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**CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO’S ROLE IN DISASTER  
RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS  
ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE**

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**Abstract:**

The global physical environment is changing more frequently and one of the consequences consist in the increased likelihood of the environmental failures (earthquakes, droughts, floods, famine etc). Disasters are a regular part of global life, whether caused by acts of nature or acts of man. These events become humanitarian emergencies when their effects impact on a society whose inherent resources are insufficient to absorb the impact and deal with the event’s consequences. Hence, NATO has assumed an important role in international disaster relief by becoming involved in the provision of relief following natural disasters, all these being in accordance with the founding principles of the Alliance. The purpose of this paper is to spotlight the importance of NATO’s specific structures dealing with disaster relief (EADRCC - *Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre*, EADRU - *Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit* etc) and to present the main challenges of the intervention in Pakistan earthquake (2005). At the same time, it will be given a better understanding of NATO’s role in DRO, by discussing its added value based on the Pakistan case study, and, eventually, will be identified some areas for improvement.

*Key words: Civil Emergency Planning (CEP); Disaster Relief Operations(DRO); Humanitarian Assistance; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); Pakistani Earthquake; NATO Response Force (NRF)*

**1. Introduction**

In the last period of time, disasters have become increasingly destructive, occurring on a more frequent basis. Hence, NATO’s policy on international disaster relief acknowledges that natural disasters are posing an increasing risk to the international communities anticipating that “*the number of people at risk to natural and technological disasters will increase dramatically over the next two decades*”. [1]

# **CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE**

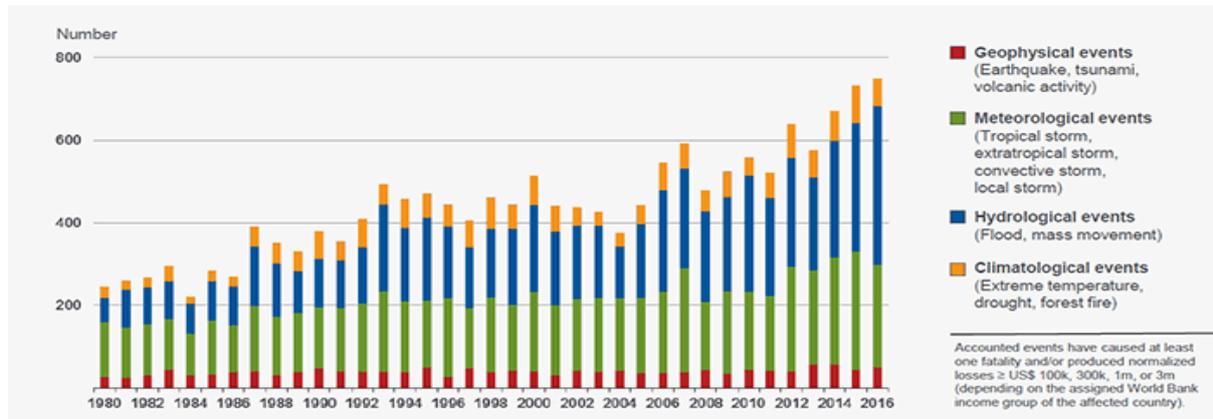


Fig.1 Disaster evolution 1980-2016[2]

Undoubtedly, from the very beginning of its activity, NATO Alliance has been actively present not only in activities related to security and defence but also in missions in the area of civil protection and humanitarian support which encompasses disaster relief operations, as well. As a matter of fact, the Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC) was created when NATO first developed its Civil Emergency Planning programme in the 1950's and a few years later, in 1953, NATO conducted its first disaster assistance operation following a natural disaster, due to The North Sea floods in England and Netherlands. [3]

For an coherent, efficient and effective intervention in Disaster Relief Operations (DRO), NATO has developed some structures able to coordinate the supply of relief and to intervene in these specific missions, named EADRCC-Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre and EADRU-Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit.

At the same time, when deemed it necessary and with NAC-North Atlantic Council approval, NATO can deploy on the affected area of disaster some military assets which belong to NATO military command and force structures. This was the case of Pakistani earthquake, when NATO used both options, activation of EADRCC/EADRU and deploying on the spot of NRF-NATO Response Force, respectively. Being the first intervention of NATO Forces in these kinds of missions, I consider this case study relevant to get some conclusions and lessons learned and to identify the appropriateness of involvement of NATO in Disaster Relief Operations.

## **2. NATO structures which could be involved in Disaster Relief Operations (DRO)**

### **2.1 Civil Emergency Planning (CEP)**

NATO Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) has become more important than ever, covering various dimensions of NA5CRO (Non Article 5 Crises Response Operations), its role being to collect, analyse and share information in order to use in the most effective way the resources of alliance designated to emergency situations. CEP acts as an enabler, having a network of experts who are specialized in the area of civilian resources.

Besides this network of civil experts, the Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee (SCEPC) serves as the top NATO advisory body for disaster relief operations, as its role is to ensure that support for national authorities is executed in accordance with the Alliance's objectives. An important characteristic of CEP is that civil assets remain a domestic affair, being permanently under control and

# **CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE**

responsibility of the national authorities. When a disaster has occurred in one country which is overwhelmed and cannot provide the necessary disaster assistance, NATO gets involved, its primary role being to help the affected nation to better handle the protection of civilian populations. At the same time, CEPC oversees the activities of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC).

## **2.2 The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)**

On 29 May 1998, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) Ministers endorsed the EAPC Policy on "Enhanced Practical Cooperation in the Field of International Disaster Relief". In this respect, ministers agreed to establish at NATO Headquarters, within the Alliance's Civil Emergency Planning Directorate (CEPD), a Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) which will be activated in case of an emergency. EADRCC serves as NATO's primary practical civil emergency response mechanism and is responsible for the coordination of international relief efforts of all 50 EAPC-Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council states (29 NATO and 21 Partner countries). The creation of EADRCC was initiated following a proposal from Russia to enhance the Euro-Atlantic response capability, resulting in the "EAPC Policy on Enhanced Practical Cooperation in the field of International Disaster Relief".

EADRCC activity is highly appreciated due to the promotion of information sharing, through organizing seminars and conferences, and also through facilitating close and continuing cooperation for training and exercises among voluntary groupings of EAPC member countries. Field exercises are organized each year and serve the objective of increasing interoperability and enhancing cooperation among nations, by applying EADRCC SOPs.

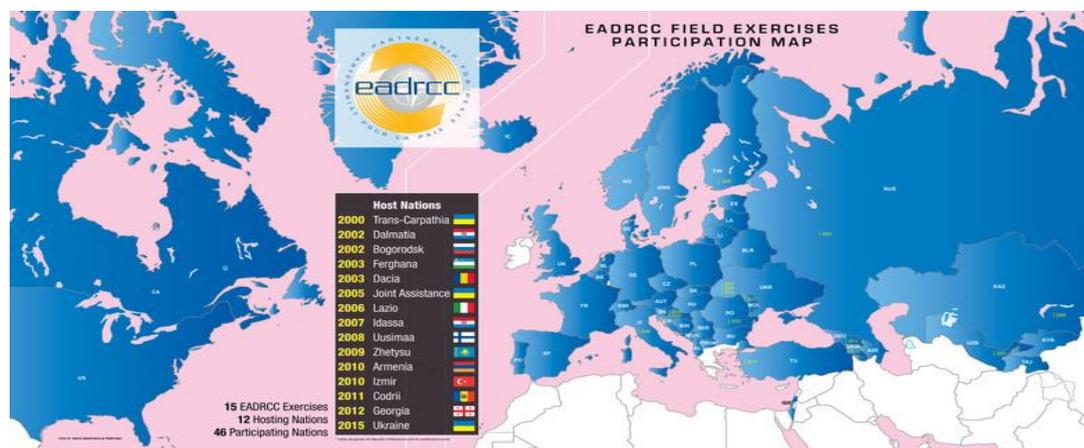


Fig.2 EADRCC exercises during the time[4]

The EADRCC is responsible for the deployment of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU), which will be activated whenever one or more EAPC member countries deploy capabilities in response to any disaster.

## **2.3. The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Unit (EADRU)**

In accordance with the EAPC basic document, EADRU is the main tool of EADRCC, composed from multi-national mix of national civil and military elements, which are offered by EAPC countries on a volunteer basis. The composition and the size of this multinational unit will be determined after the assessment of each particular disaster.

# ***CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE***

Extremely important is the fact that national elements remain under their respective national control while deployed in the affected country as an asset of the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA).[4]

## **2.4. The Rapid Reaction Team (RRT) and the Advisory Support Team (AST)**

The Rapid Reaction Team and the Advisory Support Team represent another non military tools for CEP. RRT was established in 2006 by the SCEPC and has the capability to deploy a team of specialists in order to evaluate the necessary assets to cope with disaster and act in close cooperation with UNOCHA. The AST is mainly focused on the phase prior to a potential disaster, having the goal to improve the preparedness, response and recovery capabilities of nations. An AST is solely deployed when a nation directly requests assistance through the SCEPC and it is not mandatory for the nation to follow the recommendations of AST.

## **2.5. Forces from NFS (NATO Force Structure)**

The activities conducted by NATO that do not fall under the Article 5 umbrella are considered as "Non-Article 5" and grouped under the concept of crisis response operations. [5]

Sometimes NATO could decide on the involvement of forces belonging to NFS to intervene for a disaster relief operation. NFS is composed of allied national and multinational forces and HQs placed at the Alliance's disposal on a permanent or temporary basis under specific readiness criteria. These provide a pool of forces in order to allow for a high degree of flexibility to meet the requirements of conducting and sustaining different operations.

The NATO Response Force (NRF) is a highly ready and technologically advanced multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly to wherever it is needed. As with every NATO operation, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) has operational responsibility for deployed NATO forces. The operational command of the NRF alternates between NATO's two Joint Force Commands in Brunssum and Naples.

## **3. Case study: NATO'S involvement in Pakistan earthquake (2005)**

### **3.1 General aspects of the earthquake**

On 8 October 2005, a powerful earthquake (7.6 degree on Richter scale) affected the Northern part of Pakistan, causing a particularly high level of destruction to the Kashmir Region (Figure 3). It took place shortly after 8:50 a.m. local time and the epicentre was situated about 12 miles northeast of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Some facts of the event are presented, as follows:

- ✓ Dead: 73,000 persons (includes over 18,000 children);
- ✓ Injured: 70,000 persons;
- ✓ Overall affected: 3.2- 3.5 million persons;
- ✓ Without Shelter: 2.8 million persons (approx.);
- ✓ Without adequate food: 2.3 million persons;
- ✓ Employment loss: 325,000 persons;
- ✓ Housing : 400153 shelter units destroyed or seriously damaged;
- ✓ Education: 4844 destroyed, 2647 damaged;

# ***CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE***

- ✓ Health: 455 destroyed, 119 damaged;
- ✓ Roads: 4429 km damaged.



**Fig.3 Pakistan earthquake map[6]**

First relief efforts were conducted by the Pakistani military who provided an immediate response by coordinating the relief efforts and deploying around 60,000 troops in the affected area. Notwithstanding these first efforts, the Pakistani authorities and humanitarian organizations were incapable of dealing with the huge number of victims found on the spot. Moreover, the peculiarities of terrain, the extreme weather and low infrastructure downsized their attempts to provide relief efforts. In addition, winter was coming and the worsening weather conditions were another cause for concern. Taking all this into account, Pakistani government decided to request help from international organizations, including NATO.

## **3.2 NATO'S involvement**

NATO intervention mainly consisted of 2 main phases, the first one being conducted by EADRCC (Air Bridge to Pakistan) and the second one was materialized by sending some troops belonging to NRF (NATO Response Force) on the spot. Due to the geopolitical aspects which existed in the region at that time, NATO assumed from the very beginning a 3 months period for this disaster relief operations mission. The timeline of the intervention is presented in Table 1.

### **STAGE 1: NATO'S AIR BRIDGES**

One day after the request was received, the NAC decided that NATO's role would be to coordinate, through EADRCC, the transportation of the aid supplies that were offered by EAPC countries, as follows:

- ✓ transportation assistance for United Nations;
- ✓ NATO Air-bridge used by 19 EAPC, 2 non-EAPC nations, WFP, UNJLC and UN-HCR;
- ✓ more than 160 flights with almost 3,500 tons of relief goods (18,000 tents; 510,000 blankets; 17,000 heaters; 30,000 mattresses; 55,000 sleeping bags; many tons of medical supplies).

***CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE***

Timeline	NATO Pakistan Earthquake Relief Operation
8 October	Earthquake hit Pakistan
10 October	Request for assistance by Pakistani authorities
11 October	NAC approves airlift
21 October	Approval deployment ground forces
24 October	Deployment DJTF HQ Deployment air component
29 October	Deployment land component
6 November	First NATO helicopters
9 November	NATO Hospital (NMH) starts activities
10 November	Start engineering support
1 February	End of the mission

**Table 1. Timeline for NATO intervention in Pakistan earthquake 2005**

**STAGE 2: DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY ASSETS ON THE GROUND**

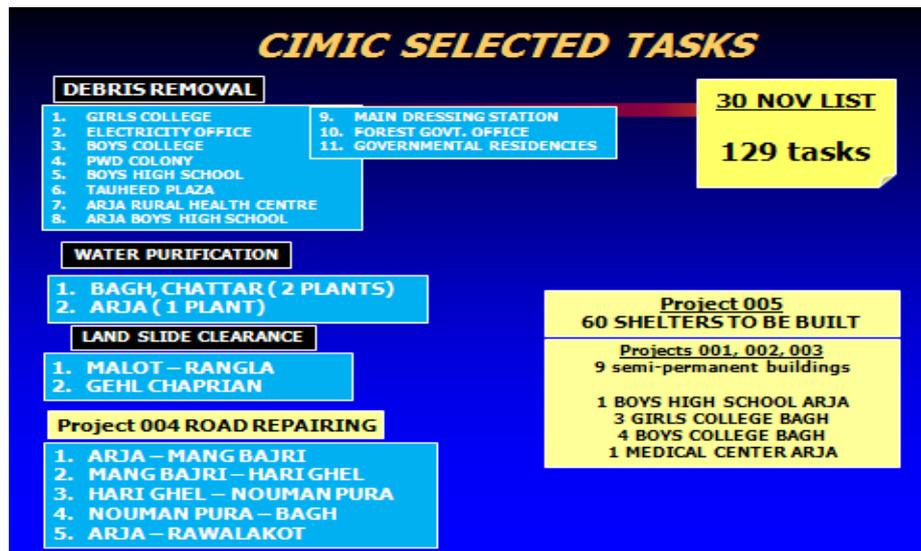
Following an additional request from the Pakistani authorities, NATO initiated the second stage of the disaster relief operation, in which specialized units from the NRF were deployed on the ground. In fact, for this mission was nominated the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps from Madrid, Spain (NRDC-SP), under the coordination of Joint Command Lisbon (JCL). More importantly, this disaster relief operation led by the Alliance was NATO's first major relief operation outside the Euro-Atlantic territory and the NRF's first major deployment. The main functions delivered by NRDC-SP in this operation were focused on engineers, medical support and CIMIC missions. The forces were tailored to the mission so the engineers had to be reorganized from a typical war fighting engineer unit into an ad-hoc unit able to perform disaster relief operations and the synchronization with other entities from the theatre was of paramount importance.

The engineers tremendous effort during the mission could be understood from the following facts:

- ✓ 100.000 manpower hours;
- ✓ 16.000 heavy machinery hours to relief;
- ✓ 9 semi-permanent buildings;
- ✓ 60 shelters, 17 health centers, 43 schools;
- ✓ 26 shelters, 23 schools & 3 health centers winterized;
- ✓ 41.000 m<sup>3</sup> debris removed (4.100 trucks);
- ✓ 18 retaining walls built;
- ✓ 20.000 linear meters of road cleared of landslides;
- ✓ 15.000 linear meters of road cleared of snow;
- ✓ drainage in Bagh main streets cleaned (1.000 meters);
- ✓ 270.000 liters of drinking water distributed in BAGH and ARJA.

CIMIC missions performed by forces deployed on the ground are presented in Figure 2.

# **CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE**



**Fig.2 Part of CIMIC missions**

The medical statistics are proving the hard work of the medical staff and their achievements, as follows:

- ✓ 1 NMR (NATO Military Relief) Hospital;
- ✓ 4890 patients;
- ✓ 159 operations;
- ✓ 51 villages visited;
- ✓ 3500 consultations;
- ✓ developing vaccination campaigns.

## **4. Conclusion**

NATO's important contributions, as mentioned above, became clear during the Pakistan earthquake response and this case study showed that some time was lost in the deployment of forces and there is a need for improving NATO decision-making process, to foster cooperation and dialogue between civilian and military actors, at all levels and to increase cooperation with the potential host nations. Some general conclusions and lessons learned from this important mission are listed below:

- a) Related to planning process:
  - ✓ coordination needs to begin as soon as possible in the planning stage;
  - ✓ the use of liaison officers as early as possible is also essential to effective civil military cooperation;
  - ✓ the status of forces and memorandum of understanding concerning host nation and forces contributing nations is also something that must begin as early as possible;
  - ✓ during the initial planning phases for an operation of this type it is also important to have plans for transition and force withdrawal.
- b) Related to execution process:
  - ✓ a key challenge was the lack of common understanding among all stakeholders regarding the priority of humanitarian needs;

## ***CONSIDERATIONS ON NATO'S ROLE IN DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS (DRO) WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE***

- ✓ lack of familiarity and understanding of the role of NATO among Pakistani opinion formers such as politicians and media;
  - ✓ a sizeable portion of the population did not speak english so interpreters and translators were essential;
  - ✓ the adaptability and effective decision making process of the Pakistani authorities was widely appreciated by the huge array of actors involved in the operation;
  - ✓ NATO's important role would not have been possible without the efforts of the Pakistani Army.
- c) Related to logistics and engineering:
- ✓ the existing logistic and transportation resources were limited. Every possible form of transport was used from porters to mules to aircraft;
  - ✓ the engineer package needs to be carefully tailored and balanced to the specific mission: lightly equipped engineers are an easier beast to move into, but heavy engineering assets make quicker progress;
  - ✓ services and supplies should be procured as close to the area of need as possible; this reduces the logistic bill and ensures that the supplies are compatible to the local culture;
  - ✓ money not only facilitates the deployment of the force but helps get tasks done.

To sum up, this case study reaffirmed once again that NATO and its structures should be considered a crucial actor with meaningful contributions in Disaster Relief Operations. Its added value is obviously through highly integrated structure, specific capabilities that it can offer in times of disasters and its ability to establish good cooperation with all involved actors.

### **5. References**

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