



Promoting Joint Staff and Interagency Cooperation in the Armed Forces of Montenegro

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Montenegro has existed as a sovereign principality since the Middle Ages. It successfully maintained independence from the Ottoman Empire, first as a theocracy ruled by bishop princes and later as a secular principality. National independence was interrupted at the close of World War I, when it was absorbed into the confederation that, in 1929, became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the close of World War II, Montenegro became a constituent republic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). It regained sovereignty in June 2006 on the basis of a national referendum which dissolved association with the rump Yugoslavia confederation of Serbia and Montenegro.

Today, as it approaches its fifth anniversary of independence, Montenegro is actively pursuing membership in both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). In December 2009, Montenegro was invited to participate in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP). MAP is a NATO program of advice, assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join the Alliance. A key initiative supporting this effort is the utilization of the U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) military to military (M2M) programs. Over the past three years, as part of this effort, the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) traveling contact teams (TCT) have assisted the Armed Forces of Montenegro (VCG)¹ in the areas of joint staff structure, strategic planning processes, and national strategy reviews. As they strengthened their internal processes, the Montenegrin Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the VCG General Staff (GS) recognized the key role that interagency cooperation played in the execution of national policy and in response to natural and manmade disasters.



With an active duty force of 2500 personnel, the ability to leverage the interagency community strengthens the VCG's response capabilities. This is particularly important since other government ministries depend on the VCG's support abilities to meet their mission requirements. To assist in developing these cooperative processes the USAWC team of Professor Bernard F. Griffard and Dr. R. Craig Nation conducted a "Joint Staff and Interagency Cooperation" seminar in Podgorica, Montenegro, January 25-27, 2011. Focused on increasing VCG and MoD staff proficiency in operating within the interagency environment, the team employed both information presentations and USAWC-developed scenario-driven exercises to stimulate discussion and identify processes.

Over the three days of the seminar, up to 30 members of the VCG and other Montenegrin government ministries were in attendance. Overall, the audience was fairly evenly divided between uniformed and civilian personnel representing the Defense, Health, Emergency Situations, Transportation, and Law Enforcement communities. The participation by the non-defense ministries was essential and added depth to both the open discussions and the scenario play.

1. VCG: Vojska Crne Gore (Armed Forces of Montenegro)

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INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET

During the opening session it was stressed that in today's political-economic environment no single element of power can resolve all issues. Sovereign entities must address the challenges facing them from the "whole of government" approach; they cannot default to the military solution. This is especially true of small nations such as Montenegro. After a review of the institutionalized U.S. interagency coordination practices the Montenegrin representatives briefed on their internal processes for cooperation. In balance there was the realization that true interagency cooperation was still a work in progress that required not only internal agency cultural adjustments, but greater opportunities to exercise stated procedures.

When Montenegro moves forward in developing its "whole of government" approach, it has the advantage of size. In this case, smaller is better. Though the complexity of the U.S. system is daunting, its' basic objectives of integration, coordination, collaboration, and deconfliction are as applicable in Podgorica as they are in Washington DC. As the Montenegrin interagency cooperative structure evolves, its' smaller bureaucracies may lead to more informal and person-to-person interactions vice prescribed coordination forums. Whatever methods win out they must ensure that as the Defense community engages other government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and regional and international organizations, it is for the purpose of accomplishing an objective.



Joint Staff & Interagency Cooperation Seminar attendees reflect the military and civilian agency participation

Although many of its government offices existed prior to the devolution of the Serbia-Montenegro Confederation, just five years into independence the ministries no longer act as merely implementers for a larger government entity, but must master the skills to develop, plan, resource, and execute policies. These challenges tend to cause the separate ministries to look inwardly, "protecting turf," rather than seeking cooperation and shared responsibility. As mentioned above, both the defense and non-defense agencies must overcome organizational biases to succeed. This culture change will not occur overnight. It is largely generational so the passage of time may be the ultimate solution. During this transitional period, cooperative emphasis must come from the top. Both the military and civilian leadership must constantly reinforce the criticality of the "Whole of Government" approach, leading the way by example and reinforcing the concept through practices.

DEFENSE SUPPORT TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES

Building on the opening discussions, the USAWC team employed a Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) scenario to demonstrate the extensive interagency cooperative effort required for effective response to natural or manmade disasters. Following a discussion of the responsibilities and functions associated with DSCA within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the U.S. Federal Government, participants were presented with a major natural disaster scenario. In order to replicate the necessary coordination and cooperation that must be achieved in order to successfully respond to widespread domestic infrastructure damage and a building humanitarian crisis, attendees were assigned specific role-playing positions.

The Ulcinj Earthquake

On August 12th, 2012 at 1030 hours, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck 10 KM off shore of Ulcinj, a tourist center on the Adriatic Sea near the Montenegro-Albania border. Most major road systems were affected with the damage causing major delays of local rescue services. Critical infrastructure and key resources in most of the affected areas sustained



The Ulcinj Earthquake

substantial damage. Electrical power supply and generation is off-line and most fossil-fuel resources (natural gas, gasoline/diesel, coal, etc.) were heavily damaged and, in many cases added to the disaster by fueling fires and explosions. The majority of all landline, cellular, and radio-repeater communication are inoperable in the affected areas. Highway and rail systems across the zone sustained moderate to severe damage. Hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes sustained moderate to severe damage. Many schools were heavily damaged.

Identifying Joint Staff & Interagency Cooperation Requirements

Role-playing groups were required to make an initial assessment that addressed the main priorities for the affected region within the first week, and the priorities for restoration of the critical infrastructure and key resources in the affected region. In the process of accomplishing these tasks they identified which agencies set the initial priorities and determined restoration priorities.

Following the assessment discussions the VCG players were asked to identify the necessary immediate military planning steps to take in support of this incident, and the primary non-MoD agencies they would interface with in this situation. Also addressed was where deployed military forces fit in to the incident command structure. Concurrently, the interagency role-players looked at what considerations were required to integrate international assistance, taking into consideration preexisting assistance and military-to-military support agreements. To further stimulate the cross-organizational discussion all groups looked at possible long-term military recovery resources required in this type of disaster, and the impact this would have on national security readiness.



Medical Interagency Working Group develops responses to the Ulcinj Earthquake crisis

CAPABILITIES MANAGEMENT

In most cases DSCA planning and execution takes place within a crisis atmosphere that stimulates a desire for cooperation. Longer term planning to identify, resource, and acquire required capabilities does not enjoy such stimuli. So it is critical that interagency processes are in place so that identified capabilities are available at the time they are required. As an aspirant for both NATO and EU membership, the VCG is contributing small units to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. As it becomes more capable larger contributions may be expected. The ability to project forces out of region does not just happen; it must be planned for and resourced.

Using the U.S. Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), The Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process, and the Defense Acquisition System (DAS) as examples, Professor Griffard and Dr. Nation reviewed the basic steps necessary to ensure a needed capability arrives on time and is sustainable. A key point made was that all problems do not require a material solution. Proper application of a JCIDS-type process and the DOTMLPF² strategy leverages existing strengths and maximizes the impact of interagency cooperation. To reinforce this dialogue a scenario focused on the coordination and cooperative interagency efforts required to identify, develop and sustain a force projection mission was provided to the participants.

Crisis in the Southern Caucasus

A second scenario presented a peacekeeping operations (PKO) mission in the Southern Caucasus region in the spring of 2015. Specifically the ongoing hostile environment between the countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan brought on as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. In January 2011 the Government of Montenegro had informed the EU that they would be capable of providing a deployable Light Infantry Company Team for out-of-region Peacekeeping missions by January 2015. As a result of this commitment, in February 2015, the EU requests that Montenegro provide said force as part of the EU component of the UN Caucasus Peacekeeping Force (UNCPKF).



Dr. R. Craig Nation, USAWC, enjoys a professional discussion during a seminar break

2. DOTMLPF: Doctrine; Organizational Design; Training; Materiel; Leadership and Education; Personnel; Facilities

Identifying, Developing and Sustaining a Force Projection Capability

Based on this requirement, the players were tasked to identify the military and interagency processes required to ensure that this capability was available in the 2015 timeframe. The mission required the identification of the necessary steps to expand the current deployable small unit capability to the promised company team. This resulted in a detailed discussion of the design, resourcing, training, and sustainment requirements and the military and interagency cooperation necessary to meet the timeline.

With further definition of the mission requirements, it became evident that some of the skills required were not presently resident in the VCG. However, some of these shortfalls could be resolved through interagency cooperation. Capitalizing on the health, law enforcement, and legal expertise of other government ministries, both training and augmentation solutions were proposed. This leveraging of non-MoD assets proved an affordable method of meeting mission requirements within a resource constrained environment.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Montenegro looks to be a useful contributing partner in both the EU and NATO. As a small nation, these new commitments will compete for limited available resources. Without a working cooperative interagency process, there is a risk of not getting the maximum return on investment for resources expended. Continued proactive efforts to reinforce interagency procedures, especially between the defense community and civilian government agencies, will result in “more bang for the buck,” strengthening Montenegro’s endeavors towards full European integration.

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