# STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE HQ-00310

**ISAF Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief Response**

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**REFERENCES:**

A. (NU) ISAF SOP 322, ISAF *In Extremis* Support to International Community, 1 Sep 10  
B. (U) Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors in Afghanistan, 20 May 08  
C. (U) The Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Force assets in disaster relief, May 94, Updated Nov 06  
D. (U) PRT Handbook  
E. (U) PRT ESC policy guidance note number 3

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**AMENDMENT RECORD**

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1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this SOP is to provide policy and guidance on the roles and responsibilities as well as command and control of coalition forces in the event of a Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operation in Afghanistan.
2. General. In general, it is the responsibility of the host nation, supported by the international community, to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief events. Foreign militaries are considered a last resort response capability and participate in HA/DR operations only at the request of the host nation or proper civil authority. This typically occurs when a foreign military possesses a unique capability (i.e., distribution assets) the host nation and/or the international humanitarian community (IHC) lack. The exception to this rule is a time-sensitive, life-threatening situation where only the foreign military can provide immediate in extremis support due to its capacity, proximity, and reach (see Reference A).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

   a. Key Civilian Actors

   (1) GIROA. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has overall responsibility for any HA/DR event within Afghanistan. Within GIROA, the organization charged with coordinating and responding to HA/DR is the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA).

   (2) IHC. The International Humanitarian Community (IHC), which includes various United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other international and domestic civil-society entities, provide HA/DR support should a disaster event exceed the capacity of GIROA to respond effectively. The IHC contains technical experts who are trained to assess specific humanitarian needs and determine appropriate assistance. Within the IHC system, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is the lead agency for coordinating international assistance in support of GIROA. Basic principles of humanitarian relief, such as neutrality, impartiality, and independence, underpin much of the IHC assistance.

   (3) UN OCHA. OCHA is the lead U.N. agency for coordinating the IHC assistance to a disaster response. OCHA has no statutory authority over response entities but plays a key role in coordinating a coherent response to emergencies and natural disasters. In the event that military forces are required for HA/DR assistance, OCHA, through its Civil-Military Coordination Officers, will liaise closely with GIROA, ISAF, and IHC stakeholders to prevent the duplication of efforts.

   (4) Other U.N. Agencies and NGOs. International humanitarian response in Afghanistan is conducted primarily through U.N. humanitarian agencies and other international and national NGOs that comprise the IHC. In addition to OCHA, other U.N. agencies include the World Food Program (WFP), the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO), and the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). NGOs are wide ranging and often have diverse mandates, funding sources, and areas of technical expertise. While U.N. entities are part of the collective U.N. country team, NGOs are accountable only to their home office and are not subordinate to any other entity in Afghanistan. The common link among NGOs and most U.N. agencies is adherence to the basic
humanitarian principles. These principles allow NGOs and other humanitarian organizations to negotiate access to affected populations, especially those populations residing in insecure or contested areas. The willingness of NGOs and U.N. actors to work closely with military or political actors varies, depending on the organization and the specific context of the HA/DR event.

(5) International "Donor" Governments. National embassies are the primary national offices for the coordination of international development and humanitarian assistance. They will liaise with Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), OCHA, and ISAF to determine if an HA/DR event exceeds GIROA's national response capacity and to mobilize the donor nation's support and assistance. Examples of these "Donor" government entities include the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID-UK), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Assistance from donor governments is usually financial support to NGOs and U.N. responders, but can also include the movement of appropriate emergency relief commodities and personnel to affected areas.

(6) The Red Cross/Red Crescent/Red Crystal Movement. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral, and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. In some case, it may coordinate the international activities conducted by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in armed conflicts and other violent situations.

b. Key Military Actors

(1) Afghan National Army (ANA). The ANA is one of GIROA's primary responders in a HA/DR event. As GIROA's disaster response capacity (both personnel and enablers) improves, GIROA should become less reliant on support from other nations. In the meantime, the IHC, and ISAF to a lesser extent, will likely be required (requested) to provide some form of assistance to GIROA.

(2) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). All HA/DR assistance provided by ISAF should be in response to an assessed need by GIROA or OCHA. ISAF will only be used in an HA/DR response when requested by GIROA or in extremis situations. ISAF assistance will only be used until it no longer provides unique capacity to GIROA and the broader humanitarian relief community. ISAF will make every effort to abide by the guidelines regarding military participation in an HA/DR event as denoted in References B and C. For ISAF, the assessed need or requirement will be communicated through OCHA's Civil-Military Coordinator. Providing military capabilities or supplies absent a specific requirement may indirectly harm the affected community by undermining economic structures,
duplicating existing efforts, and/or creating a negative public relations effect. Overall, ISAF assets should only be used for HA/DR when the following conditions are met:

(a) There is no comparable civilian alternative  
(b) Civilian guidance (i.e.; UN-directed requirements) is maintained  
(c) The humanitarian mission is clearly distinguished from other military operations  
(d) ISAF support is limited in time and scale  
(e) There is an exit strategy for military forces, which are determined at the outset of the operation  
(f) Non-Military options have been exhausted, and ISAF assistance is provided as a last resort

**In extremis** needs supersede the above conditions.

(3) Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The primary role for a PRT during an HA/DR event is twofold: (1) encourage and strengthen Afghan national disaster management systems per References D and E by ensuring information about the event and requests for support are transmitted to GIRQa (Kabul) and the IHC; and (2) provide requested and validated humanitarian assistance, in support of GIRQa and the IHC. The IHC will treat the PRTs similar to the military—as a last resort capability. All actions should be first coordinated through IJC and OCHA to prevent duplication of effort.

2. ISAF Integration in the HA/DR Initiation Process

a. In the event of a disaster event that exceeds the capacity of GIRQa and the IHC to respond, Afghan interlocutors may request assistance directly from ISAF. Requests to support GIRQa-led HA/DR operations are initiated in one of the four following ways:

(1) An official request from GIRQa to another government ("Donor")  
(2) An official request from GIRQa directly to the ISAF  
(3) A request by the International Humanitarian Community (IHC) to a donor government  
(4) An in extremis situation in which ISAF assets are uniquely positioned to save lives and timeliness outweighs official request channels

b. All requests for ISAF assistance, whether originating in one of the regional commands or in Kabul, should be directed to HQ ISAF. HQ ISAF will coordinate with OCHA and the embassy of the donor country whose troops will be employed. HQ ISAF will interact with coalition nations should ISAF forces in the area be inadequate to maintain the military mission and execute an HA/DR mission. Regardless of the origin of the request, ISAF will ensure the requirements have been defined by the IHC and GIRQa and the mission is appropriately scaled and non-duplicative.

3. Command and Control. Refer to Annex A
NON-SENSITIVE INFORMATION RELEASABLE TO THE PUBLIC

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Annexes:

A. Command and Control (C2)
B. Definitions
C. Glossary
ANNEX A – COMMAND AND CONTROL (C2)

REFERENCES:

A. Afghanistan National Disaster Management Plan, Dec 03
B. Afghanistan National Disaster Management Plan (DRAFT), Oct 10

1. General

   a. The lead responder to a humanitarian assistance / disaster response event in Afghanistan is GIROA. In case of an HA/DR event, GIROA will coordinate efforts using the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) located within the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority. Should GIROA determine that the humanitarian requirements for an HA/DR event exceed GIROA’s capacity, GIROA could request support from the international community, including from the U.N. other humanitarian actors, and/or ISAF. In the event of a direct request, ISAF, in coordination with OCHA and other donors, may deploy a liaison team to the NEOC to ensure requirements, capabilities and limitations are properly conveyed. It is the responsibility of ISAF to ensure that OCHA and the broader IHC are included in the preliminary discussions. Figure 1 depicts this relationship.

   

   ![Diagram](image.png)

   Figure 1. GIROA – ISAF relationship for HA/DR assistance request.

   b. Should an HA/DR event surpass the capacity of GIROA, GIROA may ask the IHC for assistance. If the capabilities of the IHC are insufficient, GIROA will then ask ISAF or other countries for military assistance. Regardless of the number of entities involved, figure 2 shows the establishment of coordination LNOs within the key actors. All

   A-1
NGOs and other agencies outside GIROA, IC, and ISAF will coordinate their efforts through the UN. Overall, ISAF will provide an LNO to GIROA as already discussed, and UN will provide an LNO to both GIROA (ANDMA) and ISAF, if required. In summary, Figure 3 depicts the major actors involved in an HA/DR event.

Figure 2. Coordination between GIROA, ISAF and UN.

Figure 3. Key actors during an HA/DR event.
ANNEX B – DEFINITIONS

Disaster Response – Decisions and measures taken to mitigate the effects of a disastrous event, (usually natural) and to restore order, and reestablish normality.

Humanitarian Assistance – Aid provided during and in the aftermath of a crisis to address immediate needs of a population that includes saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining and protecting human dignity. Humanitarian assistance is mainly provided by non-governmental and international organizations.

In extremis – A situation in which life is at immediate risk; grave and/or extreme circumstances.

International Community – With reference to this SOP, nations not Afghanistan.

Military Operations – Military action (including administration) which includes combat, movement, supply, attack, defense and maneuvers needed to accomplish the objectives of any battle or campaign.

Non-Government Organizations – constituted organizations that operate independently from any government; organizations not affiliated with any government.
ANNEX C – GLOSSARY

ANA – Afghan National Army

ANDMA – Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority

GIRoA – Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

HA/DR – Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

IHC – International Humanitarian Community

IJC – ISAF Joint Command

IFRC – International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team

UN – United Nations

UHHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

WFP – World Food Program

WHO – United Nations World Health Organization