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The New Zealand All-of-Government HADR response model provides relevant, effective, and timely interagency response to rapid-onset HADR events at the strategic and tactical level. Assessed deficiencies indicate an opportunity to enhance interagency preparedness at the operational level. Enhancing national preparedness for responding to future challenges in the South Pacific requires not only interagency cooperation but focussed and committed interagency preparedness at the operational level underpinned by unity of effort.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**ANALYZING INTERAGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR NEW ZEALAND ALL-OF-
GOVERNMENT HADR RESPONSE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Analyzing Interagency Preparedness for New Zealand All-of-Government HADR Response in the South Pacific.

Author: Major Michael Nochete DSD, New Zealand Army

Thesis: The New Zealand All-of-Government response to HADR can be more effective by enhancing interagency preparedness at the operational level through; enhancing interagency integration, improving command and control interoperability, and developing an ICT enabled common operating picture.

Discussion: The aim of this paper is to provide the reader with an assessment of New Zealand's HADR response model, highlighting the challenges of responding to South Pacific rapid-onset disasters, and informing the reader on how the New Zealand All-of-Government approach can be improved to meet these challenges.

Conclusion: New Zealand has a practiced approach to responding to HADR events in the South Pacific. The New Zealand National Security System is mature and sophisticated at the strategic level. New Zealand's lead agency in offshore disaster relief operations has become increasingly professional in its approach to what is now core business for its organization. Interagency deficiencies at the operational level rely on the professionalism and 'can-do' attitude of individuals and organizations at the tactical level to execute HADR operations successfully. To realize the potential of an All-of-Government approach to HADR response, government agencies need to develop greater unity of effort. Continued refinement of the HADR response system to develop interagency interoperability is positively tracking. However, shortfalls at the operational level still manifest into issues at the tactical level.

The shortfalls of the New Zealand All-of-Government approach are; the lack of a formal information sharing platform, a lack of operational level interagency preparedness, and the design and execution of command and control that impacts interoperability. Mitigating these weaknesses require interagency understanding and improved integration.

The New Zealand All-of-Government HADR response model provides relevant, effective, and timely interagency responses to rapid-onset HADR events at the strategic and tactical level. Enhancing national preparedness for responding to future challenges in the South Pacific requires not only interagency cooperation but unity of effort in focus and commitment to interagency preparedness at the operational level.

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Preface

New Zealand contributes to regional security within the South Pacific. A large portion of this contribution is responding to rapid-onset natural disasters that require the provision of Humanitarian Assistance and/ or Disaster Relief (HADR). I wanted to research and write a paper that assessed our All-of-Government (AoG) response to HADR events to ascertain whether we are sufficiently postured to execute timely and effective HADR operations. In so doing, I would gain a greater understanding of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) role in an AoG response, satisfy a curiosity about whether we are doing all we can to prepare for HADR operations, and provide recommendations to set the conditions for improved responsiveness.

The first part of this paper outlines the New Zealand context and AoG procedures for HADR response in the South Pacific. The second part provides a framework to assess the NZ HADR response model for rapid-onset natural disasters in the region. The third part of the paper reviews the NZ response to the Solomon Islands flooding in 2014 and the 2015 response to Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu. The review indicates how well the NZ National Security System enables an effective and timely HADR response. The final part of this paper outlines how the NZ AoG response to HADR can be more efficient in the South Pacific by enhancing the current HADR system to develop greater interagency unity of effort.

I would like to thank Dr. Eric Shibuya, Professor of National Security Affairs, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, for his mentorship and support throughout the writing of this paper, and my wife Sharon for her understanding and support throughout my time at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

Introduction

“One of the most important responsibilities of any government is to ensure the security and territorial integrity of the nation, including protecting the institutions that sustain confidence, good governance, and prosperity. For this to happen, the country's national security machinery has to be strategically focused, coordinated, accountable... and responsive to any challenges that arise.”¹

New Zealand's National Security System, May 2011

New Zealand has a standing responsibility, in conjunction with Australia, for security in the South Pacific (See Appendix 1). The region is peaceful and does not suffer from interstate threats. In this sense, the traditional security issues of armed conflict are less of a probability than the destabilizing nature of rapid-onset natural disasters.¹ The diverse geography represented in this region from low-lying atolls to mountainous islands with volcanoes, along with the yearly threat of tropical cyclones, make this region one of the most vulnerable environments in the world. Encapsulated in the South Pacific region are countries that are self-governing dependencies of New Zealand. Under Sections 9(1)(a) and (b) of the Defence Act 1990, New Zealand's armed forces are authorized to perform any public service; or provide assistance to the civil power in time of emergency, whether in New Zealand or elsewhere.² The Defence Act allows the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) to support a New Zealand All-of-Government (AoG) response to a rapid-onset natural disaster in the South Pacific through the provision of Humanitarian Assistance and/or Disaster Relief (HADR).

The NZDF defines Humanitarian Assistance (HA) as “the use of available military resources to assist or complement the efforts of responsible civil actors or specialized civil humanitarian

¹ The terms rapid-onset and slow-onset are widely used to differentiate between disasters that occur with little warning (such as earthquakes and tsunamis) and those that develop over a longer period (such as a drought), yet there is no accepted dividing line between rapid-onset and slow-onset disasters. This paper focuses on rapid-onset as the ability to respond to rapid-onset disasters builds the capacity to respond to slow-onset disasters.

organizations in fulfilling their primary responsibility to alleviate human suffering.”³ Additional doctrinal guidance states that “[s]hould a military force undertake HA tasks, responsibility should revert to the appropriate civilian agency at the earliest opportunity.”⁴ Disaster Relief is defined in British doctrine as the “organized response to alleviate the situation resulting from a catastrophe, the aims of which are to save life and lessen suffering, limit damage and restore essential services to a level that enables local authorities to cope.”⁵ For this paper, HADR will be considered in a single context as the early stages of disaster relief will incorporate humanitarian assistance.

The NZDF does not maintain an allocated standalone contingency ready element. Rather, when requested to mobilize, the NZDF brigades the required assets to meet the specific situation dependent response. The NZDF has contingency plans and metrics it reports against to monitor preparedness for those contingencies. As an organization that trains, prepares, and operates the NZDF can effectively function in this manner. Other government agencies (OGA) primarily ‘operate’ as they generally do not have the capacity to ‘train and prepare’ in the same nature as the NZDF. The difference in capacity requires a coordinated framework to leverage the differing strengths of government agencies.

The National Security System document of 2011 sets out a framework for how New Zealand Government agencies work together to coordinate and respond to national security issues,⁶ and includes regional disasters. The Official’s Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) designates the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) as the lead agency to coordinate a response to a disaster in the South Pacific.⁷ The willingness of government agencies to cooperate is not in question; however, the readiness and ability of agencies to integrate for a response are another matter.

The New Zealand National Security System has a proven capability to respond to regional natural disasters. However, improvements can be made to the capacity to respond. As the future operating environment in the South Pacific becomes more congested and complex, better synergy and greater interagency preparedness through unity of effort will be required to support government HADR coordination and response. The New Zealand All-of-Government response to HADR can be more effective by enhancing interagency preparedness at the operational level through; enhancing interagency integration, improving command and control interoperability, and developing an ICT enabled common operating picture.

This paper will use two case studies to investigate whether the New Zealand (NZ) model for HADR response provides timely and effective relief operations - the NZ response to the Solomon Islands' flooding in 2014 and the relief effort in response to Tropical Cyclone Pam that struck Vanuatu in 2015. These examples provide relevant insights into the effectiveness of the NZ HADR response model and enable final analysis for recommendations to improve the NZ AoG system. Before reviewing the case studies, it is pertinent to understand the South Pacific operating environment and the NZ AoG HADR response enterprise.

South Pacific Operating Environment

Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz note that the number of worldwide natural disasters “has increased in recent decades, from approximately 100 to 150 a year in the early 1980s to an annual average of 392 during the 2000 to 2009 decade.”⁸ The threat of natural disasters in the South Pacific is increasing,⁹ and despite the required assistance for Pacific Island countries being variable, they are inevitable. Natural disaster commentators forecast that the “frequency and intensity of [rapid]-onset climate-related natural disasters, particularly storms, hurricanes, cyclones, and flooding will increase in the future as a result of global warming.”¹⁰ Rising sea

levels will predominantly affect the world's population who live in at-risk coastal areas.¹¹

Islands in the South Pacific are just a few metres above existing sea levels and are particularly vulnerable.

This vulnerability has led to the increased recognition of the need to respond quickly and efficiently to disaster areas. HADR responses require a rapid mobilisation of assets to deliver assistance, security, and protect lives. In response to the trend of increasing natural disasters, there has been a corresponding proliferation of international humanitarian organizations. "The probable increase in the frequency, severity, and impact of [rapid]-onset natural disasters will challenge both civilian humanitarian agencies and military forces that are likely to deploy in support of disaster response."¹² The modern humanitarian system is more complex with numerous humanitarian organizations that have different purposes, operating procedures, capacities, and cultures. Coordination of these various participants is difficult and will likely become more so in the future as increasing numbers of individuals and organizations seek to respond to emergencies. The question is whether the current NZ AoG response model for disaster relief can meet the challenges of a region in which there are more natural disasters, a congested operating environment, and the added pressure of awareness through social media.

Social media coverage of disasters increases public awareness and, therefore, political pressure for a rapid response. Governments that are perceived to respond slowly are vulnerable to criticism. It is in this context of increasing numbers of disasters, growing demand for responses, and a complex world of humanitarian action that this paper seeks to determine whether NZ Government agencies are postured to provide timely and effective HADR response in the South Pacific.

United Nations guidelines for humanitarian and military professionals dealing with civil–military matters state that the use of military forces should be a last resort in responding to natural disasters.¹³ However, in many countries, predominantly in Asia, military forces are the ‘first resort’ in a time of disaster.¹⁴ Military forces have capabilities and readiness levels that are ideal to support major disaster relief efforts. The NZDF can arguably project a wide set of capabilities more quickly than civilian actors. The role of national military forces in a disaster response varies from country to country. Wiley Thompson notes that “[i]n most countries civil protection or national disaster management organisations are civilian-led but include military and police forces in their governance and planning and rely on these forces when civilian capacity is insufficient to respond.”¹⁵ Internationally, military predominance in HADR is largely for domestic disaster response. The efficacy of military response in the initial stages of a disaster is due to the military having the equipment and ability to respond rapidly.

Specifically, military transportation, communications, logistics, and medical support are often of most immediate use when responding to a disaster. Military forces have organic life-support systems that decrease their dependence on limited host nation resources. Affected populations commonly appreciate the immediacy of a military response in the initial stages of an HADR operation. However, as the immediate requirements subside, the military’s relative advantage over civil agencies decreases. The diminishing advantage over time highlights why the NZDF, although a key enabler, should not be the lead agency in responding to rapid-onset natural disasters now, or in the future.

The NZ HADR Response Enterprise

Within New Zealand, there are several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and multiple government agencies that track and forecast possible disaster areas. These include the government's lead agency for regional disasters, MFAT, and the supporting agencies of NZDF - the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MOH), the New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS), and the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management (MCDEM). Although annual exercises occur, the coordination between operational and tactical level practitioners during periods of non-emergency appears insufficient. The duplication of information gathering, varying degrees of preparedness, and disparity in knowledge between agencies when an emergency occurs supports this perception.

In May 2011, after a Department of the Prime Ministers Cabinet review of NZ's national security interests, the NZ Government released the *New Zealand National Security System*, which defines NZ's national security interests and describes how government agencies are to work together to manage and respond to national security issues. The *National Security System* is reviewed "from time to time, to ensure that it remains current and relevant."¹⁶ This strategic-level guidance is the foundation for AoG coordination for HADR missions. It is the operational level that processes strategic direction to enable the tactical level to execute timely and effective relief operations. Awareness of this framework at the tactical level is negligible. The lack of knowledge about the whole system prevents tactical practitioners at the lower command levels from understanding the decisions that facilitate or hinder response operations. This evaluation suggests that there is an opportunity to improve the NZ model. This paper seeks to provide additional considerations at the operational level to support a contemporary NZ AoG HADR framework.

In the event of a natural disaster, MFAT through the Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC), leads an AoG or multi-agency response.¹⁷ The ECC is the operational level command platform for interagency coordination. The Emergency Task Force (ETF), “is a formal grouping within the national security system for responses to offshore natural disasters”¹⁸ and provides strategic oversight. (See Appendix 2 for Terms of Reference). Due to the different types of natural disasters, a single approach to rapid-onset events is impractical. MFAT essentially has three options when responding to a natural disaster. These are the provision of funding, technical assistance, and relief supplies. The last two options, and in particular, technical assistance, requires interagency coordination. When MFAT identifies an impending disaster, it is empowered to establish the ECC and mobilize a reconnaissance team from various agencies to support the local Consular Post. Once a request for assistance is received from a government, MFAT coordinates with supporting agencies to prepare for and deploy a relief effort.

The ETF is chaired by MFAT and includes representatives from NZ Government Departments, the Committee for International Development (representing NGOs), and representatives from France and Australia. The coordination of relief efforts in the South Pacific is through the relevant NZ High Commission under direction from the Wellington-based MFAT controller.¹⁹ To enable preparedness, the ETF (through the ECC) meets at the start and end of the annual Pacific cyclone season to review lessons identified for areas of improvement. The NZ National Security System has developed since 2011 into a mature framework. Within this framework, MFAT has developed a professional approach that is underpinned by review and adaptation. As such, an examination of the NZ AoG HADR model is incomplete without acknowledging the implementation of lessons learned and subsequent operating developments.

Recent NZ HADR Improvements

Government of New Zealand (GoNZ) strategic direction facilitates best practice within the NZ AoG HADR model and leads to the use of formal agreements to clarify response contributions. In 2013, Shelly Biswell reported on the reasons why some government agencies are consistently high performers and the traits required for agencies in *Getting to Great*.²⁰ Of particular interest is that Biswell states “[t]he best agencies understand what others are trying to achieve and how others can help and then work to align others’ interests to deliver the desired results.”²¹ The interagency coordination in 2013 that led to the formal agreement on *Offshore Deployment Guidelines*²² reflects the professional approach MFAT has developed since becoming the lead agency for off-shore natural disasters. This document updates the 2010 *Guidelines for Responding to Natural Disasters in the Pacific*. Aspects of the original 2010 document are extant, but the update refines the NZ HADR enterprise system in an attempt to develop interagency interoperability.²³ The update provides terms of reference for support, reporting procedures, and attempts to clarify a command chain.²⁴

The *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* are developed into an Action Plan for the particular situation by an interagency planning group in the ECC. The Action Plan is finalized and agreed upon at the strategic level (ETF).²⁵ Should the magnitude of the disaster warrant, the “Official’s Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination (ODESC) may be activated to provide [governance] oversight of the ETF coordinated response.”²⁶

Outside of the cyclone season, MFAT conducts ECC training, briefs ETF representatives on lessons learned during the previous cyclone season, conducts a pre-season cyclone brief, and conducts a scenario based exercise.²⁷ These actions all reflect best practice for a high performing organization. In Biswell’s words, “[t]he best agencies expect and support ongoing improvement

and adaptation through measurement, testing and review.”²⁸ The strategic level guidance provides a framework for timely and effective HADR response. However, the lack of awareness of this framework at the tactical level suggests a disconnect at the operational level. To determine whether this perception is justified, a framework is required to enable assessment.

Framework to Assess Interagency Preparedness

The *NZ National Security System* document states that “[w]ithout appropriate performance indicators, it is difficult to measure the success of the national security agencies...[and impedes] the search for efficiency improvements.”²⁹ It goes further to state that the “experience of systems thinking in the engineering world may offer some indicators.”³⁰ Systems thinking in engineering proposes that successful systems typically have five attributes of fitness: coherence across all elements, connectedness between elements and with other systems, completeness in that it includes every significant component, clarity of understanding about the total system, and consistency regarding processes and standards applied.³¹ This paper defines the desired attributes of an AoG HADR system as follows:

Coherence across all elements: Organizational consistency in preparation.

Connectedness between elements and with other systems: Ability to share information and leverage interagency information collection opportunities.

Completeness in that it includes every significant component: Organizational structure of the response-contingent.

Clarity of understanding about the total system: Interagency awareness of other agencies capabilities and the *Offshore Deployment Guidelines*.

Consistency regarding processes and standards applied: Interagency procedures for deployment, information flow, and responsibility levels (chain of command).

By reflecting on observations from recent operations, one can better assess how prepared the NZ AoG HADR network was to respond, thereby providing an indication of how timely and effective the response was. It also aids in validating or disproving the perceived disconnect at the operational level.

Case Studies

The case studies do not directly assess the key aspect of differences in organizational culture. Addressing these differences are beyond the scope of this paper; however, it acknowledges that the organizational culture permeates in an organization's members and is hard to change. Replacing organizational perceptions and bias with a focus on accomplishing interagency synergy is a leadership challenge. Organizational leaders must identify cultural differences and work toward a resolution that will alleviate friction and foster a sense of cooperation. Successful unity of effort requires collaboration, coordination, and mutual understanding to attain a common goal, in this instance, efficient HADR response. The following case studies and analysis attempt to identify opportunities to better prepare GoNZ agencies for integration during a HADR response. Though not directly addressed, cultural differences can be ameliorated through developing interagency preparedness.

Review of these operations reflects successful HADR outcomes. However, the question is: How could they have been better? The successful deployment and execution of the relief efforts are examples of the experienced NZ HADR model. Review of NZDF lessons identified in after-action documentsⁱⁱ indicate operational level deficiencies that can be addressed to enhance interagency preparedness for rapid-onset natural disaster relief efforts. A lack of access to OGA after-action reviews has meant a reliance on NZDF documentation. As this paper looks at

ⁱⁱ Some observations reported in in post activity reports could not be used due to the security classification that is placed on information. The specific observations referred to in this paper are either unclassified or have been cleared for use by the J8 Branch of Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand.

broader NZ AoG interagency preparedness, research focused on aspects external to the NZDF that had an impact at the tactical level. By examining issues that manifested at the tactical level, this paper can extrapolate information to identify shortfalls and areas for improvement at the operational level. Rationalizing what reflects a possible gap in preparedness, as opposed to the inevitable friction that is inherent in disaster relief operations, determines the most pertinent and valid observations.

Solomon Islands 2014

Over the period 3-5 April 2014, the Solomon Islands experienced heavy rainfall and flash flooding that destroyed homes on the banks of the Mataniko River in Honiara and claimed 22 lives. On 5 April 2014, the Government of the Solomon Islands (GoSI) announced a state of emergency for Honiara City and the Guadalcanal Province and requested international assistance.³² The GoNZ agreed to provide support on 6 April 2014, and the MFAT ETF coordinated New Zealand's relief efforts. The NZDF supported this effort through the provision of a C-130 aircraft and a Joint Reconnaissance Team (JRT) that deployed on 7 April 2014. The support increased over the next ten days with a second C-130 flight, the deployment of environmental health specialists, and additional relief supplies. In addition to MFAT and NZDF, the response also included elements from MOH, NZ Police, and various NGOs.

The AoG initial assessment team coordinated with GoSI representatives to identify response priorities. Overwhelmed hospital resources and the damage to the Matakino Bridge shaped the NZ response. Relief Web reported that the NZ contribution to relief and recovery efforts totaled \$2.6 million.³³ A Bailey bridge was sent from NZ to help maintain transport links while the Matakino Bridge underwent repair. Two health teams deployed on separate rotations to assist the local authorities and included emergency management doctors and nurses, logisticians, and

support staff.³⁴ Although the NZDF response effort concluded on 18 April 2014, MFAT continued to coordinate and provide support to the GoSI. This case study is an example of a small scale response. The determinant of the scale of response is not the magnitude of disaster but the requirements of the supported nation. Despite the successful provision of relief supplies, medical aid, and engineering support this case study identifies areas of opportunity to enhance interagency preparedness for responding to sudden-onset disasters.

Coherence across all elements. The MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* are reviewed and updated annually. The NZDF contingency plan to support disaster relief also undergoes continual review. Despite these reviews, the initial stage of the response lacked clarity about the legal status of initially deployed elements, no detailed media plan, and no clarity in the formal support arrangements and relationships with the Consular Post and GoSI.³⁵ These deficiencies indicate a lack of coherent interagency coordination in preparation. Leaders at the strategic level conceive this type of information, but it is refined and implemented through the operational level. This lack of organizational consistency in preparation during periods of non-emergency highlights a deficiency in coherence across GoNZ HADR agencies.

An observation regarding the risk of deploying an ad hoc JRT and subsequent recommendation of establishing a certification process to prepare personnel, are worth noting.³⁶ The MFAT *Guidelines for Responding to Natural Disasters in the Pacific* directs early identification of reconnaissance elements and requires individuals to be sufficiently trained and equipped to operate effectively.³⁷ The extent of training within the NZDF and caliber of personnel is arguably sufficient to ensure the provision of effective support. The lack of certification may simply have been a symptom of operational tempo or lack of manning, but the observation nonetheless highlights a disparity in organizational preparedness.

Connectedness between elements and with other systems. A key enabler during the operation was an ad-hoc arrangement to fuse information management and product development such as unclassified geographic products.³⁸ One observation that noted “there was a critical lack of fusion and information management among [agencies] in theater, and any [suggestion] of a fusion capability [provoked] immediate interest”³⁹ indicates a shortfall in the connectedness between GoNZ HADR agencies at an operational level.

The review of the Solomon Islands response by headquarters Deployable Joint Interagency Task Force notes that familiarity of the affected nations emergency/ disaster plan is a key enabler to inform planning and to engage with appropriate officials, cluster members,ⁱⁱⁱ and provincial leaders.⁴⁰ It is not clear who provided the GoSI Disaster Management Plan, but this observation highlights the importance of leveraging interagency information collection opportunities. Engaging at the right level with the right people enables the collection of information to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the GoSI and allows Consular Post staff to identify high impact donor opportunities.⁴¹ The majority of GoNZ HADR agencies do not have the capacity to maintain current emergency/ disaster plans and up to date contact lists for key actors in the South Pacific. However, MFAT, through the International Development Group (IDG),^{iv} and its memorandum of understanding with CDEM elements operating in the Pacific, can develop a consolidated contact list that can enable faster situational awareness of a country’s emergency management plan and key contacts. Developing an interagency collaborative data portal as a shared repository of information will lead to cost savings, reduce duplication of effort, and increase the situational awareness and timeliness of HADR efforts.

ⁱⁱⁱ The UN cluster approach is the principle construct utilized by the humanitarian community to define roles and responsibilities within the different functional areas of disaster response activities.

^{iv} In 2009 when NZ AID was re-absorbed by MFAT it fell under the International Development Group. The NZ AID name is still associated with various programs in the South Pacific.

Completeness in that it includes every significant element. This case study did not provide observations on the structure of the response elements. The lack of negative observations suggests a balanced structure that met the requirements of the situation. As such, there is no opportunity for further analysis.

Clarity of understanding about the total system. An observation that “[NZDF] employment before, during, and after an HADR event was not well understood by [OGA]”⁴² shows a lack of interagency awareness. Additional observations indicate that MFAT personnel on the ground did not understand the role of the NZDF JRT or the capabilities that could enhance Consular Post efforts.⁴³ Similar observations stated that NZDF personnel had a “shallow understanding of Consular Post structures and responsibilities.”⁴⁴ These observations indicate not only a lack of interagency knowledge but also suggest a lack of cognizance of the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines*. The responsibility to ameliorate the issues identified rests at the operational level.

Consistency regarding processes and standards applied. A positive observation was the use of the NZ High Commission (HICOM) as a central headquarters for key stakeholders.⁴⁵ This arrangement allowed open information flow, timely coordination, and streamlining of key stakeholder participation in ETF telephone conferences. The corresponding recommendation urges NZDF to engage with MFAT to normalize this arrangement.⁴⁶ The implementation of this proposal, as shown during Vanuatu in 2015, displays the potential for enhancing interagency preparedness through established procedures.

Vanuatu, 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam

Operation Tropical Cyclone Pam (TC PAM) is the MFAT led NZ AoG response to the category five cyclone that struck Vanuatu on 13-14 March 2015. TC PAM caused widespread damage and loss of life throughout Vanuatu. In response to the cyclone, MFAT coordinated an initial deployment utilizing NZDF aviation assets followed by the HMNZS CANTERBURY. New Zealand's commitment was part of a significant France, Australia, and New Zealand (FRANZ)^v contribution. Other nations present during the operation included Fiji, Japan, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands. The first 36 hours of the operation focused on supporting the HICOM evacuation of registered New Zealand and approved foreign nationals.⁴⁷ After the evacuation, the focus shifted to developing a better understanding of the needs of the outer islands and the delivery of immediate aid. On 18-19 March, the Government of Vanuatu (GoVan) divided relief efforts along provincial boundaries and allocated sectors to FRANZ partners based on GoVan priorities. As a result of Australian and French forces having pre-emptively sailed to the area, the NZ contingent was allocated the Shepherd Islands group of Shefa Province.⁴⁸

The NZ response included a Royal New Zealand Air Force B200 King Air used to transport aid coordinators and conduct recon flights to assess damage and help plan relief efforts. The HMNZS CANTERBURY deployed with 150 tons of supplies to address immediate needs such as providing potable water, food, hygiene packs, and materials to repair buildings.⁴⁹ Army engineers within the contingent reinstated water supply to communities, cleared debris, and repaired roads. The NZ Navy supported the NZ Red Cross by moving 15 tons of stores to neighboring islands. Coordination of the NZ AoG response was in conjunction with GoVan representatives who were on site with aid teams.⁵⁰

^v FRANZ is a trilateral disaster relief cooperation agreement for the South Pacific.

The AoG response resulted in “New Zealand provid[ing] \$5 million of initial relief, deploy[ment] [of] a multi-disciplinary team of health, emergency management, fire service, and defence personnel.”⁵¹ Overall, the operation was considered “extremely successful, demonstrating a high degree of inter-departmental cooperation, sound civil-military cooperation, and support to GoVan national objectives and disaster relief priorities.”⁵² Despite the overall perception of success, there were frustrations reported at the tactical level that stemmed from operational deficiencies.

Coherence across all elements. At the tactical level, frustration stemmed from the length of time taken to make the decision to deploy, the type of support, and the composition of the task units, as this was considered excessive considering the amount of warning that a tropical cyclone was going to strike Vanuatu.⁵³ GoNZ strategic direction places emphasis on the operational level to coordinate disaster response. The frustration indicates an issue in reconnaissance and planning to support decision making. The ECC is mandated to deploy an initial assessment team. The short notice nature of initial assessment requires organizational consistency in preparation to facilitate timely situational awareness. Despite the eventual success of the HADR operation, these observations indicate areas for improvement to enhance interagency preparedness through coordination at the operational level.

An observation on equipment and procedures states that the NZDF environmental health specialists have “a close relationship with the NZ Medical Assistance Team (NZ MAT) from MOH.”⁵⁴ It goes further to say that the tactical level has established standard operating procedures and reporting formats and recommends that they should be reflected and standardized at the operational level.⁵⁵ This coordination is an example of cohesion at the tactical level, which

if consolidated at the operational level, would enhance interagency preparedness for a HADR response to rapid-onset natural disasters.

Connectedness between elements and with other systems. A lack of pre-deployment briefs generated a large number of observations.⁵⁶ The NZDF is one of the few government organizations that ‘trains and prepares’ as opposed to primarily focusing on ‘operating’. This fact means that the NZDF is in a position to leverage interagency information collection opportunities to develop country briefing packs. The lessons collection activity noted that a member of the NZDF contingent generated a Contingency Pack using information from the Lonely Planet publication and maps from Google earth.⁵⁷ As indicated in the Solomon Islands case study, MFAT can act as the lead agency responsible for coordinating a shared repository of information. Appropriate government agencies could then assist to prepare and maintain Contingency Packs for deployment briefs and the development of situational awareness. This operational level process would significantly enhance interagency coordination and preparedness.

Completeness in that it includes every significant element. An observation made during the reconnaissance phase states that government agencies had to lobby for limited seats on an aircraft.⁵⁸ The failure to organize the structure of the reconnaissance team to support the local Consular Post before the event, indicates a lack of interagency coordination. A ‘one size fits all’ approach is not suitable for HADR response operations. However, central coordination at the operational level to establish a structure early, prevents wasted effort at the tactical level.

In the information age, an essential aspect of an HADR response is a media plan. Some observations report it appeared that the NZDF worked independently of MFAT during media events.⁵⁹ An indicator of interagency preparedness in the contemporary environment with social

media is a unified media plan. Refinement of the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* can address this issue by establishing the coordination of media events through the Consular Post, or the location of senior MFAT representatives. This approach supports a response contingent that integrates media elements from OGA as part of the organizational structure. Centralized coordination through integration enables a unified AoG interagency approach.

Clarity of understanding about the total system. Several observations made mention of the lack of understanding by OGA as to how the NZDF operates and how this creates friction.⁶⁰ A significant risk area is the Real Life Support (RLS) that OGA expects the NZDF to provide.⁶¹ Without formal clarity of the responsibility for RLS, this issue will continue to be a risk. The NZDF is the ideal agency to provide RLS in an NZ AoG response when providing the major elements of technical assistance in a large scale setting. Close liaison, mutual understanding, and formal policies among government agencies are necessary to facilitate this requirement. Similar observations were seen in the lessons identified from the HADR support to the Solomon Islands in 2014. The repeated lack of OGA awareness and expectation highlights areas of weakness that coordination at the operational level can improve.

A statement that the “NZDF is not used to the concept of supporting MFAT, NGOs, and [OGA]”⁶² is worth discussing. The observation goes on to state that “until there is a common doctrine for all agencies HADR will remain a disorganized process where the NZDF is a means to enact an effect but has little or no control in the way it is tasked.”⁶³ Common doctrine requires interagency understanding. Memorandums of understanding exist but focus on linking different government department outputs to funding. Refinement of the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* would mitigate a lot of the identified issues in these case studies and would set the conditions for greater interagency preparedness.

Consistency regarding processes and standards applied: During mobilization, MFAT and OGA arrived at the Devonport Naval Base, unannounced to the ships crew, expecting embarkation for passage to Vanuatu.⁶⁴ The lack of coordination caused the ship's load team to work 36 hours non-stop to meet deployment deadlines.⁶⁵ The lack of procedural awareness, or miscommunication, highlights a coordination issue at the operational level that had a significant impact at the tactical level. Ensuring OGA liaison officers are embedded and trained within the ECC before a disaster occurs, will prevent this type of miscommunication.

An operational level issue that manifested at the tactical level was the uncertainty of command chain responsibility. "By default, the NZDF appeared to [absorb] the NZ MAT, NZ Fire Service, and Urban Search and Rescue...as it was not clear who was in command of these agencies."⁶⁶ This issue around the status of command is an area that the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* specifically seeks to address. Ensuring liaison officers can speak for their agencies during the development of the Action Plan in the ECC can mitigate command chain confusion. Familiarity with the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* at the operational and tactical level would lessen the confusion and friction experienced during HADR execution.

Additional comments state that the OGA expected the NZDF to provide RLS and other resources such as fuel and transport.⁶⁷ The noted issues appear to stem from a lack of interagency preparedness at the operational level. Addressing these issues can be done during periods of non-emergency, through coordination to clarify complementary capabilities, roles, areas of responsibility, levels of support, and command and control arrangements. At the very least, common user logistics and command integration should be addressed in the ECC during the development of the Action Plan.

Key Findings

The analysis of observations made during the Solomon Islands and TC PAM responses reflect relevant relief efforts facilitated by strategic level guidance that enables mission command at the operational level to adapt to specific situations, and the professional ‘can-do’ attitude of practitioners at the tactical level. Planning and execution differences between government agencies, a lack of clarity regarding command and control responsibilities, and confusion over reporting requirements all served to hinder the initial deployment. The issues identified in the case studies indicate that the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* developed by the ETF need further refinement and distribution across GoNZ agencies. The key findings are summarized to show three operational level areas for improvement within the NZ AoG HADR model. The key findings from this case study are:

Lack of operational level interagency preparedness. There is a lack of clarity in understanding the total system. The total system is the government agencies involved in HADR in the Pacific and the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines*. The uncertainty in how each government agency operates, the capabilities they provide, and the preferred methods of employment, further demonstrate a lack of awareness. The lack of familiarity with deployment requirements and arrangements for RLS, or common user logistics, show a lack of awareness and consistency regarding processes and standards applied to preparedness. The deficiency in interagency integration at the operational level, affects AoG capacity and unity of effort.

Collective engagement through simulated exercises is a key platform to practice, revise, and enhance command and control. The Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) is embedded across government agencies to provide a common language and framework to operate in for emergency management. Annual engagement is appropriate for agencies to maintain

currency at that level. Issues arise when integration at the operational level occurs without previous interagency experience. The CIMS framework provides a foundation, but the differences in operating cultures between agencies become a source of friction and leads to disconnects that affect coherence across the HADR enterprise. Greater engagement would not only aid interagency integration as cultural differences are identified and overcome, but will also assist in clarifying command and control responsibilities.

Design and execution of command and control that impacts interoperability.

Deficiencies in pre-determined levels of responsibility for the NZ AoG response contingent supports this conclusion. The framework is available at the operational level to mitigate this issue as it is the ECC, through an interagency planning group, which develops the Action Plan for a response. The analysis that leads to the Action Plan needs to include greater consideration of the levels of authority to facilitate seamless integration at the tactical level. The issue may reside with internal agency methods of operation. However, consistency across agencies regarding command integration and information flow will enhance interagency preparedness and the execution of HADR operations.

Lack of a formal information sharing platform. A lack of shared situational awareness is evident and exasperated by not leveraging the information collection opportunities of OGA. This deficiency manifests in the limited coherence across all elements of the NZ HADR response enterprise and also reflects shortcomings in organizational consistency in preparation. The absence of a shared repository of information hinders unity of effort and impacts the timely development of situational awareness. A collaborative network architecture with an operational data portal will ensure current information is available throughout the disaster response enterprise.

The key findings from these case studies indicate areas for improvement within the NZ AoG HADR framework. Since being allocated lead agency for offshore disaster response, MFAT has become increasingly professional through harnessing institutional knowledge and experiential learning. As with any system, the implementation phase takes time to embed procedures, identify shortfalls, and develop enhancements. Refinement of the MFAT *Offshore Deployment Guidelines* is likely as MFATs adaptive process of experiential learning evolves during the cyclone off-season. The case studies, although only a small capture of data, indicate opportunities to enhance the NZ AoG HADR system. The following recommendations are not a judgment of any single agency, rather, they are reflective of an opportunity for the GoNZ to enhance its interagency capacity and identify aspects of cross-agency synergy that can be leveraged to enhance the AoG HADR response.

Recommendations

In disaster response, the ‘fog of relief’ created by confusion and competition has the potential to cause those in need to suffer. The essence of enhancing the NZ AoG HADR framework is to develop greater unity of effort. These recommendations target the operational level; however, it is acknowledged that the strategic and tactical level can influence their implementation and efficacy. MFAT processes provide the platform to address certain issues identified in the case studies, and so the following recommendations are enhancements for further consideration.

Enhance interagency integration at the operational level. Operational level coordination to refine expectations, standards, and processes will aid in enhancing interagency capacity. One way of achieving this is through joint contingency planning between GoNZ departments before a disaster occurs. The process is in place with yearly activities, but the frequency is insufficient to bridge cultural differences. Participants need to be at the operational level. Ideally, the

individuals would be the identified liaison officers that are embedded when the ECC is operating. This approach not only increases preparedness but also has the potential to increase trust and mutual understanding between the various participants. Greater engagement will also assist in addressing cultural differences.

A secondment to MFAT Pacific Division (International Development Group) during the cyclone season, or longer, will allow OGA to understand MFAT procedures, processes, and culture. Secondments are not universally palatable due to the additional strain on staffing levels from the losing agency, so an alternative is for representatives to attend MFAT ECC training. This engagement would provide the platform for OGA representatives to brief participants on their particular agency to spread awareness of their capabilities and procedures. Secondments, ECC training, and exercise participation will enhance interagency capacity and aid in improving command and control interoperability.

Improve command and control interoperability. By addressing the opportunities to enhance interagency integration, the system would also improve command and control interoperability. Embedding a liaison officer in the ECC during training and relief efforts will aid unity of effort and command integration. Greater consideration during the development of the Action Plan can mitigate the issue of command responsibilities seen in the case studies. A standing command agreement within the *MFAT Offshore Deployment Guidelines* is not practical. However, highlighting possible options based on previous response efforts would enable faster decision making and enhance responsiveness. The coordination needed to execute this requires a common operating language.

The CIMS provides a government-wide framework for emergency response coordination and a common language. Better awareness and training are needed to embed CIMS. It is an agency

responsibility to train their employees to work within CIMS. MFAT conducts CIMS foundation training which may be useful for identified liaison officers to attend. Greater engagement and integration of government agencies can enhance interagency capacity and improve command and control interoperability. A collaborative network architecture with an operational data portal will further enhance interoperability through information sharing.

Develop an ICT enabled common operating picture. There is no information sharing platform for agencies during periods of non-emergency. This deficiency leads to the duplication of information gathering and a different knowledge start state for agencies when an emergency occurs. A way to overcome this information disparity is to develop a shared knowledge repository. An ideal solution would be a common access network managed through interoperable ICT. The difficulty of this solution is the predictable conflict over who pays to build and then maintain this network, who administers the information, and who is ultimately responsible for it.

The NZDF “describes itself as being in its infancy in terms of strategic information and knowledge management, [however], [t]here is a high-level awareness of the importance of information for NZDF’s future success and the NZDF is working with other agencies to further enhance these practices.”⁶⁸ An AOG intelligence fusion cell is beyond the scope of this paper; however, at the operational level, there are cross-agency opportunities. An example is leveraging the information collection opportunities of one agency and combining it with the information management experience of another, while a third agency can use its experience in product development. An unclassified collaborative network architecture with an operational data portal would enable such a venture and is achievable through operational level coordination. For example, an open source website for sharing information with disaster response practitioners in

the Pacific.^{vi} MFAT as the lead agency for offshore disaster response is well placed to be the moderator of the website. The information collection opportunities available to MFAT and MCDEM in the Pacific can facilitate a shared knowledge repository that OGA can access to ensure shared situational awareness and preparedness for a disaster response.

Conclusions

The NZ AoG HADR response model provides relevant, effective, and timely interagency response to rapid-onset natural disasters at the strategic and tactical level. While GoNZ has developed a progressive approach to comprehensive HADR management and provides a proven model for responding effectively to disasters, there are opportunities to further enhance the NZ AoG approach. The New Zealand National Security System is mature and sophisticated at the strategic level. MFAT, as the lead agency in offshore disaster relief operations, has become increasingly professional in its approach to HADR operations. Interagency deficiencies at the operational level rely on the professionalism and ‘can-do’ attitude of individuals and organizations at the tactical level to execute HADR operations successfully. Government agencies need to develop greater unity of effort to realize the potential of an AoG approach to HADR response. Continued refinement of the disaster response system to develop interagency interoperability is tracking positively. However, shortfalls at the operational level are evident in the case studies. The shortfalls identified in the case studies are the lack of a formal information sharing platform, a lack of operational level interagency preparedness, and the design and execution of command and control that impacts interoperability. Mitigating these weaknesses

^{vi} An example is www.apan.org. All Partners Access Network (APAN), formerly called Asia-Pacific Area Network, is a United States Department of Defense (USDOD) social networking Website used for information sharing and collaboration. APAN provides non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and U.S. partner nations who do not have access to traditional, closed USDOD networks with an unclassified tool to communicate.

requires interagency understanding and improved integration at the operational level. MFAT has established the strategic and operational framework to address these deficiencies.

To further develop the recommendations in this paper, research on the best approach to coordinate, build, and implement an interagency operational data portal as a shared repository for HADR information is required. The establishment of a collaborative network architecture for disaster response could facilitate combining offshore and domestic disaster response frameworks. This approach would strengthen the NZ security system and leverage the opportunities available to a small country. Enhancing national preparedness for responding to future challenges in disaster response requires not only interagency cooperation, but focused and committed interagency preparedness at the operational level underpinned by unity of effort.

Endnotes

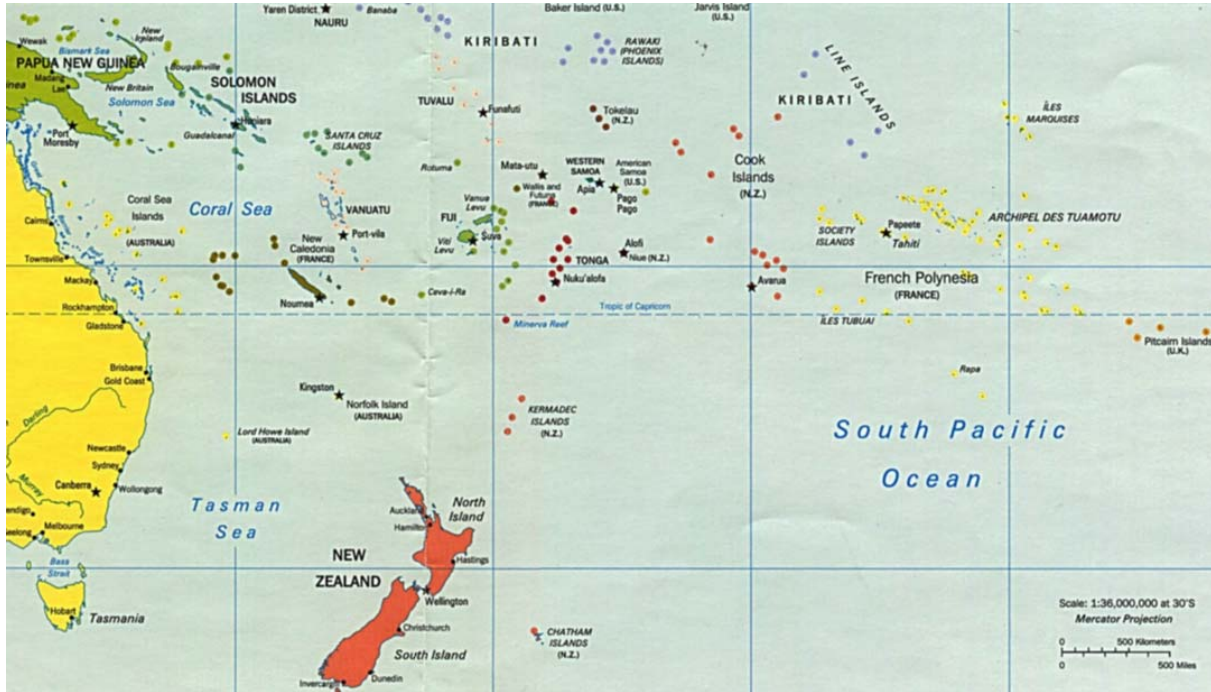
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Appendix 1

South Pacific



http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/australia/oceania_pol_2013.pdf

Appendix 2

Emergency Task Force Terms of Reference



Emergency Task Force (ETF)

Terms of Reference

Purpose & Brief

The primary geographic focus for New Zealand's response to offshore natural disasters is the South Pacific. The Government expects that New Zealand will provide a practical, all-of-Government response to requests for assistance from Pacific Island countries. New Zealand will also consider providing targeted response capabilities following major natural disasters in South East Asia.

New Zealand's response to offshore natural disasters is coordinated through a cross agency Emergency Task Force (ETF) that is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The purpose of the Emergency Task Force is to ensure a coordinated approach amongst government and non-government entities to New Zealand's response to offshore natural disasters.

This document details the terms of reference for the ETF.

Objectives

The Objectives of the ETF are to:

- Ensure a collective ownership of New Zealand's response.
- Advance a shared understanding of the situation.
- Ensure a coordinated offshore response from New Zealand agencies across foreign policy, aid and consular dimensions.
- Support the MFAT Deputy Secretary/Controller with advice and guidance on responses options throughout an offshore response, including possible risks and their mitigation.
- Ensure New Zealand agency capabilities are understood and how they may contribute to a response.
- Ensure coordinated communications and engagement domestically and offshore.

-
- Promote continuous improvement of New Zealand’s international humanitarian responses through debriefs, joint exercises and overseeing operational enhancements.
-

Structure and Membership

The ETF is a formal grouping within the national security system (ODESC) for responses to offshore natural disasters.

There are two tiers of ETF membership: The full ETF and the NZ Government ETF.

Full ETF

The full ETF membership comprises of a group of New Zealand Government agencies, Crown Entities, non-Government agencies, the NZ Red Cross, and France and Australia. The full ETF membership is outlined below:

NZ Government Agencies and Crown Entities:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- New Zealand Defence Force
- Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
- New Zealand Police
- New Zealand Fire Service

Non-Government Agencies

- NGO Disaster Relief Forum (represented by the Council for International Development)
- New Zealand Red Cross

France Australia New Zealand (FRANZ) Partners

- France
- Australia

Other New Zealand Government Agencies may also participate where relevant.

NZ Government ETF

From time to time, there will be a need for New Zealand Government agencies to meet separately to discuss issues that are particularly relevant to NZ Government policy and operations. Within the full ETF membership, there is a NZ Government ETF, comprising of the group of New Zealand Government agencies above.

The representative from each agency on the full and NZ Government ETF should be a senior member of staff who has responsibilities for disaster response management and related policies within their own agency.

It is expected that members will communicate outcomes of the Emergency Task Force back to their own agency leadership and staff as appropriate.

Chair and Secretariat support

The Chair of the Emergency Task Force is the MFAT Deputy Secretary responsible for the response to a natural disaster offshore, or designated representative. MFAT will provide secretariat support for the Emergency Task Force including issuing invitations, agendas and papers and convening and chairing meetings.

Meetings

Frequency

The Emergency Task Force will be following notification by MFAT of a likely significant natural disaster, or immediately following a natural disaster that is likely to be of a scale that requires a response by at least one other agency besides MFAT. MFAT will contact ETF members by phone or email.

For a smaller response, or an event needing an immediate response, the Controller may call a 'virtual' ETF via email or teleconference.

After the conclusion of a response to a sizable natural disaster, the Emergency Task Force will meet within eight weeks to discuss lessons identified from the response. MFAT will then develop a plan for implementation.

The Emergency Task Force will also meet on a twice yearly basis. It will meet prior to the annual Pacific cyclone season to prepare and to confirm operational enhancements. It will also meet after the Pacific cyclone season to review the year and identify operational arrangements and readiness enhancements that are needed. These meetings will cover all natural disasters, not just cyclone events.

Location and hosting of the meetings will be at MFAT's office, 195 Lambton Quay.

Meeting Format

A standing agenda will be circulated prior to or at the Emergency task Force meetings. It will include:

- Situation update
- Action Plan
 - Any priorities that need to be addressed
 - Any emerging risks and proposed mitigation
- Updates from agencies
- Coordination and Communications
- Next meeting

Meeting notes

Each agency represented at ETF meetings during a response will take their own notes and report back to their respective agencies.

Meeting notes and recommended actions will be distributed within one week following the twice yearly season preparations and conclusion meetings.

Costs

1. Agencies will meet their own costs of participation
2. MFAT will meet secretariat and administrative costs

Decision Making

The Emergency Task Force is charged with:

- Coordination between agencies, with NGOs and FRANZ partners
- Provision of information, advice and guidance to MFAT Controller
- Provision of input into the Action Plan
- Confirmation of communications arrangements and engagement with key domestic and international stakeholders.

Given the fast-paced nature of responses, some decisions may need to be taken outside of the ETF. In these circumstances MFAT will consult relevant Government agencies prior to making recommendations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

MFAT is responsible for recommending the response options and action plan to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Representatives of agencies on the ETF are expected to brief their senior executives and respective Ministers.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs considers response recommendations by the MFAT Controller and informs the MFAT Controller of decisions.

Glossary

AoG	All-of-Government
CIMS	Coordinated Incident Management System
DR	Disaster Relief
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre
ETF	Emergency Task Force
FRANZ	France, Australia, New Zealand
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDG	International Development Group
MCDEM	Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NZ	New Zealand
NZ AID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
NZ Inc	NZ Incorporated (Collective NZ approach)
NZFD	New Zealand Fire Service
NZ MAT	New Zealand Medical Assistance Team
ODESC	Official's Committee for Domestic and External Security Coordination
OGA	Other Government Agencies
TC PAM	Tropical Cyclone Pam

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