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**THE NEED FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION (NOT JUST
COOPERATION) IN DISASTER & DISEASE MANAGEMENT**

Introduction

In recent years there has been considerable focus on the possibility of a terrorist attack on Australians at home and abroad. The security of its citizens is the first responsibility of Government. Labor has argued that the fight against terrorism can be better coordinated through the creation of a dedicated Department of Homeland Security. But it must be acknowledged that since 2001 there has appropriately been a much greater focus on better coordination and response at all levels of Government.

So while homeland security has recently prompted some policy reinvigoration, what are we doing in respect to human security issues?

While there is unquestionably a possibility of a terrorist attack in the foreseeable future there is an inevitability that we will have to face major human security issues in our own country or region in the immediate future. This may be man made or from natural events - an earthquake and accompanying tsunami, a major storm or even a disease or viral pandemic.

While avian influenza has perhaps slipped from the radar as an immediate threat, it certainly has not disappeared. The 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami and recent Solomon island earthquake demonstrates the instability of our regional geology.

I will focus on both of these issues in order to evaluate some lessons learnt and the adequacy of our preparations.

The Possibility of Pandemic

It has been predicted that an avian influenza pandemic could infect 40 percent of the world's 6 billion people and about 40 million would die. It has been suggested this could occur over a period of only five or six months. ¹

The past experience of the 1918 pandemic of influenza is instructive. In the United States 675,000 Americans died. This was 0.6 percent of the total American population at the time. On today's population that would be 1.9 million potential deaths in the USA alone. In Australia it would be in the order of 150,000 people. Extend those rates to the rest of the world and you are looking at potentially 36 million deaths. Pretty close to the loss of lives during the entirety of World War II.

A pandemic would be a major catastrophe and a major financial burden on Australia. The burden will result from having to deal with infection in our own population and also the Asia Pacific region - the region most likely to be severely infected.

It has been estimated that the first year cost to the USA would be between \$71 and \$166 billion. This includes the cost of medical care and the cost of likely lost work days. While I am not aware of similar research in Australia on a comparable estimate it could be assumed that it would cost our nation somewhere in the order of \$5 to \$12 billion.

In addition there would be other significant consequences on domestic travel, trade and commerce. The SARS epidemic throughout the Asia-Pacific region

affected about 9000 people with a 10 percent death rate. It is estimated that the total cost of that epidemic including lost travel revenue was US\$40 billion.

In highlighting the far reaching economic consequences of pandemics US Navy Admiral Hufstader pointed out in his article to the Asia Pacific Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance:

“Goods are not produced, sold, or bought. Agriculture output drops as equipment and supplies become unavailable. As workers become sick or die, or are afraid to go to work, food production conceivably drops. Food shortages and malnutrition, perhaps even famine, with their own consequences on health and productivity, could be seen. Even if there are areas of the world that escape direct infection by pandemic influenza virus, their trade drops, their supply chains are damaged, and their financial markets are severely stressed.”²

In a region where fragile states are numerous the additional stress of pandemic influenza could take them beyond the tipping point.

Are we doing enough to prevent an outbreak of bird flu or deal with its consequences? I ask the following questions to which I suspect in each case the answer is probably - best case “a bit “ – less satisfactory “not sure” – worst case “bugger all”.

What are we doing to plan and share information inside our nation and within our region?

What are we doing to monitor wildlife that carries the influenza virus?

What are we doing within the region to restrict the trade in wild animals?

What are we doing to assist countries in our region to vaccinate domestic bird flocks to prevent infection and block spread?

What are we doing to assist in improving the conditions under which market animals known to carry the virus are raised, in particular by separating them from other animals and from humans?

What are we doing to build surveillance systems to do regular sampling and monitoring for human illness that might be avian influenza and is this information being adequately shared?

What are we doing to plan and develop stockpiles of medical supplies and drugs in preparation for an outbreak?

Are we doing enough to educate people (at home and in our region) about the virus, how to limit their risk, and how to limit its spread?

What are we doing to promote cooperative planning among nations in our region?

What are we doing to plan now for emergency expansion of hospitals and hospital staffing?

What are we doing to plan for the evacuation of nationals from affected countries?

What are we doing to protect our first responders and their families from the risk of infection?

What are we doing to identify a transit point where it may be necessary to take Australians returning from affected areas for assessment?

What are we doing to plan to control travel within our country and our region?

Should business be considering plans for maintenance of functions despite staff illness and disruption of their supply chain?

Some of these things are being done – at least in part. But I will argue that they could be much better planned and co-ordinated through a dedicated centre for civilian and military cooperation.

The Asian Tsunami

A report by the Asian Development Bank Institute estimates that the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami resulted in over 230,000 deaths. In Indonesia alone it is estimated that over 130,000 either perished or were never found. Regionally, approximately 1.7 million people were displaced in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The same report notes, that in addition to the devastating human costs, the tsunami is estimated to have caused US\$10 billion in damage to infrastructure, housing and property.³

The international response was immediate and substantial. In Aceh alone over 200 humanitarian organizations – plus 3,000 military troops from a dozen countries – arrived to offer aid. But how was relief implemented?

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), in their World Disasters Report 2005, describe the situation among relief agencies, local authorities, and tsunami victims in Aceh as an “information black hole”. The report focussed on a number of areas where the delivery of aid should be improved.

First the report noted that the value of support from neighbouring countries was underestimated. It was noted language and cultural awareness was an asset. This enabled them to quickly assess immediate needs. It was noted that many international agencies brought in staff from Europe or America, when they could have instead exploited regional expertise.

Because of a lack of coordination some areas received an abundance of assistance while other areas of greatest need missed out. The IFRC noted that “most agencies flocked to Aceh’s devastated west coast – but 150,000 people displaced on the east coast received far less aid”.

The report further noted 22 health NGOs were operating in one area on the west coast. Ten international field hospitals were set up in Banda Aceh, none of which worked at full capacity. There were too many surgeons. One UN

witness in Meulaboh saw “20 surgeons competing for a single patient. Yet midwives and nurses were in short supply. Women had to give birth without medical assistance”⁴

The IFRC report noted that while systems seemed to be in place for effective communication between militaries those systems were “less good between the military and civilians”. This was due to an absence of civil-military coordination experts and the absence of systems to enable information to be shared between the military and civilian organisations.⁵

Dr Joel Selanikio of the Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management commented on this issue in the following terms:

“The lack of information was compounded by a lack of sharing between the military and civilian components of relief: during the first weeks the situation was extremely chaotic in Banda Aceh with no one visibly in charge. In addition, the civilian agencies did not seem pressed to coordinate with each other or with either the Indonesian or the American military. Having spent years working at the Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE), an organization which makes a great effort to promote civil-military cooperation in disasters, I found this lack of initial coordination probably the most dismaying aspect of the relief.”⁶

Perhaps understandably as a result of workload, reporting became a low priority but this impeded effective allocation of resources. Again the Red Cross noted that out of 200 agencies present in late January, only 46 submitted reports to UN coordinators. Rarer still were joint needs assessments.⁷

Detailed assessments were sacrificed in favour of delivering aid. Rivalries between agencies, competing to spend unprecedented budgets – and, in some cases seek notoriety, did not encourage information sharing.⁸

Few organizations deployed female workers to assess women's specific needs. The IFRC report noted that "out of earshot of men, Acehese women asked for underwear, headscarves, sanitary protection and the contraceptive pill, as well as complaining about sexual harassment".⁹

But without detailed assessments by aid agencies the relief effort was handicapped. Aid agencies "didn't know how many people required medical care; they didn't know how many people were without food, or without shelter; they didn't know how many children were unattended by adults. This made it impossible to efficiently order supplies, or to measure progress: you can't tell how far you have come if you don't know where you started".¹⁰

On the other hand Dr Selanikio also pointed out instances where, as a result of lack of communication, a number of communities were assessed several times in a matter of days by different agencies with no aid being provided in the meantime.

Frustration has been expressed with the lack of communication between aid agencies and the military. There were clearly some instances of communication not occurring because of over exaggerated suspicion by several aid agencies of the motivation of the Indonesian military. Dr Selanikio instanced examples where as a result of inability to access a military liaison officer it took 2-3 weeks for aid agencies to connect military transport with civilian aid resources. This meant "two to three weeks in which the needs of the worst-affected populations down the coast went largely unmet".

On the other hand the militaries were equally unaware of specialist resources that aid agencies were able to provide including sanitation teams and child protection services.

Further there was no visible attempt to provide any kind of widespread internet access in Banda Ache for relief agencies:

"Some had it; some did not. This meant no email, no online forums for information discussion, no online bulletin boards for coordination or for

posting results of assessments. In short, there was a highly compromised ability to electronically share information across the field of relief actors.”¹¹

Even with those agencies that accessed the internet there was an absence of agreed protocols for communication and the sharing of vital information.

“For the aid agencies, it was as though development of the world wide web had stopped right after web-based email was invented.”¹²

Have these problems been rectified? While a formal assessment has not been undertaken of the recent Solomon Islands earthquake and accompanying tsunami, I would suggest they haven't, at least in a thoughtful analytical and comprehensive sense.

Dr Joel Selanikio has made four suggestions based on his experience:

1. Create dedicated assessment teams across agencies, which include local personnel. Organizations that routinely respond to disasters should expect to do joint assessments with the other groups onsite, and have personnel dedicated and trained in advance for that purpose.
2. Create a dedicated information coordination team responsible both for providing internet access and facilitating use of web-based coordination tools. Groups like Télécoms Sans Frontières provide an excellent example of the benefit of having a dedicated group providing access to the internet. Just having access, however, is not enough: someone needs to facilitate information sharing by creating easy-to-use online spaces to post lists, store files, and keep contact information – all tasks that are required in every disaster setting but which are usually done haphazardly if at all.
3. Recognise that civil-military liaisons are absolutely essential in settings where the military will be playing a role.

4. Aid organisations must be induced and/or compelled to actually want to coordinate, and see a value in doing so. They must see outcome as being more important than having the opportunity to fly the flag.¹³

Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC)

The prospect of an avian flu pandemic and the Asian tsunami have been used as examples of instances where civil and military co-operation have fallen short. In that context it is of note that our most senior military officer believes that our military will increasingly be called upon for non war fighting tasks. It is an area where effective civil and military cooperation is an imperative.

In a speech delivered on 16 May 2007 Chief of Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said in the future our military will have to deal with challenges such as:

“Climate change and the impacts of global demography. And some are natural dangers, such as cyclones, earthquakes and tsunamis, to name just a few.”

The CDF said:

"Global factors (such as terrorism, pandemic disease, resource depletion and the security impacts of climate change) and regional factors (such as state fragility, poor governance and economic underdevelopment) may affect Australia's security interests, both directly and indirectly.¹⁴

These examples collectively raise the same issue – what do we need to do to enhance the capability of civil and military organisations to deal with complex emergencies?

It is universally accepted that maximising cooperation between our civilian and military sectors (CIMIC) will multiply the capabilities of both sectors.

So what is already occurring in the area of civil military cooperation in Australia?

To make an assessment of how cooperation can be enhanced it is necessary to recognise and at least briefly evaluate the cooperation that is occurring.

Defence has a number of CIMIC programs in operation. The ADF has three major training organisations for 'peace-operations': the ADF Peacekeeping Centre (ADFPKC) at the RAAF Base Williamstown, the 39th Personnel Support Battalion (39 PSB) in Sydney, and the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law operating out of Melbourne and Sydney.

The role of the ADF Peacekeeping Centre is to develop doctrine for peace operations and train both ADF personnel and a limited number of Australian Federal Police officers in UN recognised procedure and tactics.¹⁵

The 39th Personnel Support Battalion delivers 'mission specific' training. Reflecting operational requirements of missions like those in the Solomons, and East Timor the PSB has trained a number of representatives from the AFP, DFAT, and Customs. Included in this training is a specific CIMIC course.

The Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law works with the Defence Legal Divisions and the University of Melbourne Law School. The Centre's Charter was drawn up in 2001 "to facilitate cooperation amongst military forces of the Asia Pacific Region in the research, training and implementation of the law governing military operations". Their course includes both government and non-government organisations, and aims to increase their knowledge of operational planning and to assist in the familiarisation of each others perspectives and methods.¹⁶

The ADF's submission to the current Senate inquiry into Australia's involvement in Peacekeeping shows that the ADF is also working with AusAID to better facilitate engagement with the NGO community in dealing with complex emergencies.¹⁷

Through its Fragile States Unit AusAID is also examining and refining Australia's response to fragile and conflict prone states.¹⁸ Importantly the Unit has participants from Defence, AFP and the Treasury. In a welcome move last year AusAID created a CIMIC liaison officer position.

The Australian Federal Police's submission to the Senate inquiry also outlines initiatives aimed at enhancing inter-agency cooperation. This year, interoperability between the AFP and the ADF will be helped by the posting of an AFP officer to the ADF Warfare Centre. There is also a proposal to appoint an additional two AFP officers to the ADF's Joint Operations Command.¹⁹ A new secondment program of AFP officers to AusAID is also a constructive move.

It would be wrong and unfair not to acknowledge that DFAT plays an increasingly important role in coordinating an across government response to emergency management and longer term peacebuilding operations.²⁰

But the reality is – despite an increasing volume of interagency cooperation and even cross-pollination of people – when it comes to emergency response Australia has no single coordinating body. And just as importantly agencies in our region don't have a central 'go to' point.

Our contribution to regional CIMIC Programs is limited. The ADF's Peacekeeping Centre conducts a biannual peacekeeping exercise with Thailand (called PIRAP JABIRU) aimed at improving planning for complex missions.²¹ But the breadth and inclusiveness of such an exercise would surely be far greater were there a coordinating body engineering wider participation among regional partners.

I should also note that we do have an Australian military liaison officer based in the US State Department to assist in coordinating Australia's contribution to the Congressional Global Peace Operations Initiative. Defence and DFAT are also promoting the development of an agreed set of ASEAN Regional Forum CIMIC Standard Operating Procedures.²²

These developments are all encouraging and have Labor's full support. Notwithstanding this support however serious questions can't be avoided.

Why was the post Boxing Day tsunami response so chaotic and in light of the response to the recent Solomon Islands earthquake (and tsunami) can we say the shortcomings have been properly addressed?

Why are we yet to deploy adequate warning buoys and why are we still without a basic evacuation alarm system along our own coast line?

Why also do we face the potential consequences of massive potential avian pandemic threats if the existing cooperative structures are adequate?

And furthermore why do we continue to struggle to build long term capacity in the fragile states to our immediate north and east?

The short answer is that there is a quantitative difference between cooperation and coordination. Cooperation between relevant agencies is undoubtedly occurring. Regular communication is in itself a major strength. But coordination – the provision of a central dynamo with command and control – is still lacking.

There is still no Australian centre to develop, coordinate and improve the skills of the numerous dedicated professionals in both our civilian and military sectors. For instance, there is nothing equivalent to the Honolulu based Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance that undertakes outstanding work in performing this role .

The Need for Greater Coordination

In 1994 the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade recommended that an Australian Peace Keeping Institute be established with a permanent secretariat to coordinate peace-keeping policy and decision-making. It was proposed that the institute would include representatives from Defence, DFAT, Prime Minister and Cabinet, the AFP, the AEC, as well as NGOs, the Defence Industry Committee and private suppliers.²³

The Government at the time did not agree, stating that the then-current procedure of interdepartmental committees and the military planning process was sufficient.²⁴

Whilst not wanting to focus on the pros and cons of past decisions, twelve years later I think it's fair to say the Committee was right and it is now time to act accordingly.

Experience has proven the merit of this 1994 recommendation. We are seeing the consequences of living in a region of fragile states that are exposed to a number of man made or natural crises. These crises, in turn, create their own challenges for the survival of the political, legal, social and economic framework of those countries.

This has potential repercussions for our own national health, prosperity and security.

Community strength together with government competence and capacity are fundamental to establishing the ability of a country to prevent, respond to and manage disasters. This is the case whether it is a minimising the likelihood of a mass breakout and spread of a pandemic or giving sufficient warning to prevent drownings from a tsunami. Obviously capability to respond will also minimise human suffering and economic loss.

In their excellent submission to a recent Senate inquiry into Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations, the international aid and development agency Austcare emphasised the need to "forge greater understanding, coordination, and closer linkages between the responsibilities of the military, humanitarian agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs)".²⁵

While they welcome the growing frequency and longevity of peacekeeping interventions worldwide, Austcare make some penetrating criticisms regarding the adequacy of today's civil-military preparation and planning.

The submission focussed on the need for greater coordination between civilian and military organisations in responding to complex emergencies²⁶

Austcare submitted that "Australia could become a regional and global centre of excellence". The key suggestion is the establishment of a Regional Institute for Complex Emergencies (RICE) or an equivalent body. It is proposed that the Centre would work with the UN and relevant research institutes. It is proposed that the centre come under civilian control and have a regional focus and representation. Such a centre for excellence would bring a particular focus to building civil-military relations, skills and effectiveness.

The theme of Austcare's submission is that effective civil and military co-operation is required to respond to a variety of human security crises – from peacekeeping to disaster response. Effective CIMIC demands a whole of government or whole of nation response. It is increasingly obvious that the challenges existing within our region requires our government to develop coordination the likes of which we have never seen before.

In better coordinating the roles and responsibilities of agencies the emphasis must also be on preparation, planning and training. As Austcare point out:

“A lack of resources combined with poor coordination on the ground can invariably be traced to inadequate pre-deployment analysis and preparation.”²⁷

There are a number of examples that Australia can draw on to develop such a capability. In the UK, the two year-old Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit brings together the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Development to coordinate Government policy and develop international best practice.²⁸ The United States Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization has a similar mandate. It is responsible for developing policy from the initial response to an unstable situation through to fostering sustainability, which has included developing a model for civilian teams that can deploy together or embedded with the military.²⁹ The Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance has particular focus on the Asia Pacific region under this program.

The EU Civilian Headline Goal 2008 aims to develop a civilian capacity that can deploy in a short time periods, potentially with the military, in response to the decision to launch a mission.³⁰ Additionally, the UN has opened a new Peacebuilding Commission to identify States on the verge of collapse, provide assistance to prevent it and sustain long-term peacebuilding efforts.³¹ All of these initiatives have been launched over the last three years in response to an internationally-recognised need for comprehensive peacebuilding infrastructure.

Australia can now be considered as falling behind best practice on the issue. We should move to establish a similar Centre at the earliest possible opportunity.

Natural disasters and pandemics will hit fragile states hardest. We cannot divorce ourselves from our region. It is in our national interest for Australia to play a greater role in the area of regional civil military cooperation and coordination.

Conclusion

A reality check tells us we could be far better prepared for the inevitable human security challenges that await us and our region. Whether they are “acts of god” or acts of man – they are inevitable.

The good news is that we have dedicated people (both in and outside Government) who are willing to examine existing deficiencies and suggest reforms. Only last week in Senate Estimates hearings senior officials from AusAID acknowledged the complexity of the task ahead. In discussing the current arrangements for technical assistance and capacity building in the region the Assistant Director General of Fragile States and International Branch described how “there is more room for improvement”.

This acknowledgment from our public service is welcome but we need political will and drive to make the necessary reforms happen. I can assure you’ll get that drive from a Rudd Labor Government. It is an area where we can and should be working even more closely with the outstanding disaster management and humanitarian relief work of the United States in our region.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Threat of Pandemic Influenza Rear Admiral R D Hufstader *Liaison* - Center for Excellence DMHA – Hawaii Vol 3 No. 3

² *ibid*

³ <http://www.adbi.org/news/2006/12/27/2108.tsunami.lessons/>

⁴ The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), World Disasters Report 2005

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Dr Joel Selanikio “What We Have Here is a Failure to Coordinate: Lessons Learned Problems Observed in the Response to the Tsunami”, *Liaison* - Center for Excellence DMHA – Hawaii Vol. 3 No. 3 http://www.coe-dmha.org/Liaison/Vol_3No_3/authors.htm#10

⁷ (IFRC) World Disasters Report 2005

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Dr Selanikio Op cit

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Dr Selanikio noted “As one local NGO head told me in Ache ‘we don’t get donations, time on CNN, or points from the home office, for quietly working in coordination with the other NGOs’. Op cit.

¹⁴ Speech by Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston (Chief of Defence Force) to RUSI Conference delivered on 16 May 2007. For full speech see:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/media/SpeechTpl.cfm?CurrentId=6652>

¹⁵ Submission by Department of Defence to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007

¹⁶ <http://www.apcml.org/overview.php>

¹⁷ Submission by Department of Defence to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007

¹⁸ Submission by AusAID to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007

¹⁹ Submission by Australian Federal Police to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007

²⁰ Submission by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007

²¹ <http://www.defence.gov.au/adfwc/peacekeeping/about.htm#Activities>

²² http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/FADT_CTTE/peacekeeping/submissions/sub15.pdf

²³ Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Australia’s Participation in Peacekeeping*, Defence and Trade, 1994

²⁴ Government Response to The Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade, October 1995

²⁵ Auscare - Submission to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade *Inquiry into Australia’s involvement in peacekeeping operations*, March 2007, p. 2

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12

²⁸ <http://www.postconflict.gov.uk/about.html>

²⁹ <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/c12936.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.iss-eu.org/esdp/05-gl.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/>