

The 13th Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)
Summary by the Chair
(Tokyo, October 23, 2008)

I. Introduction

1. The 13th Tokyo Defense Forum (Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region) was held in Tokyo, on October 22 and 23, 2008, with the participation of twenty-five countries (Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, People's Republic of China, India, Republic of Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Union of Myanmar, New Zealand, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Republic of Singapore, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Kingdom of Thailand, The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, United States of America and Socialist Republic of Vietnam). The European Union (EU), ASEAN Secretariat, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) also participated in this Forum.
2. The Forum was chaired by Mr. Masaru Tsuji, Director-General for International Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Japan.
3. The focus of the Forum was two-fold: "Efforts for International Cooperation in Disaster Relief" for Session I and "National Defense Policies" for Session II.
4. Mr. Seigo Kitamura, Senior Vice-Minister of Defense of Japan, made opening remarks. In his statement, Mr. Kitamura pointed out that the initial stage of large-scale disaster relief operations often calls for a high degree of readiness and expertise, requiring cooperation among militaries as well as civil-military cooperation. He invited all delegates to actively participate in the Forum in a hope that they will come up with useful suggestions for national and international efforts in the future.

II. Session I: Efforts for International Cooperation in Disaster Relief

5. With the development of disaster relief cooperation in multilateral fora such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Chair proposed some objectives for this Session: to share recent experiences of international cooperation in disaster relief, with a focus on information sharing and coordination of activities between affected countries and assisting countries/organizations; and to exchange views on how we could further promote regional efforts and to supplement existing efforts.
6. Participants expressed their deep condolences and sympathy to the victims of recent disasters in the region.

Presentations

7. China, Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, United States, ICRC, ASEAN Secretariat, Japan, UNOCHA and New Zealand made presentations on this topic, including experiences and lessons learned during recent major disasters such as the cyclone in Myanmar and the earthquake in China's Sichuan Province this year.

Role of Armed Forces in Major Disasters

8. It was reaffirmed that the military alone cannot cope with large-scale disasters given the wide array of problems and expertise required. Nevertheless the military is an important integral part of the interagency approach to managing such efforts to tackle disasters, particularly in the initial stage when they can expedite transport of goods and victims, and address the needs for immediate rehabilitation of infrastructure including communication system. The Forum acknowledged that the international cooperation in disaster relief can promote mutual confidence.

Suggestions for National Efforts

9. Some participants suggested the need for further capacity-building efforts including the improvement of disaster relief-related equipment. The following were also suggested to be key day-to-day and systematic

preparation factors which serve to improve national resilience to disaster:

- Inter-agency coordination mechanisms;
- Good working relations between central government and local communities;
- Establishment of an early warning system;
- Enhancement of public awareness in disaster preparedness; and
- Standard operating procedures which facilitate effective civil-military cooperation as well as cooperation and coordination with the international community.

Suggestions for International Cooperation

10. Participants pointed out that, while affected countries played a central role during recent major natural disasters, international efforts for emergency assistance were also indispensable. Some participants pointed out the usefulness of prior bilateral or multilateral arrangements for disaster relief.
11. Some participants pointed out the need to develop behavioral norms on international disaster relief based on the following broad principles:
 - The affected country has the primary responsibility to respond to disasters occurring within its territory in a prompt and effective manner;
 - Where needed, the affected country shall facilitate external assistance from other countries and international organizations in its humanitarian and disaster relief efforts to achieve the objective of prompt and effective disaster management and relief (e.g. prompt access by assisting countries through provision of diplomatic permission / clearance by affected countries);
 - Overall control and supervision on external assistance as well as the consent of the affected countries;
 - International Humanitarian Law should be respected as a recognized reference, when applicable.
12. The forum shared the recognition that coordination and appropriate information sharing between affected countries and assisting countries/organizations is vital for more effective cooperation.

13. Furthermore, some participants suggested the following elements are of great importance in facilitating coordination and information sharing, based on the experiences and lessons from international cooperation in recent disasters:

- Trust and confidence between affected countries and assisting countries as the basis for international cooperation;
- Development of standard operating procedures and conduct of training and exercises to foster mutual trust and better coordination;
- Improvement of damage analysis and needs assessment on critical matters such as sanitation, health, logistics and foods by joint assessment teams composed of the government of affected countries, assisting countries and international organizations such ASEAN and UN. Involvement of local communities in the affected areas at all stages of the relief and recovery activities to identify accurate needs of assistance is critical;
- “Escort team” functioning as contact point, which serves as good interlocutor between foreign teams and local authorities to establish smooth communication and to identify the real needs; and
- 24-hour telephone hotline / call center to provide relevant information including whereabouts of foreign nationals.

Suggestions to Further Promote Regional Efforts

14. Discussions were held on areas where regional efforts need to be further promoted such as:

- Identification of impediments preventing the swift military contribution to disaster relief and elaboration of communication strategy to enhance public support for the role of the military;
- Consideration of existing guidelines and lessons learned when deploying, coordinating and publicizing military support;
- Multilateral exercises for capacity-building, interoperability enhancement and procedural review, such as the ARF field exercise (Voluntary Demonstration of Response) in May 2009 and similar other future exercises;
- A common platform for sharing information in time of disaster and a further elaboration of concrete means including the establishment of a coordination center at various levels;
- Awareness of the global tracing services of the Red Cross and Red

- Crescent Movement; and
- Compiling and sharing experiences and lessons learned of both affected and assisting countries.

III. Session II: National Defense Policies

15. Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam made presentations on the recent development of their respective defense policies. EU also presented on European security and defense policy.
16. Comprehensive presentations were made on some recent major developments in defense policies including threat recognition and strategies against common security challenges in the region as well as defense white papers which are recently released or to be released soon.
17. A number of countries referred to their recognition of recent challenges for defense organizations, including emerging threats and diverse contingencies such as international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional crises, failed states, transnational crime, maritime security, natural disasters and epidemics.
18. A number of countries presented their efforts to implement a continuous reform of the defense organizations to meet the changing security environment, including strengthening the capability of humanitarian assistance and international peace cooperation.
19. Participants pointed out that defense diplomacy constitutes an important part of their defense policies.
20. The Forum appreciated the constructive efforts made in this session in volunteering presentations on each country's defense policy. They underscored the importance of frequent exchanges of this kind in sharing information to ensure increased transparency.

IV. Closing Remarks

21. During the sessions, participants shared their respective national disaster

management and coordination mechanisms, as well as experiences and lessons learned from recent disasters. They noted that such exchanges will provide useful reference to national efforts to build their own capacities.

22. The Chair believes that the discussion conducted in this Forum could contribute to the work within the ARF and to national efforts. He expressed his intention, as supported by participants, that the outcome of this Forum will be reported by the host country to the 8th ARF Inter-sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief which will be held in Indonesia next December, co-hosted by Indonesia and the EU, and at other ARF meetings.
23. The Chair thanked all participants for their support and valuable contributions to the Forum. Participants expressed their appreciation to the host country for organizing this Forum to promote international cooperation in disaster relief and understanding on defense policies of participating countries.