



A physician embarked aboard the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS *Bataan* (LHD 5) describes a Haitian woman's injuries to visiting members of Doctors Without Borders while examining patients, Grand Goave, Haiti, 29 January 2010. (U.S. Navy photo by MCS2 Class Kristopher Wilson)

# Foreign Disaster Response

## Joint Task Force-Haiti Observations

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The devastation in Haiti caused by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake on 12 January 2010 prompted the longest and largest U.S. military effort in a foreign disaster relief operation. The earthquake destroyed vast areas of Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital, as well as a number of communities to the west of the capital, killing an estimated 230,000 persons and leaving thousands trapped in the wreckage and over two million without shelter. At the peak of Operation Unified Response, 1 February 2010, Joint Task Force-Haiti (JTF-H) consisted of over 22,000 service members, 58 aircraft, and 23 ships. With the stand-down of JTF-H on 1 June, Operation Unified Response lasted nearly five months.

This article contains our initial observations and recommendations to after action reviews and lessons that our military and interagency community should learn from as we prepare for the next foreign disaster.

## The Response

Within hours of the earthquake, President René Preval sent several of his ministers on motorcycles to the home of U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Ken Merten, to request immediate assistance from the United States. The first request was to take control and open the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, whose terminal had been significantly damaged and tower disabled. Lieutenant General P.K. (Ken) Keen was with Ambassador Merten at the time, had already been in contact with Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), and was able to assure the ministers our military would respond. Runway conditions allowing, we were confident we had the capability to open the airfield.

On 13 January, General Keen was able to make contact with Haitian government officials at the airport and inspect the runway with UN officials. Under the direction of SOUTHCOM,

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elements of the Department of Defense (DOD) began to arrive on that day to assist the government of Haiti and the U.S. Embassy. The 1st Special Operations Wing reopened the international airport, while the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Higgins* and military aircraft began delivering relief supplies and evacuating American citizens. Department of Defense immediately ordered the USS *Carl Vinson*, USS *Bataan*, USS *Nassau*, and USS *Carter Hall* to Haiti along with additional forces from the 82d Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps assigned to the Global Response Force. Recognizing the need to establish a command and control element for the rapidly growing force, SOUTHCOM established Headquarters, JTF-H on 14 January to conduct humanitarian assistance and foreign disaster relief operations in support of the lead federal agency, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Joint Task Force-Haiti assumed responsibility for all U.S. forces and began directing activities to assist in providing timely relief. Immediately, the XVIII Airborne Corps assault command post, 2d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, arrived along with 58 rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft with elements of the amphibious ready groups. These elements, together with members of SOUTHCOM, Joint Force Special Operations Component, and the 3d Expeditionary Sustainment Command formed JTF-H, which led efforts through the emergency phase and into the relief phase of the operation. Additionally, Joint Forces Command, Northern Command, European Command, Transportation Command, and other selected units mobilized personnel to augment JTF-H with required specialties.

On 20 January, the hospital ship USNS *Comfort*, equipped with surgical operating teams and orthopedic surgeons, arrived in the operations area. 82d Airborne's 2d Brigade Combat Team (BCT) supported multiple inter-agency humanitarian

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aid distribution missions in the heaviest impacted areas of Port-au-Prince. By the end of January, JTF-H controlled over 22,200 troops both on the ground and offshore. Sixteen distribution sites were established to provide food, water, and medical care.

Joint Task Force-Haiti planners and leaders worked alongside their counterparts from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), USAID, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to develop plans for moving internally displaced persons at risk due to the impending hurricane season. Joint Task Force-Haiti conducted assessments and executed engineering projects with the UN and NGOs to mitigate the risk and reduce the number of people requiring relocation.

The Joint Force Maritime Component Command, composed of the 22d and 24th Marine Expeditionary Units, conducted missions outside Port-au-Prince to the west and north. Using the flexibility inherent in amphibious forces, Sailors and Marines brought relief to thousands of Haitians in the outlying regions.

On 15 March, United States Army South (ARSOUTH) deployed to augment JTF-H's staff, and on 18 March ARSOUTH conducted a relief

The Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20) at anchor off the coast of Haiti, 31 January 2010. (U.S. Navy, Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist J. L. Chirrick)

in place and transfer of authority with the XVIII Airborne Corps. When the 2d BCT redeployed at the beginning of April, JTF-H retained 2d Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment as its primary Army force. The JTF continued to provide relief support in the form of shelter and engineering projects, while international partners took responsibility for food and water distribution. As the rainy season approached, it became clear that JTF-H would continue operations through the end of May, when SOUTHCOM New Horizons exercises would provide the transition to continuing theater security cooperation activities.

From mid-March through mid-May, the JTF mission focused on mitigating the dangers of pending heavy rains, floods, and mudslides at nine designated internally displaced persons camps in Port-au-Prince, to include supporting Haitian government, UN,

## ***The most significant challenge facing the U.S. military and the international community in the initial emergency phase was logistics.***

USAID, and NGO partners in relocating displaced persons to transitional resettlement sites. Through these efforts, JTF-H postured for a seamless transition to the newly created SOUTHCOM Coordination Cell and Theater Security Cooperation activities represented by the New Horizons exercise.

Although Operation Unified Response was the longest and largest U.S. military foreign disaster relief endeavor, U.S. military support was only a part of the response. The support from the international community was phenomenal and together saved countless lives that could have been lost to this disaster.

The tremendous response from the international community was a blessing but also presented some unique challenges. The following are observations from the JTF-H perspective.

### **Respond Quickly and Effectively**

Fundamental to saving lives in the onset of any disaster is responding quickly and effectively. In Haiti, this became even more pressing due to the devastation of the earthquake and a lack of Haitian government capacity to respond.

The rapid deployment of U.S. military forces and U.S. resources was quick and effective, but not always efficient. The initial surge of forces and relief efforts was ad hoc because no single agency or organization exists with the capacity to adequately respond to such an emergency. This effort was outside the formal U.S. military planning, sourcing, and tracking procedures, resulting in shortfalls in some areas. Because of the flexibility of our military forces and rapid deployment of the DOD Global Response Force, JTF-H helped avert a food and water crisis. Although more than 230,000 people died from the earthquake, the abundant and superior medical assistance provided by the U.S. military and the international community saved thousands of lives. The most significant challenge facing the U.S. military and the international community in the initial emergency phase was logistics.

Overall, the U.S. military's logistics response was proactive and robust. Three areas presented challenges:

(1) Incomplete situational awareness in the early hours after the quake made it difficult to determine requirements and priorities.

(2) Absence early on of a unified and integrated logistics command and control structure to integrate the overall logistics effort led to gaps in reception, staging, and movement of forces, equipment, and supplies into Haiti.

(3) Initial reliance on the only airport into Haiti, Toussaint Louverture International Airport, for the throughput of personnel and relief supplies forced the U.S. military to develop a system for validating and prioritizing global international flights to ensure critical equipment, supplies, and personnel were available.

Joint Task Force-Haiti worked through these challenges and issues, but our logistical system is designed and focused primarily on internal support to our own forces, rather than external support in a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operation. A more thorough look into capabilities required for this type of operation is necessary.

There are two primary ways to deliver aid directly to Haiti. The first is by air through the international airport in Port-au-Prince. This airport has only one runway and one small taxiway. Further, the earthquake rendered the control tower and the terminal unusable. Establishing an aerial port of debarkation within the first few days of the earthquake was critical. Within 28 hours of the earthquake, Airmen from the 21st, 23d, and 123d Special Tactics Squadrons had supervisory control of the airport. They oversaw airport and runway operations around the clock until it transferred to the Haitian Airport Authority in March. The throughput the Airmen managed increased from 13 flights per day (prequake) to a peak of 150 flights per day to enable the needed flow of personnel, equipment, and relief supplies. However, even this increase in capacity could not meet the demand, so SOUTHCOM's 12th





Air Force, in coordination with the United Nations, developed a system of prioritization by creating slot times and priorities driven by the Haitian government.

The other primary means of delivery is by sea through the Port-au-Prince seaport. The earthquake rendered both northern and southern piers unusable. Joint Task Force-Haiti, with assets from U.S. Transportation Command supported by the Army and Navy, initially established a Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore capability to bring supplies in from the sea. This more than doubled the number of shipping containers received compared to prequake numbers. SOUTHCOM also established the JTF port opening element to repair the damaged southern pier and establish a temporary port capability using two contracted Crowley barges. This enhanced the flow of relief supplies and reduced some of the pressure on the international airport.

Less than 48 hours after the earthquake, the lead elements of 2d BCT, 82d Airborne Division, landed at the airport and moved to the heavily damaged area of Port-au-Prince. Along with USS *Carl Vinson* and its fleet of helicopters, the force provided vital relief supplies in a sustained manner. Almost as important at the time was a visible sign for the Haitian

A Haitian boy watches as U.S. Sailors in rigid-hull inflatable boats from the amphibious dock landing ships USS *Fort McHenry* (LSD 43) and USS *Carter Hall* (LSD 50) arrive at the New Hope Mission in Bonel, Haiti, 19 January 2010. (DOD, MCS2 Kristopher Wilson, U.S. Navy)

people that support was arriving. It provided hope for many Haitians.

Maritime forces were logistically self-sufficient and did not need to use either the aerial port or seaport. Aircraft carrier and amphibious ship operations provided lift assets to move supplies in support of the JTF. The Navy and Marine Corps pushed forces ashore to execute critical humanitarian assistance operations, which were instrumental in the overall success of the mission. Placing a Navy flag officer from the Joint Force Maritime Component Command in the JTF headquarters and officers in the Joint operations center ensured operations were fully synchronized and provided a common operating picture.

All these efforts were instrumental in saving lives in the initial weeks of the response. As we prepare for the next foreign disaster in support of the lead federal agency and partner nation, we should do the following:

- ◆ Develop a robust and capable team to deploy trained and equipped personnel in an early-entry package to conduct assessments and develop requirements, as well as render immediate life-saving assistance.
- ◆ Examine the requirements for an enduring Joint logistics organization, with the appropriate command and control, as part of the Global Response Force.
- ◆ Continue Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore and Joint task force port-opening deployments and exercises, and increase education on these capabilities across all services.
- ◆ Maintain the Global Response Force with a responsive Joint capability that can operate in both a permissive and nonpermissive environment with forced entry capability.

## Protect the People

When the lead elements of 82d Airborne Division's 2d BCT arrived in Haiti, we talked with the troop commander about the existing permissive but uncertain environment in Port-au-Prince. We discussed the requirement to focus on the needs of the Haitian people, the rules of engagement, and the nature of our humanitarian assistance mission. While we would be security conscious, we were not there to deliver aid through the barrel of a gun, but by reaching out with a hand of friendship. To that end, our leaders and troops showed tremendous flexibility and agility. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, states that the "focus of counterinsurgency is the people: provide for the people, protect the people, and convince the people of their government's legitimacy."<sup>1</sup> Haiti certainly illustrated that the focus of a humanitarian assistance mission must be the people. The fundamentals of counterinsurgency doctrine are very applicable in a foreign disaster relief mission.

From the beginning, the focus was to save lives and mitigate suffering. Every member of the task force understood this focus and the three initial priorities—provide critical medical aid, distribute water and food, and support the search and rescue efforts. Throughout the operation, JTF-H's close relationship with the Haitian people ensured mission success.

The people of Haiti affected by the earthquake were our operational center of gravity and the centerpiece of all our efforts. Leaders and troops were in constant contact with Haitians in their assigned area of operations. They worked to understand the culture. "Creole"

speakers at the platoon level ensured units could communicate effectively in the predominant language of the people on the street. Troops reached out with a hand of friendship and provided hope where none existed.

Gang violence was a concern since over 4,000 prisoners, including many prominent gang leaders, escaped from a major prison immediately following the earthquake. It was uncertain how this would affect humanitarian efforts. Fortunately, a lack of security was never an impediment to executing humanitarian assistance operations. The Haitian people viewed U.S. troops as helping them to recover from the earthquake and protecting them from those that would do them harm. Our close working relationship with MINUSTAH forces and their efforts in security operations enabled the Joint task force to focus on humanitarian assistance operations and specific security tasks in support of that effort.

To conduct humanitarian assistance, security must be established to protect the people from looting and acts of violence. In Haiti, the presence of UN forces on the streets following the earthquake and the integration of the arriving U.S. forces deterred the possibility of a deteriorating security situation.

Protecting the people, understanding their culture, speaking their language, living among the populace, and developing a relationship with the community leaders are key in accomplishing this mission. We offer this as a model for our next foreign disaster response.

## Build Partnerships

Success in a foreign disaster relief operation hinges on partnerships. Operation Unified Response could not have succeeded without the strong partnerships shared and developed with the government of Haiti, UN, USAID, and NGO counterparts. General Keen's relationship with Major General Floriano Peixoto, MINUSTAH force commander from Brazil, dates back to 1984 when both were captains.<sup>2</sup> This friendship helped the staffs to work closely together and share a common operating picture in Haiti.

In the first few days following the earthquake, the two generals discussed how it was necessary for JTF-H to operate within the envelope of a safe and secure environment provided by MINUSTAH forces. Major General Floriano Peixoto's force of roughly 4,000 troops in Port-au-Prince would provide the necessary security so JTF forces could support the





From right, U.S. Army LTG P.K. (Ken) Keen, the commanding general of Joint Task Force-Haiti, Brazilian army MG Floriano Peixoto, the commander of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, and U.S. Army COL Timothy McAteer, the commanding officer of the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, share a moment at McAteer's command post in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 11 March 2010. (DOD, by MCSCS Spike Call, U.S. Navy)

humanitarian assistance mission. Bringing both staffs together early in the operation ensured the two commanders aligned priorities. It also enabled the task force to support the delivery of food, water, and emergency medical care. This would not have been possible without a shared sense of trust and partnership. Developing relationships and partnerships early is essential. Leaders at every level must devote time and energy to make it happen. Regular meetings with all parties ensured understanding, aligned priorities, improved communication, and contributed to unity of effort and mission accomplishment.

One notable example of this was the development of the first major food distribution plan. The World Food Program, JTF-H, MINUSTAH, and various UN agencies and NGOs spearheaded the initial delivery of food throughout the city of Port-au-Prince

and surrounding communities at 16 food distribution points. The result was that more than two million Haitians received much-needed food and water. This initial food distribution plan was flawlessly executed because of the Joint and combined planning and partnerships that were cultivated. There are two tasks we should take on to build partnerships:

- ◆ Leaders at every level should seek out the key partners to build a relationship that will ensure unity of effort.
- ◆ We need to conduct exercises with partner nations, UN, and other U.S. agencies to develop relationships and refine processes/systems.

### **Coordinate and Collaborate to Achieve Unity of Effort**

The JTF operated in a complex, dynamic, permissive environment, yet an uncertain one. It included



Members of the Miami-Dade TF1 rescue of a 2-year-old from the rubble of a destroyed building in Haiti. USAID deployed the Miami-Dade TF1 squad as part of the comprehensive U.S. response to the earthquake that struck Haiti, 19 January 2010. (USAID)

the government of Haiti, United Nations, USAID as the U.S. lead federal agency operating with the U.S. Embassy and host of interagency partners, and hundreds of NGOs. One key to JTF success was the ability to coordinate and collaborate with all the organizations. Establishing JTF-H's humanitarian assistance coordination cell at the operational level facilitated this coordination and collaboration. The cell served as the conduit for bringing different organizations and functions together under one "coordination and collaboration roof." It pulled together the efforts of JTF-H, MINUSTAH military forces, the UN humanitarian community, USAID, and the NGOs to build a common understanding of the requirement. Led by a JTF-H general officer, the coordinating cell was comprised of more than 30 U.S. military members. It interfaced with every Joint interagency,

intergovernmental, and multinational organization to ensure synchronization of effort.

To coordinate and collaborate with nonmilitary partners, it was necessary to share information. Early on, we decided to be open and transparent. To do this, JTF-H operated on unclassified systems and used commercially available programs such as Google Earth to build a humanitarian assistance common operating picture at the tactical level.

Coordination and collaboration was critical at the operational and tactical levels. For instance, JTF-H did not have command and control of the area of operations, and MINUSTAH and the JTF both occupied the same tactical terrain. Camp managers representing NGOs primarily oversaw the thousands of spontaneous internally displaced persons camps. The JTF simply overlapped forces in the area and familiarized



ourselves with the camps to provide capabilities where needed and enable those we worked with to accomplish their mission.

The daily collaboration of unit leaders from the platoon to the brigade level with community leaders, MINUSTAH military forces, and NGOs was key to developing an understanding of the environment, determining requirements, maintaining situational awareness, and supporting the Haitian people.

To achieve unity of effort we need to use nontraditional methods:

- ◆ Develop an unclassified humanitarian assistance common operational picture with the available tools to share information with nonmilitary partners (inter-agency, NGOs, UN, etc).
- ◆ Codify the use of coordination centers like the JTF Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center, UN Coordination Support Committee consisting of the leadership of the Haitian Government, the UN, humanitarian assistance agencies, and JTF and Joint Operations Tasking Center when conducting foreign disaster relief.

## Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

On 14 January, about 36 hours after the earthquake, the ramp of the Toussaint Louverture International Airport was occupied by hundreds of journalists and camera crews from all over the world. The tragic circumstances surrounding the earthquake had focused the eyes of the world on Haiti. We recognized that the JTF must be transparent, approachable, and responsive to the public—Haitian and U.S. as well as international audiences. The permissive environment allowed the JTF to reach out through both traditional and social media forums. The news media was embedded at every level and was proactive in telling the story of what the “whole of government” was doing with UN and NGO partners in support of the government of Haiti.

Facebook (with over 5,000 followers) and Twitter (with over 270 followers) were used to counter possible misinformation. On the first day of the movement of displaced persons from one of the spontaneous camps to a new settlement site, JTF public affairs personnel used cameras on their cell phones to “Twitpic” Haiti’s president visiting the new resettlement location. The

photos were posted on Twitter and on JTF’s Facebook within seconds. This was one of many examples of leveraging social media to communicate to the world.

Another organization that furthered the JTF’s communication efforts was the Joint Information and Interagency Center. The center served as the hub for coordinating and synchronizing communication efforts from the strategic to the tactical levels. The goal was to ensure that all U.S. government personnel providing humanitarian relief in Haiti spoke with one voice and provided timely and accurate information. One of the products that grew from the Joint Information and Interagency Center was daily talking points that provided the overall communication goal, core themes, target audiences, and top-line messages. This product evolved into the “JTF Two Pager” that included Operation Unified Response themes, priorities, talking points,

***JTF-H ... used commercially available programs such as Google Earth to build a humanitarian assistance common operating picture ...***

facts, and figures. It was distributed throughout the JTF, SOUTHCOM, and the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince.

To further communication with all agencies, we recommend the following:

- ◆ Codify the use of a joint information and inter-agency center when employing a JTF.
- ◆ Add a social media expert on the joint manning document for the JTF public affairs office.
- ◆ Examine and revise policies and procedures where possible to allow the maximum use of unclassified means and mediums for information sharing to include social media, blogs, and websites.

## Support the Lead Federal Agency

Being in Haiti at the time of the earthquake enabled us to personally see the magnitude of destruction and get a sense of its impact on the Haitian people. The evening of 12 January and the following morning, we

knew the United States and the world would have to immediately respond with a massive effort. President Obama declared that providing relief to Haiti was a priority, and his administration issued guidance that it would be a unified whole-of-government effort with USAID as the lead federal agency. This early national commitment provided strategic intent and DOD resources for a rapid response, but policy, preparation, organizational issues, and civilian capacity challenged longer-term implementation.

USAID stood up the Office for Response Coordination in Haiti, led by Ambassador Lew Lucke. From the start, the roles, responsibilities, authorities, and required capabilities of the lead federal agency were not clearly defined. While the designation as lead federal agent gave broad authority to coordinate efforts, there was no specification of subordinate support relationships or division of labor. USAID had few personnel on the ground to form and lead the robust planning required early in the crisis, so the JTF provided planners to USAID and worked to ensure the JTF was enabling and supporting USAID in all efforts.

When a whole-of-government approach is needed and directed, we should ensure all government agencies understand their role and responsibilities. The lead federal agency should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and appropriate resources and authorities. Department of Defense, Department of State, and the lead federal agency should work together to determine the conditions that must be met to redeploy military forces at the end of the emergency and relief response phases.

For future foreign disaster relief operations, we need to:

- ◆ Examine how to mobilize civilian capacity to support the lead federal agency and explore with the UN the idea of forming an international civilian and military capability to respond to disasters.
- ◆ Examine how to improve the integration and capacity of our military and civilian disaster assessment teams, and consider the development of small, medium, and large teams that can respond within 12 hours of a disaster.
- ◆ Examine policies and procedures that will allow DOD greater flexibility to leverage the support of the public/private sector.

## **Pull From All Available Resources to Form the Joint Task Force**

The capabilities and the command and control necessary to build a Joint task force for a contingency of this nature were not included in the Global Response Force, and due to other possible contingencies, SOUTHCOM's Army component was not available. Consequently, JTF-H was formed ad hoc. Fortunately, the XVIII Airborne Corps had a trained and ready force that could deploy immediately as the core for the JTF. This was key to success. However, the Corps lacked key enablers, so other organizations had to provide depth.

Southern Command, Joint Forces Command, Joint Enabling Capabilities Command, Joint Communications Support Element, Joint Public Affairs Support Element, Northern Command, European Command, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy elements, as well as numerous liaison officers, responded and filled the gaps. Initially, the JTF depended on the embassy to provide workspace and communications equipment to operate. The close proximity of the JTF to the U.S. Embassy facilitated the initial whole-of-government response and the development of relationships among the various staffs. The JTF later established its headquarters next to the embassy and close to the MINUSTAH headquarters, which facilitated continued coordination, collaboration, and communication. Unless we posture the proper capabilities in the Global Response Force or in the combatant commands, we will have to continue to build future JTFs during a crisis response in a similar ad hoc fashion. To use all available resources for foreign disaster response operations, we should:

- ◆ Review U.S. combatant command components and Joint Force Command headquarters' capacity and role in forming a JTF.

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Brazilian military MG Floriano Peixoto, commander of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, and U.S. Army LTG P.K. (Ken) Keen, deputy commander of U.S. Southern Command and commanding general of Joint Task Force-Haiti, talk with the camp leader of the Ancien Aeroport Militaire internally displaced persons camp in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 11 March 2010. (U.S. Navy, MCSCS, Spike Call)

- ◆ Review the capability and deployability of the Global Response Force in support of forming a JTF headquarters.
- ◆ Locate the JTF headquarters where it can best coordinate and communicate with the embassy, partner nations, and other key organizations.

### **Include the Host Nation Government**

Our response to a foreign disaster relief mission is at the request of the host nation. We should ensure the host nation provides the necessary leadership to coordinate its efforts. In order for the host nation government to have legitimacy with its citizens, it must provide early and consistent leadership of all aspects of the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.

The earthquake significantly impaired the government of Haiti, which was a weak institution even

before the earthquake. Fourteen of sixteen ministry buildings were destroyed and hundreds of government workers perished in the earthquake. Many who survived were understandably traumatized by the catastrophe. It was important to reassure the people that their government was in charge and working to address their needs. This proved to be a challenge as the people complained of the lack of visible national leadership.

During disasters, government leaders need to get out among the people and communicate with citizens. They should also be involved in the humanitarian response and reconstruction planning early to provide guidance and ensure the efforts of the international community support their nation's long-term plan. It was critical that the government of Haiti be included in all aspects of planning and decision making.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

1. Develop a more robust and capable disaster response assessment and initial life-saving response team.
2. Have combatant commands maintain a JTF capable force trained and ready to deploy in support of a foreign disaster relief operation with requirements from the Global Response Force.
3. Develop an international disaster response framework for nations to deploy civilian and military capability to respond to disasters.
4. Conduct exercises to develop relationships and refine processes and systems.
5. Codify the use of coordination centers like the U.S. JTF-Haiti Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center, UN coordinating support committees, and Joint operations tasking centers; make them adaptable to any existing partner-nation center.
6. Develop and codify unclassified information sharing tools like All Partners Access Network and JTF-Haiti's humanitarian assistance common operating picture; make them adaptable to any partner-nation's existing system.
7. Examine how best to integrate and support the NGOs and public/private sector in support of humanitarian assistance/foreign disaster relief.
8. Tackle the internally displaced persons challenge immediately.

### Work Closely with the UN Humanitarian Community

In Haiti, one cannot effectively conduct humanitarian assistance or foreign disaster relief without working closely with the UN and the vast number of NGOs that have been there for years. These agencies are crucial when it comes to humanitarian assistance and foreign disaster relief support, but they add complexity when it comes to governance and building host nation capacity. There are reportedly over 1,000 NGOs working with the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance in Haiti. As the scouts and soldiers of the humanitarian effort, NGOs manage displaced persons camps, conduct food and shelter distributions, establish medical facilities, and deliver all types of relief. While critical, their work should ultimately help build the capability of the government of Haiti to govern.

Initially, the JTF commanders and staff did not fully appreciate the number of humanitarian organizations that were in Haiti before the earthquake. It became apparent the JTF would have to reach out and integrate them into their systems and processes to be successful, so the JTF worked with the UN to develop

UN-approved coordination processes to include government of Haiti-led "coordinating support committees" and a UN-led "joint operations tasking center" where requirements were validated and tasked to the appropriate organizations. When working with the UN, the JTF also had to understand and coordinate within the UN "cluster system" to achieve unity of effort.

Much like working within a "whole of U.S. government" effort, we must work within a "whole of international community" effort at the macro level. This can only be accomplished by good coordination and collaboration after clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all the players.

### Anticipate Challenges with Internally Displaced Persons

Natural disasters are historically followed by the displacement of people. The number of displaced persons depends on the magnitude of the disaster and the country's ability to respond to it. This earthquake created a challenge that will be with Haiti for decades. As the emergency response phase began to pass, it became apparent that the major challenge facing the



government of Haiti and the international community was the estimated one-to-two million internally displaced persons who had established approximately 1,300 spontaneous settlements in Port-au-Prince. The magnitude of the destruction forced many to live under sheets, tarps, tents, or nothing at all. Some camps emerged in areas prone to flooding and mud slides. With the rainy season approaching, this challenge became the number one priority of the government of Haiti and the international community.

The JTF's mission of saving lives and mitigating suffering then focused on the top nine internally displaced persons camps most likely to flood or have mud slides. These nine camps were home to over 100,000 people. Even after engineering projects lessened the effects of the rain in each of these camps, approximately 6,000 people needed to move to safer ground. To assist in the effort led by the UN, the JTF provided engineer support, transportation assets, and civil affairs teams at each priority camp. The JTF also supported camp managers and NGOs as they performed critical tasks. At the strategic level, the JTF and USAID worked closely with the UN and the government of Haiti to develop an internally displaced persons strategy. While none of these requirements were anticipated in the initial days of the disaster, we knew that issues regarding displaced persons had to be addressed following most natural disasters. To plan and execute an acceptable solution requires host nation leadership as well as cooperation and coordination among the international partners.

## Conclusion

In Haiti, the U.S. military was a supporting element of a larger humanitarian assistance disaster relief network. Militarily, this can be frustrating at times. Chain of command is inherent to the military. Once an order is given, it is executed. Because of the enormity of the situation and the myriad organizations with disparate goals supporting the Haitian earthquake disaster response, there was no collective command and control structure. Rather, it was about all organizations coordinating, collaborating, and communicating toward a common purpose—to save lives and mitigate suffering.

The JTF-H chain of command directed a great deal of effort toward working with the different leaders at each level of support. From the strategic to the tactical level, it was imperative that JTF-H spoke with one voice and acted as a catalyst to achieve unity of effort. Our ability to assist in maintaining focus enabled overall mission success. Haiti has many challenges ahead. It will take not only an enduring U.S. commitment, but also an international community commitment for Haiti to “build back better” and give its people an opportunity to recover, reconstruct, and prosper in the decades to come while being prepared for the next natural disaster.

Shown above are some recommendations as we look for lessons that the U.S. military, interagency, UN, and international community can apply in preparing for the next disaster response. **MR**

## Notes

1. 2d Battalion, 5th Marines website, at <[www.state2ndbn5th-mar.com/coinman/notes/counterinsurgency](http://www.state2ndbn5th-mar.com/coinman/notes/counterinsurgency)>. Notes on FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 28 February 2008).

2. See Ken Keen, Floriano Peixoto Vieira Neto, et al., “Relationships Matter: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in Haiti,” *Military Review* (May-June 2010): 2–12.

To view “Foreign Disaster Response: Joint Task Force-Haiti Observations” as it was originally published in November–December 2010, visit <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/JF-22/Original/Keen.pdf>.