PREPARING FOR CATASTROPHE:
A NEW U.S. FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL
DISASTER RESPONSE

GRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

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Table Of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abstract

Success of the U.S. Government response to international humanitarian disasters depends upon the quality and timeliness of decisions made in Washington D.C. as much as upon activities in the field. However, the government lacks a comprehensive framework for organizing and managing interagency response efforts even though numerous federal departments and agencies may participate. Without clearly established lines of authority, expectations, and responsibilities for each organization, U.S. efforts are often ad hoc and erratic. The purpose of this paper is to identify the need for a more effective U.S. Government international disaster response system and to suggest a framework of structures, processes, and procedures that can effect an improvement.

The paper first makes a case for the strategic importance of U.S. disaster response capabilities in order to justify the commitment of attention and resources needed to develop a new response framework. It next reviews the current U.S. Government international disaster response system and highlights shortcomings in practice with two case study examples—the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and the response to Hurricane Mitch. The paper then critiques the current disaster response system in four key areas—leadership, the interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. Finally, the paper offers options and recommends ways to construct a more effective U.S. Government framework for international disaster response.

I. Introduction

Every year, the United States Government provides life-saving emergency relief in the wake of natural and manmade disasters around the globe. These disasters may result in enormous human suffering and loss of life, and the time available to make a difference is often limited to hours or days. Decisions must be implemented quickly, and resources must be allocated efficiently to rapidly place the federal disaster response machinery in motion. Without a rapid response, the initiative may be lost, and with it, the opportunity to aid affected populations may vanish.

The success or failure of U.S. relief efforts may depend upon the quality and timeliness of decisions made in Washington D.C. as much as upon activities in the field. The entire international relief effort may rest on U.S. Government decisions since other countries and relief agencies often follow the U.S. lead in responding to disasters. An effective U.S. response requires a highly integrated effort across federal agencies to efficiently marshal resources and allocate them for maximum life-saving impact. An effective interagency system in turn requires a framework of structures, processes, and procedures to be in place in advance of a disaster response.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Government lacks a coherent system for organizing and managing interagency response efforts even though many diverse agencies may be drawn into the endeavor. Without clearly established lines of authority, expectations, and responsibilities for each agency, the federal response often gets mired in time-consuming bureaucratic politics—especially when the use of military resources is contemplated or

required. All too frequently, the result is an ad hoc and erratic response cobbled together only after critical time has passed. While most U.S. responses eventually gain their footing and achieve some measure of success, most could have been much more effective. Tragically, the cost of bureaucratic delay can sometimes be measured in lost lives and human suffering.

The purpose of this paper is to show that the U.S. Government lacks a comprehensive framework for responding to international disasters and to suggest a framework of structures, policy, and procedures that can produce a more effective response system. The paper first makes a case for the strategic importance of U.S. disaster response capabilities in order to justify the commitment of attention and resources needed to improve the system. It next reviews the current U.S. Government international disaster response system and highlights shortcomings in practice with two case study examples—the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and the response to Hurricane Mitch. The paper then critiques the current system and identifies deficiencies in four key areas—leadership, the interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. Finally, the paper offers options and recommends ways to construct a more effective U.S. Government framework for international disaster response.

The U.S. Response to International Disasters

International humanitarian crises vary widely in scale and complexity. Humanitarian crises may be caused by (1) a sudden economic decline or collapse, which hinders food production and distribution, (2) environmental factors, including natural disasters, climate change, and the inability of the land to support growing populations,

and (3) political and conflict-related factors. Some disasters occur in countries capable of providing relief indigenously while many others are small, localized emergencies that require little or no outside assistance. Most U.S. Government responses tend to be small in scale with support limited to grants of funding and commodities distributed through third-party relief organizations. More serious disasters may require on-site relief coordination and assistance by U.S. Government relief agencies.

Most challenging are those humanitarian crises resulting from major natural disasters—especially in locales incapable of handling the calamity alone—or from political and military conflict that tears civil society apart. As they increase in magnitude, disasters also increase exponentially in complexity. Conflict-generated disasters, which are also known as complex emergencies, pose some of the greatest challenges to relief efforts because of the underlying political stakes, heightened security concerns, and expanded number and diversity of actors involved. Although they form a relatively small proportion of the disasters generating a U.S. Government response, the largest disasters consume most of the federal resources and attention devoted to international disaster assistance. They may also require a more direct role by U.S. agencies as coordinators and implementers of emergency relief.

Within the federal government, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the primary agency involved in international disaster response. USAID coordinates the federal response to international disasters through its Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), which can respond to the majority of international disasters with little or no assistance from other federal agencies. For major international crises, however, other federal organizations may be involved in response efforts—

including the Department of State (DOS), Department of Defense (DOD), and the

National Security Council (NSC). These agencies are the primary U.S. Government

actors in a major international disaster response, but other federal organizations may also

assist as required by the situation.

Scope of Research

Although many federal agencies may play major individual roles in the U.S.

response to major international disasters, the U.S. Government lacks a coherent process

for collectively managing and coordinating their efforts. This paper concentrates on the

few major disasters requiring a rapid and robust interagency response—including from

DOD—rather than the many that USAID handles effectively every year with little or no

outside assistance. For the purposes of this project, and in the absence of an agreed-upon

definition, a *major* international disaster will be distinguished as one in which at least

300,000 civilians require swift international relief to avoid serious malnutrition or death

(NIC iii).

This paper examines what happens within Washington-based federal agencies and

departments during the international disaster response process rather than what occurs at

the affected location—presuming that better interagency coordination will pay great

dividends in the field. In addition, the paper deals solely with *international* rather than

domestic disasters, which fall under the direction of the U.S. Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA). The exclusive emphasis on the U.S. Government

international disaster response system should not suggest that the U.S. will be the only

contributor to an international relief effort. On the contrary, the United States is usually

joined by a host of other governments, International Organizations (IOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs) in the relief effort. The paper presupposes that the U.S. Government must better organize its own response efforts to be a more effective international relief partner.

Time may be the most critical resource in a disaster response, and the focus of the paper is on the *immediate response* to rapid-onset humanitarian disasters. The paper does not address long-term development or chronic humanitarian assistance issues. In the case of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated Central America in 1998, the paper focuses on the initial emergency relief stage rather than the rebuilding and reconstruction phase that followed. While "nation building" is beyond the scope of the research, the U.S. Government must plan its immediate response to minimize the disruption of development programs within the affected country.

Because the author's frame of reference is that of a military officer, the paper pays particular attention to the part played by the military in the interagency response process and its role in providing rapid, life-saving disaster assistance. This emphasis on the military role does not extend to humanitarian interventions, which entail the use of combat power to aid populations threatened by violence. However, the paper does address how the U.S. responds to the *effects* of complex emergencies and humanitarian interventions and how these efforts can be made more effective. Using the Kosovo example to illustrate, the paper is concerned with the U.S Government effort to aid Albanians displaced from Kosovo rather than the air campaign intended to save them from ethnic cleansing.

Finally, this paper proposes a common federal response framework for both natural and conflictive disasters even though complex emergencies are often treated separately from natural disasters in public policy as well as in most literature. The main difference between these types of disaster is that complex emergencies add a *security* consideration to the technical and logistical challenge of relief efforts. U.S. disaster assistance may occur in a zone of conflict, where aid and aid providers may become targets of warring factions. The distinction between natural and conflictive disasters becomes blurred when a natural calamity—especially drought-induced famine—strikes a society torn by civic violence. Furthermore, the human conditions driving the relief effort—displaced populations, disease, and starvation—and the resources required to alleviate human suffering are generally the same, and the same federal agencies are typically involved in both types of disaster. Because the similarities outweigh the differences, a common framework is required in the response to both types of disaster.

Research Methodology

This paper is based upon a qualitative research design and draws information from three basic sources: (1) U.S. Government and military publications and reports on national strategy, policy, and doctrine; (2) academic and non-government literature, publications, and reports on the international environment, national security decision-making, the interagency process, and disaster assistance; and (3) informal interviews of current and former U.S. officials involved in international disaster responses in Washington as well as the field. For an outside perspective on the U.S. disaster response process, the author also interviewed officials from United Nations (UN) humanitarian

agencies in New York and Geneva plus individuals experienced in NGO and PVO disaster response efforts.

The effort to tie disaster response to U.S. national interests draws primarily on national security literature, reports, and publications, but several officials also provided helpful observations through individual interviews. To capture the current interagency disaster response process, the author analyzed a number of literary and government sources. Although the paper is focused narrowly on international disaster response, difficulties with interagency coordination are common within the executive branch, and the author drew useful insights from materials on the NSC decision-making framework. The case studies on the Kosovo crisis and Hurricane Mitch are based upon individual interviews as well as two key reports. The first report is a joint interagency review conducted by State Department and USAID officials, and the second is a DOD-sponsored report on the response to Hurricanes Georges and Mitch.

These reports also support a more in-depth critique of the current system. Another important source of information for this critical review came from interviews with participants in the current international disaster response process. These include members of an Informal Humanitarian Assistance Working Group (IHAWG) active within the Washington-based federal agencies. These sources also influenced the final recommendations contained in the paper. Other important influences came from literature on the NSC interagency framework, FEMA's Federal Response Plan (FRP) for domestic disasters, and a draft Federal Foreign Disaster Response Plan (FFDRP) designed to apply the FRP to international disasters.

For insights into the military's unique role in the international disaster response system, the author consulted military strategy and doctrine publications, books on disaster relief, civilian and military journal articles, and numerous papers derived from professional military education (PME) programs. This understanding was supplemented by learning more about the military commander's perspective of interagency coordination from a vantage point in the field. The author interviewed Joint Task Force (JTF) commanders for the 1996 effort to aid Hutu refugees in Zaire, the 1999 Turkish earthquake response, and the 2000 Mozambique flood relief effort. Additionally, the author gained insight into regional military considerations during visits to each geographic unified command and to the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, which is a leader in civil-military preparation for disaster assistance.

Organization

Before addressing problems with the current U.S. international disaster response system and offering possible solutions, the paper seeks to justify the commitment of attention and resources required to improve U.S. disaster response capabilities. Accordingly, Chapter Two highlights the factors leading to humanitarian disasters in today's strategic environment and the international impact they can have if left unaddressed. This chapter aims to show why international disasters often require a U.S. Government response, and it proposes a broader conception of U.S. national interests that encompasses the nation's humanitarian as well as its strategic interests. Within this

broader context, U.S. disaster response capabilities can be viewed as an important instrument of U.S. national security policy in an unstable world.

Chapter Three examines the current U.S. system for international disaster response. It outlines which federal agencies are typically involved and details the responsibilities of each. It also discusses existing disaster assistance funding mechanisms, which are a key element of the interagency decision-making process. Next, the chapter discusses the NSC framework for interagency coordination, highlights the challenges inherent in the interagency process, and shows how the Clinton Administration attempted to address some of these difficulties. This chapter concludes by reviewing how the current U.S. international disaster response system performed in Kosovo—a recent example of a complex emergency, and Hurricane Mitch—a major natural disaster.

Chapter Four offers an in-depth critique of the current system to show that the U.S. Government lacks a comprehensive framework for responding to international disasters. The chapter assesses the current system in the four key areas of leadership, the interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. It finds that (1) No one is in charge of the overall international disaster response system; (2) The interagency process is not institutionalized; (3) Unclear funding mechanisms and inadequate civilian resources hamper effective disaster response; and (4) International disaster response is not planned for strategically.

Chapter Five identifies available alternatives and recommends several steps to construct a more effective U.S. Government framework for international disaster response. The chapter offers proposals in each of the four areas assessed in the fourth

chapter and makes the following recommendations: (1) Clarify who is in charge of the U.S. international disaster response system; (2) Institutionalize interagency response structures and procedures; (3) Reform funding mechanisms and enhance civilian response capabilities; and (4) Develop a strategic planning capability for international disaster response.

The premise underlying Chapter Five—and the entire paper—is that an effective disaster response framework must be in place *before* a crisis rather than *after* crisis development in order to reduce costly delays and enhance an operation's life-saving and strategic impact. The paper concludes in Chapter Six with a prognosis for implementing a new framework under the Bush Administration. It also offers some implications a new system might hold for U.S. disaster response activities in the field and for other U.S. and international relief partners.

II. International Disaster Response and its Strategic Context

This chapter aims to show why international disasters justify the attention and resources of the United States Government. It begins by highlighting the origins of humanitarian disasters and discussing the impact they can have both on individual countries and regions and on the international system as a whole. The chapter then examines how international disasters can impact U.S. national interests. The American response to international disasters is motivated by a complex interplay of U.S. strategic and humanitarian interests, and the chapter proposes a broader conception of national interests to guide decision-makers in determining whether to respond to a international disaster. Within this broader context, U.S. disaster response capabilities can be viewed as an important national security instrument in an unstable world.

Origins of Humanitarian Disasters

<u>Manmade Disasters</u>. After the Cold War ended, many pundits and policymakers were quick to proclaim a "New World Order." Unfortunately, the end of the superpower struggle did not guarantee a peaceful international system, and the emerging strategic environment has been characterized by increasing—rather than decreasing—international instability. Nationalist, ethnic, and religious tensions previously held in check during the Cold War have been unleashed—often violently. In many situations, civilians have become the target of combatants, who deliberately employ privation, starvation, and

slaughter to kill or expel noncombatants. These humanitarian crises are commonly referred to as complex emergencies.

Complex emergencies differ from rapid-onset natural disasters in one key respect: most produce ample warning to the international community. Many complex emergencies do not seem like emergencies at all—especially those that have persisted for years or even decades. What turns these cases into an emergency requiring a major relief effort may often be increased international awareness of the crisis—and pressure on governments for rapid action. Complex emergencies can also deteriorate very rapidly— witness Kosovo—and transform chronic human suffering and human rights violations into a major humanitarian crisis requiring a swift international response to prevent massive loss of life.

Many complex emergencies erupted in the past decade and caused massive human suffering. In a 1999 report on global humanitarian emergency trends, the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) defined complex humanitarian emergencies as "situations in which at least 300,000 civilians require international humanitarian assistance to avoid serious malnutrition or death" (iii). The NIC observed a rise in the number of these ongoing manmade crises from an average of five per year between 1985 and 1989, to a peak of 26 in 1994, and finally to an annual average of 22 in the period between 1995 and 1999 (11). Table 1 lists some complex emergencies of concern to the international community as of June 2001.

Table 1. Current Complex Emergencies (UN ReliefWeb)

Afghanistan	Great Lakes (Burundi; DR Congo; Kenya; Rwanda;
Angola	Tanzania; Uganda)
Balkans	Indonesia
Caucasus (Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia)	Iraq
Colombia	Chechnya
Congo	Sierra Leone
North Korea	Somalia
East Timor	Sudan
Eritrea-Ethiopia Conflict	Tajikistan
Horn of Africa Drought	West Africa

A profusion of complex emergencies during the 1990s commanded the attention

of the international community. Many see the 1991 effort to aid Kurdish refugees in

northern Iraq as the catalyst for the growing international focus on complex emergencies

(Irwin 2). Later that same year, the collapse of central authority in Somalia led to clan

warfare and sowed the seeds of a massive famine, which prompted a major multinational

response. In 1994, genocide in Rwanda led to the most horrific ethnic conflict of the

decade and stimulated a global outpouring of aid—albeit well after the blood-letting had

run its course. Throughout the decade, the Balkans suffered numerous outbreaks of

violence rooted in ethnic and nationalist animosity as Slobodan Milosevic attempted to

maintain Serbian sway over Yugoslavia's breakaway republics—especially Croatia and

Bosnia-Herzegovina—and the province of Kosovo.

These emergencies were complex because human suffering could not be

alleviated without addressing security concerns. Violence and political breakdown

complicated the task of aid distribution. Aid workers often became targets of

combatants, who kidnapped, killed, or maimed hundreds of aid givers over the past

decade. Aid also became a target for organized crime and petty theft—posing a threat

both to aid workers and to the entire relief effort (NIC 14). Security concerns prompted

greater military involvement in civilian relief efforts and required closer civil-military cooperation. The growing military role in humanitarian emergencies has required cultural shifts on both the civilian government and NGO side as well as within military institutions around the globe.

Not all manmade humanitarian emergencies are rooted in violence—some are caused by sudden economic crises. The process of globalization has contributed to several such emergencies. Even as it draws states closer together in a global marketplace linked by new information technology, globalization's benefits are not evenly distributed. Globalization has brought unprecedented wealth to the market democracies while leaving other states further behind along the road to development. The international financial crisis of 1997 and 1998 demonstrated that even globalization's beneficiaries are vulnerable to unexpected side effects. The NIC found that the crisis "eroded the margins of safety that separate hundreds of millions of people from poverty in dozens of 'emerging market' countries. In addition, the legacy of the crisis has made many countries more vulnerable to the social impact of natural disasters" (9).

Natural Disasters. Even though manmade emergencies occupied the international spotlight through much of the 1990s, the world community routinely provided emergency relief after natural disasters overwhelmed local relief capabilities following flooding in Bangladesh, earthquakes in Turkey, and hurricanes in the Caribbean. Natural disasters pose special challenges to the international relief community because they often strike with little or no warning. Their rapid onset and unpredictable effects make relief planning efforts difficult while at the same time making timeliness of the response critical. Table 2 lists natural disasters generating international concern since June 2000.

Table 2. Natural Disasters: June 2000 - May 2001 (UN ReliefWeb)

Countries Affected	Disaster	Countries Affected	Disaster
Pakistan	Drought	Azerbaijan	Earthquake
India	Cyclone	Indonesia	Floods
Russia	Floods	Sri Lanka	Floods
Iran	Floods	Papua New Guinea	Earthquake
Samoa	Floods	Venezuela	Floods
Angola	Floods	Bangladesh	Cyclone
Vanuatu	Cyclone	India	Cyclone
Zambia	Floods	Tanzania	Earthquake
Peru	Floods	Caribbean	Hurricane /Tropical Storm
Ukraine	Floods	Laos	Floods
Hungary	Floods	North Korea	Typhoon
Romania	Floods	Vietnam	Floods
Zimbabwe	Floods	Bangladesh	Floods
Multiple Countries	Tropical Cyclone Paula	Caribbean	Hurricane
DR Congo	Volcanic Activity	Armenia	Drought
Afghanistan	Earthquake	Georgia	Drought
Malawi	Floods	Nepal	Floods and Landslides
Indonesia	Earthquake	Cambodia	Floods
El Salvador	Earthquake	Uzbekistan	Drought
Afghanistan	Cold Wave	Mexico	Earthquake
Mozambique	Floods	India	Floods
Pakistan	Earthquake	Bhutan	Floods and Landslides
India	Earthquake	Brazil	Mudslides
Bolivia	Floods	Tajikistan	Drought
El Salvador	Earthquake	Philippines	Tropical Depression
Sri Lanka/India	Cyclone	Nicaragua	Earthquake
Mexico	Volcanic Activity	Guatemala	Floods
Mongolia	Drought	Chile	Floods
Fiji	Floods	China	Floods
Ukraine	Cold Wave	Madagascar	Drought
Moldova	Storm/Rain/Frost	Indonesia	Earthquake
Turkmenistan	Earthquake		

In some cases, manmade emergencies are compounded by natural disasters. For example, drought has combined with a long-running civil war in Sudan to produce famine conditions—prompting an annual international response for more than a decade. In other cases, societies recovering from civil conflict were badly affected by natural disasters that threatened their tenuous progress toward stability and reconstruction. Hurricane Mitch dealt the nation-states of Central America a major blow as they strove to rebuild their societies after years of disastrous civil conflict. Similarly, flooding in Mozambique threatened the tenuous—but real—progress made by that impoverished nation since resolving its own civil war in the early 1990s.

The need for relief in the wake of natural disasters has increased over the last decade. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 5.5 million people needed aid due to natural disasters in 1998—a nearly ten-fold increase over the 1992 level (NIC 16). For several reasons, the number of people affected by natural disasters is likely to continue growing for the foreseeable future. Climate change has the potential to generate more frequent and severe weather phenomena, which could cause more devastating natural disasters. Even if "global warming" does not take place and the frequency and intensity of natural disasters remain unchanged, these disasters will likely affect more people than ever before because population growth will magnify the human impact. Much of the world's population growth is concentrated in those areas least able to cope with disasters.

Growing populations increase the human impact of disasters and scale of suffering. Population pressures also increase the possibility and scale of famine. Many warning signs usually precede famine; it is not a rapid-onset disaster. However, the world community often takes action only after the situation has become an emergency that requires immediate assistance. For example, famine conditions in Somalia built for many months before international media attention increased pressure for the international community to respond in 1991. In a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report, a panel of non-governmental experts predicts that the potential for famine will be greatest where repressive governments or internal conflict hinders relief efforts—as in Somalia during the early 1990s and North Korea in recent years (17).

The Impact of Disasters within the International Environment

Manmade and natural disasters can have a devastating impact on individual countries—especially those ill-equipped to cope with humanitarian emergencies. Disasters can wipe out years of development overnight. In many countries, quality of life is already tenuous, and Philip Johnson notes that an emergency can crowd "people out of the narrow margins of life they live on;" people may be only one disaster away from having their lives change permanently for the worse (217). Disasters can cause the collapse of government authority, civil war, lethal ethnic conflict, destruction of infrastructure, collapse of social structures, famine, and massive population displacement—both internally and across borders (Menkhaus 54). The CIA panel predicts that for economically underdeveloped countries, "mass migration resulting from civil conflict, natural disasters, or economic crises will strain local infrastructures, upset ethnic balances, and spark ethnic conflict" (16).

Not only does disaster-induced migration harm individual countries and their citizens, it can spill across national borders and affect entire regions. Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy of Yale University maintain that "With its migratory outflows, increasing conflict due to the breakdown of political structures, and disruption in trade patterns, chaos undoubtedly affects bordering states" (34). Refugees and internal displacement lead to health and other problems. Refugee camps are breeding grounds for disease with their poor sanitation, malnutrition, and overcrowding. Ken Menkhaus, a prominent humanitarian writer, contends that humanitarian emergencies can become "a virtual human petri dish for virulent and dangerous new diseases" (59).

Instability caused by humanitarian crises also provides a fertile breeding ground

for transnational troublemakers such as terrorists, drug traffickers, pirates, and crime

syndicates. These international outlaws threaten stability and the rule of law by vying

with governments for control of the state, and in some cases, by controlling the actual

levers of government. The CIA panel predicts that criminal or terrorist groups will

increasingly gain control over territory and government institutions in weak societies

(30). West Africa illustrates the strategic impact chaos and instability can have on a

region. During the early 1990s, the effects of a devastating civil war in Liberia spilled

into the neighboring countries of Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Guinea and destabilized

the entire region. In a widely-discussed 1994 article, "The Coming Anarchy," Robert D.

Kaplan painted a bleak picture of the resulting regional impact:

> West Africa is becoming the symbol of worldwide demographic,
> environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as
> the real "strategic" danger. Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime,
> scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-
> states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies,
> security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly
> demonstrated through a West African prism.
>
> Sierra Leone is a microcosm of what is occurring, albeit in a more
> tempered and gradual manner, throughout West Africa and much of the
> underdeveloped world: the withering away of central governments, the
> rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and
> the growing pervasiveness of war (n. pag.).

More than seven years after his article appeared, the situation in West Africa has not

improved—in fact, it has worsened with military coups in Ivory Coast, which was once

seen as a model for the developing world, and near anarchy in Sierra Leone, where

unrestrained armed groups control criminal fiefdoms, and where child soldiers randomly

maim innocent men, women, and children in the absence of effective government.

International instability can have a tremendous regional impact, but it can also disrupt the entire international economic system. Globalization has left more states susceptible to distant economic crises than ever before, and now, the economic effects of instability caused by a natural or manmade disaster in one region may be felt around the globe. The Indonesian economic crisis of 1997 and 1998 illustrates how disasters and economic crises are inextricably linked. The NIC found that "El Nino-related drought and forest fires in Indonesia…aggravated the food crisis brought on by the sudden economic emergency and may have contributed to the downfall of the Suharto government" (16). The problems in Indonesia worsened an already serious global financial crisis that also pushed Russia, Brazil, and other countries to the brink of financial collapse.

Ultimately, the impact of humanitarian crises on states like Indonesia, Russia, and Brazil is the greatest threat posed by natural and manmade disasters because these countries are pivotal to regional stability and the international system. In their landmark *Foreign Affairs* article, Chase, Hill, and Kennedy describe a pivotal state as one that is "so important regionally that its collapse would spell transboundary mayhem: migration, communal violence, pollution, disease, and so on" (37). A list of pivotal states might also include Mexico, Algeria, South Africa, Egypt, Turkey, India, and Pakistan. A humanitarian emergency in one of these countries would have major implications for U.S. national interests and demand an appropriate response from the U.S. Government.

U.S. Interests in International Disaster Response

U.S. interests in responding to international disasters must be understood within the context of the country's overall national interests. During the four-decade East-West contest, a rigidly bipolar international system split much of the world into two rival blocs—one orchestrated by Moscow, the other managed by Washington. Countering the mortal danger posed by the Soviet threat was clearly the preeminent U.S. security interest. Despite its perils, the bipolar system proved to be stable since the Soviet threat was relatively focused and predictable. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States no longer faces a direct challenge to its survival. Unfortunately, Western victory in the East-West struggle did not guarantee a peaceful or orderly international system.

Contemporary Strategic Interests. As the Cold War victor, the U.S. remains the world's only military superpower and maintains a commanding lead in every other element of national power—from its economic dynamism to the worldwide appeal of its culture. Although the U.S. no longer faces a catastrophic superpower confrontation, today's threats and challenges are more diffuse and harder to anticipate than during the Cold War. Instability has become the main challenge to international order in the contemporary strategic environment, and Chase, Hill, and Kennedy argue that "chaos and instability may prove a greater and more insidious threat to American interests than communism ever was" (35-34). International stability is arguably America's paramount national security interest today—no other nation has a greater stake in maintaining stability than the world's richest, most powerful nation.

Contemporary threats to the U.S.-sponsored international order are many and varied. Without a superpower rivalry, the main challenge to global stability comes from

rogue states—including Iraq and North Korea—who menace their neighbors and challenge regional U.S. interests. Other security challenges are posed by the potential spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. As a direct threat to U.S. national security, humanitarian emergencies hardly compare with the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or the threat posed by rogue states. Yet in the first decade of the post-Cold War era, Menkhaus notes that "most U.S. interventions abroad have been in response to humanitarian crises" (53). Humanitarian emergencies are not the most dangerous threats to U.S. interests, but they may be the most prevalent. Furthermore, if left unaddressed, these crises can develop into more serious threats later.

Humanitarian emergencies threaten U.S. strategic interests by generating chaos as conflict and refugees spill across borders and disrupt the regional and global economies. Patricia Irvin, a former DOD official responsible for humanitarian and refugee affairs, observes that "Chaos…is not in the interest of the United States anywhere: It is the ground on which political fanaticism is built and tyrants raised, and it is as destructive to the economy and infrastructure of a country as full-scale war" (4). While the U.S. has clear national interests at stake in humanitarian emergencies, the stakes are not all equal—some threaten U.S. interests more than others. For example, a humanitarian emergency affecting a pivotal state like Indonesia—whether from a manmade or natural disaster—would have more serious consequences for the U.S. than flooding in Mozambique. Nevertheless, the U.S. has responded to flooding in Mozambique and other international crises with limited strategic risks because America also has a moral stake in alleviating human suffering.

National Interests and the Moral Imperative. Not all U.S. interests at stake in international disasters are strategic interests, and not every undertaking will directly benefit the American people. Americans consistently display a moral interest in saving lives and alleviating suffering that does not always align with traditionally narrow conceptions of national interest. In the wake of Hurricane Mitch, an unprecedented outpouring of private relief contributions and support pressured the U.S. Government to mount a huge relief effort. Public support for the people of Central America was motivated in part by the "CNN Effect" because in today's world, few major natural disasters go unreported by the 24-hour global news media. In addition, corrupt or repressive governments can no longer hide humanitarian emergencies from the international community and the watchful media eye.

Visual images of human suffering can stimulate intense domestic pressure to act whether the affected locale is of strategic importance or not. Even though media attention and domestic political pressures influence the U.S. Government decision to respond to an international disaster, there is also an idealistic motivation behind U.S. actions. Most often, decision-makers respond to a combination of moral impulses and strategic interests when determining responses to international disasters—the strands of morality and self-interest are inextricably intertwined.

Whatever the motivation, American beneficence can provide indirect but real advantage to the U.S. in the form of international goodwill. For example, U.S. Ambassador Peter R. Chaveas found that many doors were opened and partnerships strengthened in Southern Africa as after the U.S. response to flooding in Mozambique and its neighbors (Presentation). The United States military continues to benefit from the

goodwill it generated more than one year later (Dryer Interview). Similarly, U.S.

emergency assistance in response to flooding in Vietnam broke down barriers with that

nation's government and military (Ecker Interview). Disaster relief can be an

opportunity to cement bilateral relations with host nations and to enhance cooperation

with the international community.

In a period when visual images carry such enormous impact, the image of a U.S.

Air Force (USAF) airlift aircraft—marked with the Stars and Stripes on its tail—

unloading emergency relief supplies can powerfully communicate the U.S. commitment

to an affected nation and its people. Experience bears out the argument by Andrew

Natsios that "goodwill generated toward the United States by our humanitarian work

around the world does affect public opinion in countries where memories of hard times

and dark hours will linger for years after the emergencies are over" (Natsios, Horsemen

24).

Natsios is uniquely qualified to understand U.S. interests in international disaster

relief. He served as OFDA Director and Assistant Administrator for USAID's Bureau of

Food and Humanitarian Assistance in the first Bush Administration. He is also a retired

Civil Affairs specialist in the U.S. Army Reserves, and until recently, he was vice

president of World Vision, one of the largest American NGOs. Natsios was recently

confirmed as USAID Administrator, where he will be the current Bush Administration's

leading humanitarian voice, and where he can be expected to advocate a conception of

U.S. national interests that includes a strong humanitarian component.

A Broader Conception of National Interests.

Natsios argues that "Doing good may sometimes bring geostrategic advantage.... In fact, the integration of the humanitarian imperative into U.S. foreign policy strategies will both bring geostrategic advantage and increase the effectiveness and force of those strategies" (Natsios, Horsemen 21). The explicit linkage between U.S. disaster response and its national interests makes some purists in the humanitarian community leery. However, while private organizations may be free to provide aid with little consideration of self-interest, the U.S. Government must defend its use of taxpayer dollars, and the moral imperative alone may not be enough to justify disaster response efforts. Because the U.S. has neither the resources nor the will to respond to every disaster with the same level of commitment, it must evaluate the stakes and potential risks entailed with each crisis and decide whether to intervene case-by-case. Those international disasters in which America's humanitarian impulse intersects most clearly with its strategic interests will be the ones that garner the most vigorous response.

Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, both prominent American humanitarians, understand the competing moral and strategic impulses underlying U.S. disaster response decisions. They argue that what is needed "is to understand the U.S. national interests more broadly, encompassing enduring American values such as long-standing humanitarian traditions. The U.S. stands to benefit from, and should contribute appropriately to, a better functioning and more universal international safety net" (67). Ultimately, the U.S. will benefit from a broader interpretation of its national interests— one that views its disaster response capabilities as a tool to maintain international stability plus a means of generating international goodwill.

Growing appreciation for these capabilities can already be seen. In a joint State Department-USAID interagency report on U.S. Government humanitarian programs, reviewers found that "The line separating the USG [U.S. Government] humanitarian stake from our other key foreign policy goals has been erased. In high profile cases such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, Somalia, North Korea, northern Iraq and Mitch, our actions to ameliorate humanitarian crises have become conspicuously interlinked with other U.S. foreign policy goals" (8). In each of these actions, the U.S. Government employed a disaster response system with resources, responsibilities, and authority scattered across several federal departments and agencies. The next chapter examines how this system works—or fails to work—as a tool of U.S. national security policy.

III. International Disaster Response—Theory and Practice

The United States Government's international disaster response capabilities are an important instrument of national security policy. In responding to manmade and natural disasters around the globe, the U.S. Government has tapped expertise and resources spread across multiple agencies. This chapter outlines which federal agencies are typically involved in international disaster response and details the responsibilities of each. It also analyzes existing disaster relief funding mechanisms, which are a key element in the interagency decision-making process. Next, the chapter discusses the NSC framework for interagency coordination and highlights the challenges inherent in the interagency process. It also shows how the Clinton Administration attempted to address these difficulties through a Presidential Decision Directive on complex emergencies. The chapter concludes by considering how the U.S. international disaster response system worked in two recent case studies—Kosovo, which provides an example of a complex emergency, and Hurricane Mitch, which was a major natural disaster.

The Existing Disaster Response System

Within the federal government, USAID acts as the lead agency for international disaster response. By law, USAID acts under the policy direction of the Secretary of State, but it is an independent agency that is responsible for international development and economic aid as well as disaster response. The USAID Administrator is designated as the President's Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance. USAID

coordinates the federal response to international disasters through OFDA, which falls under the Agency's Bureau of Humanitarian Response (BHR).

OFDA provides assistance in response to a disaster declaration by the U.S. Ambassador in the affected country or by the Department of State. OFDA can immediately provide assistance funds through the U.S. Embassy, the local USAID mission, or through private relief organizations operating in the affected region. OFDA may also contract resources locally or send its own relief commodities from stockpiles at warehouses it maintains around the world. In most cases, OFDA can perform its disaster response mission with little or no assistance from other U.S. Government agencies. In Fiscal Year (FY) 1999, for example, OFDA "declared" 64 disasters. Of these disasters, OFDA handled 37 on its own while 27 required some assistance from other U.S. Government agencies (OFDA 18-74).

A typical OFDA-only response occurred after heavy rainfall in Chad caused flooding between June and September 1999. Floodwaters affected more than 128,000 people and killed livestock, destroyed buildings, and drowned agricultural lands. OFDA responded by providing $25,000 through the U.S. Embassy to the Chadian Red Cross to procure and deliver relief supplies (OFDA 24). Other disasters required a more robust U.S. Government response, but only a few—including Hurricane Mitch and the Kosovo crisis—required substantial effort by OFDA's interagency partners. The cumulative FY 1999 U.S. Government responses—for both manmade and natural disasters—are illustrated in Table 3.

## Table 3. OFDA Disaster Responses in Fiscal Year 1999 (OFDA 76-87)

Countries Affected	Type Disaster	Countries Affected	Type Disaster
* Angola	Complex Emergency	Philippines	Typhoon
* Burundi	Complex Emergency	Philippines	Floods
Cameroon	Volcano	Republic of Korea	Floods
Central African Republic	Complex Emergency	* Taiwan	Earthquake
Chad	Floods	Thailand	Floods
Comoros	Complex Emergency	Vietnam	Storm/Floods
* DR of Congo	Complex Emergency	Vietnam	Floods
Djibouti	Epidemic	* Afghanistan	Complex Emergency
Eritrea	Complex Emergency	Afghanistan	Earthquake
* Ethiopia	Complex Emergency	Pakistan	Cyclone
* Ethiopia	Drought	* Albania	Refugees
Gambia	Floods	Greece	Earthquake
Kenya (FY98 Carryover)	Explosion	Hungary	Floods
Kenya	Floods	* Macedonia	Refugees
* Liberia	Complex Emergency	Russia	Fire
Mali	Floods	* Yugoslavia (Kosovo)	Complex Emergency
Mauritania	Floods	Tajikistan	Floods
Mozambique	Floods	* Turkey	Earthquake
* Nigeria	Explosion	Ukraine	Floods
Republic of Congo	Complex Emergency	* Bahamas	Hurricane
* Rwanda	Complex Emergency	Belize	Hurricane Mitch
* Sierra Leone	Complex Emergency	* Colombia	Earthquake
* Somalia	Complex Emergency	Costa Rica	Hurricane Mitch
* Sudan	Complex Emergency	* Dominican Republic	Hurricane
Tanzania (FY98 Carryover)	Explosion	* El Salvador	Hurricane Mitch
* Uganda	Complex Emergency	* Guatemala	Hurricane Mitch
Cambodia	Floods	Haiti	Hurricane
China	Floods	* Honduras	Hurricane Mitch
India	Earthquake	Honduras	Fire
* Indonesia	Complex Emergency	Honduras	Floods
Malaysia	Health Emergency	* Nicaragua	Hurricane Mitch
* North Korea	Food/Health Emergency	Paraguay	Cold Wave/Fire

* Responses requiring participation of other U.S. agencies in addition to OFDA

As natural disasters and complex emergencies increase in magnitude and complexity, OFDA must draw on expertise and resources from other USAID offices and other federal agencies and departments. Emergency food aid is provided by the USAID/BHR Food for Peace (FFP) program and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides emergency assistance for refugees, and State's Bureau of Political Military Affairs (PM) coordinates military support with DOD, which can be a key player in a major international disaster response.

Within the civilian Office of the Secretary of Defence (OSD) hierarchy, the Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs (PK/HA), which falls under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (SOLIC), coordinates the use of military resources for disaster assistance. The International Logistics Division (ILD) in the Joint Staff J-4 Logistics Directorate performs a similar function within the military hierarchy. Other federal agencies may also provide technical assistance depending upon the nature of the emergency—including the CIA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Finally, the NSC bears overall responsibility for integrating and harmonizing individual agency and department efforts. The statutory members of the NSC are the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense, and they are advised by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) plus the National Security Advisor and other senior officials as needed. These figures are responsible for overall U.S. national security direction and are the key decision-makers in a major international disaster response. Because of countless demands on their time, however, day-to-day policy guidance and interagency coordination is left to the National Security Advisor and her NSC staff. During the Clinton Administration, the NSC Office of Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs provided policy guidance and coordination for international disaster relief, but the role of this office is under review by the new Bush Administration. (See Figure 1 below for a diagram of the primary agencies involved in U.S. Government international disaster response efforts.)
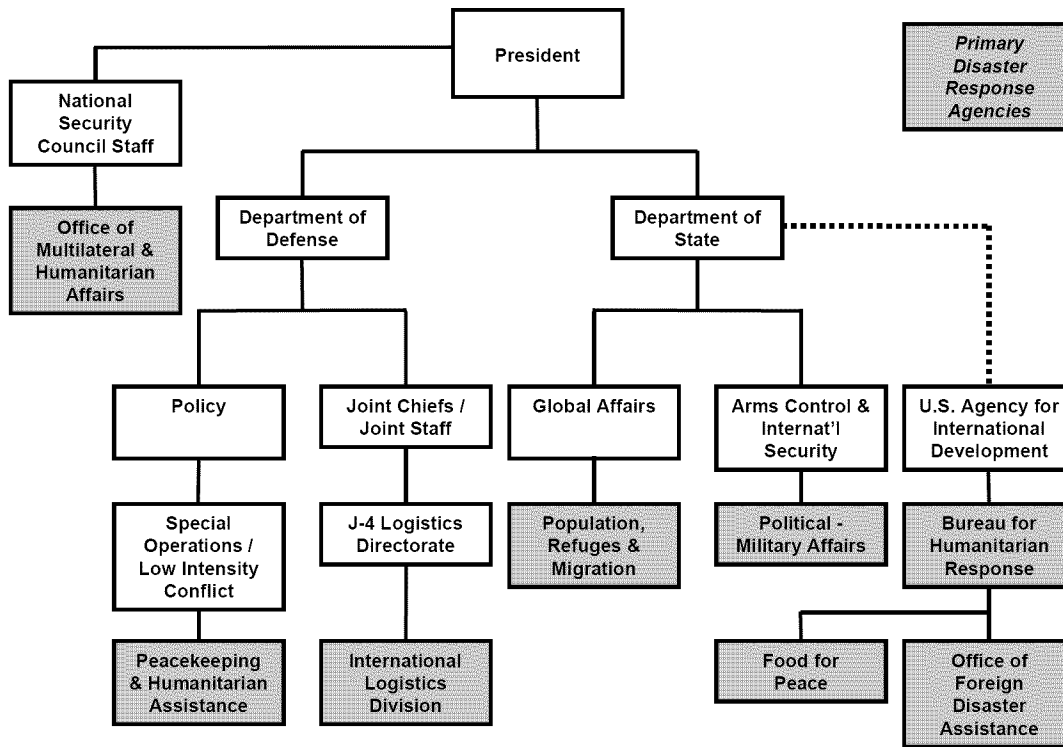
Figure 1. Primary U.S. Agencies Involved in International Disaster Response

Funding for Disaster Response

No discussion of the international disaster response system can be complete without exploring how U.S. Government response efforts are funded. Under the present process, the U.S. Government draws on several different funding authorities and accounts to cover its disaster assistance costs—especially when military forces are required. USAID maintains an International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account, which OFDA can tap in the event of a disaster. OFDA can immediately provide up to $25,000 to the local U.S. Embassy or USAID mission to buy relief supplies locally, or it can grant the funds to an IO or NGO as it did through the Red Cross in the Chad flooding example. It can

also send relief commodities from one of OFDA's four stockpiles (OFDA 8). As a

disaster unfolds, the OFDA Director exercises final authority on how much of OFDA's

approximately $200 million annual IDA appropriation to commit to the response (Kunder

Interview).

OFDA's IDA account is not the sole source of relief funding. BHR/FFP

administers emergency food aid programs under U.S. Public Law 480 Title II, which

requires no repayment from the affected country, and the USDA provides surplus food

commodities for emergency feeding programs under the Agricultural Act of 1949.

State/PRM contributes multilateral grants to international relief organizations to aid

refugee populations, and it helps fund the annual budgets of IOs involved in refugee

relief such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (OFDA 9).

DOD has a number of funding sources to tap when its assets are tasked for

international disaster relief. First, the President use various authorities to "drawdown" a

total of $200 million in goods and services from service Operations and Maintenance

(O&M) Accounts (Tedesco 6 Jun 01 Interview). To restore these drawdown

expenditures to the services, the President must request a supplemental appropriation

measure from Congress. DOD can also draw from its Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster,

and Civic Action (OHDACA) accounts.   This source of funding is relatively small—

averaging about $55 million annually—and it also supports other DOD humanitarian

programs such as worldwide demining efforts (DOD HA Briefing Slides). A third source

of DOD disaster relief dollars comes from Commander-in-Chief (CINC) Initiative Funds

(CIF), which are used at the discretion of the CJCS to support regional military

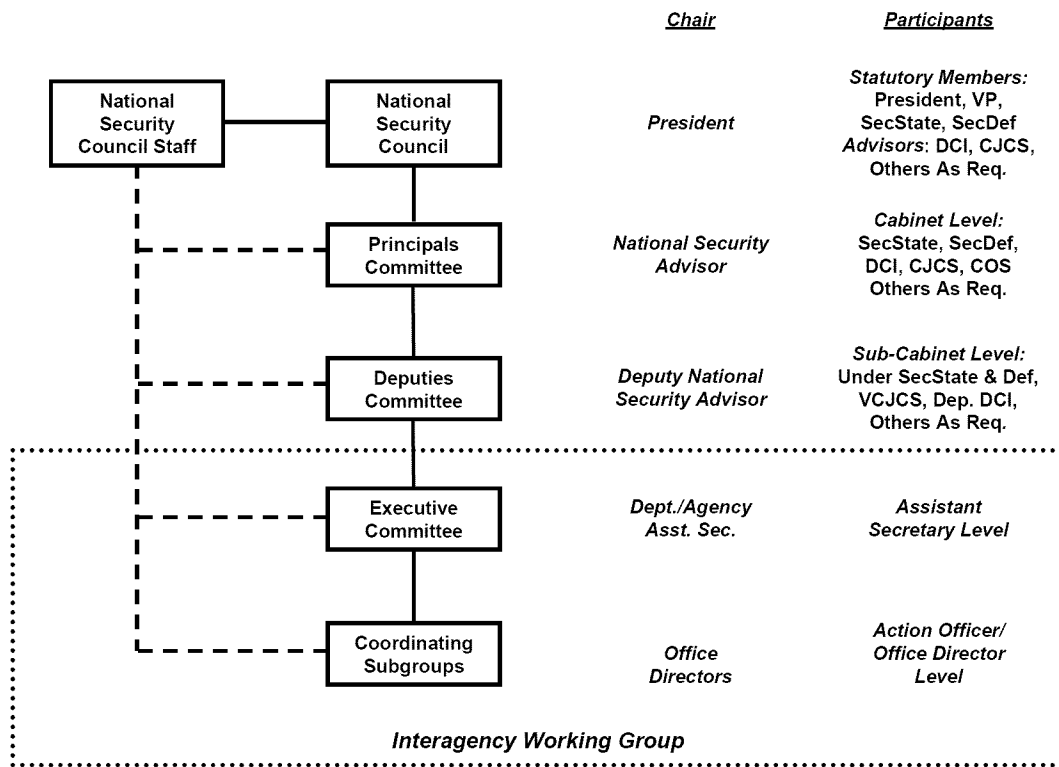commanders in their theater engagement efforts.

The Challenges of Interagency Politics

The Interagency Process. Funding mechanisms are a critical component of the U.S. Government's disaster response system, and decisions on resource allocation are at the heart of interagency politics. Within the federal bureaucracy, disaster response is only one of many functions and issues addressed through an "interagency process." In their article on the interagency process, George T. Raach and Ilana Kass suggest that its purpose is "to provide information and refine options while also allowing participants to voice opinions, offer recommendations, and for better or worse advance bureaucratic agendas." The model interagency process is based upon the premise that the U.S. Government's diplomatic, economic, and military components must be closely integrated in order to maximize effectiveness of the effort (9-10).

The fundamental benefit of an interagency process is to elicit frank, well-considered advice. Bruce Pirnie, a RAND researcher, argues that the process should "help integrate U.S. efforts by providing channels of communication among relevant agencies from the working level to the highest level" (47). The interagency process should identify concerns to be addressed at the appropriate level, which is sometimes at the level of the President and his senior advisors. Interagency coordination and decision-making applies to areas across the national security spectrum—not just disaster response—and the process takes place through a hierarchy of working groups within a common NSC framework.

At the pinnacle of the interagency hierarchy, the Principals Committee is comprised of the department secretaries, National Security Advisor, CJCS, and equivalents. At the next level, the Deputies Committee is made up of department under

secretaries, the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS), and equivalents.

Other lower-level, policy-coordinating Interagency Working Groups (IWG) are made up

of assistant secretaries and equivalents, and coordinating subgroups are comprised of

NSC staff and agency action officers (Mendel & Bradford 14). In some cases, an IWG

may consist of office directors, action officers, and other staff who report to an IWG

Executive Committee (EXCOM) (Raach & Kass 13). A model of a generalized NSC

working group framework follows in Figure 2.

		Chair	Participants
National Security Council Staff — National Security Council		President	Statutory Members: President, VP, SecState, SecDef Advisors: DCI, CJCS, Others As Req.
Principals Committee		National Security Advisor	Cabinet Level: SecState, SecDef, DCI, CJCS, COS Others As Req.
Deputies Committee		Deputy National Security Advisor	Sub-Cabinet Level: Under SecState & Def, VCJCS, Dep. DCI, Others As Req.
Executive Committee		Dept./Agency Asst. Sec.	Assistant Secretary Level
Coordinating Subgroups		Office Directors	Action Officer/ Office Director Level

Interagency Working Group

Figure 2. Generalized NSC Interagency Working Group Framework[1]

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[1] This figure combines elements of a figure by Robert D. Walz in Mendel & Bradford (15) and one from JP 3-08 (A-K-2).

Generally, IWG membership is not fixed and may vary depending on the crisis or issue being considered. Also, an IWG may be either an ad hoc body formed for crisis response or to address a specific issue, or it may be a standing group meeting to provide proactive crisis management and develop formalized patterns of cooperation. For a standing IWG example, Peacekeeping Core Groups met routinely during the Clinton Administration to discuss issues relating to UN peacekeeping missions. All previous standing IWGs have been deactivated by the current Bush Administration, however, and new ones will be established as needed following a national security review (Tedesco 6 Jun 01 Interview).

A government agency or department with functional responsibilities in the crisis or issue of concern will normally be designated as the lead agency, and it will chair the relevant interagency group. If a lead agency is not designated, the group may be chaired by a member of the NSC Staff. The new Bush Administration has indicated a preference for lead agency assignments over NSC leadership (Rubin A29). A lead agency ensures that integrated policy options are developed in the lower-level working groups and passed up the hierarchy for decisions. The agency is also responsible for implementing decisions once they are reached unless responsibility is assigned elsewhere.

In theory, Raach and Kass observe that participants in the interagency hierarchy should "look for opportunities to complement and enhance the capabilities that others bring to the table." In practice, they argue that "Personalities can dominate interagency deliberations—especially if process management is ineffective—and personal or organizational agendas may take precedent over larger crisis-related issues." These impediments hamper effective and timely decision-making, which is further complicated

by "sparse or obtuse" feedback from decision-makers. A final obstacle is that lead

agencies may lack the human and financial resources to implement decisions (10-11).

Difficulties in the interagency process all too often lead to failures of coordination or

attempts by agency and department heads to sabotage efforts (Cambone 46). The

difficulties of interagency coordination apply to almost every interagency process, and

they are clearly evident in U.S. disaster response efforts.

PDD-56. Disaster response efforts in the first Bush Administration and early in

the Clinton Administration highlighted many problems with interagency coordination and

decision-making. Following flawed interagency performances in Somalia, Haiti, and

Bosnia, the Clinton Administration implemented Presidential Decision Directive 56

(PDD-56) in 1997 in an attempt to improve U.S. Government management of complex

emergencies and address many of the interagency difficulties underscored above. As

outlined in a 1997 White Paper, PDD-56 tasks the NSC with coordinating the efforts of

each organization involved in the emergency, including State, Defense, USAID, and

other agencies as required (White House 1-7). This policy, which applies only to

complex emergencies and not natural disasters, has been suspended pending review by

the new Bush Administration.

When a complex emergency occurs or is anticipated, PDD-56 calls for the NSC

Deputies Committee to form an EXCOM comprised of representatives from each

participating agency—primarily at the assistant secretary or deputy assistant secretary

level. Its members serve as the functional managers for each element of a U.S. response,

including refugee management, relief logistics, diplomatic efforts, and coordination with

IOs and NGOs. The EXCOM may be augmented with representatives from participating

agencies. The EXCOM is charged with the day-to-day management of the complex emergency, and its tasks include clarifying agency responsibilities, ensuring interagency coordination, and developing policy options for senior decision-makers.

Once the President and the other senior NSC Principals decide upon a course of action, the EXCOM develops an integrated Political-Military Implementation Plan to synchronize agency efforts and provide overall unity of effort for the operation. Whenever crisis onset permits, the EXCOM also performs an interagency rehearsal and review of the plan prior to its implementation and before each critical phase of the operation. This step is designed to identify and resolve interagency differences over mission objectives, agency responsibilities, mission timing, and resource allocation before the actual operation.

As conceived, the interagency process outlined in PDD-56 should foster a more synergistic U.S. Government response to a complex emergency. Rather than providing the NSC Principals Committee with a set of policy options developed in isolation by each "stove-piped" agency, the EXCOM should provide more fully integrated, cross-functional alternatives for consideration. Closer coordination should also provide greater flexibility and a more rapid response to dynamic crisis situations. The interagency model outlined in PDD-56 should also conserve the limited human and financial resources of each agency by eliminating duplication of tasks and providing overall unity of effort.

Unfortunately, PDD-56 was implemented only partially in the Kosovo crisis, which was the first major U.S. Government response to a complex emergency since PDD-56 was developed. Moreover, because it only addresses complex emergencies, the PDD-56 interagency model was not used at all during the substantial U.S. response to

Hurricane Mitch—even though the crisis required an integrated civil-military effort. The next section examines the interagency processes employed during each of these contingencies in order to highlight problems experienced in actual U.S. Government responses.

Kosovo Case Study

The complex emergency in the Serbian province of Kosovo originated with ethnic strife between the ethnic Albanian majority and the Serbian minority, which was backed by the stridently nationalist regime of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. By the end of 1998, fighting between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Yugoslav army and Serb police forces resulted in the internal displacement of tens of thousands of people from their homes. As negotiations between the sides broke down, and as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) threatened retaliatory air strikes, Serb forces began a mass expulsion of ethnic Albanians from the province. Following a confused early stage, the international relief effort cohered as the crisis continued. The U.S. and the international community eventually supported approximately one million refugees in neighboring countries and facilitated a massive repatriation once hostilities ceased.

The Kosovo crisis unfolded over the span of several months, and an EXCOM was formed prior to the air campaign to develop policy options for the Deputies Committee. Because of faulty assumptions about Serb strategy and a major failing within the intelligence community, neither the United States nor the international community was prepared for the massive scale or rapid onset of the forced exodus from Kosovo. The State/USAID review noted that while a PRM-chaired humanitarian subgroup was formed

to advise the EXCOM, this body was isolated from key information on the military plan—limiting its effectiveness. Ultimately, no political-military plan was developed to address a major refugee crisis until after the expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo began (DOS/USAID 2-3).

The isolation of the humanitarian subgroup prevented the EXCOM from effectively carrying out its interagency tasks as outlined in PDD-56—it was incapable of managing the humanitarian response to the Kosovo crisis, unable to clarify agency responsibilities, and could not provide fully integrated policy options for key decision-makers. The joint State/USAID review found that many policy discussions were not fully informed and that initial U.S. Government response to the crisis suffered from the "lack of a humanitarian voice in senior policy deliberations." The confused response that initially resulted led to "a disturbing perception at the highest levels of the USG that no one was in charge of USG civilian humanitarian programs" (DOS/USAID A1 1).

To provide more order to the humanitarian effort, a Kosovo Coordination Council (KCC) was formed by President Clinton one week after the bombing began. The group was chartered to provide high-level leadership for humanitarian aspects of the Kosovo crisis, and it took responsibility for managing the U.S. Government response from the EXCOM. Chaired by the USAID Administrator, the KCC included the Assistant Secretary of State (PRM), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (PK/KA), Joint Staff Director for Logistics (J-4), White House Deputy Chief of Staff, and FEMA Director, who became involved in this international—rather than domestic—crisis to manage public donations (DOS/USAID A-1 5).

The humanitarian subgroup was assigned as the Executive Secretariat to the KCC, and its chair was transferred to the NSC (DOS/USAID 2, 6). This interagency group included the OFDA Director as well as representatives from State/PRM, Defense PK/HA, J-4/ILD, FEMA, and CIA (Tedesco 6 Jun 01 Interview). The humanitarian subgroup provided a regular forum to discuss strategic and operational issues concerning the U.S. Government response, and it relayed major issues to senior officials. It also made many operational decisions (DOS/USAID 3, 6). Another important group formed during the crisis—in addition to the KCC and humanitarian subgroup—was an interagency operations center based at OFDA's 24-hour Operations Center. The Kosovo operations center was staffed by members from participating agencies, and it helped provide day-to-day management for the crisis and reported on the situation daily to the KCC, President Clinton, and other decision-makers (Tedesco 6 Jun 01 Interview).

Despite their ad hoc formation and late start, the KCC, humanitarian subgroup, and Kosovo IOC provided better communication and smoothed interagency coordination, which helped the U.S. Government response gain traction and prevent a major humanitarian catastrophe. The State/USAID review found that—unlike the initial crisis response—preparation for the post-hostilities phase was marked by "intensive interagency planning including senior levels" (8). Nevertheless, the review also found the KCC had an ambiguous mandate and made only a limited impact on policy formulation in the Principals and Deputies Committee meetings. As an ad hoc entity, it lacked continuity and follow-through, and it ceased to function when the USAID Administrator departed on his pre-announced retirement. The KCC also suffered from a murky mandate, which led to an ambiguous relationship with the humanitarian subgroup

(DOS/USAID A-1 5-7). All three entities resulted from crisis management decisions during a major humanitarian emergency rather than from careful prior planning.

An additional factor complicating the interagency response came from fragmented funding authorities. The Kosovo crisis occurred just months after Hurricane Mitch depleted OFDA's IDA account. This funding shortfall forced PRM and OFDA into a complex arrangement, which substituted PRM funds for NGO activities in Kosovo that would have normally been funded by OFDA. As a result, key PRM and OFDA staff spent valuable time making the awkward funding arrangement work instead of planning for possible refugee scenarios (DOS/USAID A-1 7).

Although interagency coordination and planning became much more effective in the latter stages of the crisis, the initially confused U.S. effort suggests some overall weaknesses in the existing U.S. disaster response system. No single authority exercised clear operational control or leadership over the humanitarian effort, and policy-makers lacked a single accountable humanitarian voice. No standing interagency disaster response body existed in advance of the conflict, and the ad hoc interagency framework adopted had to be invented amidst the crisis. U.S. efforts were also hampered by awkward funding mechanisms, a lack of guidelines for interagency coordination, and inadequate contingency planning for humanitarian scenarios prior to the refugee exodus.

Hurricane Mitch Case Study

Uneven though it may have been, the U.S. Government response to the Kosovo crisis was at least guided by an official framework for interagency cooperation in the form of PDD-56—even if this guidance was followed irregularly. By contrast, the U.S.

response to Hurricane Mitch highlighted the fact that the interagency process is not captured in PDDs or anywhere else for natural disasters. The flawed interagency performance during the Mitch response also underscored the lack of any prior strategic planning within the interagency process for a major natural disaster in a region known to be susceptible to hurricanes.

Hurricane Mitch was one of the most powerful and devastating hurricanes ever to strike Central America. Between 26 October and 1 November 1998, the hurricane pounded Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala—causing some 10,000 deaths, destroying nearly 100,000 homes, and affecting 3.6 million people. OFDA's annual report describes the U.S. Government response to Hurricane Mitch as "the most significant contribution ever made toward a natural disaster by the USG." Emergency assistance from the U.S. Government totaled $319 million, which was mainly directed toward Honduras and Nicaragua—the two countries that bore the brunt of the storm. U.S. authorities also approved a subsequent $563 million for rehabilitation and reconstruction for Central America and the Caribbean once the emergency phase had passed (OFDA 66). U.S. military forces played a central role in the Hurricane Mitch response and rescued more than 1,000 flood victims, treated 3,400 sick and injured people, and delivered almost 4 million pounds of relief supplies (Lidy et al. II 30).

Although Central America and the Caribbean are prone to hurricanes, the U.S. Government did not have a comprehensive response framework in place prior to the crisis, and participants did not benefit from prior interagency contingency planning for hurricane scenarios. Consequently, OFDA and other U.S. Government agencies began to assemble an interagency response only after a humanitarian emergency became

imminent. As the magnitude of the disaster became clear, the President directed a large-scale, strategic U.S. response—including the use of DOD assets—that exceeded OFDA's limited disaster management capabilities. Subsequently, the NSC formed an IWG to coordinate the immediate disaster response effort. A DOD-sponsored study produced by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) found that this group exerted some authority over the interagency process but that it "relied on generalized authority and the willingness of federal agencies to participate, rather than on a formal command and control structure or rigorous planning and implementation processes." A similar State Department task force provided a focal point for information exchange but lacked formal authority over resources or operations (Lidy et al. II 33-34). In their interviews with key participants, the IDA researchers, who included former OFDA Director Jim Kunder, found that many individuals "did not find the ad hoc USG coordination mechanisms sufficient for a disaster response operation as complex as Hurricane Mitch" (II 18-19).

Despite the activities of the NSC-level working group, the State/USAID review found it "unclear which operational agency was managing the overall U.S. response." Instead of designating the USAID Administrator, who is the President's Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance, as the overall authority for U.S. Government efforts, the White House appointed the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Maria Echaveste. The appointment of Echaveste was largely motivated by domestic political considerations attuned to the substantial interest shown in the crisis by the American Latino community (DOS/USAID A-2 2).

The decision to run the response effort from the White House was within Presidential prerogatives, but the State/USAID review found the net effect of this

decision was that "no single agency or official perceived that it had the authority or capacity to provide a full, initial assessment of the scope of the disaster or manage the overall U.S. response." Valuable time was wasted as agencies attempted to overcome these impediments to develop and implement an effective response plan. Ambiguous authority and unclear mandates also meant that no one exercised day-to-day operational control over the crisis response (A-2 2-3).

Absent clear and effective leadership, the Hurricane Mitch response suffered fitful interagency coordination. Many factors confounding the interagency response were beyond any agency's control—including the almost unprecedented size and the multi-country impact of the storm. However, the IDA study observed that

> intense humanitarian and political interest in launching a sizable and high-profile relief effort was not matched by a comparable level of operational coordination among USG agencies…. Coordination problems occurred in gathering and validating damage assessment data, in determining the overall shape and character of the USG response, and in establishing interagency relief priorities…. (II 37).

One of the major interagency coordination issues identified in the IDA study was that OFDA "had neither the management resources nor clear command authority to direct DOD or other agency efforts, especially when DOD was primarily utilizing its own resources to fund U.S. military operations." Consequently, DOD took a larger role in guiding the interagency process than it was used to (II 27, 33-34).

In the wake of the storm, participants also discovered that no single agency possessed sufficient assessment capabilities to determine emergency needs and develop an effective action plan. The launch of a major civilian relief effort was delayed by incomplete damage assessments, and the deployment of U.S. military assets was held off

for several days absent data showing that the disaster had overwhelmed the response capacity of the civilian agencies (DOS/USAID A-2 4-5). These delays helped create the "impression that the U.S. was slow to respond" (Lidy et al. II 27).

Many difficulties encountered in the interagency process centered around civil-military coordination. One major factor contributing to delay was the absence of clear guidelines or doctrine regarding what level of crisis requires the use of military capabilities. Without an overall political-military planning framework to guide the interagency effort, specific roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined for each agency, and costly delays and duplication of effort occurred. The State/USAID review suggested that a lack of clear guidelines "may have contributed to the delays in establishing a single plan that laid out the objectives and structure of the U.S. response" (A-2 4-5). IDA found that this "fundamentally flawed" interagency process also "placed unwarranted demands on DOD's planning and management capacity" (III 9-10).

During the Hurricane Mitch response, DOD effectively became the lead agency in part because of the amount of its own resources committed to the response and the diffusion of funding authorities across the agencies involved. Funding issues had a major impact on the overall response effort and its outcome. The IDA study observed that "Interagency uncertainty during the early stages of the Mitch response over who would cover the costs of relief efforts likely contributed to delays in the USG response, and certainly bred a degree of confusion in the interagency planning process" (III 32).

In the absence of senior-level allocation guidance, mid-level managers in each agency sought to protect their own resources. OFDA had already forecast substantial response needs for the year in other regions and tried to protect its IDA budget.

However, OFDA eventually spent one-fifth of its IDA account on Mitch—forcing it to delay funding for other important relief programs. DOD sought to protect its limited OHDACA resources, but Mitch completely drained its OHDACA account and forced it to suspend demining and other humanitarian support programs worldwide. The President's annual drawdown authority provided only limited additional support (DOS/USAID A-2 4-5). Congress eventually provided a supplemental appropriation, but because it came later in the fiscal year, DOD demining efforts and other humanitarian programs could not be regenerated. Furthermore, the supplemental was not guaranteed, and had it not been authorized, DOD would have had to absorb the entire drawdown cost from service O&M Accounts—potentially risking military operations, readiness, and training worldwide (Lidy et al. II 36).

Ultimately, the end date for military operations was driven by budgetary considerations as much as by any other factor. DOD's limited funding for disaster relief combined with the unwillingness of other agencies to defray DOD's operational costs meant that the military had to redeploy when the money ran out rather than when operational objectives had been achieved (Lidy et al. II 36). Although U.S. military forces helped save hundreds of lives and provide food, clothing, medicine, and shelter to thousands, delays caused by ad hoc interagency structures, unclear leadership authority, nonexistent guidelines for interagency coordination, and inappropriate funding authorities meant that the full DOD deployment "was late relative to the overall relief needs of the stricken populace" (Lidy et al. II 35).

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45

The Kosovo humanitarian crisis may have been entwined with NATO's air campaign while security considerations were largely absent in Hurricane Mitch, but the U.S. Government agencies involved in relief efforts were largely the same, and many of the ad hoc interagency processes and structures established were similar. Not surprisingly, many of the difficulties with the U.S. disaster response process highlighted by Hurricane Mitch mirror those encountered during the Kosovo crisis even though one was a complex emergency and the other a natural disaster. U.S. Government disaster response efforts in both the Balkans and Central America were ultimately successful, but U.S. agencies were unprepared for both disasters and still lack the mechanisms to handle future crises. The next chapter exposes the difficulties that continue to trouble the U.S. international disaster response system in greater detail.

IV. A Critique of the International Disaster Response System

The current USG interagency disaster response process is characterized by informality, absence of formal doctrine, uncertain leadership or direction, lack of serious contingency planning, and unclear supporting relationships. In short, virtually all of the elements that should characterize an efficient emergency response system are missing.

—IDA Report on Hurricanes Georges and Mitch

Despite the eventual success of most disaster responses, experience suggests that the U.S. Government's disaster response system is—in the words of the IDA study— "fundamentally flawed" and requires "fundamental reform" (ES-10). This chapter draws on personal interviews and literature to detail major deficiencies in current disaster response mechanisms and processes. The overarching critique offered in this chapter— and paper—is that the U.S. Government lacks a comprehensive framework for responding to international disasters. This chapter assesses the current system in the four key areas of leadership, the interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. It finds that (1) No one is in charge of the overall international disaster response system; (2) The interagency process is not institutionalized; (3) Unclear funding mechanisms and inadequate civilian resources hamper effective disaster response; and (4) International disaster response is not planned for strategically.

Leadership

Both the Kosovo and the Hurricane Mitch cases—as well as previous disaster response efforts—demonstrated ambiguous lines of leadership in the U.S. Government

response to international disasters. Much of this problem stems from structural

impediments in the federal system, where responsibilities are widely dispersed across

organizational boundaries. A fragmented disaster response system further weakens the

already limited voice and influence exercised by humanitarians from civilian agencies

during an actual disaster response.

       <u>Structural Challenges</u>. Systemic challenges are rooted in the American political

system itself, with its built-in checks and balances and the distribution of power through

the different branches of government. The existing structure of departments and agencies

within the executive branch was established through a combination of the U.S.

Constitution, legislative mandate, and the accumulated organizational decisions of

successive administrations. The structure of the federal government promotes

overlapping mandates and duplication of effort, and Jennifer Taw observes that structural

constraints place "generic limits on anyone's ability to completely control the interagency

process" (6).

       Structural impediments are readily apparent within the U.S. Government's

civilian disaster response system. In its comprehensive review of U.S. national security

issues, the Commission on National Security/21st Century—also known by its co-

chairmen's names as the Hart-Rudman Commission—described the present

organizational structure for U.S. foreign assistance programs, which include disaster

assistance, as a "bureaucratic morass." Congress shares some of the blame by saddling

USAID with so many tasks "that it lacks a coherent purpose." In addition,

"Responsibility today for crisis prevention and responses is dispersed in multiple AID

and State bureaus, and among State's Under Secretaries and the AID Administrator. In practice, therefore, *no one is in charge*" (53).

To illustrate their point, the Commission noted that if a humanitarian disaster similar to the 1999 Mozambique flooding occurred today, three USAID bureaus would be involved, and responsibility would be dispersed among at least three Under Secretaries of State and four State bureaus. As a result:

> Neither the Secretary of State nor the AID Administrator would be in a position to commit the resources found to be necessary, or to direct related humanitarian and refugee assistance operations….[O]ther government agencies, and especially the Defense Department, would be at a loss to know where and how to coordinate their activities… (53).

The joint State/USAID review reached similar conclusions after reviewing responses in Kosovo, Hurricane Mitch, and other crises, where it found unclear which agency was responsible for leading the U.S. Government's humanitarian response operation.

> Overall, the current split between State and USAID's civilian emergency programs has impeded coherent leadership on humanitarian matters, domestically and abroad, and complicated the coordination of civilian and military humanitarian efforts…. Overlapping bureaucratic mandates and duplication of effort hinder both the operational efficiency of our humanitarian programs…and the interlinkage of programs (4).

U.S. efforts to assist displaced persons reveal just how irrational the existing system can be. Traditionally, State/PRM has focused on aiding refugees while USAID/BHR has primarily assisted victims of natural disasters and internally displaced persons affected by complex emergencies. However, the line between refugees and internally displaced persons has become increasingly blurred—especially in Kosovo and other complex emergencies. Today, State/PRM and USAID/BHR often duplicate efforts

by funding and interfacing with the same IOs and NGOs and serving the same at-risk populations (DOS/USAID 10).

Weak Humanitarian Voice. The USAID Administrator may be the President's designated Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance, but the diffusion of responsibility for civilian assistance programs undermines his authority. Even though the USAID Administrator is equivalent to a Deputy Secretary in U.S. Government hierarchy, Jim Kunder points out that the Administrator does not normally attend meetings of the Deputies Committee unless first invited by the State Department (Interview). The IDA report, which was co-authored by Kunder, observes that "neither the USAID Administrator nor USAID's subordinate disaster relief organization, OFDA, has the stature or authority within the USG interagency process to compel coordination among more powerful departments and other entities." The practical result is that there is no single point of coordination and leadership in planning for and management of crises (Lidy et al. III 10).

Without a unified humanitarian voice in senior policy-making circles, the humanitarian implications of political-military decisions made in crisis situations have not received adequate consideration at critical moments. Nor does a single person exercise overall accountability and authority for an international disaster response. The DOS/USAID interagency review concluded "that the most important impediment to humanitarian effectiveness is lack of unified leadership within the USG" (4, 9). Lack of unified humanitarian leadership also weakens the limited influence humanitarian experts exercise over high-level decision-making within the government.

The Interagency Process

A further difficulty with the existing U.S. response system to international disasters is that—given the leadership constraints—no effective framework exists to integrate the efforts of interagency players dispersed across department and agency boundaries. This difficulty arises in part from variation in the NSC framework and the interagency process between successive Administrations. For example, while standing IWGs were common during the first Bush Administration, they fell out of favor during the Clinton era (Raach & Kass 13). Similarly, the new Bush Administration has indicated a preference for strong lead agencies while the NSC tended to exert more control over the interagency process during the Clinton and especially the Reagan years.

Interagency coordination and decision-making is difficult under the best of circumstances, and changes in how the national security apparatus works complicate the interagency process for international disaster response. As a consequence, there is no formal interagency process or venue to establish channels of communication and to address disaster response concerns in advance of a crisis. A further result is that there are no standard operating procedures or doctrine for managing interagency operations once a major disaster response is directed.

Interagency Working Groups. PDD-56 represents an attempt to provide a coherent U.S. Government response to complex emergencies within existing structural constraints, and it provides a framework to integrate members from functionally-oriented, stove-piped government departments and agencies into an interagency EXCOM. Although this framework does provide a senior-level focal point for complex contingencies, the EXCOM conceived by PDD-56 lacks clearly-defined leadership.

Without a designated lead agency accountable for the overall interagency response to a disaster and authorized to direct the actions of other agencies, the EXCOM must rely on consensus decision-making.

With no leader authorized to settle disagreements, disputes may not be resolved before reaching the Deputies or even Principals Committee level—if they are resolved at all. Because the interagency design also requires participants to operate under dual chains of command, stove-pipe department and agency jobs will usually take precedent over interagency roles without a leader exercising directive authority. Participants are also more vulnerable to the bureaucratic agendas of their own agencies, and decisions are more likely to be made within individual department or agency management structures instead of through an integrated interagency process.

A further difficulty with the PDD-56 framework is its temporary nature—the EXCOM is only formed in anticipation of or reaction to a complex emergency. Ad hoc decision-making structures promote reactive rather than proactive responses to complex emergencies and reduce the overall impact of the U.S. effort. Even the imperfect framework provided by PDD-56 was implemented only partially in the Kosovo crisis. Furthermore, a major natural disaster response like Hurricane Mitch lacks an interagency response framework altogether—even though the PDD-56 template could have been used as a starting point. The ad hoc interagency mechanisms formed for each of these contingencies proved insufficient for the task.

The structural impermanence of ad hoc coordination mechanisms also prevents the development of a core of experts seasoned in interagency coordination. This is especially a problem for those participants used to rapid, unilateral decision-making.

Military participants may have particular difficulty working within the slow and frustrating interagency process without a firm foundation of interagency experience. Personalities are a central element in interagency relations, but without institutionalized patterns of cooperation, relationships may not be formed in advance of a crisis. As a result, participants may come to ad hoc crisis organizations with an incomplete understanding of the capabilities and limitations—and bureaucratic agendas—other agencies bring to the table.

Without a standing interagency group at the assistant secretary level, the DOS/USAID interagency review finds that "Humanitarian crises are normally handled by several officials below Subcabinet rank who interact without assignment of lead responsibility or formal procedures for coordination" (10). The IHAWG is a primary example of an informal attempt to keep interagency cooperation alive at the subcabinet level between crises. This informal IWG was initiated by Colonel Joe Tedesco of J-4/ILD, Michael Gray of State/PRM, and others who wanted to preserve the interagency ties they formed on the humanitarian subgroup during the Kosovo crisis. Since that response effort, IHAWG participants have continued meeting to discuss humanitarian assistance and disaster relief issues affecting their agencies.

Members see the IHAWG's value coming from the forum it provides for conducting low-key discussions and for building mutual trust and understanding between members of different agencies. The group seeks ways to improve the interagency process and for its participants to resolve issues crossing agency boundaries. IHAWG membership remains informal, but routine participants include military officers from J-4/ILD and from the Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Global Division (J-5/GD).

Civil Affairs specialists from the Joint Staff Operations Directorate (J-3) and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) have also participated. Civilian DOD participants include representatives from PK/HA, and representatives from OFDA, State/PRM, State/PM, and the NSC Office of Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Operations are also key contributors to IHAWG discussions.

The IHAWG allows participants at the action officer and staff level to build working relationships, and this routine coordination has paid off in closer coordination during humanitarian responses in East Timor, Mozambique, and elsewhere. However, the IHAWG is mainly driven by individual personalities committed to improving the disaster response and humanitarian assistance missions. The group has no official sanction or formal status, and without these, the IHAWG may not survive the rotation of existing members to new jobs inside or outside government. Replacements may not share the same level of commitment to interagency coordination as their predecessors.

The IHAWG is not mirrored by an official interagency body at the assistant secretary—or EXCOM—level. Without a formal commitment to the interagency process, any major new disaster response will likely require another ad hoc EXCOM and other coordination bodies to be formed amidst the crisis, and the lessons learned from Kosovo and Hurricane Mitch may have to be relearned. The challenges that these ad hoc groups will face will be made even more difficult by the fact that most political appointees will be new to their posts once the Bush transition is complete, and only a few may have prior disaster response experience.

No International Disaster Response Process. The lack of standing interagency groups in the international disaster assistance arena has helped prevent development of a standardized response plan—complete with standard operating procedures and doctrine—to be employed during an actual crisis response. In a natural disaster scenario, no U.S. Government-wide plan guides federal agencies on how to conduct assessment and planning, international disaster response management, civil-military coordination, and other critical tasks. PDD-56 attempts to identify and assign appropriate missions and tasks, but its guidance is incomplete and has been followed only irregularly in practice. As the IDA researchers observed in their report, "When this unclear process is combined with the uncertain leadership noted above and the exigencies of large-scale, rapid-onset natural disasters, deterioration in the quality and timeliness of the disaster response is almost guaranteed" (III 12).

The Kosovo crisis and Hurricane Mitch response show how unclear processes can hinder U.S. response efforts. During the Kosovo crisis, the interagency operations center had to be formed without clear guidelines on how it would be staffed, what its mandate would be, or how it would interact with the other interagency groups and individual agencies. The Hurricane Mitch response lacked an effective command and control mechanism within Washington altogether, and no one exercised operational control over the U.S. Government response. The effort also suffered from incomplete and poorly integrated damage assessments. In both cases, fundamental flaws in the interagency process contributed to delays in developing an overall U.S. Government response plan and reduced the final impact of U.S. efforts.

Difficulties in civil-military coordination are among the most evident shortcomings of the existing disaster response process. The State/USAID review observed:

> Effective coordination of U.S. civilian and military humanitarian operations is essential, yet decisions on when and how to deploy the U.S. military for humanitarian purposes are often made in an ad hoc, cumbersome fashion which has lead to costly delays, especially in the critical early phase of operations (12).

As evidence of ineffective civil-military cooperation, the IDA report found that in the Hurricane Mitch response, "Key military leaders had little knowledge of OFDA or its role; key civilian leaders had limited knowledge of DOD organization or capabilities" (B-54). Decision-makers on both sides lack guidelines on what level of disaster should trigger military support, and once military forces are committed, the process lacks criteria to determine the desired end state. Lack of end state triggers is especially problematic for military planners, who desire clear markers for when to pull out (Wehrle Interview).

A further difficulty in interagency civil-military coordination is that no mechanisms exist to translate civilian humanitarian relief needs into military requirements. For example, during a major natural disaster such as a hurricane or an earthquake, potable water is often is short supply. Civilian humanitarian agencies may be able to assess the number of people in need of drinking water, but they lack the means to translate this need into military requirements. No mechanism exists for converting a requirement to "Provide drinking water for 100,000 displaced persons" into the appropriate number of military Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPUs) or the number of personnel and types of units needed to operate them. In Hurricane Mitch, military planners had to rely on individual experience and apply planning tools designed

for calculating combat needs to arrive at specific military requirements (Lidy et al. ES-11). Without an adequate translation mechanism, military planners have difficulty determining what military contribution is expected, what resources to task, and what accounts to tap for the mission. The result may be a military contribution that is late, unequal to the task, or over-commits military resources.

Resources

Resource matters typically consume more interagency attention and energy than any other concerns. The Kosovo crisis and the Hurricane Mitch response clearly showed that U.S. Government funding authority for international disaster response is as widely dispersed as leadership authority, and processes for obtaining resources are as flawed as the overall interagency process. As with leadership constraints, much of this problem is systemic and results from the constitutional separation of powers and the accumulation of legislative and executive branch decisions. Funding issues confound the entire national security apparatus. A United States Institute for Peace (USIP) report finds that a major issue "Bedeviling interagency cooperation is the perplexing budgetary challenge of how to get resources when department heads—and not NSC officials—are responsible for funding programs" ("Environment" 5).

Agency heads are more prone to protect their resources when their budgets are modest. The civilian agencies primarily responsible for disaster relief and aid to refugees—USAID and the State Department—generally lack sizable, rapidly available budgets and funding flexibility for major crises (Taw 11). Both agencies also lack sufficient authority to tap the resources needed for the mission when they are needed.

Assessment activities take time, and when aid requirements are finally identified, it often takes too long to work out funding arrangements. With its $200 million IDA account, which can be tapped immediately at Director discretion, OFDA is the exception. However, Mitch showed that even the IDA fund can be rapidly depleted, which is especially constraining at the beginning of a fiscal year with other likely crises on the horizon.

Another funding issue is that DOD garners a much larger share of resources than its civilian counterparts. The result is that other agencies often look to DOD for solutions simply because the military has the resources they lack—the path of least resistance often leads to military involvement. The USIP report observes that "The Defense Department's relative wealth often leads to Defense funding for civilian programs, which in turn erodes interagency trust" ("Environment" 5). One source that is frequently tapped for disaster response is DOD's ODHACA account. Once ODHACA is depleted, the military cannot transfer funds from its O&M accounts to replenish it—DOD must instead seek a supplemental appropriation. Because support for OHDACA does not run very deep in Congress, legislators may be reluctant to replenish OHDACA monies. DOD is therefore reluctant to commit them—especially when it sees funding responsibility resting with the civilian agencies.

Often, the easiest way for the President to show decisiveness during a humanitarian crisis is to use his various drawdown authorities and instruct DOD to spend up to $200 million in response to specific event. The President will then ask for a supplemental appropriation, and Congress faces the choice whether to restore the funds to military O&M accounts or let the services make up the cost elsewhere. Because

Congress will almost always approve a supplemental rather than let military readiness and training suffer, drawdown funding is a relatively secure way for an Administration to pay for a disaster response effort. Consequently, tapping the military for humanitarian response missions has become more commonplace—placing additional operational demands on heavily-tasked forces.

Constrained civilian financial resources are paralleled by limited human resources. Civilian agencies are not funded to maintain large contingency staffs or a strategic planning capability. Only DOD has adequate surge capability to generate enough personnel and resources to provide appropriate representation within the interagency process during a crisis (Pirnie xvii). Thus, DOD often becomes the lead agency by default, and many planning and coordinating tasks fall to military planners. While the military enjoys relative wealth compared to civilian agencies, its human resources are in high demand for other missions, and DOD is often reluctant to commit them for tasks that could be performed by civilian humanitarian experts.

Strategic Planning

A final observation of the current U.S. international disaster response system is that it does not treat disaster response strategically. Even though U.S. disaster response capabilities are an important instrument of U.S. national security policy, the system is rarely viewed as a complex instrument requiring strategic planning. To a large extent, the lack of strategic planning capabilities involves resources. Contingency planning for disaster scenarios would involve resource commitments from each agency—including human resources. Another difficulty is that—with their limited resources—civilian

59

agencies have never developed a planning system like that exercised by the military. Planning also runs counter to civilian humanitarian agency cultures ("Mars/Venus" 6). Unfortunately, the quality and timeliness of U.S. response efforts suffer in the absence of prior planning, and the impression of a slow and unorganized initial U.S. response can bear domestic political costs for the U.S. Government and blemish U.S. prestige abroad.

Although many countries and regions are prone to specific types of natural disasters—i.e. earthquakes in Turkey, hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean, and drought in the Sahara—little if any interagency pre-planning is conducted for likely disaster scenarios. Complex emergencies usually develop over months or years and provide more advance warning than natural disaster, but little interagency planning takes place for these disasters either. The military does some contingency planning for disaster response on its own, but its plans are not mirrored within the interagency process. Thus, even though several emergent complex emergencies can be discerned, no major planning efforts are underway. One case in point is Indonesia, where ethnic unrest, political turmoil, separatist movements, and economic distress threaten to undermine this pivotal state straddling some of the world economy's most vital shipping lanes. Without an eye on potential trouble spots and some degree of concept planning, the U.S. may lack advance warning telling it when trip wires triggering a U.S. response have been breached.

The U.S. Government had ample time to develop contingency plans and strategies for a humanitarian response prior to the Kosovo crisis, and crisis mitigation measures could arguably have been taken prior the displacement of Kosovo's Albanian population. Likewise, Hurricane Mitch occurred in a hurricane-prone region. A region-specific, interagency response plan in place prior to the disaster could have made the U.S.

Government response much smoother. In each disaster, the U.S. eventually committed a great deal of its resources to the humanitarian response, and ad hoc response structures, processes, and procedures ultimately produced successful outcomes. However, without prior contingency planning and strategy development, the U.S. Government response was ad hoc, uneven, and failed to leverage the amount of resources committed and efforts expended for their fullest impact. The next chapter offers options and makes recommendations on how to adopt a more strategic approach to international disaster response and how to build a more effective framework for the entire response system.

V. A New International Disaster Response Framework

*The present status quo is not an optimal basis for promoting U.S.
humanitarian interests. We can and should do better.*

—DOS/USAID Review 5

This chapter identifies available alternatives and recommends steps to construct a
more effective U.S. Government framework for international disaster response. The
premise underlying this chapter is that an effective disaster response framework must be
in place *before* a crisis rather than *after* crisis development in order to reduce costly
delays and enhance an operation's life-saving and strategic impact. Chapter Five offers
proposals in each of the four areas assessed in the fourth chapter—leadership, the
interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. The overall recommendations are
to: (1) Clarify who is in charge of the U.S. international disaster response system; (2)
Institutionalize interagency response structures and procedures; (3) Reform funding
mechanisms and enhance civilian response capabilities; and (4) Develop a strategic
planning capability for international disaster response.

Leadership

Perhaps the most important step in constructing a better U.S. Government disaster
response system is to clarify who is in charge of federal relief efforts. To a large degree,
the lack of clear disaster response leadership stems from the dispersion of responsibility

across organizational boundaries in the federal system. Difficulties in interagency coordination are common across the spectrum of national security issues, and any discussion of reforming the disaster response system must take place within the context of wider efforts to redesign the entire U.S. national security apparatus. Any institutional redesign would have major implications for international disaster response. Two examples illustrate the scope of reform options available to senior decision-makers.

In the first example, Gregory D. Foster proposes replacing the entire NSC framework with a "U.S. Security Council" that includes three supra-cabinet ministers between the President and cabinet secretaries. Under this model, the Secretaries of Defense and State would report to a Minister of International Affairs, who would presumably have overall responsibility for international disaster assistance (29-33). In another proposal, Stephen A. Cambone proposes replacing the NSC with a National Security Directorate. Five directorates led by dual-hatted cabinet secretaries would be responsible for making national security policy and directing interagency operations (43-60). International disaster response would likely fall under a Directorate for Crisis Management led by the Secretary of Defense. Although these proposals are well beyond the scope of this paper, they are included to suggest how far-reaching reforms could potentially affect the international disaster response system.

More modestly, U.S. Government disaster response capabilities would be enhanced by consolidating civilian humanitarian response programs. This section presents several options to clean up the "bureaucratic morass" of foreign assistance programs, which include disaster response. With or without consolidation, this section argues that a single lead agency should be clearly designated over the entire international

disaster response process, and a single individual should be vested with overall authority and accountability for the U.S. Government response system and crisis response efforts.

Consolidate Civilian Humanitarian Programs. The bipartisan Hart-Rudman Commission conducted a sweeping review of the national security system—one with major implications for international disaster response. Among its recommendations, the Commission calls for a more traditional policy coordinating role rather than an operational capacity for the NSC (48-49). Some of the Commission's most sweeping chances would affect the State Department, which would be restructured more along regional rather than functional lines. Most significantly for the U.S. international disaster response system, the Commission strongly recommends that USAID and all the nation's foreign assistance activities be consolidated into State. Their report argues that:

> aid is not an end in itself, nor can it be successful if pursued independently of other U.S. programs and activities…. Only a coordinated diplomatic and assistance effort will advance the nation's goals abroad, whether they be economic growth and stability, democracy, human rights, or environmental protection (56).

Under the Commission's proposals, refugee and humanitarian assistance programs, presumably including OFDA and PRM, would be brought together under the Under Secretary for Global Affairs (59). With the division of labor between State and USAID eliminated, the Secretary of State would be solely accountable for civilian response efforts.

The joint State/USAID review similarly found that "Consolidation of U.S. civilian humanitarian functions into one agency provides the best opportunity for ensuring unified humanitarian leadership and coordinated planning and operations among U.S. civilian actors." The reviewers outlined some possible structural remedies for the fragmentation

of civilian humanitarian responsibilities, but these were more narrowly focused than those offered by the Hart-Rudman Commission. The State/USAID review suggests three alternatives to bring these disparate elements together: (1) Consolidate all U.S. humanitarian functions into State, (2) Consolidate all U.S. humanitarian functions into USAID, or (3) Create a new humanitarian agency that would incorporate the humanitarian functions of both State and USAID. State PRM and USAID/BHR would form the core of any consolidated structure (14).

Each of these options would have major implications for the U.S. Government international disaster response system. Ultimately, any structural reform initiative would entail significant political hurdles, and enactment would require Congressional approval and Presidential endorsement. The more dramatic the option, the less likely it is to survive legislative, bureaucratic, and financial challenges. Conversely, modest proposals are more likely to gain the support needed for passage. While these options are included to show the range of consolidation alternatives available rather than to endorse any proposal in particular, this author does see substantial merit in merging civilian humanitarian response capabilities in a single agency.

The goal of structural consolidation—whatever its form—should be to eliminate overlapping mandates and duplicated efforts and to provide more coherent leadership of U.S. humanitarian programs in general and the international disaster response system in particular. Progress in these areas can also be made within the current—albeit imperfect—organizational structure. The remaining proposals and alternatives considered in this chapter are designed to work either within existing organizational boundaries or within a system featuring consolidated civilian humanitarian agencies.

Assign Clear Lead Agency Responsibilities. With or without consolidation, the disaster response system can be strengthened by assigning unambiguous lead agency responsibilities for international disaster response. This step can be taken without legislation or major reform. The State/USAID review proposes three options to provide lead agency clarification: (1) Give lead responsibility to the USAID Administrator for all complex emergencies and natural disasters, (2) Clearly divide responsibilities with USAID/BHR responsible for natural disasters and PRM responsible for complex emergencies, and (3) Create an established mechanism to allocate lead responsibilities on a case-by-case basis (DOS/USAID 20).

Of these options, the second is flawed because the distinction is not always clear between natural disasters and complex emergencies, and the third would not provide predictable or unified leadership (DOS/USAID 20). Only the first would provide coherent leadership. This first option has another advantage: the USAID Administrator would occupy a reserved humanitarian chair at Principals Committee meetings, and under this proposal, a senior USAID or State official designated by the USAID Administrator would attend Deputies Committee meetings. The representative would be at the Assistant Secretary or Assistant Administrator level or higher as needed. Assignment of clear lead responsibilities to the organization with primary duties in that area would ensure a senior-level humanitarian voice would be heard during any deliberations concerning a potential or current humanitarian emergency. (DOS/USAID 15).

Designate a Director of International Disaster Assistance. In addition to assigning clear lead agency responsibilities, a single person should be vested with overall accountability and authority for the international disaster response system. That person

should be the President's designated Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance—currently the USAID Administrator—and he should have the authority to compel interagency coordination and cooperation for international disaster response. To provide the title and stature to match his greater authority, this person should be redesignated the *Director* of International Disaster Assistance.

A precedent for both the designation and the authority that would come with it can be found in the Director of Central Intelligence. The DCI is both the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the head of the Intelligence Community, and he acts as the principal intelligence advisor to the President and the NSC. The DCI also chairs the NSC Senior Interagency Group when it meets to consider intelligence-related issues. Applying the DCI template to the disaster response community, the Director of International Disaster Assistance (DIDA) would head the U.S. Government's international disaster response system and serve as the principal advisor to the President and NSC on international disaster response issues. He would also chair the NSC Deputies Committee when it meets to discuss disaster response issues or respond to a humanitarian crisis, and he would hold a dedicated humanitarian chair during NSC Principals Committee meetings.

The designation of a DIDA could be made whether or not U.S. Government humanitarian programs are consolidated. With civilian humanitarian response capabilities consolidated in State under the Hart-Rudman Commission's reformed State Department or one of the State/USAID review options, the Undersecretary for Global Affairs or another equivalent State official could be the DIDA. With humanitarian programs consolidated under USAID or without structural changes, the USAID

Administrator would hold both the designation and the responsibilities. Regardless of the forum, the DIDA should be automatically be included in senior-level meetings whenever disaster response policy is considered or emergency actions are contemplated.

The DCI model is not without its difficulties. Applying it to international disaster response efforts would require close coordination between the executive branch and Congress, and if the DIDA were to be vested with directive authority over resource taskings, legislation would likely be required. Institutional resistance to a strong DIDA can also be expected—especially from DOD if the DIDA is able to exercise directive authority over military resources. Finally, critics may find the DCI model unsuitable for disaster response because it has not always worked smoothly in the intelligence community. Much of the model's uneven performance stems from the greater secrecy and higher cultural barriers between intelligence agencies, however. By contrast, disaster response occurs very publicly and lacks the secrecy inherent in intelligence work. Additionally, the cultural barriers between the civilian agencies—if not between the civilians and military—may be more surmountable than those in the intelligence community. Finally, DOD would likely welcome stronger leadership within the civilian humanitarian community and a single individual with whom to coordinate efforts—even though DIDA tasking authority would certainly be contentious.

A wide range of options exists for clarifying who is in charge of the U.S. international disaster response process. Structural reforms would be the most difficult step to execute, but they may pay the greatest dividends over the long term. In the interim, a lead agency should be designated and its responsibilities clarified, and an individual with overall authority and accountability for the international disaster response

system should be designated. Any reform should promote the central aims of providing overall unity of effort and of amplifying the humanitarian voice in senior decision-making to develop policy that advances both U.S. strategic and humanitarian interests.

The Interagency Process

Designation of a lead agency and of an individual with overall authority and accountability should provide more effective and accountable leadership within the interagency process for U.S. international disaster response efforts. While clarifying who is in charge over the entire system should help foster a more effective interagency process, other steps should also be taken to formalize interagency coordination. First, a standing IWG for international disaster response should be formed. Second, a standardized international disaster response plan should be developed to guide interagency planning and execution efforts during an actual crisis response operation.

Form Standing International Disaster Response IWG. Although PDD-56 provides a framework for interagency cooperation in a complex emergency, lack of clear leadership within the process and the ad hoc nature of its interagency structures limit the model's effectiveness. Meanwhile, the U.S. Government response to natural disasters is process-free. This last concern can be remedied by creating a common response framework for both natural disasters and complex emergencies. The striking similarity between the problems experienced during the Kosovo crisis and during the Hurricane Mitch response show that a common system is needed for both types of emergency—even if the security element must be integrated into the response to complex emergencies.

Within a common response framework, leadership should be provided by appointing a representative from the lead international disaster response agency—presently USAID—to chair the interagency process and lead the U.S. disaster response system in developing policy and procedures and in providing guidance during a crisis response. Under this proposal, one individual would be accountable for the overall outcome of the mission—contributing to unity of effort and allowing the U.S. Government to speak with one voice. Without strong leadership, the interagency process may drift, and bureaucratic agendas may take precedent.

The ad hoc nature of existing response mechanisms can be fixed by establishing a standing International Disaster Response IWG. This IWG would be led by an EXCOM made up of assistant secretaries and equivalents from agencies responsible for refugee management, relief logistics, diplomatic efforts, and coordination with IOs and NGOs. These would include the USAID/BHR Assistant Administrator, State/PRM Assistant Secretary, DOD Deputy Assistant Secretary for PK/HA, Joint Staff J-4 Director of Logistics, NSC Senior Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs, and National Intelligence Officer for Economics and Global Issues. Any U.S. Government agency could potentially participate in this process and would be included as needed. The EXCOM chair would be the held by the lead humanitarian officer, who would be the BHR Assistant Administrator under the current U.S. Government structure.[2]

The EXCOM of the International Disaster Response IWG would be supported by one or more interagency support teams made up of office directors, action officers, and

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[2] The State/USAID Review proposed a Senior Humanitarian Advisory Council, which would be roughly equivalent to the proposed EXCOM. The Council would be comprised of the same members except that the J-4 Director is not specified (19).

staff from participating agencies. These support teams would be chaired by either the

OFDA Director or his designated representative. The purpose of the standing

International Disaster Response IWG—with its EXCOM and interagency support

teams—would be to refine disaster response policy and procedures, address interagency

issues that arise between crises, and when necessary, provide policy guidance to the

Deputies and Principals Committees. Figure 3 shows what a standing International

Disaster Response IWG might look like within the NSC framework.
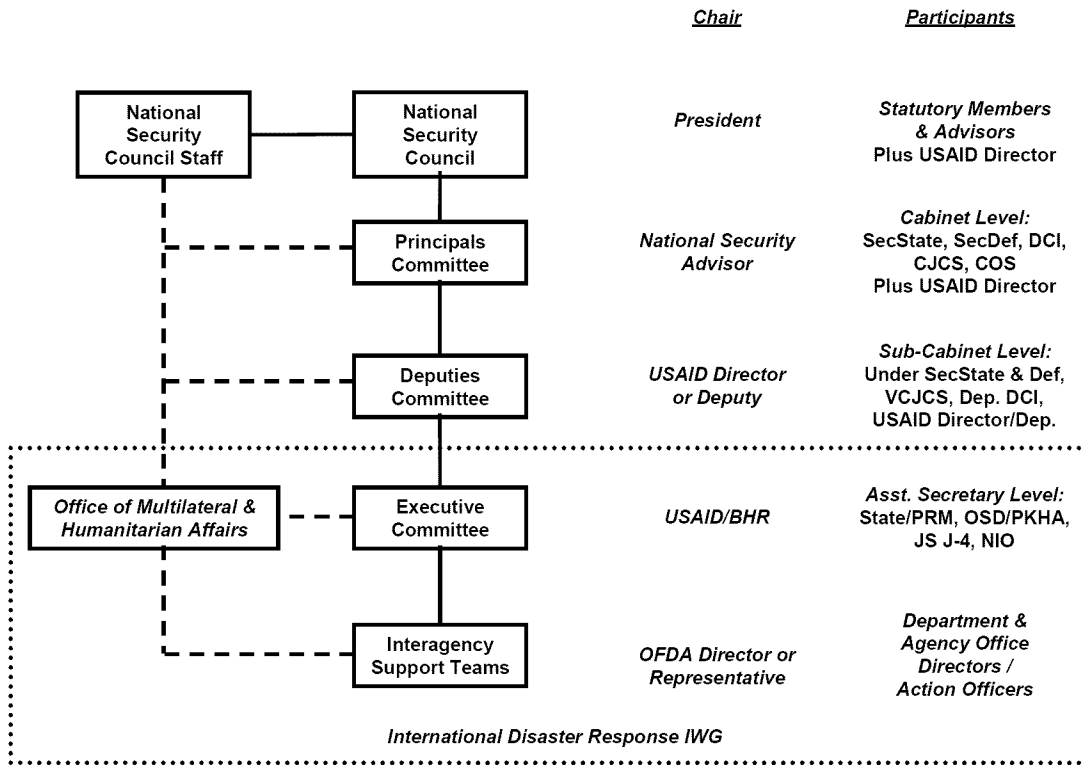
Figure 3. Proposed Standing International Disaster Response IWG

To illustrate how a standing IWG might work, a Resources Support Team could

discuss funding issues while a Plans and Policy Support Team could examine

improvements in civil-military cooperation and refine policy for issues such as internally displaced persons. The teams would have no authority to make actual resource or policy decisions—otherwise the stakes would change, and bureaucratic agendas might reassert themselves. Instead, the teams would identify issues and make recommendations for the EXCOM or higher resolution. Members of the present IHAWG would likely form the core of these new interagency support teams, and with their limited authority, the teams would preserve much of the IHAWG's informality and continue to provide a forum for candid discussion where issues can be discussed without attribution.

The International Disaster Response IWG outlined here is based on a generalized template for interagency working groups within the NSC framework. This framework was adopted because U.S. international disaster response capabilities—especially during a complex emergency—form a national security instrument and must be integrated with other elements within the NSC architecture. An alternate framework has been proposed in the draft Federal Foreign Disaster Response Plan (FFDRP), which models its interagency disaster management structure more explicitly on FEMA's Federal Response Plan (FRP). The draft FFDRP was contracted by OFDA but has not been approved or adopted to date. This plan provides a template for natural disaster response, but it could be adapted to complex emergencies as well. The interagency apparatus proposed in the draft FFDRP contains many similarities to the proposed International Disaster Response IWG, but its focus is more operationally oriented toward specific crisis responses.

Formation of a standing International Disaster Response IWG would help build a core of experts in the field accustomed to interagency politics and to balancing competing bureaucratic demands. It would also form an experienced cadre ready to provide rapid

interagency coordination during a humanitarian crisis—a capability largely absent during Kosovo, Hurricane Mitch, and other recent operations. Personalities are key to effective interagency relations, and structures of formalized cooperation would pay greater dividends in a crisis than ad hoc organizations by allowing relationships to be built, issues resolved, and policy developed before a crisis rather than after a crisis develops. A standing International Disaster Response IWG would also preserve corporate knowledge as individual participants depart for new jobs, and interagency cooperation would no longer depend mainly on personalities. A degree of permanence would prevent the U.S. Government from reinventing the interagency process every time it responds to an international disaster.

Develop Standard International Disaster Response Plan. One of the first tasks the International Disaster Response IWG would face is to develop a standardized response plan to employ during an actual crisis. Such a plan would contain standard operating procedures and doctrine for assessment and planning, disaster response management, civil-military coordination, and other critical elements.[3] Without standard operating procedures and interagency doctrine in place before an international disaster strikes, responses will continue to be ad hoc and late to need.

Timely and effective disaster response requires a formal assessment and planning process that ensures objectives are clearly stated and activities properly coordinated between each agency. When a crisis has occurred or appears imminent, the International Disaster Response IWG would develop a political-military implementation plan. The

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[3] The draft FFDRP is one template for such a plan and offers "policies and procedures, planning assumptions, concept of operations, response actions, and USG agency roles and responsibilities" (FFDRP). This draft plan influenced many of the proposals presented in this section.

outline for such a plan is provided in PDD-56. Its elements include a situation assessment, statement of U.S. interests, mission statement, desired end state, concept of operations, agency responsibilities, and transition and exit strategies. The plan would also outline functional tasks and individual agency planning responsibilities (White House 7). The political-military plan would be developed by staff and action officers on an interagency support team—possibly the Plans and Policy Team. The plan would then be validated by the EXCOM and approved by the Deputies Committee or Principals Committee.

The goal of this assessment and planning step would be to develop a single, integrated interagency plan rather than a series of plans produced by each stove-piped agency. The resulting plan would help prevent duplication of effort and waste of scarce resources, and it should also ensure the efforts of each agency are aligned with common objectives. To illustrate the synergies this process would provide, USAID could integrate long-term development considerations in the plan to ensure U.S. Government relief efforts do not overwhelm sustainable development programs with good intentions. Also, DOD could communicate the impact military participation might have on its exercise, training, and other operational activities to interagency partners as they weigh alternative courses of action.
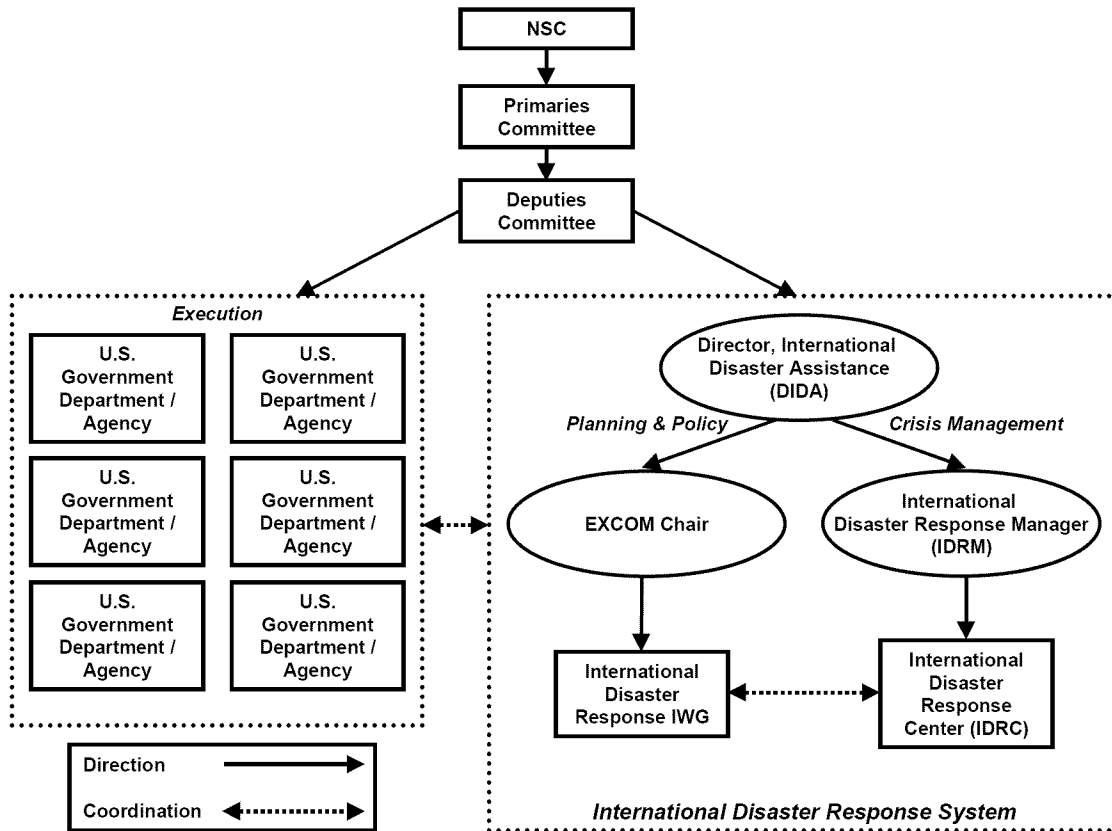
Develop International Disaster Response Center. Another critical element of the proposed disaster response framework would be establishment of a Washington-based operations management center. The International Disaster Response IWG would develop the political-military plan and provide advisory input during an actual international disaster, but it would not manage ongoing or emergent crises. Crisis management would

be handled by a International Disaster Response Center (IDRC) based at OFDA. The existing OFDA Operations Center can be activated to coordinate disaster assistance operations 24-hours per day—as it was during the Kosovo crisis when it hosted the interagency operations center.

Under this proposal, the OFDA Operations Center would be expanded to form a permanent 24-hour IDRC responsible for monitoring all disaster warning sources, estimating consequences of a potential disaster, developing options for crisis response, identifying U.S. Government response capabilities and resources required, and directing their delivery to the affected area. The IDRC would be staffed by a small permanent cadre, and each department and agency would augment the center in a crisis according to a predetermined augmentation plan. Overall accountability and responsibility for the operation would rest with a single predesignated International Disaster Response Manager appointed by the USAID Administrator in his capacity as Director of International Disaster Assistance.[4]

When a major crisis requiring interagency coordination has occurred or is imminent, the International Disaster Response IWG would support the IDRC with policy guidance, and the DIDA would provide overall direction for the crisis response in accordance NSC Principals and Deputies Committee guidance. Members of the IWG interagency support teams could act as liaisons between the IDRC and their individual agencies and IWG as required to provide information flow and ensure all aspects of the crisis response have been coordinated with each agency. By having these operational

structures and formalized procedures for interagency coordination in place before a crisis,

the timeliness and effectiveness of the overall U.S. Government effort would be

enhanced. Figure 4 illustrates the integrated international disaster response system

proposed.

Figure 4. Proposed U.S. International Disaster Response System

Develop Interagency Doctrine and Procedures. Established doctrine and

procedures for civil-military coordination would also bring great rewards to the U.S.

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[4] The IDA report identifies the need for a single action center to manage rapid-onset disasters and offers a more robust OFDA operations center as one alternative. Another alternative is a National Center for Rapid-onset Natural Disasters based on the FEMA model (B-21-23). The Disaster Response Manager concept is borrowed from the FFDRP (5-7).

response system. The State/USAID review argues that "It should be a USG priority to more systematically define standard operating procedures in order to better clarify the interface between civilian humanitarian programs and the US military" (12). More effective civil-military coordination would begin with a formalized interagency process, where civilian and military participants become more familiar with the capabilities each agency brings to the table and how these could be put to best use. In general, military planners should seek to fill in gaps in civilian capacity with unique military logistics and security capabilities. Other capabilities such as medical support, civil engineering, communications, and command and control may be tapped as well.

Civil and military planners can draw on this understanding to develop guidelines and criteria for using DOD support and capture them in a international disaster response plan. These protocols would fill a need identified by the DOS/USAID interagency review to "minimize delays in accessing essential DOD support by defining more clearly what the U.S. military, under different scenarios, can be expected to contribute, what accounts will be accessed, and what prior operational planning on the civilian side is required" (19). Military planners should seek to play only a supporting role while the civilian agencies set priorities and provide overall direction for the effort. They should also develop a "total force" mindset that provides them awareness of other relief systems and efforts in order to reduce duplication of effort—as well as costs to DOD (Lidy et al. III 26).

Another improvement that must be made in civil-military coordination is the development of a process to turn identified relief needs into military requirements. Presently, no effective process exists. The translation of relief requests from State and

USAID into military requirements and language is ad hoc and slow, and it typically

wastes resources and duplicates efforts. To make this process more efficient, DOD can

work with civilian agencies to produce humanitarian service modules. These modules

would capture specific recurring relief requirements and express them in terms of

capabilities that can be provided by either civilian or military agencies. Humanitarian

service modules would include goods, services, skills, and equipment routinely needed

during relief efforts. For example, a "potable water" service module could be developed

with a specific number of ROWPUs and the type of expertise needed to operate them.

The number of modules tasked would depend upon disaster severity and number of

people affected. The creation of a service module system for U.S. civilian and military

relief capabilities would streamline the planning process—saving time and resources.[5]

Resources

Reform Funding Mechanisms. U.S. Government resources would be used more

effectively if the funding mechanisms for foreign disaster response were rationalized.

Funding uncertainties likely caused delays in both the Kosovo and Hurricane Mitch

responses. While the U.S. Government has sufficient resources to meet most probable

response needs, it lacks the assurance that the necessary financial resources and spending

authority will be available to support the mission in a timely manner (Lidy et al. ES-12).

The first step in resolving this issue should be to ensure that the person in charge of the

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[5] The service module discussion is borrowed from the IDA report on Hurricanes Mitch and Georges (III 22-23), but the humanitarian service module concept also appears in the FFDRP. The concept is derived in part from the list of Military Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) produced by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which was formerly the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UN MCDA Ref. Man.).

international disaster response system—the USAID Administrator in his capacity as DIDA—has the authority to commit resources on behalf of the entire interagency response network.

One approach would be a funding system in which the committing authority provides a fund cite at the time that each agency is tasked with a disaster response mission. The model for this approach is the U.S. domestic disaster response system, which the IDA report argues "provides a simple, consistent approach to tasking and funding decisions: when FEMA tasks DOD or another USG agency, the tasked entity can expect full reimbursement from FEMA." If this approach were adapted to international disaster response, DOD and other agencies could expect to have their costs restored by USAID through the OFDA IDA account (Lidy et al. III 34).

Enhance Civilian Response Capabilities. Using consolidated funding mechanisms would require that the DIDA be given greater directive authority to commit resources from other agencies. The size of the IDA would most likely have to be increased as well—an uncertain proposition at a time of limited Congressional support for foreign assistance programs. However, larger, more accessible funding sources for the civilian relief agencies might expand the range of options available to them and reduce their reliance on military support. For example, with increased funding, OFDA would have greater ability to contract civilian air transport and conserve military airlift. Measures that conserve military resources should appeal to those concerned about military overstretch. At the same time, the military would likely be less reluctant to commit its resources if funding came with the tasking and if it knew that its OHDACA-funded programs and O&M accounts would not suffer.

An additional resource issue that needs to be resolved is the shortage of human resources available for civilian international disaster response efforts. Without improving response capabilities within civilian agencies, there will be a continuing reliance on the U.S. military for crises (DOS/USAID A-2 4-5). U.S. Government civilian agencies need a surge capacity to allow response capability to multiple crises or to a single major crisis. This capacity can be met in part by forming a ready reserve from other offices within State and USAID as well as members of the NGO community who can be mobilized quickly to assist relief planning efforts (DOS/USAID 18-19).

This surge capacity can be provided with little additional cost. However, several full-time positions need to be filled within the international disaster response process outlined above. Jim Kunder believes that a cadre could be formed of approximately ten or so "senior disaster planners," who include former ambassadors, retired generals, and other experts with experience in international disaster response (Interview). Once again, FEMA provides the relevant model with its permanent cadre of about twenty senior disaster planners. A similar cadre could be tapped to provide individual disaster response managers to run the proposed IDRC. Ideally, this cadre should be supported by a modest but full-time supporting staff. Most members of the IDRC would be loaned to the center during a crisis from their respective agencies, but having a core permanent staff at the IDRC would provide greater continuity. This staff would also be able to provide an early warning capability for international disaster development.

The rationalization of disaster response funding, an increase in civilian response resources, and the formation of a permanent cadre of senior disaster managers and staff would not come easily. Each proposal would require a strong advocate. As the Director

of International Disaster Assistance, the USAID Administrator could provide this advocate role based on the DCI model. The DCI has responsibility for the multi-agency National Foreign Intelligence Program, and he helps develop and justify its budget to Congress. While the USAID Administrator would not require overall budgetary authority for all U.S. Government international disaster response programs, he could be an effective advocate for agency disaster response budgets as DIDA. Just as a single humanitarian voice would better serve U.S. disaster response capabilities at the decision-making table, a single voice would provide a stronger advocate for resources before Congress.

Strategic Planning

A final element that would make the U.S. Government international disaster response system more effective is to adopt a strategic approach to international disaster management. The Hart-Rudman Commission supports this concept by advocating a reformed national security strategic planning process that includes more contingency planning—specifically for humanitarian and military operations—and greater senior-level oversight (48-49). Whenever possible, decision-makers need early warning of likely crises because there may not be sufficient time to plan once a crisis erupts. Early warning would come from a "crisis watch," which would identify potential humanitarian emergencies from either complex emergencies or natural disasters. This crisis watch would provide a trip wire to energize the disaster response system into action.

The International Disaster Response IWG would be responsible for maintaining the crisis watch. The IWG could maintain an Early Warning Support Team that would

survey the international arena for potential disasters by gathering and reviewing

information from multiple sources—including the intelligence community and the media

as well as reports from IOs and NGOs involved in the relief field. The support team

would also receive early warning information from the OFDA-based IDRC. The team

would pay particular attention to those pivotal states where U.S. strategic and

humanitarian interests are most likely to coincide.

Once incipient complex emergencies and likely natural disaster scenarios are

identified, the support team would notify the EXCOM, which would in turn review each

potential disaster for national security implications and the U.S. national and

humanitarian interests at stake. The group would also assess the probable human impact

in the affected country or region and predict the domestic public reaction to the disaster

to see if a U.S. response could muster public support. Finally, the EXCOM would assess

the potential costs and benefits of response versus inaction. This cost-benefit analysis

would look at tangible factors such as potential resource commitments as well as national

prestige and other intangible factors.

For those crises likely to present the greatest potential strategic risks, the most

human suffering, or the most domestic pressure and support for response, the EXCOM

would direct the support team to develop integrated interagency contingency plans based

on the political-military planning template outlined above. The model for such a

planning effort can be found in the military deliberate planning process, and the end

product would be similar to a concept or functional plan. The military's geographic

unified commands are already beginning to develop their own individual plans—such as

U.S. Southern Command's new functional plan for a Caribbean hurricane scenario.

These military plans can be used as the starting point for interagency planning efforts. Once an interagency political-military plan is prepared, the support team would submit it to the EXCOM for validation, and the EXCOM would pass it to the Deputies Committee for final approval.

A real-world scenario can illustrate how this process would work. A crisis watch would certainly identify Indonesia to the EXCOM as an incipient complex emergency. The EXCOM would survey the ongoing ethnic unrest, political turmoil, separatist movements, and economic distress in this pivotal state. Because it straddles some of the world economy's most vital shipping lanes, the unraveling of Indonesia would clearly place vital U.S. interests at stake, and as the world's fourth-largest state, with a population exceeding 200 million people, the humanitarian crisis could be enormous. Domestic support for a potential humanitarian response would be less certain, but the scenario would likely warrant a significant pre-planning effort to identify potential trip wires that could trigger a U.S. response.

Producing strategic plans for disaster responses in Indonesia and elsewhere would likely require additional resource commitments from each agency—especially civilian relief agencies with limited strategic planning capabilities. This initiative would also be likely to run into cultural barriers in those agencies without a strong planning tradition. However, these barriers are not insurmountable and can be overcome with a greater leadership emphasis on enhancing U.S. Government international disaster response capabilities and treating them as an important tool for managing instability and generating goodwill. With the proper emphasis, these capabilities can become a more effective means of maintaining U.S. influence and prestige in the world.

VI. Prognosis & Implications

In an essay on the power and prestige enjoyed by United States in the modern international system, German writer Josef Joffe observes that "Great powers remain great if they promote their own interests by serving those of others" (27). Development of a new framework for international disaster response would prepare the United States to serve the needs of those suffering from humanitarian catastrophes more rapidly and effectively. With a revamped response system, the U.S. would be ready for opportunities to promote its national interests while developing international goodwill at the same time. A more effective response system could help the U.S. prevent a localized humanitarian disaster from spreading across borders and posing a greater threat to the nation's strategic interests later. U.S. disaster response capabilities may not rank as high as other political, military, and economic elements of national power, but a relatively modest investment in attention and resources could pay great dividends. The returns on a greater investment in these capabilities should not be underestimated.

There are a number of options available for revamping the system, and this author hopes that the recommendations outlined in Chapter Five will contribute to the overall discussion on improving U.S. Government disaster response capabilities. As with any initiative to change how the federal government functions, the prognosis is uncertain. Hopefully, the Bush Administration will take the U.S. experiences in Kosovo and Hurricane Mitch to heart and recognize that the disaster response system has not changed

appreciably since those crises. The difficulties encountered then should provide

sufficient incentive to explore ways of improving the system.

Several trends and actions by the new Administration suggest that many of these

proposals may be looked upon favorably. First, President Bush's National Security

Advisor, Condolezza Rice, plans to seek more integrated interagency solutions to

national security issues and to clearly define lead agencies within a more robust

interagency process. In a January speech at the U.S. Institute for Peace, she said that "we

can no longer afford stovepipes" in national security policy making. Instead, we must

"unite all agencies which work across borders" to make foreign policy (Rubin A29).

Another sign auguring an improved interagency process is a planned funding

increase for the State Department that should reverse the spiral of decay noted by the

Hart-Rudman Commission (53). With an improved resource outlook, and with the

enhanced stature provided by its new Secretary, Colin Powell, the State Department

should become a more effective and authoritative partner in the interagency process. The

stature enjoyed by Secretary Powell will be complemented by the strong humanitarian

voice that the new USAID Administrator, Andrew Natsios, can be expected to wield in

senior policy-making circles. Finally, the Administration's desire to reduce the level of

military commitments may lead to greater investments in civilian disaster response

capabilities.

Developing a new framework for international disaster response in Washington

would be an important step in U.S. response capabilities, but it is not the only step

required. This paper deals with the disaster response process the Capitol rather than in

the field, but interagency cooperation in the field also has room for improvement. A new

disaster response framework in Washington would require improved lines of authority and communication with U.S. representatives and agencies in the affected region— including the U.S. Ambassador, OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART), and military JTFs. The revamped disaster response system must clearly define chains of command between the new Washington-based entities and these field operatives.

The interagency process must also spell out how the U.S. Government plugs its disaster response system into international relief efforts and coordinates with the panoply of other governments and militaries; key UN agencies such as UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the World Food Program (WFP); other IOs such as the ICRC; NGOs such as CARE and World Vision; private businesses; and concerned individuals. These other participants in international relief efforts are independent actors with their own—sometimes competing—agendas, but they will often look to the U.S. Government to provide the lead. Therefore, the U.S. Government must be able to effectively communicate its contribution and objectives to the rest of the international relief community.

The success or failure of an international disaster response mission is ultimately determined in the field. The Washington-based international disaster response system cannot ensure success, but it can provide the conditions for success—or failure—through the quality and timeliness of its decisions. A new response framework—complete with clearly-defined leadership, institutionalized interagency coordination, rationalized resources, and strategic planning capabilities—will ensure that those decisions are made more effectively and rapidly than ever. The result will be a national security instrument that better promotes U.S. interests while serving the needs of others.

Acronyms

ASD	Assistant Secretary of Defense
BHR	Bureau for Humanitarian Response
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIF	CINC Initiative Funds
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CINC	Commander-In-Chief
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center
COE	Center of Excellence
COS	Chief of Staff
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CONPLAN	Operation Plan in Concept Format
CNN	Cable News Network
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DASD	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DIDA	Director of International Disaster Assistance
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DR	Disaster Relief
EXCOM	Executive Committee
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFDRP	Federal Foreign Disaster Response Plan
FFP	Food for Peace Office
FRP	Federal Response Plan
FY	Fiscal Year
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IDA	International Disaster Assistance
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IDRC	International Disaster Response Center
IFRC	International Federal of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
IHAWG	Informal Humanitarian Assistance Working Group
ILD	International Logistics Division
INSS	Institute for National Security Studies
IO	International Organization
IOC	Interagency Operations Center
IWG	Interagency Working Group
J-3	Joint Staff Operations Directorate

J-4	Joint Staff Logistics Directorate
J-5	Joint Staff Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate
JTF	Joint Task Force
KCC	Kosovo Coordination Council
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MCDA	Military and Civil Defense Assets
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU	National Defense University
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	National Intelligence Council
NSC	National Security Council
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
OASD	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civil Assistance
OPLANS	Operational/Operations Plans
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
PDD	Presidential Decision Directive
PK/HA	Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs
PM	Political Military Affairs
PME	Professional Military Education
PRM	Population, Refugees, and Migration
PVOs	Private Voluntary Organizations
ROWPUs	Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SECSTATE	Secretary of State
SO/LIC	Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict
SOUTHCOM	U.S. Southern Command
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
USAF	U.S. Air Force
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCNS/21	U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century
USD	Under Secretary of Defense
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USG	U.S. Government
USIP	U.S. Institute of Peace
VCJCS	Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
WFP	UN World Food Program
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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14. ABSTRACT

Success of the U.S. Government response to international humanitarian disasters depends upon the quality and timeliness of decisions made in Washington D.C. as much as upon activities in the field. However, the government lacks a comprehensive framework for organizing and managing interagency response efforts even though numerous federal departments and agencies may participate. Without clearly established lines of authority , expectations, and responsibilities for each organization, U .S. efforts are often ad hoc and erratic. The purpose of this paper is to identify the need for a more effective U.S. Government international disaster response system and to suggest a framework of structures, processes, and procedures that can effect an improvement. The paper first makes a case for the strategic importance of U.S. disaster response capabilities in order to justify the commitment of attention and resources needed to develop a new response framework. It next reviews the current U.S. Government international disaster response system and highlights shortcomings in practice with two case study examples-the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and the response to Hurricane Mitch. The paper then critiques the current disaster response system in four key areas-leadership, the interagency process, resources, and strategic planning. Finally, the paper offers options and recommends ways to construct a more effective U .S. Government framework for international disaster response.

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