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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES  
JCSP 35 / PCEMI 35

Masters in Defence Studies

**Is the Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Hitting the Mark?**

By /par

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**Abstract**

The Canadian Forces (CF) developed an organization in 1996 that was designed to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world and provide humanitarian assistance during significant natural disasters. This Disaster Assistance Response Team or DART became the flagship for CF involvement as one part of a larger Canadian Government effort. One would surmise that such a capability would be frequently deployed over the past dozen years or so, but that is not the case. In fact the DART has been activated for only four missions since 1996, despite a marked increase in the number of natural disasters since that time. The logical question therefore is ‘why’?

The intent of this paper is to analyse various aspects of the CF DART, ranging from the concept of operations to the deployability and employability protocols and to attempt and answer this and other questions. It will argue that the CF Disaster Assistance Response Team is an extremely valuable weapon in the Canadian Government arsenal however; its effectiveness and utility can only be improved if certain changes are made.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Forces (CF) developed an organization in 1996 that was designed to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world and provide humanitarian assistance during significant natural disasters. This Disaster Assistance Response Team or DART became the flagship for CF involvement as one part of a larger Canadian Government effort. The intent of this organization is to develop a core of approximately 200 highly trained professionals who would be capable of swiftly deploying, with all necessary kit and equipment, to the most remote places on the earth and form one of the pillars of the Canadian whole of government approach to disaster assistance operations. One would surmise that such a capability would be frequently deployed over the past dozen years or so, but that is not the case. In fact the DART has been activated for only four missions since 1996, despite the dramatic increase in the number of natural disasters since that time.<sup>1</sup>

The obvious question then is ‘why?’ What are the reasons for the limited number of deployments despite the increase in global demand? What are some of the factors that are influencing the application of this team and more importantly, what if anything can be done to improve this capability in order to ensure that the Canadian people are doing their global share to help? The intent of this paper is to analyse various aspects of the CF DART, ranging from the concept of operations to the deployability and employability protocols and to attempt and answer some these questions. It will argue that the CF Disaster Assistance Response Team is an extremely valuable ‘weapon’ in the Canadian

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<sup>1</sup> OFDA/CRED. International Disaster Database. [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be). (Brussels, Belgium, 2008), 1.

Government arsenal, however, its employment effectiveness will continue to be questionable unless measured changes are made to its construct and employment policies.

In order to ensure a systematic and logical flow to this argument, the paper will be subdivided into four main sections: Background Information; an Overview of Past Deployments and Lessons Learned; National and International Feedback; and the Way Ahead for the DART. Through this approach, one will have a full appreciation of the myriad of issues that surround this organization ranging from its roles, missions and tasks to its composition and current capabilities. These capabilities will then be illustrated with real-life examples in the form of case studies of the actual deployments, identifying a number of strengths and weaknesses. The lessons learned from these examples, will be further explored through the eyes of national media, as newspaper and journal articles are brought forward to highlight the Canadian public perceptions during each of these deployments. As well, there will be an international component consisting of a report sponsored by the United Nations (UN) office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which deals specifically with military assistance to natural disasters. Once all of this information has been processed and the plethora of viewpoints and challenges are exposed, the final chapter will focus on the future of the DART. It will elaborate on the current initiatives that are planned for change as well as provide a variety of proposals and recommendations which may be further explored in order to optimize this significant and robust capability. Before any of this can be examined in detail however, it is essential to understand the global environment; in essence the conditions in which the CF DART will be called upon to operate.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Organization has determined that during the past ten years, disasters have significantly affected about 2.5 billion people. These figures are double what were recorded in the 1990s and the number of people affected each year is approximately 188 million.<sup>2</sup> As John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator has stated, “Any credible vision of the future must recognise that humanitarian needs are increasing and that climate change is the main driver. We are already seeing its effects, in terms of the numbers of people affected and in the rising cost of response.”<sup>3</sup> According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, in 2007, natural disasters caused some 16,500 deaths and an estimated US\$62.5 billion in damages and economic losses around the world.<sup>4</sup> It goes on to state that trends are suggesting an intensifying impact of natural disasters in particular on the poor nations whose growing populations and poor urban and rural planning make them more vulnerable to natural hazards. (See Figure 1)

It should be noted at this time that there are a number of different schools of thought regarding the ‘increase’ in natural disasters and some would argue that the actual number of natural disasters has not increased as such, just the reporting of them. For example, in Figure 1, there appears to be a 50 percent increase in the number of disasters since the inception of the DART in 1996 until today. The causes for this increase could

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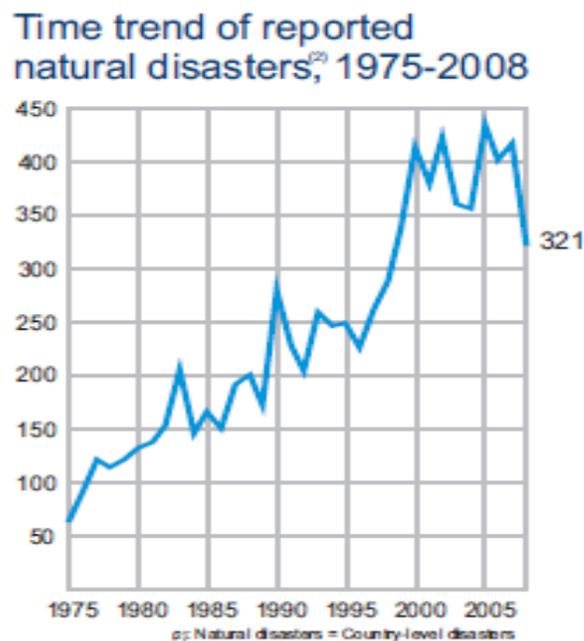
<sup>2</sup> Canada. Canadian International Development Agency. *Reducing The Impact of Natural Disasters*. (Ottawa: July 22 2008); <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-225122316-NE4>; Internet accessed 01 February 2009, 1.

<sup>3</sup> John Holmes. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Climate Change: Coping with the Humanitarian Impact*. (New York: 2008); <http://ochaonline.un.org/>; Internet Accessed 01 February 2009, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Canada. Canadian International Development Agency. *Reducing The Impact...*, 1.

range from a changing threshold for making the list i.e. a 'significant natural disaster' is now counted when more than 5000 people are affected vice the ten thousand in 1990 for example. Or it may be caused by a result of political changes in countries such as China and Russia which combined with dramatic increases in technology and the media, now allow the world to see and hence record more disasters than before. Regardless of the actual cause or combination of causes behind this increase, the fact remains that the world is now aware of more natural disasters that it was ten plus years ago.

**Figure 1: Time Trend of Reported Natural Disasters, 1975-2008<sup>5</sup>**

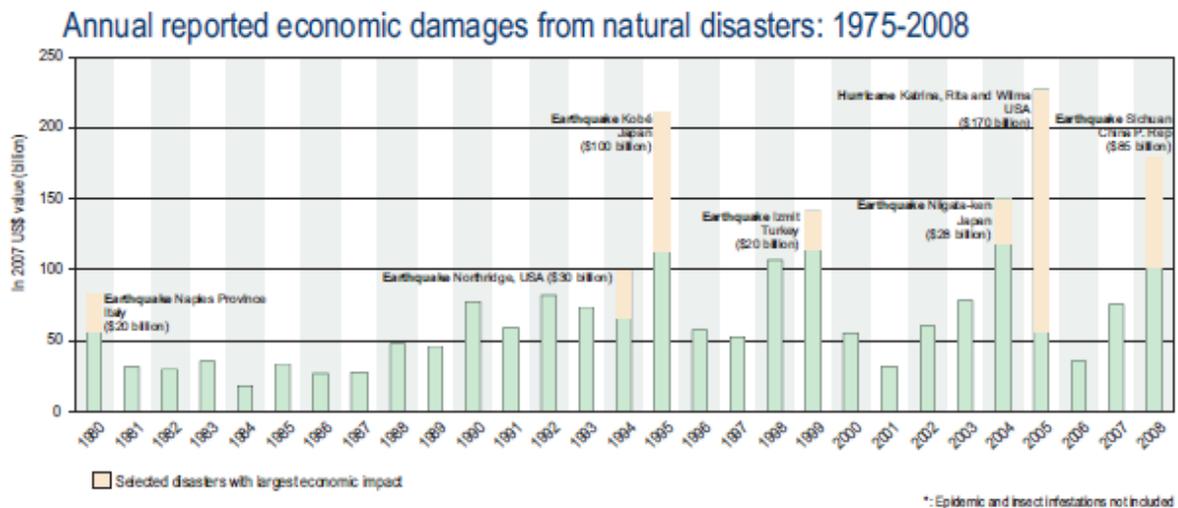


As the rate of disasters increase, they continue to take a heavier human toll and come with a higher price tag. (See Figure 2) The cost of responding to disasters has risen tenfold between 1992 and 2008 and the international community continues to develop such initiatives as the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. *2008 Disasters in Numbers*. (Brussels, Belgium: 2008); <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/media-room/facts-sheets/2008-disasters-in-numbers-ISDR-CRED>; Internet accessed 01 February 2009, 1.

of Nations and Communities to Disasters, which provides an opportunity to promote a strategic approach to reducing vulnerabilities and risks to natural hazards.

**Figure 2: Annual Reported Economic Damages from Natural Disasters: 1975-2008**



On the national front, Canada continues to take a proactive stance in meeting the increasing role of humanitarian assistance through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). As stated in the DFAIT webpage, “Humanitarian action is an important component of Canadian foreign policy. It reflects our values and principles, and responds directly to our national interests in promoting peace and security...”<sup>6</sup> In particular, one of the four stated objectives of Canadian humanitarian action is to “ensure an effective, appropriate and timely Canadian response to humanitarian crises abroad that is coordinated with the international community and is consistent with the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Canada. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *Humanitarian Affairs*, Ottawa: August 2008; <http://www.international.gc.ca/humanitarian-humanitaire/index.aspx>; Internet accessed 07 February 2009,1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

This policy is evident as well in the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) website as Canada's commitment to appropriate, timely and effective humanitarian assistance is a recurring theme throughout the document. Although there are a number of key projects and interactions within the international community, it should be noted that, "CIDA's primary response to crises is financial support to organizations that make up the international humanitarian system."<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, based on the empirical data one may reasonably deduce that the general trend of natural disasters is increasing and according to the publicized policies of DFAIT and CIDA, these increases will be met with an appropriate and timely response. The next logical step would be to examine the role of DND, in particular the CF DART in this response.

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<sup>8</sup> Canada. Canadian International Development Agency. *Canada's Commitment Information for Partners Related Sites*, Ottawa: March 11, 2008 <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-1261545-RJU>; Internet accessed 07 February 2009, 2.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The CF deployed 2 Field Ambulance to Rwanda in 1994 in order to provide medical assistance to the thousands of refugees suffering from the effects of a widespread cholera epidemic. Although these efforts were extremely successful for the people that received treatment, overall it was determined to be a case of ‘too little, too late’ as the unit did not arrive until after the peak of the epidemic. The Canadian government was able to learn many lessons from this experience and one such lesson was the requirement to have a rapid-response capability that was able to provide effective humanitarian aid and assistance worldwide. It was a direct result of these lessons that the CF Disaster Assistance Response Team was born.<sup>9</sup>

Since its inception, the DART continues to evolve in terms of its criteria for deployment, its roles, mission and tasks as well as its organizational structure and equipment. The specifics of which are detailed in a Contingency Operations Plan (CONPLAN) GRIFFON.<sup>10</sup> This evolution is also directly affected by political influences as the DART is the designated, high readiness, military piece of a Whole of Government (W of G) approach to humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

In order to gain a full appreciation of the second and third order effects associated with potential changes to the CF DART, it is necessary to understand the myriad of internal and external pressures that are intimately linked with this aspect of Canada’s humanitarian and disaster assistance.

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<sup>9</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Backgrounder – *Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team*. (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, January 2005); <http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/news-nouvelles/views-news-afficher-nouvelles-eng.asp?id=301>; Internet; accessed 06 January 2009, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Expeditionary Force Command – CEFCON CONPLAN 20851/06 GRIFFON-Deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team*. (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, December 2006), 1.

## 2.1 Deployment Criteria.

There are normally three phases of disaster response: the Immediate Life-Saving Phase; the Stabilization Phase; and the General Recovery Phase.<sup>11</sup> (These phases have just recently been amended and now include the Rescue, Relief and Recovery Phases)<sup>12</sup> Although the DART has been coined as “Canada’s Rapid Response Team”<sup>13</sup>, this is actually a bit misleading as the DART is not designed to be a first responder to a natural disaster scenario. In fact, within the context of a coordinated Government of Canada (GoC) approach, the DART is a capability that is specifically designed to be deployed as a stabilization tool. A tool that provides a bridge after the first seven to ten days of a disaster, to meet the interim needs until the affected government or humanitarian agencies can restore certain medical and engineering services.<sup>14</sup>

Canada’s initial response when a large scale natural disaster strikes would be to immediately convene a meeting of the Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response Group within the first hours of learning of the event. This DFAIT-led, interdepartmental task force serves to allow a coordinated passage of information and effective control in order to design the GoC response. Within the first 12-24 hours, financial assistance is made available through CIDA to key international humanitarian partners such as the

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<sup>11</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Forces Joint Headquarters – Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, November 2008), [http://www.cfjhc.forces.gc.ca/dart/main\\_e.asp](http://www.cfjhc.forces.gc.ca/dart/main_e.asp); Internet; accessed 06 January 2009. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Gillies, Major P. *Comments on DART Operations*. (Kingston: Canadian Forces Joint Headquarters, 07 April 2009).

<sup>13</sup> CBC News. In Depth: Canada’s Military. *Disaster Relief: Canada’s Rapid-Response Team*. (Toronto: October 2005); <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/cdnmilitary/dart.html>; 1.

<sup>14</sup> Canada. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *How the Government of Canada Responds to Natural Disasters Abroad; Frequently Asked Questions*. (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, January 2009); <http://www.international.gc.ca/humanitarian-humanitaire/faq/asp?lang=eng>; 8.

International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and certain United Nations agencies. This allows them to rapidly deploy (both physically and financially) to the affected area providing immediate life saving assistance but it also provides an immediate reconnaissance capability. Through the provision of Canadian and other nation's funding, these organizations are able to send out expert teams which assess the damage and identify needs which are then listed in the 'Needs Assessment' reports. These reports provide crucial information to Canada (and other donor countries) regarding the specifics of the disaster as well as priorities or effort and detailed direction in order to coordinate any gaps in international assistance. The 'Needs Assessments' are also augmented by information that is gathered during the Interdepartmental Strategic Support Team (ISST) analysis which is DFAIT-led and includes a military representative which is normally the CO of the Joint Headquarters.

The Canadian government would then be in a position to take the appropriate action in terms of additional cash contributions, the deployment of pre-identified Canadian technical experts, the distribution of CIDA managed relief stocks and/or as appropriate the deployment of CF assets which may include the DART. It is important to note however that the decision to deploy the DART is based on a joint recommendation from DFAIT, CIDA and DND. It would also be dependent upon a specific request from the affected government or the UN, for the services that the CF DART can provide, the needs assessments completed by technical experts, as well as advice from our embassies and humanitarian partners. "A DART deployment can only be considered when there has been a formal request from the government of the affected country".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

## 2.2 Roles, Mission and Tasks.

The DART is focussed on the provision of two core capabilities: primary medical care; and the production of potable water. It also provides two enabling capabilities; specialist engineering support; and command, control and communications.<sup>16</sup>

Primary Medical Care: This would normally include a tented medical facility that could service up to 200 outpatients per day and accommodate 10 inpatients. The medical aid station includes a pharmacy, a lab, limited obstetrics services as well as a rehydration and preventative medicine section. The deployed medical platoon treats minor injuries and attempts to prevent the spreading of diseases but it does not have a surgical capability.

Production of Potable Water: The engineer team has the capability through its Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units (ROWPU) to deliver a baseline of 50,000 litres per day but this can be expanded to a limited surge capacity of 250,000 litres per day. They also have the capability to monitor local water supplies and chlorinate local wells as required.

Specialist Engineering Support: The remainder of the engineer troop are comprised of both field and construction engineers who provide limited vertical construction and utilities capabilities. Their heavy equipment section working in conjunction with the construction section builds the austere camp for the DART and then is able to take part in other basic tasks in support of the host-nation and/or humanitarian aid agencies.

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<sup>16</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Expeditionary Force Command – *CEFCOM CONPLAN 20851/06 GRIFFON...*, 2.

Command, Control and Communications: The DART sets up facilities to allow communications between all organizations involved in the relief effort including the host-nation government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN aid agencies.

The mission of the DART as detailed in CONPLAN GRIFFON is as follows: “...to conduct emergency humanitarian relief operations in order to minimize human suffering in the short term, and assist in strengthening the medium-term recovery effort through cooperation with the affected nation, the UN and NGOs”.<sup>17</sup> There are, however, a number of restraints which are placed on the DART’s deployments and they include: (1) the DART will not conduct operations within a Chemical, Biological, Radioactive or Nuclear (CBRN) contaminated environment; (2) the DART will not normally deploy into non-permissive environments; and (3) the DART will not normally deploy within Canada.

### **2.3 Organization and Equipment**

The DART is not a standing CF unit and therefore does not have personnel posted into it like a regular unit. It is a core group of pre-identified military capabilities that remain at a high state of readiness but who work in different units across the country. The headquarters is located in Kingston and is comprised of less than ten personnel who work in the Canadian Forces Joint Headquarters (CFJHQ) and the Canadian Forces Joint Signals Regiment (CFJSR). They form the operational-level element and they are responsible for strategic liaison with Canadian and the affected nation’s officials, International Organizations (IOs) as well as NGOs in order to determine the DART’s humanitarian response. The current force level is authorized up to 210 personnel and it

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

can be surged to a maximum of 240 personnel with the Commander of Expeditionary Force Command's (CEFCOM) approval.<sup>18</sup> The team consists of a HQ with about 50 personnel, an Engineer Troop of approximately 45 personnel, a 45 person Medical Platoon, a Defence and Security Platoon (D&S) of 45 personnel and a Logistics Platoon of approximately 25 personnel.

The CF Field Equipment Table for the DART is extremely wide and diverse ranging from such items as pens and paper to tentage to heavy engineer equipment to a ROWPU. This equipment is stored for immediate use in a military warehouse at 8 Wing Trenton, (the CF Airport of Embarkation or APOE) where it is maintained by a small supporting staff of four personnel and is available for rapid deployment. It should be noted that although the equipment is centrally controlled and maintained, it remains to be one of the most difficult aspects of deployment as it would require approximately 27 C-130 flights to move this equipment. By way of illustration, the last deployment of the DART to Pakistan in 2005 during OP PLATEAU required five Antonov-124 aircraft to deploy the equipment and that did not include the personnel. This particular aspect of the DART will be illustrated again in subsequent sections.

## **2.4 CONPLAN GRIFFON**

The overarching document which provides direction and guidance for the deployment of the CF DART is CONPLAN GRIFFON<sup>19</sup>. The latest version of this document was signed on 20 December 2006 and like all contingency plans, it is designed to give as much information as possible regarding a potential operation so that preparations can be completed and thus allow for a rapid deployment. In essence, it

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

would not only facilitate the mission analysis process for a DART Commander but it also provides guidance to other commands within the CF.

There are however certain aspects to this CONPLAN which are noteworthy within the wider view of the DART deployment and in particular how this CF capability fits within a whole of government approach to operations. The first and foremost is the apparent emphasis that is placed throughout the document regarding the fact that DFAIT is the lead department for the GoC. It goes so far as to list the responsibilities of DFAIT and CIDA as well as the continued importance of strengthening the intergovernmental working relationships leading up to and during a DART deployment. It clearly states the mandate for the CF and other Government Departments (OGDs) to establish Liaison Officers (LOs) who will incorporate into the departments in order to facilitate the timely and accurate passage of information. This appears to be a significant shift from prior versions of this CONPLAN and it strongly supports the whole of government approach. There is one question, however, as to the Command and Control relationship which does not appear to be clear within the document and that involves the day to day operational command of the DART. Although the CONPLAN states that DFAIT is the lead department, it also states that the DART Commander will report to Comd CEFCOM vice the DFAIT head of mission (HOM).

## **2.5 Whole of Government Approach**

As discussed earlier in this section, all aspects of the DART deployment are purposely intertwined with the OGDs of DFAIT, CIDA and others. From the decision to deploy the DART to the execution of the mission and the decision to redeploy back to Canada, these aspects are all synergized within a whole of government approach to

operations. One such example of early synergy within the government is the ISST. This ISST is a 3-4 person team who are responsible to conduct the strategic analysis of a natural disaster situation and they will be quickly dispatched to the affected country to determine the magnitude of the disaster in conjunction with a range of other factors. The team is led by DFAIT and will include a military representative and a CIDA representative. The ISST will also determine in consultation with the host nation, what types of support that Canada could offer.

Another example of the emphasis that is placed on the interdepartmental teamwork associated with the Canadian response to natural disasters and humanitarian assistance is the continuous link that is made between the CF Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) and DFAIT and CIDA. The importance of maintaining this relationship at the strategic level cannot be underestimated and the SJS play a key role in building this relationship and taking an active role in regular interdepartmental meetings.<sup>20</sup> These meetings provide a venue for discussion as well as an opportunity to educate the key players from the different departments on their capabilities and their processes. It should be noted however that this effort is not a complete panacea in its own right as different agendas and personalities must be synchronized. It is has been a step in the right direction and it will continue to take time to develop the trust and increasing effectiveness between these key departments.

A third example which highlights the whole of government approach actually occurs weeks after the emergency phase of a disaster and it involves an Interdepartmental

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<sup>20</sup> Quinn, Lieutenant-Colonel D. *Comments on the SJS Role for DART Operations*. (Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters, 26 January 2009).

After-Action Review (AAR). DFAIT chairs this meeting and it invites various departments to share the lessons that they have learned throughout the deployment, execution and follow-up action during a natural disaster. This has been a very successful initiative and one which has resulted in a better awareness of lessons learned in order to improve the Government of Canada's response to future natural disasters.<sup>21</sup>

## **2.6 Summary**

Since its inception, the DART has evolved from a rapidly deployable military capability into what it is today; an integrated military component within a whole of government approach to natural disaster situations. This will become much clearer during the subsequent chapters as the DART's structure and performance are reviewed within a framework of case-studies. In a relatively short period of time however; less than 15 years, the DART now has well-established deployment criteria and very specific yet flexible, roles, missions and tasks. The force structure of the DART and the significant equipment holdings are also clearly identifiable and warehoused in an easily accessible location, poised for departure. An extremely thorough CONPLAN has been developed which was updated to reflect the CF's Transformation and it appears on paper that all aspects of the DART deployment ranging from force generation to employment are well articulated and should be well understood. A final piece of necessary background information involves the emphasis placed on the DART within a greater whole of government strategy. Once again, from a Government of Canada perspective, the deployment of the DART is clearly a governmental decision based on the advice of

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<sup>21</sup> Canada. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. *How the Government of Canada Responds to Natural Disasters Abroad.*, 3.

OGDs and executed under the guidance of DFAIT, within a framework that includes CDA, DFAIT and OGDs as applicable.

Great strides have been made to improve the effectiveness of the DART and, in fact, the entire Canadian approach to natural disaster assistance operations. But the real question is whether or not enough has been done? Are the roles, mission and tasks achievable? Does the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) support the mission? Is the 'whole of government approach' simply a new buzz-word or is the DART actually an integral team player in a DFAIT-led operation? In order to find answers to each of these questions, ensuring at least a modicum of certainty, it is vital to study the various deployments of the DART since 1996 and determine if in fact the degree of mission success has evolved as well.

### **3.0 DART DEPLOYMENTS AND LESSONS IDENTIFIED SINCE 1996**

One of the key aspects of any military mission and/or operation is the continual capturing of 'Lessons Identified'. This often unglamorous task rests within all members of the mission and is instrumental in determining best practices and also the parts of an operation that need to be improved before the next mission. For the purposes of this paper, this Lessons Identified section will focus primarily at the strategic level and occasionally drift into the operational level. This will ensure that the focus remains at the appropriate level, identifying potential changes to the DART which will have the most significant impact. It should also be noted that the bulk of information in this section is derived from actual Lessons Learned Staff Action Directives (LLSADs) which were submitted and staffed through a formal process, eventually resting with the Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) Ottawa. This is important for two reasons: Firstly, it ensures that only the strategic level lessons have been addressed in these documents; and secondly, that they are being staffed by an organization that is in the best position to influence the key interdepartmental organizations as well as influence the chain of command to direct action by subordinate formations.

The following sections will explore in detail, the key lessons identified from each of the four DART missions: OP CENTRAL – Honduras in 1998; OP TORRENT – Turkey 1999; OP STRUCTURE – Sri Lanka 2005; and OP PLATEAU – Pakistan 2005. It will be also briefly discuss the Lessons Learned (LL) process at the strategic level in order to establish a common framework identifying strengths and weaknesses in the entire process. Once the individual missions have been dissected, particular attention will be paid to any common themes that seem to reoccur from mission to mission.

**Figure 3: DART Deployment Timeline from 1998-2005**

<b>Deployment</b>	<b>Disaster Announced</b>	<b>DART Commenced Deployment</b>	<b>DART at Full Operational Capability (FOC)</b>	<b>DART Redeployment Complete</b>
OP CENTRAL Honduras-1998	26 Oct 98	09 Nov 98	16 Nov 98	23 Dec 98
OP TORRENT Turkey-1999	17 Aug 99	20 Aug 99	24 Aug 99	05 Oct 99
OP STRUCTURE Sri Lanka-2005	26 Dec 04	06 Jan 05	11 Jan 05	20 Feb 05
OP PLATEAU Pakistan-2005	08 Oct 05	17 Oct 05	24 Oct 05	20 Dec 05

### **3.1 Lessons Learned Process**

As previously mentioned the collection of lessons identified may be conducted by all members of an organization and normally occurs in all phases of an operation, not just at the end. The formal After Action Report (AAR) from a DART deployment would consist of many points which would be either actioned internally or passed higher for review and subsequent action. Given the strategic nature of this organization and the diversity its impacts, both internal and external to the CF, the SJS has assumed the lead role for the strategic LL report staffing procedures.

Since 2006, the LL process has evolved into an extremely formal and well defined procedure which begins with the preparation and validation of the LL Analysis Report by the SJS LL cell. This report will highlight the key issues and then investigate them in

order to substantiate the findings and provide recommendations.<sup>22</sup> It will then be processed and vetted to ensure that appropriate Officer or Primary Interest (OPIs) are designated and recommendations should be prioritized. The SS LL cell will also provide a tracking function to maintain situational awareness of the issues, being able to provide updates as required.

The main purpose in identifying this process is to give it additional credibility; in particular to demonstrate that the lessons identified in the following sections have been put through a rigorous staffing process. A secondary purpose is to highlight the fact that notwithstanding the fact that there is such an official and developed method for identifying strengths and weaknesses, there are common themes throughout the DART operations. That is to say, many lessons are identified but not yet learned.

### **3.2 OP CENTRAL – Honduras 1998**

Hurricane Mitch struck the Central American countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala on 26 October 1998 with torrential rains and hurricane force winds. In Honduras alone, there were over a million people homeless, 12,000 people missing, 11,000 injured and over 6,000 people dead from the extensive flooding and massive mudslides. There was widespread damage throughout all facets of the infrastructure as mudslides destroyed roads, bridges, villages and much of the agriculture. The transportation system was virtually crippled and the majority of cities were isolated, unable to receive emergency supplies of food or medicines.

A DFAIT-led strategic reconnaissance team comprised of personnel from both CIDA and the CF confirmed on 5 November 1998, the requirement for rapid assistance.

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<sup>22</sup> Briefing Note prepared by Maj J Fletcher of SJS LL and submitted to the Director of Operations, SJS, *Lessons Learned (LL) Report Staff Procedures* in SJS. (Ottawa:02 March 2006), 1.

On 6 November, the Government of Canada (GOC) directed the establishment of OP CENTRAL that would provide humanitarian assistance to Honduras. On that same day, the CF responded with the deployment of Joint Task Force Central America (JTFCAM). The nucleus of this Task Force (TF) was comprised of the DART and was subsequently deployed into the Rio Aguan Valley at Sanguerra, Honduras. Other components of JTFCAM consisted of a HQ element, a Helicopter Detachment (Helo Det), Airfield Security Force (ASF) and a Military Air Movement Section (MAMS).<sup>23</sup>

The primary mission of JTFCAM was to facilitate the delivery of food, water and medical aid to the people in the Rio Aguan Valley at Sanguerra. There were however and number of secondary objectives that included; establish liaison and support to CIDA, international aid organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and to facilitate the distribution of aid from the airfield to aid agencies and local officials.<sup>24</sup>

OP CENTRAL was the first operational deployment of the DART since its inception in 1996. The deployment began on 9 November 1998 and was completed on 15 November 1998 (see Figure 3), with the declaration of operationally ready (OPRED) on the following day. Over the course of the next 38 days, the DART was able to establish liaison with three agencies: the Honduran Ministry of Health, local medical relief committees; as well as the Standard Fruit Company. The medical staff treated over 7,500 patients at the DART clinic and in remote areas. The DART engineers succeeded in building the necessary JTFCAM camps as well as the production and delivery of potable water. The MAMS unloaded over one million pounds of humanitarian aid and

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<sup>23</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Annex A to 3350-165/C33 (DLLS) 3350-165/T (DLLS) *OPERATION CENTRAL – Lessons Learned Staff Action Directive*. (Ottawa: 1 March 2000), A-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, A-2

developed an effective distribution system. The Helo Det flew 223 missions delivering over 350,000 pounds of humanitarian aid and transporting 782 passengers.<sup>25</sup>

Although these accomplishments are significant and important, there were a number of considerable challenges that directly affected the effectiveness and/or the efficiency of what the DART achieved during OP CENTRAL. These issues are explained in detail throughout the OP CENTRAL LLSAD<sup>26</sup> and include the following areas: Public Affairs (PA); DART Composition and Operational Versatility; DART Mounting and Deployment; the Helicopter Detachment; and Civilian-Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

On the subject of PA, one would reasonably expect that media attention would be extremely high for the first deployment of this new Canadian Government capability and historical records appeared to support this view. The key DART PA lessons identified during this mission included the requirement to establish a Joint Information Bureau (JIB) in Trenton, designed to coordinate the requests from national, international and local media and to ensure that this JIB was activated as part of the DART warning phase of the operation. Other lessons included the review and updating of the DART SOP and such things as the deployment of the Combat Camera Crew on future missions. A final PA lesson involved the coordination with interdepartmental agencies such as CIDA and DFAIT to ensure that the CF was appropriately involved in the preparation and execution of daily national media briefings. Overall, the PA effort was successful during the

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The OP CENTRAL LLSAD dated 01 March 2000 is actually a compilation of lessons learned from both OP CENTRAL and OP TORRENT. It includes an Annex for each but it also includes a separate Annex for LLs which are similar between the two operations. There are other LL documents for these missions but they focus primarily at the tactical level.

operation and there were a number of ‘best-practices’ that were developed for future missions.

In terms of the DART composition and versatility, this was an area in which many key lessons were identified but due to the scope and complexity of the challenges, they may not be as easy to overcome in the short term. For example, the CF presence in Honduras vastly exceeded the ‘normal’ DART organization and as a result, could not be effectively commanded and controlled with just the DART HQ personnel. The expansion of the mission, roles and tasks required the subsequent expansion of the DART HQ to a Joint Task Force (JTF). The robust capability of the JTFCAM allowed for a wider scope of control, specifically in the areas of coordinating the Honduran relief organization and other aid providers, managing the flow of personnel and support into theatre and the substantial requirement to keep NDHQ apprised of all facets of the operation. The DART expanded during this mission to include a Helo Det of four CH-146 Griffons, an ASF and an expanded MAMs component. It also included an expanded water production capability including an additional ROWPU and Water Bagger.

“The DART could not assemble, mount and support its own deployment, as required by OPLAN GRIFFON.”<sup>27</sup> During the mounting phase of OP CENTRAL, there was no supporting HQ identified to conduct the assembly, mounting and deployment of the DART. This oversight was quickly identified and resolved with 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division HQ in Kingston stepping up to assume this role however the key lesson was learned and subsequently incorporated into contingency planning documents.

In the TO&E for the DART during OP CENTRAL, there was no Hel Det. The Hel Det was added to the DART deployment in order to address the requirement to

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, A-6.

establish a medical clinic with a triage center in the proximity of the disaster area. The extensive destruction of the transportation network prevented road transport to the worst affected areas and without helicopter support; this requirement would not have been met. The Hel Det was also used for the distribution of humanitarian aid, the transportation of medical teams to remote areas as well as a large number of reconnaissance tasks. There was no question as to the valuable force multiplier that the Hel Det brought to the mission however there were some other questions; primarily the notice to move for the Hel Det personnel, the composition of the Det (in that four helicopters were deployed as a result of cost, supportability, etc, not in accordance with the CF Air Force deployment packages of three, eight 12 or 24 helicopters) and the extensive support arrangements required to keep these rotary wing aircraft serviceable. Despite the resounding success of the Hel Det, it was determined that, “..a review is needed to define the composition of helicopters as part of a DART response.”<sup>28</sup>

The final issue that was identified in the OP CENRAL LLSAD involved the challenges associated in the conduct of CIMIC between DND and other governmental departments and agencies. In essence, the CIMIC relationship, “...was not prepared to meet the time-sensitive planning of humanitarian assistance operations in Honduras.”<sup>29</sup> NDHQ was not manned to deal with specific CIMIC issues and the CF had no formalized CIMIC structure at the strategic level. This was further compounded with interdepartmental disagreements between DND, DFAIT, CIDA and CARE Canada as to which department had the lead and which department had financial responsibilities. Besides the national friction on this issue, there were tactical issues as certain NGOs

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, A-8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

highlighted the fact that CF's initial aircraft arrived in theatre without any humanitarian aid. Also, CF personnel were employed in the disaster area without any formal CIMIC training or experience in working with humanitarian assistance operations.

Throughout this first deployment of the CF DART during OP CENTRAL, there were a number of challenges as well as successes. The key aspect of this review of the lessons learned process is not so much as to identify the problems that were encountered on this mission but more importantly, to determine if these challenges were addressed and overcome or were they simply passed on to future deployments?

### **3.3 OP TORRENT – Turkey 1999.**

On 17 August 1999 a massive earthquake struck north-western Turkey causing extensive damage throughout a highly industrialized area. The casualty count from this natural disaster was extremely high with over 15,000 people killed and upwards of 25,000 people injured. The devastating effect of the earthquake saw the collapse of thousands of buildings and widespread destruction of much of the industrial infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless amidst this destruction with literally no where to go and no way to get there. The city of Serdivan was one of hardest hit cities and as much as 60% of the buildings in the northern sector were either destroyed or considered unsafe for habitation.

On 17 August 1999 OPERATION TORRENT was established to deploy a TF to the affected area and provide humanitarian assistance to Turkey, in particular to the city of Serdivan in the province of Sakarya. The CF DART was activated to form the nucleus of Task Force Serdivan (TFS) and it began deploying into the area by 20 August.

With the concurrence of the Mayor of Serdivan and the Turkish Ministry of the Interior Officials, the province of Sakarya was identified as the TF's Area of Operations (AO).

The DART deployed its HQ (TFS) in Serdivan, a small logistics detachment in Istanbul and a ROWPU detachment at Lake Sapanca. With the medical teams providing support to the people of Serdivan and the surrounding areas they were able to care for over 200 patients per day and just over 5,000 patients in total. The engineering team provided over 2.7 million litres of bulk drinking water and 216,000 litres of bagged water to the locals. They also were instrumental in the establishment of a tented camp for the internally displaced personnel.<sup>30</sup>

Although the successes and accomplishments of the DART during OP TORRENT are well known and documented, as with all operations, there were some examples of best practices as well as challenges. In particular, while this operation was only the second deployment of the DART and came within a year of its last mission, there were some common issues that faced the DART during this deployment as well as the prior one; specifically the emphasis on PA. In addition to the PA issues, there were two other areas for development during this deployment and they include: Immediate Operational Requirement Demands; and DART Medical Capability.

The key challenge regarding PA during this mission was internal to the CF as the PA plan experienced some shortfalls related to coordination between the DART Comd and the Director General of Public Affairs (DGPA). It was once again identified that the specific PA Annex in OPLAN GRIFFON was outdated and not particularly useful and it did not provide the clear direction on which HQ was responsible for the allocation of

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<sup>30</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Annex B to 3350-165/C33 (DLLS) 3350-165/T (DLLS) *OPERATION TORRENT – Lessons Learned Staff Action Directive (LLSAD)*. (Ottawa: 1 March 2000, B-2).

resources during each phase. There were other relatively minor examples of PA difficulties but the key lesson identified was the overwhelming importance of early and thorough PA operations as media demand is normally greatest in the early stages and diminishes quickly.

“OP TORRENT revealed difficulties in applying the process to address supply shortages.”<sup>31</sup> In essence this meant that a combination of competing airlift demands and the absence of dedicated logics staff at Trenton contributed to these issues. The conflicting priorities saw supply process challenges and the problems associated in maintaining key supplies in theatre while also ensuring that reconstitution could occur within three weeks of redeployment. The difficulties experienced by the DART are indicative of a supply system in which demands are managed according to a designated priority. A unit’s reconstitution is not normally given the same priority as when it is deployed on a mission and thus, its mandate of being fully prepared for a subsequent deployment within 21 days of return was not achievable unless NDHQ approval was granted.

The third main lesson identified during OP TORRENT involved the nature of the medical supplies in that the supplies were not specifically oriented towards humanitarian assistance operations. Although TFS deployed with the standard medical entitlement of supplies, they experienced shortages in pediatric and geriatric medicines almost immediately. It then became extremely difficult to acquire such medicines locally as levels were low and there were problems overcoming the language obstacles. The resupply system through the CF was often slow and impacted the level of patient care that could be provided. “The DART medical kits are stocked with items necessary to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, B-5.

treat battlefield injuries. It is unlikely that the DART will experience battlefield conditions or require these types of drugs and medicines.”<sup>32</sup> Although this issue seems to be quite ‘tactical’ in nature, the end result was an increase in coordination between the Israeli and Egyptian medical facilities, which meant that the medical staff from TFS were unable to treat the same number of patients requiring emergency patient care. Without such close cooperation and coordination between the international medical communities, this lesson may have been an extremely difficult one to learn especially if the media was made aware that the CF DART deployed a medical team into a natural disaster area without adequate medical supplies.

During this second DART deployment, it was apparent that certain lessons had been learned and new ones were continuing to be identified. It was shortly after the redeployment of the DART from Turkey, that NDHQ J3 staff decided that these lessons should be formalized and reviewed at a strategic level. This would allow any common, strategic issues to be prioritized and addressed. The five key issues that were compiled from prior LLSADs and from NDHQ staff included the following: Continuity in the Management of DART Resources; Strategic Airlift; National Command, Control and Intelligence System; Geomatics Support; and DART Strategic and Operational Planning Factors.<sup>33</sup>

Within the framework of the first issue; the continuity in the management of DART Resources, the key element was the establishment of a permanent staff to manage DART equipment, maintenance and finances. Without a permanent staff, there was no

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Annex C to 3350-165/C33 (DLS) 3350-165/T (DLS) *OPERATION TORRENT – Lessons Learned Staff Action Directive (LLSAD)*. (Ottawa: 1 March 2000, C-1).

revised TO&E for humanitarian assistance operations and this had a number of secondary effects, including for example the development of the Task Force Movement Table (TFMT) which is the key document for determining airlift requirements. The lack of permanent supply and traffic technicians resulted in an inefficient material acquisition and control system which delayed the resupply of key materiel as well as the significant challenges in accountability and reconstitution. As well, the lack of full time staff meant that financial accountability was unclear and often time beyond the influence of the DART Comd. And also, the lack of full time maintenance personnel resulted in shortfalls of serviceable kit arriving in theatre. “In other cases, unserviceable equipment was deployed before problems were discovered.”<sup>34</sup>

The second issue involves strategic airlift and although this was only touched upon in each of the missions LLSADs, it remains one of the single biggest factors in achieving mission success with the DART. For example, during OP CENTRAL the entire CF CC-130 HERCULES fleet was required to deploy JTFCAM and its equipment. This did not include the CH-146 Griffon detachment as they self deployed through the US and into Honduras. The redeployment however could not be conducted with the HERCULES fleet due to a number of factors not the least of which was the rapid requirement for reconstitution. As a result, the redeployment was conducted with a combination of CC-150 POLARIS and commercial sources.<sup>35</sup> An important note to OP CENTRAL strategic airlift is that the CF was not only responsible for the DART deployment but also for humanitarian aid, NGOs, GOC officials and some media.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, C-3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, C-4.

During OP TORRENT, it was determined that the CC-130 fleet did not have the flight endurance or the cargo capacity for a deployment to Turkey and as a result, six AN-124 ANTONOV aircraft were contracted to conduct the airlift. These contractual arrangements were in place by the J4 Movements section in preparation for such a requirement and hence were available with minimal delay. This effort was in conjunction with two military CC-150 POLARIS flights that were used primarily for DART personnel. The provision of commercial aircraft was instrumental in the successful and timely deployment of the DART. “Had commercial airlift been unavailable, TFS would have faced significant challenges in achieving the operational expectations.”<sup>36</sup>

Neither OP CENTRAL nor OP TORRENT employed the CF Joint Command, Control and Intelligence Systems (JC2IS or TITAN). This system would provide a robust and secure data communication between NDHQ and the DART. The reasons that it was not deployed range from the questioning of the requirement for secure communications on a humanitarian mission whereby most of the information is of an unclassified nature, to the assertion that it was not offered until late and would thereby present a considerable support challenge. The communication systems used during these missions consisted of International Maritime Satellite (INMARSAT) phones, cellular phones and landline (including unsecure faxes). As a result, the exercise of command and control throughout these operations was considered workable but extremely limited.<sup>37</sup>

The fourth issue identified at the NDHQ level was the timely and accurate provision of geomatics products during both OP CENTRAL and OP TORRENT. For

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, C-4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, C-5.

example, during OP CENTRAL, there was a shortage of maps of the AO and soldiers were forced to navigate unfamiliar terrain without roadmaps or reliable communications. During OP TORRENT, detailed topographical information was not accessible from the government of Turkey, who maintain strict control on such products. The result was DART personnel conducting operations using atlases, roadmaps and out of date city planning maps. Although CF assets were available back in Canada to assist in the provision of these geomatics products, the severe restriction on communication bandwidth prevented their transmission. The key lesson identified in this area is the early engagement of the Mapping and Charting Establishment (MCE) in order to provide accurate products for both the planning and execution phases of the operation.<sup>38</sup>

The final consideration which was reviewed in detail regarding the deployment of the DART to both Honduras and Turkey was the wide range of strategic and operational planning factors which need to be carefully measured prior to future deployments. For example, the duration of a humanitarian operation in terms of a DART deployment has been established at 40 days. This was successfully accomplished in OPs CENTRAL and TORRENT however much of this hinged upon the presence of well established coordinating agencies such as CIDA, UN organizations as well as local civilian organizations. If these agencies were not present then it would not have been conceivable for the DART to simply pull-up stakes and leave. Another example of a critical planning factor was the availability of strategic airlift and as mentioned in detail earlier, this factor is a potential 'show-stopper' and as such, may force the decision as to whether the Canadian Government can respond in a timely manner to a natural disaster. There are other planning factors which deal with such things as: Mission Expansion; Dart

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, C-6.

Organization and Capacity; Command and Control; and Strategic Direction but the key point is that as a result of these two deployments, important lessons have been identified which will impact the future mission analysis and planning of the DART. These must be considered in light of upcoming decisions to deploy and incorporated into the strategic planning process.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.4 OP STRUCTURE – Sri Lanka 2005.**

On 26 December 2004, the second deadliest earthquake of all time struck off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The subsequent Tsunami caused widespread destruction across the region killing more than 225,000 people and displacing more than 1.2 million others.<sup>40</sup> The devastation of this natural disaster was quickly communicated across the globe and as soon as new agencies began broadcasting reports of the Tsunami, internal elements of the DART began anticipating deployment. As a result of this informal preparatory work, the DART had completed most of its preliminary preparations by 3 January 2005, when the GOC had announced its intentions to deploy elements of DFAIT, CIDA and the CF DART. The first flight departed from Trenton on 6 January 2005 and the team had reached full operational capability (FOC) by 11 January 2005<sup>41</sup> (See figure 3). During its deployment, the DART provided safe drinking water, medical treatment as well as assistance in the reparation of basic life-support infrastructure.

“Overall, the mission was deemed a success and once again proved the DART’s ability to rapidly provide humanitarian assistance to remote parts of the world as needed

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, C-8.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations. World Health Organization. *Southeast Asia Earthquake and Tsunamis*. (New York: 2008) [http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia\\_tsunami/en/](http://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/asia_tsunami/en/); Internet accessed 09 February 2009, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. 3350-165/Q10 (J7LL) *OPERATION STRUCTURE – Lessons Learned Staff Action Directive*. (Ottawa: January 2006), A-1.

in response to catastrophic events.”<sup>42</sup> There was however a number of lessons identified during all phases of the operation that were subsequently staffed to NDHQ, in an ongoing effort to reduce problems and improve future deployments. The five major issues are as follows: Difficulty in Integration with OGDs; Mission Focus at the NDHQ Joint (J) Staff Level; Internal Communications within NDHQ; DCDS Staff Training; and Modularization of the DART.

Three of these issues although strategic in terms of the staff that were affected, i.e. NDHQ J staff or DCDS staff, will not be covered in detail throughout this paper. The main reason for this is because they deal with relatively minor issues that are not pertinent to the overall DART deployment. For example, the fact that the recall of J-Staff personnel did not go particularly well during the Christmas period although interesting in itself, is not germane to this analysis. Instead, the focus will be placed on the two key areas of; the difficulty in integration with OGDs and the modularization of the DART.

During the reconnaissance (recce) phase of the operation, there existed some considerable confusion regarding the CF role in the GOC recce team. For example, the decision was made relatively early during the GOC recce that the DART would be committed to Sri Lanka and hence it remained there to focus on the DART mission while the DFAIT and CDA representatives proceeded on to Indonesia. As a result, subsequent recce tasks did not fully incorporate a GOC approach and without a DND representative, there was some confusion as to capabilities and potential commitments. Another example of interdepartmental friction was in the arena of media and PA. Although this was considered a success overall, there remained challenges associated with different PA

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

policies between DND and CIDA. In summary, the DND PA policy is quite robust and proactive while the CIDA one is more restrictive. As a result, it was identified that CIDA did not receive the same level of visibility for its relief efforts.

Within the wider scope of intergovernmental integration and cooperation includes the preparation phase of the DART deployment; specifically the development of CONPLAN Griffon. As the standing operational plan for the DART deployment, this document would have been produced with some consultation and input from the applicable OGDs. In fact, the 2001 version of this CONPLAN was distributed to the OGDs in that year. “This plan is meant to reduce the planning and preparation of DART to deploy on short notice and thus avoid the necessity to conduct a complete OPP Cycle.”<sup>43</sup> However, it was decided not to use CONPLAN Griffon for this deployment because of the potential for an extension beyond the 40-day limit of a Griffon deployment and also because it was not considered to be appropriate as the operation involved many other Canadian departments. This rationale does not appear to be valid at present as the DART was always designed to be part of a larger GOC response and the limit of 40-days was a planning figure. Regardless of the reasons, the CONPLAN was not used and instead an abbreviated OPP was conducted without the full integration of the OGDs, leading to future areas of friction.

The second key area involves a proposal for discussion of the DART in terms of a modular approach. This is the first time that this initiative has been documented in the LL correspondence and surprisingly, there was very little elaboration in the OP STRUCTURE LL papers. What makes this initiative even more interesting is the fact that although very little was documented regarding this topic, subsequent lessons learned

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, A-5.

will highlight the potential for modularization of the DART. Rather than attempt to extrapolate lessons that may involve DART force structure amendments during OP STRUCTURE, it is worthwhile to keep this suggestion in mind as it develops into a common theme through the lessons identified in the next deployment; OP PLATEAU.

### **3.5 OP PLATEAU – Pakistan 2005.**

On 8 October 2005, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck Pakistan and Northwestern India, approximately 95 kilometres Northeast of Islamabad. Initial estimates saw a wide area of civilian infrastructure and social services destroyed, leaving over 50,000 people dead, over 70,000 injured and more than 2.5 million without shelter. After receiving a request for international help from the Government of Pakistan (GOP), the Canadian government sent an interdepartmental recce team on 11 October 2005. By 14 October, the GOC approved the deployment of the DART and by 17 October, the first flight had departed for the affected area. The DART reached initial operational capability (IOC) on 23 October and FOC the next day. (See Figure 3)

During its two-month deployment, the DART treated more than 11,700 sick and injured people and delivered more than 500 tons of relief supplies. Although the operation was complicated as a result of the affected area being located within the hotly disputed Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, the DART was able to achieve these results and more. In fact, the SJS assessment of the operation was that, “OPERATION PLATEAU represents the fourth deployment of the DART and was its most effective to date.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. 3350-165/A27 (SJS Lessons Learned) *OPERATION PLATEAU – Lessons Learned Analysis Report*. (Ottawa: March 2006), 1.

Notwithstanding the success of OP PLATEAU, the SJS was able to conduct a strategic level analysis of this deployment and produce a document which not only identifies the various lessons during the deployment, but also compares them against lessons which may or may not have been learned on the prior three deployments. This LL Analysis Report, provides an excellent reference in which to identify current issues but more importantly, ongoing trends. There were seven different areas highlighted in the SJS report: Proof of Concept; Strategic Recce; Utility of the CONPLAN Process; DART Structure and Force Development; DART preparations; Media Management; and Planning Staff Procedures.<sup>45</sup> These will be discussed in varying degrees of detail throughout this section, paying particular attention to the ones which distinguish themselves as recurring, strategic themes.

The first theme involves a proof of concept, asking the question as to whether or not a self-contained, self-supporting unit, which provides medical assistance, potable water and minor engineering, is still the most practical CF response to a natural disaster scenario. The answer to this question, simply put is, 'yes'. After four missions, the DART has proven itself to be a globally deployable capability which provides the basic services that are required during the stabilization phase of a disaster assistance operation. Despite this approval however, it was determined that in order to maintain its continued relevance in a technologically changing world, that the structure and equipment organization must be regularly reviewed and updated.

The second theme was also a relatively positive lesson identified and it involved the interdepartmental cooperation demonstrated between the CF, DFAT, CIDA and Canadian diplomatic personnel during the conduct of the strategic recce. This Whole of

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Government approach, resulted in a timely and effective deployment of the DART, facilitating not just cooperation but also a better passage of information between all interested parties. The Defence, Diplomatic and Development (3D) approach, "...makes best use of all available expertise, exploits local knowledge and ensures that complementary functions are coordinated on an interdepartmental basis."<sup>46</sup> It was recommended that early involvement of the 3D approach become the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for future DART deployments.

The utility of the CONPLAN process is the next main theme and the main lesson identified was that there is definite utility in having a contingency document that facilitates rapid deployment as a result of a well understood and abbreviated operational planning cycle. Unfortunately, CONPLAN Griffon (2001 version) was determined not to be particularly useful or current. This meant that planners were forced to disregard a plan that was designed to make this easier and conduct an entirely new planning process from scratch. The recommendation is that the CONPLAN process would work if the CONPLAN was revised to reduce the extraneous data and be updated regularly.

It has been discussed that the DART force structure is the smallest disaster assistance unit that could be employed to meet its stated mission and tasks. Oftentimes however, it requires additional augmentation and in the case of OP PLATEAU for example, civilian helicopter services needed to be rented in order to transport Mobile Medical Teams (MMTs) to remote areas that could not be accessed via roads. It was also noted by a member of the DART at the time that many of the vehicles which were shipped into theatre remained parked as the state of the roads could not accommodate CF

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

logistics vehicles.<sup>47</sup> This is a single example and to compound this problem is the fact that there has not been a comprehensive force development (FD) review conducted on the DART since its inception in 1996, and the DART does not have a FD staff to complete a review if so ordered.<sup>48</sup> The recommendations which were passed to the Commander and the J5 Plans in Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM) include the identification of an agency responsible for FD and a plan which considers a module approach to DART employment, respectively.

The fifth theme identified in this analysis involves a shortcoming in the preparation of personnel, administration and documentation in anticipation of a short notice deployment. Examples include such areas as a generic term of reference for the DART CO, Rules of Engagement (ROEs), passport and visas, licensing for medical professionals in foreign countries and many others. Some of these shortcomings may be addressed in an updated CONPLAN and the recommendation is that this CONPLAN comes with a number of separate packages or annexes which would then facilitate the rapid preparation and deployment of DART personnel. These packages would not be limited to DND personnel and would require the support of OGDs in particular DFAIT and be supported as much as possible with preliminary authorizations from ADM (Pol).

The next theme involves a logical progression in the arena of PA; specifically the embedding of media and media management. During OP PLATEAU, civilian media were embedded with the DART from the initial deployment onwards and it was

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<sup>47</sup> George Forward, Lieutenant-Commander. *Interview on His Personal Experiences During OP PLATEAU Deployment*. (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 07 February 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. 3350-165/A27 (SJS Lessons Learned) *OPERATION PLATEAU – Lessons Learned Analysis Report...*, 9.

considered an extremely successful venture. As the circumstances surrounding the deployment of a DART usually generate favourable media conditions for the CF, it "...is likely to become the norm, and all CF agencies should become familiar with the process."<sup>49</sup> The recommended course of action includes clearly defined instructions for the embedding of media on operations as well as plans that can be distributed to media representatives, which would facilitate their understanding for briefings and training sessions.

The final theme which was discussed in detail during the LL Staff Analysis for OP PLATEAU was regarding planning staff procedures; in particular, the procedures which must be employed at different levels of the HQ. For example, the planning staff functions at the strategic level should be more focussed on such issues as government liaison, special DART capabilities and diplomatic clearances. Whereas the operational level staff planning effort should address issues of deployment, logistics support and command and control. It should be noted that these specific points arose not only from lessons identified from prior DART deployments, but also in conjunction with the CF transformation that had wide ranging effects in terms of HQ organizations and divisions of command and control responsibilities. So in a sense, the SJS was attempting to identify improvements to the DART effectiveness in the midst of sorting out its own wider role, mission and tasks through the CF.<sup>50</sup>

### **3.6 Summary**

Since the DART's first deployment during OP CENTRAL, there have been a significant number of challenges presented as well as a considerable number of

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

constructive best-practices identified. From the inability to mount and support itself in 1998, to the medical supply shortage in 1999; and from the interdepartmental integration challenges in 2005 to the CF internal staff planning challenges a year later, one could make a reasonable assumption that the CF has been quite effective in identifying and in many cases, learning, valuable lessons. From a careful analysis of the LLSADs during the past four deployments, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that demonstrates the CF's willingness to improve upon the DART's capability. At present, there are action plans in effect, LL monitoring programs, OPIs identified and by in large, the appropriate HQ staff's through the CF have been actively engaged in making the DART a more effective organization. But is the DART more effective? Certainly from the perspective of CF personnel, the recurring thread that wove through each of the four deployments was one of overall mission success. But is this perspective shared by the Canadian people? Has this improvement in capability been recognized from within the Canadian government and equally important, has this been acknowledged internationally, in particular from the various IOs and NGOs associated with the UN? After more than 12 years of experience, with numerous deployments and a myriad of self-improvement techniques, is the DART truly more effective from a Canadian whole of government approach, or does it still suffer from the same employment and policy issues that it faced back in 1996? Perhaps a second opinion would help to answer some of these questions?

#### **4.0 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FEEDBACK**

Clausewitz says that “the military is an extension of society” and this is very true in the high profile, media rich environment that surrounds the deployment of the CF DART. Not only is the DART truly an extension of government as it works as an integral part of the 3D Canadian team, but it is an opportunity for a military force to deploy into a foreign land and directly assist people who have been subject to tremendous hardships and suffering. The resources and capabilities that a professional military bring to such natural disaster situations is a significant force multiplier to the overall humanitarian assistance campaign. But why then has there been public criticism of the CF DART in every mission that they have undertaken? The CF has stated in each of their AARs and LL documents that the DART has been extremely successful in each of their four missions. There appears to be a disconnect between the opinions of certain journalists and the CF, therefore it would stand to reason that perhaps some of the improvements made to the DART since 1998 have not gone far enough. And what about the global humanitarian assistance effort that is orchestrated by the United Nations? Is Canada, and in particular, is the Canadian military assistance to this multilateral effort exactly what is required, or is it simply put, a redundant, ‘feel-good’ capability that may sway the hearts and minds of certain media personalities but in practice, does not significantly contribute to the bigger plan?

Up until now, this paper has analysed various aspects of the DART but through a CF lens. The following sections will provide a couple of different perspectives which will countenance certain opinions about the CF DART and strongly debate others. Once the ‘bigger picture’ is seen, perhaps this capability will be viewed differently.

#### **4.1 Canadian Media Responses to DART Deployments**

When the CF DART deploys to a natural disaster area, the presence of the media and PA Officers that file stories back in Canada does not directly affect the effectiveness of the men and women in uniform who are doing their primary tasks. The medical team for example is not considered more efficient if a positive story is on the front page of the National Post and neither is the ROWPU pumping out less water if a negative story is filed with the Globe and Mail. One may argue that the direct impact of media responses on the CF DART may be negligible initially however the second and third order effects are considerable. These may include an increase in private and public donations to help the people of the affected disaster or something more indirect such as the continuing support for the government which then leads to support for DFAIT, CIDA and DND's efforts towards humanitarian assistance. Regardless of how the effect is reached, the key factor is that the media and predominantly the national media, plays a large part in Canada's commitment to humanitarian assistance in disaster relief operations. The true irony is that the people most directly affected by the deployment of such government instruments as the DART will have the least direct impact on whether or not their performance makes a difference.

As discussed in prior sections of this paper, the emphasis on PA continues to grow within the DART and the entire GoC approach. It is clear that the CF is unwilling to take the risk of negative public relations with respect to DART deployments so it has taken numerous steps to influence the media battlespace. These include such things as increased PA staff, providing assistance to civilian media where possible, more timely availability of information to reporters and other initiatives. But despite these efforts or

perhaps as a result of these efforts, the national media continue to criticize certain aspects of the DART. Of course it would be naive to presume that all reporters and newspapers ply their trade in a completely objective manner and therefore the following information must be considered within the framework of certain bias. Regardless of that possible bias, it is still news and it still reaches the Canadian public therefore neither criticisms nor support should be summarily discounted.

During OP PLATEAU in Pakistan, the Canadian Press Newswire reported that the DART is, "...big, slow and expensive but vey helpful."<sup>51</sup> This comment was the general consensus from an NGO doctor and UNICEF's head of water and sanitation in Pakistan. This type of comment seems to summarize the myriad of articles and reports that are broadcast across Canada before, during and after a DART deployment. Some of course are a bit more critical for example as a Tory MP critics calls the, "DART mission a 'photo op'." and that the "Military relief team not as cost-efficient as aid organizations."<sup>52</sup> But these comments are countered with government press statements such as the one issued during OP STRUCTURE as the Minister of National Defence stated, "DART members did outstanding work to help the region recover from this terrible tragedy. Our professional and caring soldiers have made a difference in the lives of thousands of Sri Lankans. Canadians can be proud of their accomplishments."<sup>53</sup> It is possible that the Minister purposely neglected to make any reference to the financial costs of the DART deployment for a number of possible reasons: The first is that the actual costs of the entire deployment was extremely high and would cause backlash from

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<sup>51</sup> Les Perreux. Canadian Press NewsWire. (Toronto: 31 Oct 2005).

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Leblanc and Colin Freeze. The Globe and Mail. (Toronto: 18 Oct 2005), A19.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Canada. Press Release No 26. (Ottawa: 07 Feb 2005).

the Canadian public; the second possibility is that the cost was not the most important factor and hence was a 'back-burner' issue; or probably the most likely scenario in that the complicated budget system and interdepartmental cost capturing spider-web resulted in the Minister not really knowing how much exactly was spent on the DART and the accompanying GoC effort.

These and other types of comments are interesting to note for a variety of reasons but once the obvious bias and subjective motives are boiled away, their normally rests some semblance of truth. For example, the critics contend that the DART is slow but as a former commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Voith stated to the Montreal Gazette in 2005, "We are not a search-and-rescue organization. We're part of the relief phase and after us comes the reconstruction."<sup>54</sup> Therefore the two points of interest from this debate would be an element of ignorance regarding the DART's role, mission and tasks as well as an assertion that perhaps the DART should be used during the initial stages of an operation and not just as a follow-on force. As an aside, the acronym DART actually implies 'speed' and perhaps this perception is part of the problem rather than the solution to overcoming aspects of ignorance.

A second criticism which has appeared in a number of newspapers and online journals concerns the overall cost of deploying the DART. Stephen Thorne, a journalist from Canadian Press, states that, "Canada's Disaster Assistance Response Team is outdated, disproportionately expensive to deploy and should be revamped..."<sup>55</sup> The expense of the DART, however, is a reality as Minister Pettigrew stated in a article by

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<sup>54</sup> Ann Caroll (Mike Voith). The Gazette. (Montreal: 16 Apr 2005), A11.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Thorne. The Canadian Press. (Toronto: 05 Jan 2005).

Terry Pedwell, “That {DART} is a very expensive thing. It’s all very nice to say ‘send the DART’ but it represents several million dollars.”<sup>56</sup> The underlying criticism does not appear to be the actual expense associated with the DART itself but whether or not it is actually money well spent. Perhaps the unknown expense associated with the costs to train, equip and deploy the DART could be put to better use another way. Potential options for funding will be considered later in this paper but for now, it should simply be noted that the Canadian news media, and hence the Canadian people are aware of the high cost of doing business with the CF DART. It should also be noted that these costs are further substantiated as a result of the military aspect of humanitarian disaster response insomuch as the military brings specialized skill-sets to a natural disaster situation. For example, although not generally deployed into a ‘non-permissive’ environment, the military can continue to operate in a low-level hostile environment as all members of the team are issued weapons. It is difficult to put a price on this capability and certainly when civilian organizations although may be less expensive, cannot provide the same effect.

Other comments from sources include criticism that, “...the team’s medical component failed to meet the international standards and its water purification system was not cost effective.”<sup>57</sup> Or that it is comprised of members from across the country that are part of the DART as a secondary duty with a unit operating budget less than any other unit therefore making the DART, a “paper tiger...a notional team.”<sup>58</sup> And other

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<sup>56</sup> Terry Pedwell. The Canadian Press. (Toronto: 03 Jan 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Jeff Sallot. The Globe and Mail. (Toronto: 16 Nov 2006), A6.

<sup>58</sup> Terry Pedwell. Canadian Press NewsWire. (Toronto: 03 Jan 2005).

comments that, “The unit is better suited to domestic response...”<sup>59</sup> These and other comments are opinions which may or may not be rooted in fact but it is once again important to consider the different points of view, in particular with a view to improving the overall capability and efficiency of the DART. This is not to say that every time a journalist writes something controversial about the DART that a team of staff officers from DND should convene a working group to find a solution. One may suggest that these articles could identify areas of weakness in the DART PA plan insomuch as the CF could publish or provide the facts which may disprove the speculation or erroneous data. But these criticisms may actually provide ideas that should be reviewed and analysed in detail. Just because a seemingly hostile reporter is extremely critical of an aspect of the DART does not necessarily mean that everything published is wrong.

The review of national media is an important factor but not the only one that should be considered in the complicated and multi-faceted paradigm of disaster assistance within Canada. In order to provide additional credibility to media reports, it is advisable to use various sources and points of view. For this reason, the next section will review the overall role in providing military assistance to natural disasters through international eyes and perhaps some common threads will become apparent.

#### **4.2 International Response on Foreign Military Assets**

Relatively speaking there has been very little published in books or reports that deal specifically with the arena of recent military support to disaster relief operations, and even less that deals with the overall international response to these types of deployments, compared with the significant increase in natural disasters in the last ten years. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) supported a

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen Thorne. Canadian Press NewsWire. (Toronto: 05 Jan 2005).

study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) entitled, *The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*.<sup>60</sup> This report, released in 2008, is a thorough compilation of questionnaires and research which focuses on four case studies of international natural disaster responses with foreign military involvement in the past ten years. Its aim is to contribute to the overall understanding of certain advantages, limitations and the practical implications of deploying military assets as part of an international disaster relief assistance mission. Although CF involvement was limited to only two of these four missions<sup>61</sup>, there have been a large number of observations raised about military forces in general and considering the CF DART LLs reviewed earlier in section 3 of this paper, it is fair to say that the international responses within the SIPRI report, accurately reflect many aspects of the CF contribution.

As this report forms the basis of this sub-section, it must be clearly understood that it is not without certain biases. For example, some of the research documentation involves questionnaires completed by the various international military organizations as well as civilian and government departments. In the case of the Canadian response, the only questionnaires completed and returned came from DFAIT and in the case of the Pakistan case-study, the High Commission of Canada to Pakistan. Also, this report was sponsored by the UN and as such is very much ‘politically correct’ in UN terms. Although it does mention nations specifically (Canadian contributions were highlighted on several occasions), any specific criticism is always directed to the greater UN

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<sup>60</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, (Sweden: 2008).

<sup>61</sup> The CF provided helicopter support to the flood relief operation in Haiti 2004 and the DART was deployed to the South Asia earthquake in Pakistan 2005.

community. Therefore, the key trends and global ‘take-aways’ must be considered within the context of the international military contributions of which Canada played a role.

Some of the prominent trends and themes identified include the following: That although the total aid for emergencies has increased, the increase in number of disasters has actually resulted in a net decrease in the amount of funding for each, effectively increasing the competition for resources and intensifying the debate about cost-effectiveness; Second to this is a trend which sees the political and diplomatic rationale for deployment of military assets trumping actual requirements and the result is not only the deployment of an unnecessary military component but in some cases reducing the efficiency of the overall response.

The key document which attempts to regulate these trends and others is called the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief or commonly referred to as the Oslo Guidelines.<sup>62</sup> These guidelines were created in 1994 and amended in 2006 in order to provide an overall practical and international normative framework for the use of military and civilian defence assets in natural disaster response. It is interesting to note that Canada does not follow the Oslo Guidelines as such but rather an amended version of the Oslo Guidelines which was written to reflect the spirit of the document within the Canadian framework.

Some of the aspects within these guidelines which are discussed throughout the report involve: timelines, appropriateness, efficiency, absorptive capacity, coordination and costs. Although seemingly straight forward, there are a number of intricacies that should be emphasized with particular relevance to the CF DART and some of the

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<sup>62</sup> United Nations. *Guideline On: The Use of Military and Civilian Defence Assets on Disaster Relief-“Oslo Guidelines”*, (New York: 1994).

information presented in earlier sections of this paper. For example, the aspect of *timelines* seems to be one of the most important considerations within a disaster response in the early days and weeks of an operation. The SIPRI report contends that the military aircraft and search and rescue (SAR) capability could play a key role early in an operation, conversely however, if promised military assets are slow to arrive it may actually impede the response by preventing the deployment of civilian aircraft. As well, the aspect of *efficiency* is not strictly limited to the military's ability to conduct its business but on how well it is able to contribute to the greater relief effort.<sup>63</sup> For example, to what extent are foreign militaries willing to submit to the coordination of their efforts by civilian actors? Also included in this discussion would be the contention that a nation's demand for integral force-protection measures result in a lower efficiency and the fact that armed soldiers may intimidate or be resented by the local people.

The SIPRI report makes a number of recommendations for potential contributors of military assets based on the Oslo Guidelines and lessons identified from previous missions. It is valuable to review these in some detail because it provides a general sense of what went wrong or what could have been done better from an international point of view. The important recommendations that are pertinent to the GoC in particular the CF DART are as follows: Improving the capacity for coordination between civilian and military actors; the development of generic Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs); better military involvement in the 'needs assessment' process; and a better overall LL and lessons sharing process.

The capacity for coordination between civilians and military actors in a disaster response operation needs improvement. As NGOs and UN organizations are an integral

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<sup>63</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The Effectiveness ...*, xii.

part of the relief effort, it is vital that military personnel deployed into the area have a rudimentary understanding of the plans, processes and capabilities of their civilian counterparts. This is not a one-way street however and civilians' understanding of military standard operating procedures (SOPs) is also key in establishing this professional and efficient working relationship. One suggestion to improve this capacity is a cooperative effort in military training exercises with a humanitarian actor as part of the exercise development team. A second idea may be the specific inclusion of the OSLO Guidelines within military field manuals and SOPs.

The second recommendation is self-explanatory and speaks directly to a nation's ability to deploy quickly into a disaster area. Any generic humanitarian assistance relief SOFAs which could be developed and signed between countries prior to a natural disaster may not necessarily expedite the military response but it certainly would alleviate one more potential obstacle.

The SIPRI report states that, "Military actors should be included in needs assessment activities. Military assets can play an enabling role, including providing assets to facilitate the assessment missions."<sup>64</sup> This would serve to not only identify the most useful role for military assets but it would serve a dual purpose of improving civilian-military coordination early on in a mission.

The final key point identified involves the entire arena of LLs and the sharing of best practices amongst the international community. Although certain countries are hesitant to be pro-active in sharing their strengths and weaknesses, governments should be encouraged to declassify and promulgate this information which may improve other military deployments and potentially save lives.

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

Overall, the international feedback on the deployment of military assets is somewhat divided. There are some humanitarian assistance personnel who strongly believe that military assistance in disaster relief operations should be by exception only and the focus should remain on increasing the resources in the civilian sector. There are others who believe that nations contributing militaries need to do more in the areas of coordination and cooperation in order to support the civilian leads during these operations. Regardless of the school of thought, a commonality that transcends the opposing viewpoints is that things can be done better and that foreign military assets will remain an integral part of the disaster relief landscape for the foreseeable future.

#### **4.3 Summary**

Notwithstanding some biased national criticism regarding the value of the CF DART, it appears to be generally accepted that this is a capability in which the Canadian people want to see continue and improve. The international community countenances this perspective and goes on to state that the role of militaries in disaster response operations will remain for the foreseeable future. Therefore based on a balance of probabilities, in conjunction with the assertion that militaries are an extension of political will, it is highly likely that the CF will remain as an active part of the Canadian government arsenal and continue to be a key part of a comprehensive approach to international disaster response operations.

The next logical question therefore is, ‘what next?’ What actions need to be taken with respect to the DART in order to make it better? Certain journalists in the national media say that the DART is big, slow and expensive. Certain reporters claim that it should be involved in earlier phases of a natural disaster or that aspects of the DART

should be removed as they are not cost effective. The UN-sanctioned SIPRI report has identified a number of issues that should be improved upon including the degree of cooperation between military and civilian actors, the importance of preparing generic legal documentation ahead of potential disasters, the importance of the needs assessments and the sharing of lessons across the military-civilian spectrum.

All of these various suggestions regardless of point of origin should be considered against the backdrop of LLs that have been identified by the CF itself. They may not be mutually exclusive in fact, the analysis of these issues may serve to reinforce each other and plant the seeds for the growth of recommendations for the way ahead.

## **5.0 THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE DART**

It is unrealistic to identify changes to an organization like the DART in splendid isolation as the CF DART is but one of the integral parts that form the entire Canadian comprehensive approach to dealing with natural disasters in the world. Therefore one would be wise in the planning process to ensure full concurrence with departments such as DFAIT and CIDA. It may also be worthwhile to seek feedback from the international community specifically the UN departments of OCHA and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) office. Any significant alteration to the roles, missions or tasks of the DART must first pass through a filter of pragmatism. That is to say that a recommendation which gains full approval from all the primary and secondary influences is not worth following up if it is not feasible in the first place. For example, massive increases to the number of full time personnel working in the DART may be generally palatable to all concerned except for the fact that the CF is unable to meet its current manning levels and there are higher priorities for funding across the department. It is therefore important to note throughout this next section that any recommendations for the 'way ahead' for the DART are technically feasible but only with the support of the CF leadership, the Canadian government or in some cases both.

The specific recommendations for the way ahead of the DART have been grouped into four general categories: Administration; Training; Modular Approach; and Cooperation/Coordination. Each of these will be expanded upon to identify a range of potential changes that could be undertaken in an effort to improve its overall effectiveness during future deployments.

## 5.1 Administration

This category deals with the management of the affairs of the DART and in particular the pre-deployment bureaucracy which could serve to greatly facilitate the preparation and the employment of this capability. The focus remains at the operational and strategic level so tactical recommendations such as ensuring soldiers have passports and visas at all times, will not be discussed. The key areas within the broader 'Administration' group that will be analysed involve CONPLAN GRIFFON and SOFAs.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the 2001 version of CONPLAN GRIFFON was not particularly valuable as the information was so vague and generic that it did little to actually prepare personnel or guide them once deployed and it was effectively dismissed, to be replaced by a version of OPP before each deployment. The 2006 version has been updated significantly and includes a much more practical and comprehensive approach with OGD involvement identified throughout the document. This is definitely a positive step but the true effectiveness of this document will be realised during the next deployment and perhaps it too will be discarded if it is not kept current and relevant. With the current op tempo in the CF, the regular updating of a CONPLAN has the tendency to become a secondary priority and if this happens, it is possible that the CONPLAN will only be amended after a deployment, when it has lost its value.

A second recommendation with reference to the development and updating of CONPLAN GRIFFON is to ensure its compliance within the framework of the OSLO Guidelines, or the Canadian adaptation of these internationally accepted guidelines<sup>65</sup>. This is not to suggest that version 2006 does not comply, but perhaps by using a common lexicon of disaster relief for example, then it would better facilitate the integration of the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

CF DART into the UN or NGO framework that would be in place during a natural disaster operation.

A SOFA is an agreement between countries which essentially outlines the rules and regulations that would allow one country to station military forces in another. The importance of this agreement cannot be undervalued with reference to a CF DART deployment as it outlines the terms and conditions of such aspects as entry and exit permits, tax limitations and host nation employment regulations to name a few. It is a legal document, it is comprehensive and although it can be quite generic in nature, it may delay the deployment of forces into a disaster response. The recommendation for the CF DART and the GoC is to ensure that SOFAs are in place with as many countries in the world that are prone to such natural disasters. This recommendation is not supported by the Commanding Officer (CO) or the Operations Officer (Ops O) of the DART<sup>66</sup> as they believe that it takes too much time and effort to draft and get approval of SOFAs through the legal and diplomatic bureaucracies. They believe that Diplomatic Notes achieve almost the exact same result in a fraction of the time. This opinion is understandably from an 'operators' point of view and although practical, it may not withstand the pressures should an international incident or criminal allegation was to surface during a DART deployment. Of course certain countries do not want foreign militaries on their soil and would be unwilling to enter into such an agreement. If the GoC is to be more effective in these operations, all efforts should be made to put into place a 'just in case' SOFA because the Canadian public may not understand the bureaucratic obstacles that are preventing their soldiers from helping sick and wounded people.

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<sup>66</sup> Ewing, Lieutenant-Colonel and Gillies Major P. *Comments on DART Operations*. (Kingston: Canadian Forces Joint Headquarters, 07 April 2009).

## 5.2 Training

Once again, it should be stressed that this recommendation is focussed towards the strategic level vice the tactical one. In fact, a common thread through all LLs and feedback is the high degree to which the members of the DART are trained to conduct a wide range of tasks. Although this suggestion will address to a small degree the requirement for additional individual training, the overarching recommendation actually leans more towards education and collective training opportunities.

One may reasonably argue that the concept of collective training an organization that is located across the country to practice skills that they are conducting in their normal day's work is both expensive and unnecessary. This is further substantiated when the normal annual posting cycle sees military personnel being posted in and out of the DART (in a secondary duty role) frequently. Combine these factors with the proven track record of prior missions and it would seem unreasonable to change what is currently being done. The adage that 'if it isn't broke then don't fix it', seems to percolate to the forefront of this discussion. And while that may be true in the broadest sense, there remain a couple of key areas in which additional training would greatly enhance the overall DART capability; they include interagency and international training.

During the strategic recce for OP PLATEAU it was recognized that the interdepartmental team that consisted of DFAIT, CIDA and DND were more successful and effective because of their close working relationships inside the 3D framework. The division between uniforms and suits was bridged as a result of working together during this operation. It therefore could logically be argued that such a working relationship and early joint training opportunities could improve the GoC capability well in advance of a deployment. In some ways this is being conducted now by the SJS and their continuing

working relationship with OGDs at various interdepartmental meetings and this is a very positive step in the right direction however the personnel at the SJS are not members of the DART and do not normally deploy with them on operations. The main point is that joint training opportunities that include DART members and the applicable OGD personnel should be investigated. This may include UN-sponsored training activities with OCHA or perhaps actual disaster response operations in which Canada is not directly participating. The possibilities are quite vast but the bottom line is that a whole of government approach to disaster response operations will improve significantly when a whole of government approach to training is taken.

### **5.3 Modular Approach**

In January of 2008, the SJS requested that an analysis of modularity of the DART be considered by CEFCOM and Canada Command.<sup>67</sup> The rationale behind this request was that it had been identified through LLs and AARs that the complete DART package is not always required during disaster crises. It was therefore requested that the core components of the DART be examined in detail to determine if discreet components could in fact be deployed as part of the GoC response. This is not the first time that the CF has reviewed this aspect of the DART and one may argue that it has been a recurring criticism since its first deployment on OP CENTRAL when it required the entire CC-130 Hercules fleet to move the DART equipment. Or more recently in Pakistan when once against the massive requirement for airlift was exacerbated by the fact that many of the vehicles shipped to Pakistan were unable to negotiate the limited road infrastructure and

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<sup>67</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. 3301-2 (SJS Engr-Ops) *Analysis of the Modularity of the Core Capabilities of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)*, Ottawa: January 2008,1.

sat dormant. Therefore the SJS has gone back to first principles and is once again challenging the assertion that the DART in its current form is its most efficient.

Unfortunately, the results of this analysis are not yet known but it is clear that there are different opinions regarding whether or not the DART could be effectively subdivided into more discreet parts. Further to that discussion is the belief that even if certain functions were removed, it would still require a large portion of the command and control structure, logistics, force protection etc. As prior analyses have demonstrated, “...the past analysis conducted by the CLS indicated that should the discrete packages of either provision of potable water or primary medical care be deployed, approximately 90% of the entire DART would be required.”<sup>68</sup> This does not necessarily apply to all circumstances and all missions equally. The SJS have provided a number of different scenarios and although the general consensus is that the DART will not be used for domestic natural disaster response (as the Regional Task Forces have similar capabilities), there are some indications that modularity is possible.

The overall recommendation therefore is that the concept of modularity should be further investigated (as the SJS is pursuing) and then it should be tested as part of a collective exercise prior to its deployment. Perhaps if a modularized CF DART is more employable in the eyes of DND, then it will become more deployable as part of the greater DFAIT team.

#### **5.4 Cooperation/Coordination**

Throughout all four missions of the DART one of the most crucial aspects was the degree to which the members of the DART were able to successfully integrate into the GoC response with OGDs and also the ability to coordinate within the greater UN/NGO

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

effort. Due to the nature of the DART's employment, it cannot be expected to operate alone and therefore it must be flexible enough to fit within the Canadian comprehensive approach as well as the global effort in the affected area. It could be said that the DART personnel have been quite successful in this area and this is indicative of the positive accomplishments during each mission. This paper will not attempt to discredit any of the DART's achievements but it will assert that things could have gone better and as the future deployments become more and more complicated, improvements in the area of coordination and cooperation must be made. The following are the specific recommendations that need to be addressed: Increase in Liaison Officers (LOs); increased globalization of educational efforts; and participation in a comprehensive international LL center.

One of the best ways in which to learn and understand what another organization is doing is to work there. In relation to the DART, there are two opportunities in which military personnel could improve this understanding; the first is to have a permanent LO with the UN (OCHA or UNDAC) and the second would involve an LNO or two working as part of DFAIT or CIDA. It is acknowledged up front that this would involve an increase of two to three military personnel (PYs) but certain economies of effort could also be realized as part of the larger CF. For example, a DART LNO could be working in DFAIT who would not only bridge the information gaps between the DART and DFAIT but also be in a position to assist the SJS in other areas that involve this or OGDs. Another example would be a CF LO working full time in OCHA or UNDAC would not only be an incredible resource for information and building contacts with the UN and NGO community but the person could also serve to enhance the diminishing Canadian

military commitment to UN New York. This officer would deploy as part of the needs assessment and provide 'ground truth' to the GoC allowing a task tailored and effective DART contribution. He or she would also play a key role in the ongoing liaison between NGOs, ensuring that the provision of military assets is efficient or perhaps making a knowledgeable recommendation in some cases that it is better to provide funding as the civilian NGO community is better suited for a particular response. The importance of a LO cannot be understated and should be considered as a force multiplier for both the DART and the CF.

The second recommendation involves an increase in education regarding the overall international disaster response effort. One example of such an initiative was discussed in 1994 by Joel Gaydos and George Luz in a "Disasters" magazine article in which they refer to the US increase in using military for humanitarian and disaster related missions. The state that, "...ongoing disaster-related work could take place at a formal center for information exchange, debate, research, training and planning."<sup>69</sup> This however would be a major investment by the Canadian government to spearhead such an international initiative but perhaps there could be a joint private and public venture in this growing arena. Perhaps this could be supportable within the mandate of the Pearson Peacekeeping Center and if so, it should be supported and encouraged by the CF, in particular the DART. Through such a venture, experience and education would be shared that would not only improve the capability of the CF DART but military and civilian disaster assistance organizations worldwide.

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<sup>69</sup> Joel C. Gaydos and George A. Luz, "Military Participation in Emergency Humanitarian Assistance," in *Disasters* 18,1 (March 1994), 55.

A third proposal that could improve the overall effectiveness and capability of the DART would be the support and participation in a comprehensive, international LL center. This center does not currently exist and although it was suggested in the SIPRI report,<sup>70</sup> it would be very difficult to establish. The main reason for this obstacle would be the willingness for countries to expose not only their strengths but also their areas for development during military disaster relief operations. Once again however, this is an opportunity for Canada to assume a lead role and work with the UN in the establishment of such a center. It could be part of a greater Disaster Institute mandate as identified in the prior paragraph or it could act as a stand-alone resource for UN countries (including military and civilian personnel). It could provide a venue to better educate responders on a variety of related subjects with the common goal of improving their ability to save lives and assist the people of disaster stricken areas.

### **5.5 Summary**

There is no denying the importance of having a capability such as the DART within the Canadian government comprehensive approach to natural disaster response operations. Some critics will argue that perhaps it is best to simply donate the same amount of money that it would cost to deploy the DART in the first place but this is not supported by the majority of Canadians. The Canadian people see their CF personnel deployed to difficult situations rendering humanitarian assistance to a stricken population and it makes them feel good. The DART is a physical extension of Canadian values and it is much more tangible than an increase in aid funding, therefore it is important.

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<sup>70</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The Effectiveness...*, xv.

Equally important is the responsibility to not only do the job well but to strive to do the job better and better each time.

A number of recommendations have been provided to do just that; make the DART better. Whether the lawyers are drafting SOFAs for isolated southwest Asian countries or staff officers at NDHQ are updating and amending the latest version of CONPLAN GRIFFON, these are steps towards the goal of improving the DART's capability. In terms of interdepartmental and international training, there is definite progress which should be pursued in order to determine what training opportunities exist and secondly to take advantage of them. The building of contacts and networking through training opportunities is extremely valuable when it comes to working together in a pressure filled environment. Also, the CF has taken a number of big steps to self-identify areas for development, one such being the possible modular approach to the DART allowing discreet pieces to deploy as the mission dictates. A final series of recommendations involves the plethora of opportunities that should be followed-up in order to improve the overall cooperation and coordination of the DART in relation to OGDs, UN agencies and NGOs. These may be somewhat more difficult to achieve due to the investment required however, the key take-away is that Canada and in particular the CF should be tracking these prospects with a view to leading or supporting them.

The list of recommendations is certainly not exhaustive and there are many other initiatives from tactical to strategic levels but the continuous striving for betterment is what defines a professional military and what will ultimately improve organizations such as the DART.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The rationale behind the creation of the CF DART remains extant almost 13 years since its inception and one may argue that despite the growth of NGOs and IOs, and notwithstanding the limitations on personnel caused by increased operational tempo across the CF, there has never been a greater role for military assistance in disaster response operations. The challenges are staggering as the incidents and intensity of climate-related hazards will remain high or increase while factors such as rapid urbanization, weak governance and environmental degradation will likely result in greater human cost.<sup>71</sup> Combine these factors with a rapidly crowded field of crises response organizations and it becomes a rather daunting proposition to a military commander responsible for the conduct of emergency humanitarian relief operations.<sup>72</sup> Therefore the real question is not whether or not military assistance will be required but when? And equally important is the tough question on whether these military organizations are set up for success?

The CF DART has had a relatively short history on which to gauge the answers to these questions and with just four deployments since 1998, it becomes difficult to ascertain a true measurement of success. Of course it is relatively easy to measure performance with the quantifiable figures of 250,000 litres of water per day<sup>73</sup> or the treating of 200 patients per day<sup>74</sup>, but how does one truly measure national success in

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Victoria Wheeler and Adele Harmer. *Resetting the rules of Engagement: Trends and Issues in Military-Humanitarian Relations*, Humanitarian Policy Group Report 21, (London: March 2006), 7.

<sup>73</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. Annex B to 3350-165/C33 (DLLS) 3350-165/T (DLLS) *OPERATION TORRENT*, B-1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, B-2.

relation to the greater global effort in disaster response? One method of course is the process of self-examination and in this method; the military is extremely diligent, conducting various AARs, producing hundreds of lessons identified after each operation. These lessons identified are then analysed and changes are made in order to overcome weaknesses and when this happens, it becomes a lesson 'learned'. This is a good process albeit flawed in that there is a natural bias associated with self-examination.

So like a patient who wants to get better, sometimes it is best to get a second opinion. In the analysis of the DART, this second opinion comes in the form of external feedback, both national and international. In doing so, the DART can then gain a more holistic appreciation of its strengths and weaknesses. Armed with these prognoses, it is then time to identify different treatment techniques and recommended courses of action that would alleviate the shortcomings and better prepare it for the next time it has to deploy. In practice this would involve making administrative changes within the DART such as ensuring that contingency plans are updated and synchronized with generally accepted international plans such as the Oslo Guidelines. It may also involve changes made to the collective training and interdepartmental coordination efforts within the GoC as well as between Canada and the UN. And although not uniformly supported across DND, perhaps a different version of modularity may be worthy of consideration. Finally and most importantly, the aspects of cooperation and coordination must be improved both at home and abroad. The DART will always be working as a piece of a much larger puzzle and although it is self sufficient, it cannot afford to work in isolation. It is a true force-multiplier in a natural disaster emergency and only through improved coordination with external agencies and expanded international education of relief efforts can the

DART become a more effective capability. Sometimes however, these recommendations are difficult to implement. They may be expensive, time consuming or just too difficult to make them worthwhile, but they must be considered and thoroughly analyzed before they can be discarded.

The CF DART is an extremely versatile and powerful capability that has a proven track record with Canadians and the international community. It has not however been used to its full capability; with only four deployments in over ten years, the same ten years that have seen dramatic increases in natural disasters across the globe. There is a variety of reasons why the DART has not deployed more frequently and these range from cost, operational tempo, international requirements etc, but the crux of the matter is that the current construct and employment policies make it an extremely difficult political option. Steps continue to be taken to improve these aspects but adjustments need to be bold and reinforced with greater measurements of success if the true potential of the CF DART will ever be realized.

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