

# Introducing the “PRACTICES”

## Recommended Practices for Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Foreign Military Assets (FMA) in Natural and Man-Made Disasters

*By CDR Andrea H. Cameron, Military Professor, U.S. Naval War College*

Years of experience, lessons learned, and best practices are operationalized in the new Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets (FMA) in Natural and Man-Made Disasters. Generated by members of the United Nations Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, the “Practices” are meant to augment the existing humanitarian guidelines. This article will explain how these practices came about, describe the five focus areas of the humanitarian response cycle, and relate why it is important to humanitarian action going forward.

### The Need for the Practices

Much has evolved in civil-military coordination over the years. Experiences in both natural disasters and complex emergencies have resulted in lessons that can enhance the existing guidelines. Observing this phenomenon, Ambassador Toni Frisch, Chair of the Consultative Group on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, identified the need to supplement the existing guidelines. With support from the Consultative Group, a drafting committee was formed that collected ideas and prepared the supplemental information. This drafting committee included members from member states, non-governmental organizations, the ICRC/IFRC, UN agencies, and academia. The many drafts were reviewed by a larger, rolling advisory group providing input and revision. As part of the UN Secretariat, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) chaired the committees to consolidate and reconcile the collective input of the Consultative Group. The Practices were released September 2018.

The Practices do not replace the four existing guidelines. The purpose is to augment these guidelines with information gained from the field. The Oslo Guidelines, MCDA Guidelines, IASC Reference Paper, and IASC Non-Binding Guidelines on the use of Armed Escorts for Humanitarian Convoys

still stand as overarching guidance. These Practices act as a ready reference for all parts of the community involved in civil-military coordination: the humanitarian community, military community, and civilian governments. According to Michael Marx, UN Senior Civil-Military Coordination Advisor, “the Practices were never meant to replace the existing guidelines, they are meant to strengthen the Oslo guidelines to reflect how we contextually operate today.” While a range of humanitarian activities informed this effort, the guidance in the Practices specifically addresses humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord) in natural hazards and technological or man-made hazards.

Key themes from the existing guidelines permeate the new Practices. With affected people at the center of response, they reiterate the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Also, humanitarian assistance shall continue to be offered at no cost to and in support of the affected state. These Practices specifically apply to the use of foreign military assets and do not address the use of domestic forces. Finally, they are intended to be non-binding, aspirational, and context-specific. This new guidance carries forward the existing guidelines with some specific key practices and intended outcomes. Figure 1 shows the Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination within the Humanitarian Response Cycle.

### Five Focus Areas of the Practices

The Practices introduce the humanitarian response cycle with five focus areas. Within the cycle, military support to humanitarian action is described as areas of preparedness, deployment, employment, transition, and monitoring and evaluation. They identify the key practices of integrating FMA to support humanitarian relief operations and describe the intended outcomes when the practices are applied effectively.

The Preparedness area includes guidance, policy and doctrine; capacity and capability development; and coordinated planning and predictability. Efforts in these categories are essential groundwork prior to the need for humanitarian action. Familiarity with guidance, policy and doctrine facilitates the appropriate use of FMA in future situations. Ideally, each State builds off of key CMCoord principles and concepts to develop tailored State emergency response frameworks through a consultative process. The creation of context-specific guidance before an event gives all actors an opportunity to gain familiarity with the guidance, work with partners, express concerns, and achieve consensus prior to an emergency. Capacity and capability development includes participation in planning, simulations, and exercises. This coordination builds networks and Information Sharing among actors who would be working together during an actual event. Finally, coordinated planning and predictabil-



Figure 1. Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination within the Humanitarian Response Cycle

ity determines vulnerability, delineates appropriate roles, and identifies appropriate relief tasks for FMA. States are encouraged to articulate their principles and procedures for the use of FMA and widely disseminate this information. The preparedness area builds trust before an emergency occurs.

The Deployment area promotes tools to coordinate the efficient deployment of FMA. Deployment comprises consultation and decision making with an additional segment on comparative advantage and complimentary. Through consultation and decision making, affected States can assess anticipated needs and consider how assisting states can communicate offers of assistance with FMA. Whether offers are bilateral or international, understanding the request and receipt process provides a more consistent and predictable deployment if needed. Also, when deploying FMA, timely and specific life-saving assistance can be identified through comparative advantage and complementarity. FMA should supplement local capability, capacity, and resources—addressing identified and validated humanitarian gaps.

The Employment focus area provides the most thorough information in the Practices. This includes the appropriate use and distinction; connectivity and coordination; and Information Sharing and placing needs at the center. Appropriate use and distinction upholds the intent of all actors to act in accordance with humanitarian principles while respecting national sovereignty. Connectivity and coordination support the national response frameworks in practice. Coordination structures, for both military-to-military coordination and humanitarian-to-military coordination, enhance the efficiency of the Request for Assistance (RFA) procedures. Facilitating this dialog amongst actors also constructs a common

situational awareness in the field. Finally, Information Sharing and placing needs at the center focuses on information exchange enabling effective decision making. Reliable data helps to prioritize the most immediate needs for the affected people. Collectively, these work to deliver principled humanitarian assistance with the appropriate use of FMA.

The Transition focus area includes exit strategy planning as well as redeployment and handover. The most important part of utilizing FMA during a humanitarian crisis is identifying early how those assets redeploy in a coordinated, responsible, safe and secure way. FMA provides essential unique capabilities in

a limited deployment and exit criteria should be determined as soon as possible. Disseminating an exit strategy supports the handoff between services providers without disrupting the provision of aid. During an emergency, transition planning can be difficult, but thinking through this part of the process early helps all actors adapt accordingly.

The final focus addresses Monitoring and Evaluation. During this phase, key stakeholders are encouraged to measure shared results for collective accountability and to improve learning and innovation. Very little data are available regarding the effectiveness and impact of civil-military coordination. By developing baselines, benchmarks, and instruments, more information can be collected and evaluated. This evidence can then be used to enhance learning and encourage innovation. After-action reviews can also identify best practices that can lead to innovation in the field. As the final phase in the humanitarian response cycle, Monitoring and Evaluation thereby informs the products and processes in the Preparedness phase. This overall cycle is developed to improve humanitarian relief operations for today and tomorrow.

## The Importance of the new Practices

These Practices are the next major step in documenting the best of how we operate in principled humanitarian action. As a ready reference, they combine the foundation provided in existing guidance with the most valuable lessons through the years. By following the key practices in each of the categories we can improve our responses in the years to come. This is a significant step forward to professionalizing civil-military coordination in humanitarian response.