

United States Air Force and United  
Nations Cooperation in Future High  
Intensity Humanitarian Airlift  
Operations:  
**Honing the Partnership**

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# Purpose

- Examine implications of 2010 Haiti relief for USAF—  
UN relations in humanitarian relief (HR) airlift
  - Ordinary characteristics of Haiti relief
    - Large scale disaster in failed state
    - High Intensity/Restricted Infrastructure (HIRI)
  - Unique aspects
    - USAF controlled access to airspace and airport
    - USAF invited UN specialists into Air Ops Center

# Issue

- Does the successful integration of World Food Program Aviation Service controllers in the Haiti Flight Operations Control Center (HFOCC) indicate the need for **institutional, doctrinal, or personnel preparation** features of either or both organizations?

# Plan

- Context of USAF-UN relations in HI-RI ops
- Operation Unified Response
- Implications

# Now: A Note of Contrite Sanity

- Yes, I know that I'm ignoring;
  - The general importance of airlift in UN operations.
  - Peacekeeping and enforcement realms.
  - Contributions by other States, including Canada
- Well, I'm only a little sorry;
  - This seems to me to be the issue of the moment.
  - Unfortunately; not the first time an American has ignored the Canadians, eh.

# The Relationship: Long But Not Particularly Deep

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# Relationship: Long

- Many San Francisco delegates flew on ATC
- Through 60s USAF only source of large-scale, long-range airlift support
- Even today USAF remains most capable

# Relationship: Not Deep

- Culturally different
  - UN: Emergency and long-term HR and Peace Operations based on UN Charter = core business
  - US: Engagement in keeping with national principles and interest = means, not the ends

Relationship characterized by “mutual lack of familiarity...[and] “little understanding of each other’s organization and procedures (RAND, 2000)

# Relationship: Not Deep

- Points of division
  - Don't like each other
    - UN people see US soldiers as authoritarian, focused on self protection, serving US interests, in for the short run.
    - US soldiers see UN as byzantine, incapable of planning, feckless even unfriendly politically, weird.

# Relationship: Not Deep

- Points of Division
  - Operate in different realms
    - Usually not directly dependent on one another operationally or logistically
    - Interact only episodically on limited scale
  - Closeness can cost
    - UN can lose credibility and neutrality
    - US can lose flexibility and control

# Relationship: Not Deep

- Interaction is more attractive when;
  - Airlift under threat; USAF delivers, UN distributes
  - UN needs protection, communications, information, medical, etc. support
  - UN wants legitimacy, visibility distributing aid
  - Americans have coffee, chow, air conditioning

# Relationship: Not Deep

- One point of agreement: Both UN and US military endorse and benefit from the Oslo Guidelines
  - Military a “last resort”
  - Only “in absence of civilian alternative”
  - Preferably under direct UN control
  - Always with clear plans for departure

# Relationship: Not Deep

- So, salient characteristics of historical relations
  - Distant and awkward culturally
  - Mutually uninformed operationally
  - Ad hoc and inefficient
  - Extends to largely separate airlift operations

# Operation Unified Response

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# Operation Unified Response: A HI/RI Incident

- High Intensity
  - 12 Jan 10 massive earthquake
  - Port au Prince (**PaP**) devastated
  - 200K+ dead, 1.7M displaced
- Restricted Infrastructure
  - PaP port disabled
  - Only 1 large-aircraft airport:  
Toussaint Louverture International (**MTPP**)

# Operation Unified Response

- US responded immediately
  - 12/2 President Obama committed large-scale aid
  - 12-13/2 US Forces posture units
  - 13/2 Substantive actions begin
    - USCG *Forward* first on scene
    - Numerous survey teams overfly/arrive
    - JCS issues formal “warning” order
    - AFSOC tactical air controllers arrive

# Operation Unified Response

- 14/1 Air Mobility Command (AMC) engages
  - Morning; Joint Assessment Team at MTPP
  - Afternoon; 618<sup>th</sup> Contingency Response Group begins arriving at MTPP
    - Runs contingency ramps
    - Grew to over 200 personnel
  - Airflow underway, **US military initially dominates and receives priority**

# Operation Unified Response

- 14/1 US also assumed “deep” air traffic mgmt
  - AFNORTH\* RAMCC\*\* activates to control inbound US military traffic/ **monitor other traffic**
  - AFSOC controls MTPP pattern
    - First-come-first-served
    - **No prioritization**

\* Air Force US Northern Command (USAF 1<sup>st</sup> AF)

\*\* Regional Air Movement Control Center

# Operation Unified Response

- 14/1 US also assumed “deep” air traffic mgmt
  - 618 CRG controls MTPP main ramp
    - The narrow throat of Haiti relief flights
    - Undisciplined traffic flow chokes it and threatens overall efficiency and safety

# Operation Unified Response

- Government of Haiti (GoH) empowers US to provide **positive control flow into MTPP ramp**
  - RAMCC controls MTPP landing slot times
  - AFSOC issues landing clearances
    - Based on slot times for planes going to ramp
    - As able for aircraft going to grass areas
  - CRG provides feedback based on ramp status

# Operation Unified Response

- Things USAF liked
  - Flow goes to 150+ large aircraft/day
  - Improved **sense** that ops and priorities in sync
- Things USAF didn't like
  - Setting priorities for humanitarian relief
  - NGO non-participants and GoH inserts (18%)
  - People who didn't like us before engaged in hate-fest over slot times and "imperialism"

# Operation Unified Response

- Important: USAF air mobility headquarters **manage** priorities, they don't **set** them
  - Historically Joint Commands, other external authorities set priorities
  - Airlift headquarters ensure general priorities met while managing day-to-day operations efficiently

**“We’re not policymaking; we execute once the policy and fiscal issues are resolved.”**

General Raymond Johns, AMC/CC, February 1, 2010

# Operation Unified Response

- To address priorities and political problems, USAF and UN agreed to embed UN specialist in RAMCC
  - UN World Food Program Aviation Service (WFP/AS) well qualified to;
    - Run robust, multi-user airlift ops
    - Coordinate and enforce priorities
  - 24/1 WFP/AS team arrived, led by AS Deputy Director, Phillippe Martou

# Operation Unified Response

- Putting WFP/AS operators in RAMCC was radical stuff
  - Ran against prevailing notions of incompatibility
  - But, under circumstances, made good sense
    - WFP/AS familiar with civil-relief community
    - UN status gave it credibility and clout
    - Freed airmen to make things work

# Operation Unified Response

- In general, decision to meld was timely, astute
  - Came as airlift effort peaking
    - Most ops problems stabilized
    - Most operators had learned to behave
    - But, priorities and politics still problematic
  - Showed like-minded airlifters could cooperate
  - Got job done--RAMCC and WFP/AS handled 4,000+ slot requests

# Implications: Normalize the Relationship

# Implications

- My research to this point;
  - Does not suggest need for institutional alterations
  - Indicates *likely* need for joint training
  - DOES indicate need to normalize effective slot time management
    - The life-or-death bottom line of effective air transport management in HIRI incidents

# Implications

- The major “players” got the message

*In the future, it is recommended that a **non-biased entity**, **coordinated with the COCOM** [Combatant Command], work closely with the RAMCC to determine aircraft priorities and bump lower priority flights in favor of those more urgent in nature...[and] consider the far-reaching political implications in deciding who gets access to the field and who does not. [HFOCC After Actions Report, sorta endorsed by WFP/AS]*

# Implications

- Some postulations;
  - There is no such thing as a “non-biased” entity
  - US Combatant Commands are not appropriate entities to adjudicate slots between international military and civil users and leaders

# Implications

- Alternative
  - UN Humanitarian Operations Coordination Center (HOCC) hosts “Logistics Management Center” (HOCC/LMC)
    - Main purpose: Inform and support Host Nation (HN) allocation and priorities for airlift flow
    - Located for convenient meetings by major participants and adequate “reach back” communications

# Implications

- HOCC/LMC primary members
  - HN Disaster Coordination Representative
    - Sets or relays apportionments and priorities
    - Reviews, modifies, approves slot-time awards
  - WFP/AS (Forward)
    - Advises HN Representative(s)
    - On-scene validations of slot-time requests, requirements, complaints
  - RAMCC (Forward) or other flow control agency
    - Liaise between HOCC/LMC and RAMCC

# Implications

- RAMCC or equivalent in support
  - WFP/AS (Rear)
    - Assign slots IAW HN allocations and priorities
    - Respond to serious requestor challenges
    - Punish non-cooperation, violations
  - RAMCC or equivalent staff
    - Receive, process, communicate slot requests
    - Coordinate with appropriate ATC authorities
    - Assess and report operational results

# Implications

- Advantages
  - Puts apportionment and priorities in hands of most appropriate authority—the HN
  - Puts management of process in hands of respected civil relief agency, with HN validation
  - Exploits robust contingency planning and operations capabilities of the military
  - Military element easily replaced by HN or other civil capabilities in the sustainment phase

Thank you!

You are now free to ask  
questions and/or  
applaud.