Introduction

The military connection to emergency management dates back to the post-World War II Civil Defense era. Over the past three decades, there has been an apparent paradigm shift in the research perception of the military and its role in disaster response. Where early disaster researchers advocated for military personnel and methods in disaster response, more recent works decry the military role in disasters. Incorporating military forces into domestic response sometimes leads to legal and political tensions centered around the debate over state sovereignty and federalism. Additionally, a sharp cultural divide furthers the gap between military and civilian organizations. Despite these issues, the U.S. military can and often does provide unparalleled response capabilities during domestic and international emergencies. As a result, state and federal military forces continue to play a significant role in large-scale response scenarios. This poster presents a summary of several combined research ventures emphasizing various aspects of military civil support operations. Through the joint lens of personal military experience and doctoral study, the ongoing research combines document analysis, personal interviews, and field work to examine the evolving role of the U.S. military in support of civil authorities during domestic and international disaster response. It further seeks to understand and explain the reasons for civil-military tensions during disasters. Finally, this research describes some of the ongoing efforts to improve military civil support operations while also advocating for enhanced research collaboration among military practitioners and university researchers.

Research Focus Areas

- Domestic Civil Support
- Defense Support of Civil Authorities
  - Disaster response
  - National Security Special Events (NSSE)
- Decision Making / Process Improvement methods
  - Operational best practices
  - Law / Policy / Strategy / Doctrine
  - Hurricane Sandy – N.Y.
  - Dual Status Commanders
- International Civil Support
- Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Response (HA/DR)
  - Law / Policy / Strategy / Doctrine
  - Civil – military tensions

Methods

- Qualitative Methods
- Document Analysis
- Interviews and Focus Groups
  - DoD
    - Office of the Secretary of Defense
    - Northern Command
    - Marine Corps
- National Guard
- Coast Guard
- Field Work

Key Points and Observations

- Federal military involvement in disaster response is reserved for “most severe” and “longest lasting” events/scenarios
- DoD → last in; first out mentality
- Defense Support of Civil Authorities
- Complex request and approval process
  - Legal considerations
    - Posse Comitatus; Insurrection Act
  - Financial considerations
    - Stafford Act; Economy Act
- Federalism vs. State Sovereignty
  - Dual Status Commander as a solution
  - Evolving and improving
    - Hurricane Katrina vs. Hurricane Sandy
- Non-Government Organizations (NGO) / DoD Tensions
  - Territorial disputes during HA/DR
  - Objectives vs. Perspectives
  - Cultural divide

- Command and control in disaster research is not the same as command and control in modern military
- Research incorrectly assumes antiquated civil-defense-era military philosophy still present in today’s military
- Practitioners also incorrectly applying “military model” to emergency response practice
- Modern military command and control doctrine/philosophy is very similar to research-supported problem-solving model

Domestic Military Command Complexities

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Hurricane Sandy and Dual Status Commanders

“Hurricane Sandy offered us a glimpse of what a complex catastrophe which spans several States and regions could look like. We will continue to mature the successful dual status command construct ... so that we will be ready to act swiftly and with unity of effort when the unthinkable happens and we are called.”

— General Charles Jacoby, Jr. (USA), Commander, US Northern Command (NORTHCOM), 20 March 2013