

The 10th Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)
Summary by the Chair
(Tokyo, 29 June 2005)

The 10th Tokyo Defense Forum (Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region) was held in Tokyo on 28-29 June 2005, with participation from twenty-two countries (Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam) and EU. UN OCHA and ASEAN Secretariat were also invited to this Forum.

The Forum was chaired by Mr. Kenjiro Monji, Director-General for International Affairs, Japan Defense Agency.

The agenda of the Forum was three-fold: "Roles of Armed Forces in Disaster Relief (presentation by affected countries)" for Session I, "Roles of Armed Forces in Disaster Relief (presentation by countries which dispatched contingents)" for Session II, and "Future Challenges and the Potential for Enhanced Regional Cooperation concerning Disaster Relief Operations by Armed Forces" for Session III.

The participants expressed their condolences for the victims and their families and appreciated the cooperation shown by international community at the Major Earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and Tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

After the opening remarks made by Senior Vice-Minister Hiroshi Imazu, Major General Kenichiro Hokazono, Director of J-5 (Plans and Policy), Joint Staff Office, Japan, made an opening presentation on the efforts made by Japan Defense Agency and Japan Self Defense Forces for the disaster relief activities and future possibilities for regional cooperation. The presentation touched upon both domestic and international experiences of JSDF concerning disaster relief and some concrete suggestions for future cooperation measures among armed forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, presentation on MCAP (Multinational Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region) was made by Ground Staff Office of Japan Defense Agency.

1. Presentation by participating countries

The participants shared the experiences of the countries affected by the Major Earthquake and Tsunami of December 2004. The series of activities of the armed forces after the catastrophe, such as evacuation of residents, search for victims, distribution of materials, provision of medical care, were presented.

The participants shared the experiences of the countries which dispatched contingents for the humanitarian activities in the affected areas. Significant amount of the humanitarian assistance in terms of activities conducted by the armed forces, along with financial contributions, from various countries was demonstrated through the presentations.

Several proposals were made for future cooperation including; conduct regional exercises, awareness education and training for cooperative disaster relief operations.

2. Lessons learned and proposals

It was noted that although the primary role of the armed forces is to defend the sovereignty of their countries, their self-sufficient characters and their capability to be mobilized at short notice enable them to play a significant role in disaster relief, especially at the stage immediately after the disaster.

Various lessons learned were offered by the participants, including:

- The need in “normal times” to practice information sharing and planning and to exchange contact points. This can be conducted bilaterally and multilaterally through the regional frameworks such as ARF and other workshops.

- Capacity building to enhance the capabilities of the armed forces, and the importance of training. Such capabilities should include those optimized for disaster relief.
- The need to develop a communication system to be used among the teams from different countries. Interoperability must be enhanced in this area.
- The importance of some specific capabilities such as search and rescue at night.
- Enhancing Public awareness, for Tsunami disaster was not well known in the region. Tsunami Monitoring System (such as the regional information network for disaster detection and warning) should be established in due course.
- The importance of close cooperation with the media.
- Providing assistance in a timely manner. For quick response, close inter-agency cooperation should be required.
- The importance of the role of the liaison officers and defense attaches.
- The usefulness of requirement catalogue as well as database for military assets that could be provided by each country.

Some participants touched upon the necessity to develop standard operating procedures in normal times among the countries in the region which would help to make initial responses smooth and to minimize damages of disasters. With regard to this matter, there was a general consensus that some principles should be developed in normal times. Some indicated that strict template or prescription would not be practical, for the situation might vary in each case and therefore response should be flexible.

The participants shared the view that coordination between many actors (foreign armed forces, civil organizations, international organizations such as UN, and NGOs) in disaster relief in various phases is important, in order to avoid overlapping as well as to fill the gap from the perspective of division of labor concerning roles, missions and capability. In this connection, the importance of establishing effective command and control at the earliest possible moment was stressed, although some chaos may be inevitable at the initial stage. Concerning this point, some emphasized that there could be differences between initial phase of disaster relief and later part of that.

There was consensus that the affected country should take certain leadership in doing so, and suggestions were made concerning the leading nation or organization in the disaster relief operations. Concept of “framework nations” or framework organizations was also introduced in this context. The participants agreed that any coordination should be based upon the consent of the affected countries.

The participants shared the view that it is important to continue to hold talks regularly and to explore the possibility to conduct joint trainings or exercises in order to facilitate mutual cooperation among military of each country. Such discussions can be conducted under such forums as next sub-committee of TDF, ARF-ISM, or SAGIP under ARF as proposed from the floor.

3. Closing Remarks

It was agreed that the outcome of this Forum will be reported by the Chair country at the occasion of next ARF ministerial meeting, which will be held on 28-29 July in Laos, and at the next ARF-ISG or ARF-ISM meeting to be held this year.

The participants welcomed Japan’s initiative to consider conducting continued working level seminar in Japan, to deepen discussions and to explore the possibilities of the future practical cooperation.

The participants welcomed that the fifth Sub-committee of the Forum will be held in the near future in Tokyo.