EXAMINING TRANSCOM’S ROLE AS A LEAD ENABLING AGENCY DURING HA/DR EVENTS OUTSIDE THE CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES

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**Introduction**

While forecasting the next conflict is fraught with uncertainty, the US Department of Defense (DOD) retains a robust logistics capability in its Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) in order to quickly respond to an array of global events. Humanitarian Logistics (HL) literature has repeatedly pronounced the importance of coordination, communication, and overall logistics capability to a successful disaster relief effort.

However, a capabilities-to-execution gap exists in that TRANSCOM is not doctrinally positioned during a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operation to be in a command and control role where its unique capabilities can be fully utilized. Four recent DOD HA/DR cases and the HL literature are analyzed to identify critical capabilities in disaster response. These capabilities are compared to the unique and organic capabilities of TRANSCOM. A model for closing the capabilities-to-execution gap is presented in which TRANSCOM acts as a functional first responder in order to quickly respond to an array of global events.

**Research Goals**

**Investigative Question 1:** Is the Joint Task Force the most appropriate command structure for OCONUS HA/DR events?

**Investigative Question 2:** Can we optimize the DoD’s response to HA/DR by further leveraging TRANSCOM and KPI/CSF identification?

**Investigative Question 3:** Does the DoD organize, train and equip to improve its position as lead enabling (supporting) agency over time?

The goal of the research is to improve the DoD’s ability as a supporting agency during major HA/DR operations.

**Results & Analysis**

Currently, the military uses the Joint Task Force and Combatant Commands as the organizational response toward HA/DR events. This approach has experienced recurring problems over the past 11 years during Operations Unified Assistance, Unified Response, Tomodachi and United Assistance.

**Methodology**

The majority of this paper’s research methodology is qualitative in nature, specifically using the Case Study Method and Grounded Theory. Yin states: “the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated” (Yin, 1984).

This seems a perfect fit for the HA/DR world and focuses on the “decisions” being made before, during and after a response. Also fitting is that “case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not populations or universes.” This, I think, aligns very well with the point of doctrine and how we position ourselves within the DoD to achieve various ends. The “ends” in HA/DR are effectiveness of response but the devil is in the details. This is perhaps why it’s so challenging to “get right.”

**Implications**

1. OCONUS HA/DR Operations are logistics Operations and require strategic airlift.

2. Sufficient Key Process Indicators and Critical Success factors are not present during these major HA/DR Operations.

3. Recurring issues related to Command and Control, information management and NGO interface are seen in the four major HA/DR responses studied.

4. The JTF establishment by OCONUS is slow to form and deliver C2.

5. TRANSCOM responds as fast or faster to major HA/DR events as the COCOMs and delivers the preponderance of relief support.

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

Command and Control, Communications and Information Management will be significant issues during the next major OCONUS HA/DR operation. Logistics Critical Success Factors and Key Process indicators will not be identified or measured both of which are critical for an efficient and effective response. The Joint Task Force will struggle for IOC while the strategic logistics effort is already underway.

TRANSCOM should gain certification as a JTF to respond to these major global events. Joint Publication 3-29 should incorporate appropriate logistics guidance and time phasing. Logistics experts should lead these major HA/DR responses. Training between DoS and DoD is inadequate for these major responses.

**DoD and DoS Interface Complexity**

**DoD and DoS Inherent HA/DR Capabilities**

**Capabilities Matrix for USG HA/DR Operations**

**4 Major HA/DR Operations**

**TRANSCOM Demonstrates Capability**

**DoD and DoS Interface Complexity**

**DoD and DoS Inherent HA/DR Capabilities**

**7 Critical Success Factors for HA/DR Operations**

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