should be given on preplanning, preparedness and training to effectively manage disasters when they strike. Practical challenges include the speed of decision making. Another practical challenge is coordination as well as the interoperability

of civil and military assets and teams. The time of delivery of assistance to victims of humanitarian crises or disasters, including cross border is crucial. Here, the Memorandum of Understanding on The Facilitation of Vital Civil Cross Border Transport, bilateral and multilateral border crossing agreements can improve the speed and efficiency of assistance. When a disaster strikes, every minute counts for saving lives. Immediate, coordinated and pre-planned response is essential.

The clear leadership and responsibility of the Host Nation as well as the role of the UN as the prime focal point for the coordination of international disaster relief operations should always be recognized and respected.

There are fundamental differences in purpose, roles and capabilities among UN, EU and NATO, however they are committed to providing disaster response in a timely and efficient manner and to ensure assistance meets the real needs in the population affected, whether in Europe, Euro-Atlantic area or beyond. They have their policies, respect each other roles in the process of response, built their coordinating mechanism and can mobilize certain capabilities that could be used to assist a stricken country.

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