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## How Canada Responds to Natural Disasters Abroad: A Model of Collaboration

*The rising number of natural disasters, and the increasing number of people affected by them, has compounded the need to study the international disaster response systems of governments. For over a decade, Canada has been working on a system of interdepartmental collaboration to coordinate its international disaster-relief interventions, requiring close collaboration between a number of federal departments. These include the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT); the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the Department of National Defence (DND); as well as other federal level departments, as required. This system is referred to as the whole-of-government approach and as detailed in its Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), results in daily task-force meetings upon disaster onset, providing a platform for prompt, government-wide action. It also includes mechanisms for consultation and engagement with members of Canadian civil society.*

*Recently, Canada gained international recognition for its disaster-relief intervention in response to the January 12th, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, where the whole-of-government system was applied. It resulted in interdepartmental collaboration between nine federal level departments, with over 2000 Canadian Forces personnel deployed to Haiti to aid in relief efforts. What lessons can be drawn from Canada's system for response to humanitarian crisis?*

*This paper outlines the Canadian whole-of-government framework for response to natural disasters abroad, and highlights how it promotes: i) structural and ideational coherence; ii) joint decision-making; iii) shared accountability; and, iv) incorporation of civil-society. Drawing attention to the contentions surrounding the increased use of military assets in disaster-relief efforts and the role of media, this paper also raises concerns about the power of political leadership to sway disaster-relief interventions away from humanitarian principles. This paper is particularly useful for countries seeking to strengthen their systems for responding to natural disasters abroad.*

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### Introduction

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 on the Richter scale hit Port au Prince, Haiti, causing an estimated death toll of 220,000 people, displacing around 1.5 million, and resulting in extensive infrastructure damage to the country (DEC, 2010). Canada immediately launched a large-scale disaster-relief response effort, which saw interdepartmental collaboration between nine federal departments. Canada's disaster-relief response included financial aid disbursements; provision of relief supplies; deployment of experts; set-up of a fund to match donations by the Canadian public; application of special immigration and adoption measures; as well as the use of a myriad of military assets (DFAIT, 2012). The military component, Operation Hestia, resulted in 2050 Canadian Forces (CF) personnel on Haitian soil.

In addition to the degree of interdepartmental collaboration required for this effort, representatives both in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) led meetings with Canadian non-governmental partners in order to share information about the developing situation on the ground in Haiti, as well as to get a better understanding of the types of programming Canada should consider funding. Canadian public were directly engaged in the disaster-relief efforts through the establishment of a Matching Fund, where the government pledged to match donations of the public made within the month following the disaster. While an initial cap of CAN \$50 million was set, this was soon removed, with CAN \$220 million being raised, for a total Canadian financial contribution of CAN \$440 (DFAIT, 2012).

Due to the timeliness of intervention, the efficiency of response, and the evident impact of Canadian financial contributions, resources and personnel deployed to Haiti, Canada's response received praise both domestically and internationally. The interdepartmental team received the Public Service Award of Excellence for "Exemplary Contribution under Extraordinary Circumstances" on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (TBS, 2010). Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, former U.S. President Bill Clinton publicly hailed Canada's efforts in Haiti as "unbelievable" (Akin, 2010). Commenting on Canada's military assets having to leave Haiti at the end of its mission, Nigel Fisher, the United Nations (UN) Head of Humanitarian Aid in Haiti, told The Canadian Press that "many felt that they wished they had stayed because they were extremely effective" (quoted in Annis, 2010).

Although the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is tasked with bringing together international humanitarian actors that are responding to the emergency in the disaster affected area, its attempts to ensure a coherent response relies on individual donor countries and organizations to coordinate their internal affairs independently. This is particularly important in countries that require collaboration between several of their own national departments when responding to international crises. Canada is a case in point.

The Canadian system that facilitated this robust disaster-relief response is known as the whole-of-government approach, and offers a number of lessons for countries seeking to strengthen their international humanitarian assistance responses. Using information obtained through Access to Information requests, as well as confidential interviews with twenty-six personnel involved in Canada's disaster-relief efforts in Haiti in 2010<sup>1</sup>, this paper details the

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<sup>1</sup> Semi-structured interviews were conducted between June 2011-April 2012 with representatives from: DND/CF; DFAIT; CIDA, Privy Council Office; Department of Finance; Natural Resources Canada; Canadian Public Health Agency; and representatives from the Canadian Embassy in Haiti in January 2010. Interviewees, referred to as

collaborative efforts used in Canada's response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. It begins by introducing the whole-of-government approach from the lens of Public Administration theory, and provides a brief survey of similar approaches both internationally, and domestically in Canada. The following section describes the strengths of the Canadian model in its ability to facilitate interdepartmental collaboration and the inclusion of civil society in disaster-relief efforts. Using Canada's disaster-relief intervention in response to the January 2012 earthquake in Haiti as an example, the paper concludes with a call for prudence. It argues that increasing military involvement results in heightened political control over the provision of disaster-relief, particularly demonstrated through the role of media. This hampers the ability of donor countries to respond based on needs on the ground, and in ways that are fair and impartial. All countries considering the use of military assets in disaster-relief response should be weary of these concerns.

## **I. Whole-of-Government Approach in Theory and Practice**

To address the complex social issues facing the world today - many of which cut across traditional vertical program structures - an increasing number of entities are required to work together for resolution, and often require various types of interventions simultaneously (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Simpson, 2007). When collaborating, stakeholders are required to develop a unified strategy on how to decide on the issues that brought them together (Vigoda & Gilboa, 2002; Ansell & Gash, 2007). There must be an explicit and formal procedure of incorporating stakeholders into multilayer and consensus-oriented decision-making processes, spanning inter-

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respondents herein, were conducted with personnel across grades, from Director General/Colonel levels to Program Officers/Generals. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. In this paper, unless indicated otherwise, information on the specifics of Canada's disaster-relief approach was obtained through these interviews.

organizational, cross-sectoral and international boundaries (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; 2003). Such a collaborative approach would avoid duplication of efforts and the waste of energy and resources that necessarily ensue when departments work autonomously on a single overarching cause (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Gray, 1989).

While the idea of collaboration resonates in the field of Public Administration it lacks a formal definition or common explanatory lens. Collaborative activity is usually described in two-part terms such as “collaborative management” (Leach, 2006; O’Leary *et al*, 2009), “collaborative governance” (Huxman, 2000; Ansell & Gash, 2007), “network governance” (O’Toole, 1997), or “collaborative networks” (Mandell & Steelman, 2003; Fleishman, 2009). It is also closely related to literature on horizontality, horizontal policy coordination, and horizontal integration (Bourgault, 1997; Weber & Khademian, 1997; Peters, 1998). These approaches are meant to put emphasis on horizontal rather than a vertical organizing, such that organizations do not have superior-subordinate relationships. Rather, there is meant to be collegial and consensus based participation, where leadership is shared around areas of expertise, and where there is a unique coming together of people and resources (see Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Mandell, 2001; Mandell & Steelman, 2003). This provides much of the advantage of the network model.

The “whole-of-government” approach is one of the most increasingly popular terms used to describe applied collaborative efforts. Some argue that whole-of-government initiatives were introduced as a reaction to the negative effects of New Public Management (NPM) reforms that emphasized market-models of public administration through decentralization, ‘silozation’, and single-purpose organizations (Pollitt, 2003; Christensen & Laegreid, 2006).

In Canada, whole-of-government approaches have been used in several areas of governance. The Government of Canada (GoC) applies a whole-of-government framework with

respect to the organization of thirteen broad societal cornerstones in its four spending areas: Economic, Social, International and Government Affairs (TBS, 2011). These cornerstones are meant to enable federal organizations to align their program activities, both financial and non-financial, to a set of high-level outcome areas, which are also used for reporting to Parliament on progress made as a country. At the provincial level, whole-of-government approaches are used for health promotion; “if improving the overall health of the population is a policy goal, then this becomes not just the responsibility of health ministries, but the responsibility of all government departments that can influence the population’s health,” explains one report (OHPE, 2011). Canada’s handling of the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver was also referred to as a whole-of-government approach, seeing significant horizontal collaboration with forty-six federal departments, agencies and crown corporations working together alongside the province, both for planning and service delivery requirements (GOC, 2010). Of particular interest for this paper, however, is the use of the whole-of-government approach in international assistance.

### ***Whole-of-Government in International Assistance***

From a theoretical perspective, success of humanitarian interventions is dependent on the quality of collaborative efforts between all involved entities (Thomson & Perry, 1998; O’ Leary *et al*, 2009). Crisis and emergency management is increasingly emphasizing the role of interdepartmental coherence and coordination for timely execution of relief measures (Farzamand, 2004). An integrated policy framework is of critical importance for this. Internationally, the whole-of-government approach has been developed through various models, each recognizing that for peace and stability operations there is great interconnectedness between political, security, governance and development dimensions. The United Nations (UN)

introduced the *Integrated Approach* and *Integrated Missions* (see for instance de Coning, 2008), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO; see Jakobsen, 2008) and the European Union (see Gross, 2008) refer to similar models as the *Comprehensive Approach*. Nationally, several governments have also worked towards improving interdepartmental collaboration for their international operations. This is increasingly popular in Australia and the United Kingdom, where it is referred to as ‘joined-up government’ (Wilkins, 2002; Fitz-Gerald, 2004).

Canada’s 2005 International Policy Statement (IPS), entitled *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*, placed interdepartmental collaboration at the heart of Canada’s development and humanitarian interventions abroad. Known then as the ‘3-D’ approach, it emphasized that Defence, Diplomatic, and Development mandates are to be jointly addressed in Canada’s involvement in failed and fragile states, citing it as the ideal strategy for “supporting states that suffer from a broad range of interconnected problems”, including both security and development issues (DFAIT, 2005, p. 20). With the shift from a Liberal to a Conservative government, the approach was given new branding and became known as the whole-of-government approach to its international development efforts (DFAIT, 2005; Hrychuk, 2009; Travers & Owen, 2008). DFAIT, DND and CIDA working together is argued to be the “...best use of all available expertise, exploits local knowledge and ensures that complementary functions are coordinated on an interdepartmental basis” (DND, 2006, p. 5). Canada’s whole-of-government approach in failed and fragile states has gained international recognition since its onset, with a recent Development Assistant Committee (DAC) peer review citing it as an approach that other donors should recognize as an effective framework for action (DAC, 2007).

In 2006, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a report on the whole-of-government approach (also referred to as ‘joined-up

approach' therein). Through its survey of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries - including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK – the report argues that there seems to be a tendency to focus integrated approaches more on conflict and post-conflict countries (OECD, 2006). Application of the whole-of-government framework in response to catastrophic natural disasters is therefore welcomed.

## II. Canada's Response to Natural Disasters Abroad

When a country faces a catastrophic natural disaster and invites international assistance, Canada's Stabilization and Relief Task Force (START), a branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), commences the Interdepartmental Taskforce on Natural Disasters Aboard (taskforce) within hours of the disaster. Through its whole-of-government approach, DFAIT works hand-in-hand with representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Defence (DND); all three forming the trio at the core of the whole-of-government approach (DFAIT, 2011). The taskforce is designed to ensure that Canada's response is swift, efficient and coordinated both in the planning and execution of disaster-relief interventions.

In Canada's first response to a natural disaster involving Canadian Forces (CF), its 1998 response to Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, international disaster-relief decisions were handled through ad hoc interdepartmental collaboration. CIDA's *International Humanitarian Assistance* (IHA) program, the Government's main channel for the provision of non-food emergency humanitarian assistance, was required to collaborate with DFAIT's *Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs, and International Women's Equality* (AGH) Division (DFAIT, 2005b). After the Canadian response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, however, a recommendation was made to

“strengthen and integrate with the stabilization and reconstruction taskforce the departmental crisis response unit (AGH) to ensure sufficient capacity during major, prolonged international crises” (DFAIT, 2005b, Online). Thus, as part of DFAIT reorganization in August 2005, crisis response and management capacities were strengthened and consolidated in a standalone group taken from the AGH, now known as the Humanitarian and Disaster Response Group (IRH). The IRH falls under START (START-IRH), and is designed to help answer the growing international demand for Canadian support and involvement in international crises. While DFAIT, CIDA and DND are the only permanent international departments in the taskforce, other departments may be called to participate based on the needs of the affected country and the nature of the disaster.

Merits of the Canadian model, which directly facilitated its response to the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, are described in the following section. They are organized under four headings: i) Structural and Ideational Coherence; ii) Joint Decision-Making; iii) Shared Accountability; and, iv) Incorporation of Civil-Society.

***i) Structural and Ideational Coherence***

In Canada’s response to the earthquake in Haiti, close interdepartmental collaboration was required between the following federal entities: DFAIT; DND; CIDA; Privy Council’s Office; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Canadian Border Services Agency; Public Health Agency of Canada; Public Safety Canada; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (DFAIT, 2012). Given the sheer number of actors involved in collaborative efforts, there are a number of problems that may result. Not only can such networks be difficult to steer or control, they are also difficult in determining who is ‘in charge’ and what next steps should be, thereby slowing the process (Rhodes, 1997; Keast *et al*, 2004). In the Canadian system, these issues are directly

addressed (i) *structurally*, through the Government of Canada's Standard Operating Procedures in Response to Natural Disasters Abroad and by having a single recognized policy lead, and (ii) *ideationally* as a result of the nature of intervention.

### *Structural Coherence*

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), of which DFAIT is the custodian, is a working document that forms the foundational reference for responding to international natural disasters. Although it is a thin manual, the SOPs have proven to be extremely powerful for facilitating Canada's disaster-relief interventions. Fifteen years in the making, they are continually revised and strengthened as lessons are learned through successive interventions. The SOPs "are designed to streamline standard actions in response to a major crisis and to anticipate turn over in staff amongst the various stakeholder units and organizations" (DFAIT, 2005b). Amongst others, the SOPs include pre-assigned individuals required to carry out specific tasks, reporting templates, and authority structures. IRH runs training programs every summer in order to ensure staff within DFAIT's divisions and in departments across government are aware of their roles in the event that a natural disaster response is required.

According to the SOPs, individuals in CIDA's IHA and DFAIT's IRH monitor natural disasters abroad 24/7. When a country faces a quick onset natural disaster, such as an earthquake, individuals in these directorates receive automatic alerts through monitoring systems (e.g. United States Seismic Geology Survey) on their BlackBerry devices. The SOPs clearly outline that pre-assigned individuals are required to contact the mission staff in the affected country, liaise with country desks within CIDA and DFAIT, as well as to call a meeting of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Natural Disasters Abroad if deemed necessary.

In addition to the permanent members, all departments deemed relevant are included as part of the taskforce from the very initial meeting. Department personnel share information they may have on the extent of the disaster and the situation on the ground, and present resources that they can bring to bear. As ideas on what the Canadian response could possibly look like are shared, at the end of the first meeting, the skeleton of the Canadian response is already developed. This facilitates group ownership over the recommendations sent up to cabinet for consideration.

According to respondents interviewed, initial taskforce meetings following the earthquake in Haiti saw over seventy people in attendance, including the Head of Mission (HOM) Ambassador Gilles Rivard, who joined via teleconference from Port au Prince. It was apparent very early on that the GoC aimed to provide a robust response in Haiti. Internal memos retrieved through the Access to Information Act indicate that whereas the earthquake hit at around 1700 on January 12, the Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) received a warning that it may be deployed by 1800 the same day. It began mounting the following day, January 13, at 0600, only 11 hours following disaster onset (DND, 2010). Given that the primary purpose of disaster-relief intervention is to meet immediate needs on the ground, the fact that DART was able to respond so quickly is noteworthy. While the employee grades of individuals participating in taskforce meetings vary depending on the severity of the disaster and the degree to which Canada is likely to be involved, very senior officials participated in taskforce meetings for the Haiti disaster-relief effort, including Deputy Director and Director levels.

The importance of effective leaders in collaborative efforts is integral in facilitating interdepartmental collaboration (O'Leary *et al*, 2009). Both in written documents and in conversations with respondents, it is clearly recognized that DFAIT serves as the lead

coordinator of the whole-of-government approach. This is in line with the OECD suggestion that given their position, role and mandate, foreign affairs is most often the best placed at the headquarters level to take up the lead coordinating role of the collaborative effort (OECD, 2006). Taskforce meetings during the Haiti response were moderated by former Director-General of START, Elissa Golberg. As the chair, DFAIT's role is to craft and weave the knowledge and capacity of all involved departments in order to achieve coherence and facilitate horizontal collaboration. The actual set-up of the conference room in which taskforce meetings take place provides an ideal environment for this.

As described by respondents, the conference room is situated within DFAIT and consists of a circular table. Spokespersons with bureaucratic authority from the different departments sit at the table. Sitting in a row behind them are reporting officers who may provide input during the meeting, but do not have any decision-making authority on behalf of the departments they represent. In addition to information sharing, the taskforce also serves as a forum to address any coordinating issues in executing decisions, especially with respect to flight scheduling, visas and diplomatic matters that may arise. Most respondents characterized the mood in the room as "cordial" and one that reflects "consensus"<sup>2</sup>. In the four days following the earthquake, seven taskforce meetings were held, and a total of 39 taskforce meetings were convened between January 12 and March 11.

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<sup>2</sup> Augmenting taskforce meetings, senior management from DND, DFAIT and CIDA also held their own meetings, which included Assistant Deputy Ministers and Deputy Ministers (and their DND/CF equivalents), to iron out any issues of contention between departments before appearing at the interdepartmental table: "you don't go to the table as a department without already having considered and planned what needs to happen" said one senior level respondent from DFAIT.

### *Ideational Coherence*

In collaborative efforts, a myriad of stakeholders are required to work together. While each may come to the table with their own personal and organizational interests, in order to avoid a situation where one party seeks to impose its views on the group, or to transfer responsibility and accountability to another, what is required is a ‘policy glue’ (May *et al*, 2005). From an ideological perspective, it is apparent that meaningful coordination can only be achieved through developing a common mental frame among the participants in the process (May *et al*, 2005; Peters, 2005). A policy glue links a diverse set of policy components through a “common set of ideas or objectives that limit inconsistencies,” thereby playing a unifying role in the broader policy space (May *et al*, 2005, p. 58). Participants must feel that they are gaining something, or at least not losing, through their cooperation, and that they are working together for some overarching greater cause. If executed optimally, collaboration is to result in policy coherence.

In Canada’s whole-of-government approach, it is obvious that participating actors share a common mental frame. Speaking to respondents involved in Canada’s international disaster-relief efforts, there is an overwhelming consensus from interviewees - regardless of which department they are from - that the objective of the whole-of-government approach is to uphold the humanitarian ideals of responding based on the needs on the ground, assisting those affected by the catastrophic natural disaster. Members from the participating departments have a clear and common understanding that their objective is collaborate to ensure that Canadian aid is delivered to those affected in the most efficient way. A number of respondents mentioned that it is the nature of the efforts, namely responses to natural disasters, that facilitates collaboration across government: “when you are working at natural disasters, there is no blame...[...].At the time no

one is blaming the victims for being in a building that collapsed”, said one respondent from DFAIT.

It is clear then that the moral and ethical considerations of humanitarian aid in response to natural disasters serve as the policy glue in the whole-of-government effort. The more common the mental frame, the more likely that mutually reinforcing policy objectives are reached, and the more unified the collaborative effort is (Fischer, 2003; Peters, 2005); certainly a factor that accounts for the strength of the Canadian disaster-relief model.

**ii) *Joint Decision-Making***

Despite the numerous and often conflicting self-interests of individuals and stakeholders, collaborative efforts are recognized for their ability to address inter-organizational conflict by requiring stakeholders to develop a unified strategy on how to decide on the issues that brought them together (Thomson & Perry, 1998; Vigoda and Gilboa, 2002; Ansell & Gash, 2007). One way in which to enable this is to ensure that all stakeholders share the same base set of information. This is accomplished through the regular development and distribution of Situation Reports (SitReps).

Within one month of the earthquake, DFAIT distributed 34 SitReps, the first of which was sent about nine hours into the disaster. Situation Reports outline all important information regarding the evolving situation in the disaster affected country; updated assessment of the needs; as well as steps taken by the host government and international actors in response to the event. An update is also provided on the Canadian consular effort; Canadian interventions; announcements made by the Prime Minister and cabinet members; and, evergreen media lines

(statements from the GoC that can be used when addressing media representatives on Canada's position with respect to disaster-efforts) are listed<sup>3</sup>.

An additional mechanism that promotes interdepartmental collaboration is standardization of decision-making processes (Peters, 2005). One means that Canada has available to assist in developing recommendations for consideration by cabinet is the Interdepartmental Strategic Support Team (ISST). A small team of minimum four members, it is Canada interdepartmental reconnaissance and assessment capability. The ISST must include one representative from DFAIT and CIDA each, and two CF personnel. If deemed beneficial, representatives of other departments may be called to participate. Through collaboration with the host government, the local embassy, and international humanitarian actors present on the ground, the ISST is the first unit to provide relief recommendations for the taskforce to consider (DFAIT, 2011).

There are a number of intervention options that the ISST can consider when establishing their recommendations. In addition to cash contributions, additional tools, as necessitated by the specific details and context of the disaster, include the deployment of pre-identified Canadian technical experts, distribution of relief stocks and, the deployment of Canadian Forces assets such as strategic airlift and personnel (DFAIT, 2011). The SOPs require that the ISST recommend the use of military assets before they can be officially deployed by the GoC.

In response to the earthquake in Haiti, the ISST was deployed within 18 hours from disaster onset. Respondents on the ISST explained that they use a Calibration Table, which

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<sup>3</sup> One of the recommendations coming out of the Haiti disaster response was for a better integrated Information Technology system to connect all departments. While SitReps were sent via email to a mailing list that included actors from across government, a suggestion for a unified intranet and single hub where a log of all updates can be stored was recommended.

suggests possible recommendations depending on the nature of the disaster and the extent of damage caused, limiting subjectivity in their suggestions. While not an exact science, the Calibration Table is said to “take out a lot of guess work” of making recommendations, as explained by a member of the ISST. Similarly, the ISST and taskforce members assess Canada’s global burden share based on the UN and consolidated flash appeals when developing initial recommendations. This is an attempt to ensure that Canada’s contribution remains within a pre-identified and agreed range. These decision-making mechanisms ensure that stakeholders from the three main departments come to an agreement on recommendations, thereby facilitating ownership over decisions taken, minimizing conflict, and providing the most optimal disaster-relief package possible.

***iii) Shared Accountability and Responsibility***

One of the identified risks of collaborative efforts like whole-of-government approaches is the fact that they often result in obscure accountability arrangements, particularly in light of the myriad of stakeholders involved (Pollitt, 2003). Since managing international disaster-relief requires leadership to steer resources in the right direction, at the right time, and fast, some argue that for truly integrated planning and implementation to occur, “a joined-up pool of resources, is absolutely necessary” (Fitz-Gerald, 2004, p. 22; Brattberg & Sundelius, 2011). Canada’s framework for disaster-relief interventions in response to catastrophic natural disasters addresses this through its Crisis Pool mechanism.

Canada’s Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF) is administered by START at DFAIT to support Canada’s response to international crises (OECD, 2006). Announced in the 2005/06 Budget, part of the GPSF is the Crisis Pool, a sum of money, capped at \$400 million, for

international aid and stabilization efforts falling above approved departmental budgets. The fund is jointly controlled by the Department of Finance, DFAIT and CIDA, and requires all three ministers to sign-off on its use. Where DND assets are to be used in the initiative, the funds required by the military are used as part of a wider Crisis Pool ask, which also requires the approval of the Minister of Defence. Amongst others, it is for this reason that representatives from the Department of Finance participate in taskforce meetings from the very first gathering.

In whole-of-government efforts, after having made contributions to aid efforts from their own reference budgets, CIDA and DFAIT ministers can make a request to access the Crisis Pool for funds over CAN \$10 million. While access to Crisis Pool funds is generally limited to specific supply cycles, in exceptional circumstances, there is an amount set aside which can be released very quickly upon receiving the appropriate approvals, regardless of time of request. The responsibility of the Department of Finance at this time is to play a challenge role and ensure due diligence, requiring that proper monitoring and accountability frameworks be put in place to ensure that money will eventually be spent as intended, and that costing tables are accurate. This joint structure for accessing the “big bucks,” as one respondent termed it, ensures that financial accountability is shared amongst all primary stakeholders in the whole-of-government effort.

Furthermore, some theorists explain that a model of auto-adaptation should be developed to improve inter-organizational performance in extreme events, and contributes to shared accountability and responsibility (Comfort & Kapucu, 2002). The use of liaison officers in the Canadian model accomplishes this.

During Canada’s response to the earthquake, Stabilization and Humanitarian experts from both DFAIT and CIDA respectively, were deployed alongside the CF bases in each of Port

au Prince, Jacmel and Léogâne, the three bases where Canadian military assets were deployed (detailed below). In addition to providing humanitarian advice to DND/CF, their role was to engage with local authorities, UN organizations, and NGO actors, aiding in succession planning. Physically co-locating political and development officers when CF personnel are deployed for humanitarian missions is said to provide a “comprehensive and integrated approach right from the beginning of [the] operation” (Golberg, 2011). A DFAIT Stabilization Expert explained, “on the ground, because people are working and living, breathing, eating, together, they consult a lot more, so I think a lot of those great ideas that may be not so great, got talked through a little bit more and explained a little bit more”.

Similarly, in Ottawa, DFAIT and DND exchanged liaison officers, with the DFAIT liaison based at the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), the operating body of the armed forces. Having members from different departments exchange personnel to this degree aided in planning, and provided the sense that the three primary departments were working as a unified entity, with shared responsibility.

***iv) Incorporation of Civil Society***

Whole-of-government approaches are argued to be significant opportunities to engage the community in social and political processes (Wilkins, 2002). Hackman (2009) shows that political leaders have an important communication role in decisive intervention outcomes through public engagement. Following the onset of the earthquake, the Prime Minister, Governor General and cabinet members were actively engaging with the Canadian public by expressing their sympathies regarding the unfolding events in Haiti, as well as detailing the nature of the Canadian disaster-relief response. Within three days of the earthquake almost 20 press

conferences and public statements were made. Furthermore, on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with the Haitian Community in Montreal, one of several meetings that involved cabinet members and senior officials from the whole-of-government engaging with the Haitian diaspora. In fact, the public was directly able to shape the magnitude of the Canadian response through the set-up of a Matching Fund by the GoC.

First introduced in Canada's response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Canada has established a Matching Fund mechanism whereby it commits to match dollar-for-dollar donations that the Canadian public makes to eligible charities. Known as the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund, it was announced on January 14<sup>th</sup>, and included a pledge by the government to match Canadian donations up to CAD \$50 (DFAIT, 2012). In a framework to assess public sector performance developed by Schacter (2008), responsiveness to the public is indicated as a key performance indicator for collaborative networks.

Responsive to the mobilization of the public, 10 days later the Minister of International Cooperation, Beverley J. Oda, announced that the Government would be expanding the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund to include all eligible donations above and beyond the original ceiling. In a statement she said, "The extraordinary response of Canadians in the tragic aftermath of the Haiti earthquake has once again demonstrated their [Canadian] compassion and generosity...the enormity of the devastation is unimaginable and donations have already exceeded \$67 million. We will keep matching individual donations dollar for dollar" (quoted on CIDA, 2010). Once the February 12 deadline was reached, the total matching pool was announced as \$220 million. The Fund is a clear and useful example of directly engaging members of the public in a disaster-relief response. Inclusion of civil society organizations is also entrenched in the Canadian model.

Canada has a noteworthy relationship with its non-governmental organization (NGO) community through the Policy Action Group on Emergency Response (PAGER). It is an informal forum of the Canadian Red Cross and NGOs that are most operational in responding to humanitarian emergencies internationally. CIDA-IHA and DFAIT-IRH members participate in PAGER meetings as non-voting members. Soon after a catastrophic natural disaster hits, PAGER teleconference calls are convened. PAGER participants engage in information sharing with the CIDA and DFAIT representatives, specifically discussing the evolving situation on the ground, providing updates on what respective members are planning to do to address the disaster, as well as to promote co-ordination between the agencies involved in the humanitarian action. Active since 1999, this is a relatively rare example of sustained cooperation between CIDA, DFAIT and the NGO sector (Buchanan-Smith & Folser, 2002). The first PAGER call was made the day following the earthquake, and continued every couple of days thereafter during the rescue, relief and recovery stages<sup>4</sup>.

While the merits of the whole-of-government have been demonstrated, there are important contentions that need to be considered in Canada's international disaster-relief framework. Taking directly from Canada's response to the earthquake in Haiti, the following section raises concerns about how the use of the military may impede donor countries from responding to the humanitarian principle of responding on the basis of need.

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<sup>4</sup> Demonstrating its leadership in the disaster-relief effort, within two weeks of the earthquake the Canadian government also organized an international conference in Montreal where representatives from 11 countries, as well as international financial institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank, attended (DFAIT, 2012). The conference laid the groundwork for the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Haiti.

### III. Responding Based on Need: Whose Need?

In order to comply with principles of good humanitarian donor-ship, donor countries in humanitarian operations are required to allocate resources on the basis of, and in proportion to, needs. They are also supposed to respond in ways that are fair, impartial and independent (see Hilhorst, 2005; Walkers, 2005). Discussions with Canadian officials involved in Canada's whole-of-government approach acknowledge that their role is to make recommendations for intervention to cabinet based on Canadian capabilities vis-à-vis needs on the ground. Responding to needs assessed is also the foundation of the ISST discussed in the previous section. What conversations with respondents clearly demonstrate, however, is a perception of a clear divide between what it is that members on the interdepartmental taskforce do, and the role of cabinet and the Prime Minister. While taskforce members offer "technical" expertise, as one respondent from CIDA highlighted, what happens "up there" is not clear.

There are a number of speculations on why the Canadian government engaged in a robust response to the disaster-relief efforts in Haiti. Canada and Haiti share a rich history of diplomatic relations, and Canada has spearheaded a myriad of development, security and political operations in the country. Canada's deep engagement in Haiti falls within Canada's priorities for the Americas and focuses on prosperity, security, and democratic governance. Haiti is the highest recipient of Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) - flows of official financing contributed by member countries of OECD with the main objective of promoting the economic development and welfare of developing countries (CIDA, 2010)<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, there is also a large Haitian diaspora in Canada. In 2001, there were approximately 82,000 Canadians of

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<sup>5</sup> According to CIDA's 2009-2010 Statistical Report on International Assistance, the top three recipients of Canadian aid from all government departments and program channels are Haiti (\$331 million), Afghanistan (\$317 million), and Ethiopia (\$211 million) (CIDA, 2011).

Haitian origin, and it is estimated that this number has risen to 100,000, with a strong concentration in Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2007). Canada's former Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, is also of Haitian origin and was Head of State at the time of the disaster in Haiti.

Scholars on Canada's foreign aid policies have recognized that over time, Canada's aid objectives have been moving away from *humane internationalism* – more altruistic provision of aid where priority is the interests of those for whom the aid is intended - towards *internationalism realism*, where domestic gains, be they diplomatic, trade or security related, or simply for achieving prestige, form the priority of the aid intervention (see for instance Pratt, 2007). Undoubtedly, the 2005 relocation of the ad hoc coordination mechanism, which existed between CIDA and DFAIT for responses to international disasters, under the START umbrella has given disaster-relief high political profile and domestic recognition in Canada, something it did not have before the move. Considering the political climate in Canada at the time of the 2010 earthquake, a number of speculations can be made about why the GoC may have responded the way it did.

At the end of 2009, the Canadian Prime Minister's decision to close the House of Commons resulted in a turbulent internal political situation in the country. It was also at this time that the GoC was dealing with the unveiling of documents confirming the torture of Afghan prisoners of war, resulting in weakening of public support for Canadian involvement in Afghanistan, and decreasing approval ratings of the party in power (Mason, 2011). Inevitably, Canada's rapid response to the catastrophic earthquake shifted news media coverage away from domestic affairs to covering the disaster-relief efforts, an ideal opportunity to showcase Canada's

leadership globally and perhaps to ‘regain’ the ‘trust’ of the Canadian public. This is evident in the leveraging of media capability during the disaster-relief efforts.

Political leadership is driven by public opinion, and public opinion is driven, in many ways, by the media. According to an Al Jazeera English report, the earthquake filled 41% of the ‘news hole’ in US newscasts (The Canadian Journalism Project, 2010). While content analysis of Canadian media has not been conducted, it is probable that the same coverage in newscasts was also evident in Canada. In fact, on DART’s second plane out of Ottawa, the GoC ensured that eighteen journalists were present on flight. Information from the Access to Information Act shows that as of January 25<sup>th</sup>, only thirteen days after the earthquake, 45 Canadian journalists were already on the ground in Haiti, housed in the compound of the Canadian embassy in Haiti. A recent study on the Canadian Broadcasting Cooperation (CBC) coverage of the disaster indicated that on average, the CBC printed nine separate articles on Haiti per day, and that reports of Canada’s “gift” of foreign aid overshadowed information about the earthquake’s damage and suffering (Mason, 2010). While one cannot assume that the media reported in this way as result of direct orders from the government, this type of reporting contributes to the political calculus of intervening (Martin, 2005). In fact, the impact of media on Canada’s international development policies, especially with respect to coverage and attention to specific geographic areas, has already been established (Martin, 2005; Van Belle *et al*, 2004).

Some may argue that regardless of what political calculations may have been behind Canada’s intervention (and inevitably these reasons were numerous), since aid was delivered to the people of Haiti by the GoC, the primary objective of responding to need was met. While in many ways this is true, the close interplay between political imperatives for intervention,

especially through the role of the media, may have affected the degree to which the Canadian government exhausted military resources in its response.

When a donor country provides aid through direct financial disbursements to aid organizations, “there is nothing to claim...there is no visual” said one DFAIT respondent. The use of military assets, however, ensures that a donor country’s ‘stamp’ is clearly visible. Each military aircraft bares the national flag, and each soldier carries the same on their uniform; “the Canadian Forces had a pretty active public affairs team, and imagery team that were deployed immediately” shared one respondent. In fact, the Canadian navy engages in a naval media embedding program which requires journalists to be embedded in navy operations on the ground in order to allow closer interaction of the whole crew with journalists (CEFCOM, 2009).

Political motivations for the deployment of the military assets in humanitarian responses have been widely called into question. OCHA supported a 2008 study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) entitled *The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response*, which argues that there is a trend for political and diplomatic rationale for deployment of military assets to trump actual requirements on the ground (SIPRI, 2008). This can result in reduced efficiency of the overall disaster response, and can negatively affect the disaster-affected population.

The key document which attempts to regulate the use of military assets in military intervention is the ‘Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets in Disaster-relief’, better known as the Oslo Guidelines (UN-OCHA, 2007). First developed in 1992 where over 180 delegates from 45 states and 25 organizations attended, the guidelines were most recently amended in 2007, and reflect similar terminology to the 2003 “Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defense Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in

Complex Emergencies” (MCDA Guidelines), in which Canada participated as review committee evaluator (MCDA, 2003). These guidelines provide an overall practical and international normative framework for the use of military and civilian defense assets in natural disaster response. Both the Oslo and MCDA guidelines indicate that the use of military in the provision of humanitarian assistance should be a *last resort* and only if deemed appropriate by experts. The guidelines state that foreign military assets should be requested only where there is no comparable civilian alternative. Could the investment of finances and resources that Canada put into its military response to the earthquake have been more effectively used to address the immediate needs in Haiti?

### ***Canadian Military in the 2010 Disaster-Relief Effort in Haiti***

The Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces (DND/CF) response to natural disasters was formalized in the deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). First developed in 1996, it is designed as a rapidly deployable stabilization tool, able to provide specific medical, water-purification, engineering, logistical and security services soon after the onset of a disaster (DND, 2012). Deployed for no more than 40-60 days, the 205 personnel unit is meant to provide immediate assistance while the affected government and humanitarian agencies regain capability continue relief and reconstruction efforts. Since its inception, DART has been deployed as part of Canada’s response to international disasters abroad five times: Operation Central (1998) in Honduras in response to Hurricane Mitch; Operation Torrent (1998) in response to the earthquake in Turkey; Operation Structure (2004) in Sri Lanka in response to the Indian Ocean basin earthquake/tsunami; Operation Plateau (2005) in Pakistan in response to

the earthquake; and, of most interest for this paper was Operation Hestia (2010), the response to the Haiti earthquake (DND, 2012).

Going over and above the traditional 205 personnel DART unit, however, in Operation Hestia ten times this amount was used. 2050 CF personnel were deployed in three locations in Haiti: the Joint Taskforce Headquarters in Port au Prince; the DART in Jacmel; and Brigade Van Doo's in Léogâne. In addition, there were two Canadian Navy ships on the shore of both Jacmel and Léogâne, the latter of which included a field hospital. CF Air Command included the deployment of C-17s and six CH-146 Griffon helicopters for strategic airlift (DND, 2011). The entire cost of military assets for Operation Hestia amounted to CAN \$ 183,850,000, approximately 46 percent of the GoC's response to the earthquake (DND, 2011b).

When asked about the recommendation for the use of military assets in Canada's response to the earthquake in Haiti, one representative on the ISST shared:

There was a decision made to go over on what we thought was - not appropriate at the outset - what we said was 'we certainly see the need for the DART, and then possibly other military assets being used'. But then there were decisions made to send additional military assets without our direct input type of thing.

Similarly, appearing in a recent Research & Development report for Defence Canada, a non-governmental organization subject matter expert said in response to the CF medical team on the ground:

They are in for the disaster. But what specifically are they in for? 'Yes, I know your hospital is going up. But who are you treating?'... 'Are you a primary care hospital? Are you a post-surgery hospital for amputees? What are you?'... 'How long are you staying? How long will that hospital be there? Is it a facility that I can bring complicated cases to?'... There were CF personnel that were doing rescue capacity early on... We had no idea who they were, where they were, where they were assigned, how it was coordinated (quoted in Thomson *et al*, 2010).

While initial demand for earthquake related medical services immediately following the earthquake were high, this quickly tapered off. Liaison Officer Reports from Léogâne indicate that on January 29, 2010, the first day of the Role 2 medical facility opening, while 103 patients were treated, only 21 had conditions immediately resulting from the earthquake (Tabah, 2010). On its third day of operation, only 5 percent of all 234 patients seen had disaster related injuries. While this medical care is welcomed and necessary, these numbers beg to ask whether alternate means of disaster-relief intervention may have been more appropriate. They also call into question the debate over what characterizes humanitarian assistance versus long-term development.

Taking lessons from the earthquake that hit Bam, Iran in 2003, Abolghasemi *et al* (2006). argue that medical care for earthquake related field hospitals can be assessed in three phases: (1) early emergency medical care (the first 48 hours); (2) from Day 3–Day 15; and (3) the last phase which may continue for up to 2 years, wherein reconstruction efforts take place. Having only opened on day 17 after disaster onset, it can be argued that the Role 2 hospital in Léogâne may not have fulfilled the stated mandate of Canada’s disaster-relief humanitarian interventions, but rather addressed longer term development objectives. Moreover, DFAIT’s after action review states, “In considering an appropriate CF element within the whole-of-government Canadian response to a natural disaster abroad, it may be more effective to prioritize engineering expertise and transport capability rather than emphasize mechanically elaborate water purification equipment and field hospitals which require time to deploy and may not correspond to needs” (McGill, 2010, Recommendation 11). Another criticism on the use of Canada’s military assets in the Haiti response concerns the use of the navy.

The HMCS Halifax navy consisted of 250 sailors as well as close to 200 Canadian soldiers which were tasked with undertaking a 5-week stay on the shore of Jacmel. While the commander stated that the fundamental mission was to provide “security and stability” in and around their assigned areas, the official explanation given by Prime Minister Harper was that “ships of the Atlantic fleet were immediately ordered to Haiti from Halifax, *loaded with relief supplies*” (quoted in Maher, 2010, emphasis added). Difference in rational aside, respondents indicate that there was not as much relief aid as expected on the ships when they arrived on Haitian shores. It is argued that space was not utilized effectively because there were orders to “rapidly deploy”, thereby not leaving enough time for the maximum amount of resources to be loaded onboard. While the use of navy in this case did prove that Canada can deploy, and deploy fast, one can question whether the use and handling of the navy was in best interest of the Haitian population at that time (Maher, 2010).

Similarly, another report criticized the fact that the GoC did not utilize Toronto based Heavy Urban Search Rescue Teams that were ready to be deployed to Haiti immediately after disaster onset, asked instead to ‘stand down’ by Lawrence Cannon, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister at that time (Toronto Sun, 2010). While ISST reports indicate the Haitian Prime Minister requested that no further rescue teams were needed on the ground in Haiti only a few days after the earthquake, primarily due to congestion at the airport and the overwhelming number of international personnel that landed in Haiti, this did not deter Canada from authorizing a far greater number of military personnel on the ground. A number of respondents also indicated that whereas the government had received criticisms for purchasing C-17s which are very expensive military assets, Haiti was seen by the GoC as the perfect opportunity to showcase the importance and benefit of this equipment, and therefore pushed along by cabinet.

Given this larger than normal military response, it was recognized that the military component of Canada's responses to international disasters is now scalable relative to the damage caused by the emergency. "You can have parts of the DART, a modularized DART, or the DART can be expanded depending on the needs on the ground...that's the basic change, it [is] a change in mentality, a change of function," explained one DND respondent. In the Canadian response to the earthquake in Haiti, however, it was also clear very early on that there was a political will and push for a large-scale response<sup>6</sup>. As a result one can question whose need this response was addressing more: the disaster-affected people in Haiti, or domestic political concerns in Canada?

## **Conclusion**

The Canadian response to the earthquake in Haiti was quick, important and definitely met needs that the Haitian population faced post the devastating January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 earthquake. Through its whole-of-government approach, DFAIT, DND and CIDA were able to work together in what, for the most part, resulted in seamless interdepartmental collaboration. A recognized lead, DFAIT maintains and continually revises Standard Operating Procedures that take the guess work out of who is to do what, when, and how. Joint taskforce meetings and the distribution of Situation Reports ensure that all parties have up-to-date information as it comes in, and formal recommendations are made only after a collaborative needs assessment is conducted through the Interdepartmental Strategic Support Team. Consistency in disaster response has seen Canada develop mechanisms to standardize its intervention as much as possible, using both a Calibration Table and maintaining relative burden share with its

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<sup>6</sup> A DND presentation indicates that the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the CF gave the order to "Go fast, Go Big" (DND, 2010b), an order confirmed in two interviews with DND staff.

international partners. Joint requests to access additional funds through its crisis pool, as well as the exchange of liaison officers are means by which the Canadian model proactively attempts to ensure shared accountability and responsibility. And, through its PAGER network and Matching Fund mechanisms, Canada's whole-of-government approach incorporates civil society in the development of its disaster-relief strategies.

Despite the facilitation of interdepartmental collaboration through Canada's whole-of-government model, however, political imperatives still affect the final disaster-relief package. This paper has shown that especially in light of the visibility afforded to donor countries, primarily through media coverage, governments might lean on the side of financing military assets where alternate means may better meet the humanitarian principle of responding to needs in the disaster-affected area. Policy integration can definitely lead to situations where development objectives are subordinated in favour of donor interests (see Brown, 2011; Smillie, 2004).

When the military response dominates media, the public may believe that military action is the only way - and perhaps the best way - in which to address humanitarian emergencies, adding pressure for subsequent disaster-relief interventions to increase the use of military assets. A form of 'securitization' of aid (Woods, 2005), the government may feel more inclined to favour a military response even where alternate means may be more appropriate, such as through providing financial contributions to multilateral development organizations. Despite these serious drawbacks, however, in theory the whole-of-government model does self-correct (to a degree).

Canada has a clear cut-off time of 60 days for military forces to leave the disaster-affected area when it works with DFAIT and CIDA for a disaster-relief operation. The described

end-state is a situation whereby “national and/or international organizations...assume responsibility for the capabilities provided by the CF” (CEFCOM, 2010, p. 10). Liaison officers are critical for this process. Through engaging with the host government, NGOs, and international aid organizations, the Stabilization and Humanitarian experts deployed on the ground with military personnel are tasked with ensuring that once CF leave, there is no ‘gap’ that needs to be filled. Without this cut-off time, disaster-relief interventions could very much begin to resemble military occupations. Perhaps what is needed then is more standards - anything to reduce unpredictability and arbitrariness in humanitarian assistance. Donor countries are encouraged to redirect their focus towards the development, and enforcement, of similar standards.

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