

## **Role of the Armed Forces in Military Operations Other Than War in Managing Natural Disasters**

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### **Abstract**

*The study analysis the role of the Armed Forces in MOOTW in managing natural disasters in a country effectively. The method utilized is the diary research method that involved analysis of creditable documents, media reports and internet reports on the role the military played in assisting government in addressing disasters. The results indicated that there are climates change threats in form of natural disasters affecting the globe of recent. Hence, it was recommended that national government could involve their Armed Forces in managing the natural disasters under the umbrella of MOOTW. The Armed Forces should operate to aid the governmental agencies responsible for the management of natural disasters in the country. This could assist to bring succour to the victims of the disasters and as well enhance the government profile among its citizens. It concludes by assessing the role Armed Forces could played in support to disasters management by operating under the MOOTW to assists the disasters agencies to bring succour to the victims. It then discussed the type of units that could be employed by the various Services of the Armed Forces and dwelled on the inter-agencies' cooperation for smooth conduct of the operations in aid to disasters victims. Finally, it was view that the use of the Armed Force under MOOTW in managing natural disasters would be a welcome development if all nations decided to incorporates the military in disasters management plan. Hence, nations should consider employing part of its Armed Forces in future disaster management issue that could threaten the citizens of the nation.*

**Keywords:** *Natural Disasters, MOOTW, Managing and Succour, Military, Coordination and Operations*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Basically, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) encompasses a wide range of activities where the military instrument of national power is used for other purposes other than the large-scale combat operations usually associated with war. It involves the use of the Armed Forces and sometimes special operations forces as well as the efforts of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations in a complementary role. In 1993, the United States (US) military put forth the theory of MOOTW for the first time in its JP3-0 Joint Operations. The military in virtually all the countries of the world remains the most unique and organized institution with defence expenditure as a rule exceeding those of other ministries or private corporation (JP3-07, 1995). According to Cohen 2001, security forces have the skills, tools and know-how to quickly get life back on track following a disaster. In response to the growing of unconventional crises in the world brought about by non-traditional threats to security such as famine, natural disasters, and political disintegration may require that there is need for the Armed Forces to intervene.

These interventions could be termed as the “New World Order” that have manifested in the form of disasters and humanitarian assistance which could require forming a friendly coalition block such as non-combatant emergency evacuations, counter illicit drug operations and support for civil authority. Although, these forms of operations and many others that are short of war are generally classified as MOOTW but are still lacking scope in some cases. The current emphasis by developed armies, allied forces and military alliance require a formal

training and preparations for the conduct of MOOTW (JP3-07, 1995). It is understandably happening due to changes that emerged in the global strategic environment base on the climate change evolving into disasters related issues that is been witnessed around the world. The situation is not completely restricted to the developed Armed Forces however developing countries also make use of their Armed Forces whenever such incident occur in their country. This climate change induces disasters crises call to question the effective role the Armed Forces could played using MOOTW in managing natural disasters and its ability to enhance the affected community living conditions.

The Armed Forces could also provide preparedness and mitigation services such as weather forecasting, pre-evacuation and disaster agent monitoring (Obiuwevbi, 2002). Disaster is one major phenomenon that man, the society and the nation must contend with as it is impossible to completely eliminate its occurrence. For instance, the Italian Army special units assist to monitor volcanic activity at Mount Vesivus an area that has witnessed volcanic eruptions over 20 times in history (Stamford, 1997). Other disaster management roles played by security forces include the protection of properties from looters and post-disaster reconstruction in line with the government directives. Hence, it is the most prevalent cause of widespread loss of lives and property in natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, droughts or windstorms among others while the effects of these natural disasters may be accentuated by human neglect. The theoretical basis for this study is the disaster response theory that refers to the ability to provide equipment and a suitable number of persons using the resources available to effectively manage or help to manage an emergency situation or a disaster in an affected area.

Consequently, military operations are the coordinated military actions of a state or a non-state actor in response to a developing situation. These actions are designed as a military plan to resolve the situation in the state or actor's favour (Armstrong Richard N, 1994). Also, military operations could be view from a model that consists of two parts which are war and military operations other than war that would be the focus point of this paper. While, natural disasters are those disasters that are caused by the interaction of activities of nature for which man has little or no control over its action. Disaster is defined as "a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources" (Oluremi Olowo, 1999). It is characterized by the abnormal intensity of a natural agent such as war aftermath, flood, mudslide, earthquake, avalanche or drought when the usual measures to be taken to prevent this damage were not able to prevent their emergence or were not able to be taken. Hence, military operations during war and natural disasters are threats to humanity that can affect the state geographical environment and there is need to resolve it before it affect the well-being of the citizens.

Therefore, the Armed Forces could exercise influence in both the military operations as well as managing the effect of the natural disasters in the state in conjunction with other agencies. Although, disasters by their nature are destructive and will always leave a lot of debris which have to be evacuated to keep the environment hazard free. The Armed Forces with their experience could be made to play such role to assist the agencies responsible in clearing the debris from a disaster area. This require for adequate training of security personnel in liaison with the relevant organizations needs no emphasis if they must be seen to render such services in the event of disasters. Hence, a national search and rescue organization is desirable for the nation to coordinate the efforts of both the security forces and other agencies in the event of a disaster. Thus, the overall goal of MOOTW is to pursue national policy initiatives and to counter potential threats to a nation. It therefore hinges on the security of a nation and the well-being of its citizens which is the essence of national security. The purpose of this study therefore, is to highlight the various role of the Armed Forces in MOOTW in managing

natural disasters. The desire to significantly improve the national Armed Forces role of MOOTW in managing natural disasters in their various countries motivated the researcher to embark on this study.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study adopted the research diary method where written records on MOOTW events are being analysed from some creditable sources. The sources are lectures and presentations, military write-up, media internet publication and analyst reports. This research was diary studies because the matter is dynamic and researchers are still conducting investigation into the role of MOOTW in managing natural disasters. Furthermore, it provides a channel for finding out the meanings and actions taken by nations in managing natural disasters using their Armed Forces. This approach offers a better means for finding out emotions, feelings, understandings and actions taken as climate change unfold.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Unit Participation in MOOTW in Managing Natural Disasters**

The Armed Forces of a nation has its primary role for the defence of the territorial integrity of the nation and a secondary role which involves aid to the civil authorities to restore law and order which is constitutionally endorse (CFRN, 1999). It consists of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force that perform a complimentary role of supporting each other to achieve the overall main objective of the nation. The MOOTW concept in peacetime uses a lesser platform in aid to managing both man-made and natural disasters that affect a state which suffered from disasters either due to climate change or natural phenomenon base on geographical location of the state. It is pertinent to note that natural disasters like famine and drought that occur periodically are difficult areas where MOOTW could not be applied to assist the people. Its therefore requires a holistic approach from the government and friendly country government to cushion the suffering and hardship of the people residing in those areas and provides basic amenities and in some cases temporary shelters for their well-being.

The Armed Forces of a nation are unique organization or instrument of a state often equipped to operate in any given field with little briefing and instructions to curtain any threats that could cause serious damage to the state. In an event where the threats are pandemic like the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Army Engineers would not be proficient to handle it hence the Armed Forces Medical services could be essential to assist in the management of the spread of the pandemic and could be invited to assist. The Armed Forces are organized, trained and prepared to respond to all types of man-made and natural disasters that may occur in any given time of a nation history. The nation's Armed Forces could be utilized in different fields in aid to the civil authority to counter any threats be it military or non-military like disasters that might threaten the state existence. Hence, the major contributions of the Armed Forces in MOOTW in managing natural disasters would be briefly highlighted to give an insight on their capability in aid to the civil authorities to restore law and order as well as boost the morale of the disaster victims. Tables and charts or captions are arranged in the form of a phrase (not a sentence) succinctly.

The Army is a key component of the Armed Forces of a nation that has specialize corps that deal with threats along their line of specialization and sometimes combined to support each other to deal with an assigned task. In line with natural disasters, the Engineers Brigade and the Supply and Transport Corps could play a key role as part of the Army contribution in MOOTW

in managing natural disasters. The Army could task the Engineers Corps to earmark a brigade or regiments while the Supply and Transport Corps also earmark a company of transport unit and fire fighters' troops to be attached to the Engineers Regiments. The Engineers Brigade or regiments could be deployed close to disasters prone areas and enhanced with additional equipment to assist areas affected with flood, landslide, earthquake and wildfire among others. Also, a company of medical team could be attached to the Engineers Brigade to work in conjunction with other medical facilities provided by other military services or the State within the area affected. Additionally, the Army Engineers could be task on construction of temporary shelters for the displaced victims of natural disasters and the use of heavy equipment for search and excavation of areas in cases of landslides. Also, it could be used to provide purified water and restoration of essential utilities in the affected community or society on behalf of the federal, state or local government.

The Navy is another important component of the Armed Forces of a nation that specialize in dealing with any threats along the country water ways and protecting the sea resources within the nation water boundary. Naturally, the Navy are trained to conduct operations on the sea including rescue missions of persons in distress on the sea. Therefore, the Navy will be adequately capable to take part in MOOTW to handle natural disasters that have to do with flooding along the sea shore areas by deploying their flat bottom boats and helicopters for the rescue of the citizens affected by the flood. However, it will require a high level of coordination and communication with the governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies responsible in conducting rescue operation to save lives and properties of the citizens in the affected areas. Also, the Navy could further contribute it medical team to work in conjunction with the Army team to provide medical cover for the affected victims. In addition, there is need for the Navy to further coordinate with the Army where possible, on the ongoing MOOTW in flood situation to know the plans and areas where those been rescued are to be move to for safety. Furthermore, the Navy is very relevant in supporting victims with humanitarian and logistics deliveries such as foods and medicals assistance to victims of disasters.

The Air Force is one of the major components of the Armed Forces of a nation with primary responsibility for air defence and air warfare due to its long reach capability. The Air Force are trained to conduct areas surveillance, search and rescue missions as well as supplies of disasters relief materials to victims at their new save areas. Therefore, the Air Force authority could earmark an helicopters squadron unit with rescue helicopters and trained personnel to support the effort and role of the Army and Navy in the MOOTW in managing natural disasters. The combined efforts of the Air Force and Navy helicopters fleet could conduct general surveillance on the areas and direct the Army Engineers team to areas where people are hanging around waiting for rescue team using the flat bottom boats or assist to airlift the people where possible. Hence, the Armed Forces under the coordination of a joint MOOTW could assist to guarantee the security and well-being of the citizens that survive the hit of a natural disaster. Also, using the helicopter they could assists in the timely lifting of humanitarian deliveries to the temporary shelter's areas and evacuation of victims with serious injuries to the nearest modern medical facility. Though, the Armed Force are the last resort but they could be place among the first set of responders due to their quick mobilization ability to assist among other for the security of the area and rescue efforts.

### **Impact of MOOTW in Managing Natural Disasters**

The managing of man-made or natural disasters impact on a society or state are usually quantify by the disaster's effects in terms of loss of lives and properties in the general area. The most difficult aspect to quantify is the wider socio-economic impact on the well-being of the citizens who are at the receiving end when the disasters occur. The effects of the disasters impact on the socio-economic activities cover loss of life, human injury, destruction of

properties, loss of livelihood, disruption of essential services and national economic loss among others. The human socio-economic impact of disasters will be more devastating if the affected population are in poor societies and sometime state. Hence, the impact of the natural disasters could be devastating if it results to social unrest trigger by the victims if their immediate interest is not be address by the government. Therefore, if the impact is not adequately managed it could affect the economic development of the nation as a whole and it would bring out other social vices that may affect the citizens well-being as well.

Consequently, the involvement of the military through MOOTW will assist to secure and alleviate the suffering of the victims of the disasters though the military are not supposed to be the first responder. The presents of the military would enhance the parameter security of the general area and then commencement of immediate rescue assistance to the victims. The great Sichuan earthquake in 2008 for example witnessed the fastest mobilization of 130,000 military personnel deployed to assist the victims and rescue teams by saving victims from the earthquake hazard. The China's coordinated response between the military and civilian agencies was view by the world as one of the most successful and important elements in the quake's aftermath. Therefore, a better trained military personnel in the line of managing natural disasters would have enhance the military performance in managing disasters events in aid to the civil authority. Hence, it is important to state that those 130,000 military personnel were mobilize the same day without training although they faced some initial difficulties but they were able to overcome it and delivered the relief assistance mission assigned to them by bringing the situation under control and save many victims as possible.



Figure 1. Chinese People Liberation Army Assisting Disasters Victims

Source: Lemonick (2015)

Therefore, well-trained military personnel on disasters mission could conduct MOOTW to aid other agencies involve in disasters management to achieve the overall strategic plan of the government to manage and bring relief to those affected in disasters. The military Engineers could be used for this purpose in both rescue operations and provision of temporary shelters for the victims if the resources and funding are made available by the government. Also, they could act as security to the relief materials and the victim's temporary shelters to ensure safety of the victims and the materials meant for them. The Air Force helicopter squadrons could assist for the transportation of the relief materials to areas that could not be reach by road or boat and also use for evacuation of the serious injured persons to a nearest hospital for medical attention. The Navy and Airforce could complement the Army Engineers in areas that they could assist to guarantee smooth coordination of the operation. The coordination cell of the operation for the distribution of these relief materials by the concerns agencies under the MOOTW would assist to reduce the devastating impact of the disasters on the victims.

In 2022, the world witnessed several disasters in some countries due to heat wave that result to wildfires and heavy rain fall that brought flooding to some countries in which there were loss of lives and destruction of properties worth billions of dollars. This disasters event had drag some of the affected people backwards and would cost the nation huge sum of money to replace the daily basic facilities required for survival that were destroyed by the disasters. Therefore, if the Armed Forces of those nations have designated part of its forces to work in conjunction with the relevant nation's emergency agencies on disasters more lives would have been saved. According to Aljazeera news, recently over 500 people were killed in flooding in Anambra state of Nigeria due to lack of quick rescue operation response and over 1.4 million people displaced due to the flooding. The US, Pakistan and Thailand have similar flooding incidents and in Asia several countries also suffered from the flood disasters in the year 2022.



Figure 2. Pictorial View of Flooding in Anambra State of Nigeria

Source: Omorogbe (2015)

Furthermore, the world witnessed other types of disasters such as wildfires, earthquake and landslides in different countries across the globe. In June 2022, wildfire affected American and European continents as well as some countries in Middle East and North Africa states that was fuelled by drought and extreme heat. The wildfire had cause large-scale destructions of farms lands, loss of lives and properties worth billions of dollars in those continents and countries. In different vein, Indonesia was stroke by 5.2 magnitude earthquake in November 2022 that resulted to lose of lives and destruction of properties worth billions of dollars. Therefore, government would need to have immediate comprehensive holistic approach responses organize by all stakeholders in disaster management in aid to the indigenes of the affected areas. Also, countries could make use of alliances with their immediate neighbouring countries in disasters management related issues that a nation may find difficult to manage alone.

impact of disasters if not adequately contain and the suffering it brought to the people address it could have a great negative impact on the national security of the country. Also, the damage cause to the environment and humans could result to other social vices that may lead to insecurity within the environment and the nation at large. Hence, all countries should have a MOOTW contingency plan on disasters management because no part of the globe is completely immune from disasters be it man- made or natural disasters. This contingency plan should be activated within 2 hours of a disaster incident and the military quickly invited to assist the governmental agencies under the MOOTW activities. The military with its quick mobilization process could be the first team to be at the affected area to save lives and evacuated people out of the area as well as designate possible temporary camp area. The Armed Forces of Indonesia and that of Nigeria assisted during the recent earthquake in Java

and flood disaster in Niger Delta of Nigeria respectively. There is the need therefore for nations to earmark part of the military as immediate support team under MOOTW to the nation's emergency agencies for disasters management in the future.



Figure 3. Rescue Team of Indonesia military and disaster agency  
Source: Ridwan (2022)

### **Inter-Agencies Cooperation in Managing Natural Disasters**

Countries all over the world could adopts the role of MOOTW in their Armed Forces as an additional means of managing both man-made or natural disasters as well as expected to be supporting the federal governmental agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to make it effective. The key supporting governmental agencies such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the paramilitary and the NGOs are required to conduct humanitarian relief mission to the victims of the disasters to alleviate their suffering. Meanwhile, the military would also carry out the MOOTW assistances by providing security within the general community, conduct search and rescue operations as well as reconstruction of accommodations or provide make shift shelters for the victims by using the military engineers. In the event that the natural disaster continued unabated without intervention it may result in wanton destruction of live and properties, disruption in governance and serious humanitarian crisis in the affected state.

Consequently, the Ministry of Environment should coordinate all the activities of the governmental agencies and the NGOs involved in the disaster's relief management. Also, it would be required to synergize the activities of both military and other agencies for smooth cooperation and communication during the operation. The ministry, various agencies and institutions supporting the MOOTW most become fully operational within 6 hours of the disaster in a multi-dimensional fashion to cater for the victims of the disaster. Furthermore, the activities of MOOTW would need to be well coordinated to provide the necessary early assistances to enhance recovery from the initiate shock from the victims as expected. Therefore, the absence of an effective and poor coordination of MOOTW efforts in managing natural disasters will result to more disasters casualties and the people may lost confidence in their government ability to save lives. It is essential to deliver necessary assistance that would help alleviate the pains of the citizens for quick recovery.

### **Prospects of Armed Forces in MOOTW in Managing Natural Disasters**

Nations all over the world, must move with the dynamic changes that is affecting the world climates and create a well-established as well as capable robust rescue team for disaster management for the future. Hence, the ability of the government to give early warning of likely disaster in a given area is key to the successful relocation or evacuation of the people that are residents in that particular area which would assist to save lives. The military as a prime mover in any nation could liaise with the Ministries (Defence and Environment) in order to conduct a combined disasters management exercises to rehearse all possible drills either for wildfire, earthquake or flooding among other disasters. The establishment of a strategic coordination

centre that could serve the need for domestic and international response purpose would be required to coordinate all efforts measure.

Therefore, nations must take into cognizance their peculiar disasters that occur frequently within their nation and developed a simple contingency plan that could be easily implemented at short notice. Also, all nations should focus on earmarking all disaster-prone areas and then advice the residents to relocates or evacuated the general areas for safety. Meanwhile, those areas should be monitor and placed under surveillances to ensure that the citizens do not return back to the general areas in the name of their ancestral home. The designated members of the Armed Forces under MOOTW could be used as a deterrence force to those indigenes whose areas are earmarked as disaster prone areas to deter them from reoccupation of the area. The strengthening of institutional collaboration and communication of disaster awareness is important to all agencies in charge of disaster management in any country.

## CONCLUSION

This study assessed the role Armed Forces could played in support to disasters management by operating under the MOOTW to assists the disasters agencies to bring succour to the victims. It highlighted some of the prevalent causes of loss of lives and properties as well as some of the natural disasters responsible for such losses. It then conceptualizes the key variables to draw out their relationship for better understanding of the discourse and how they are been utilized in the paper. It also discussed the methodology applied in writing the paper and offers a better means for finding out emotions, feelings, understandings and the actions taken as climate change unfold. There is direct and sufficient relationship between military operations and natural disasters due to the displacement and relocation both causes on the people and the need to quickly resolve the issues arising.

Furthermore, it discussed the type of units that could be employed by the various Services of the Armed Forces and the role they could played during the MOOTW to assists the other agencies. It also discussed the impact of MOOTW in managing disasters by bringing succour to the affected victims and also the government desired to save lives of their citizens. Thereafter, it dwelled on the inter-agencies' cooperation for smooth conduct of the operations in aid to disasters victims which also involves the military participation under MOOTW. Finally, it looks at the prospects involving the participation of the Armed Forces in managing natural disasters as authorize by the government.

It is recommended that countries should earmark the general areas prone to different types of disasters as well as inform the indigenes of the dangers involve in living in such areas. Countries should earmark an engineer's brigade from their Armed Forces as part of disaster management team to aid the civil agencies in charge of disaster management. Countries should equip the engineer brigade with the requisite disasters equipment and affiliated support units attached as needed to achieve the national objectives. Countries should ensure that there is synergy between the military brigade and other civil agencies under a ministry that would coordinates the affairs and activities in line with the national objectives.

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