Using Web 2.0 Technology to Support Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations:

Applying the lessons learnt from the United States Military response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake to improve the utilisation of the New Zealand Defence Force's Communications and Information Systems during Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations

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Abstract

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Operations are complex multidimensional environments requiring the deployment of a military force. These operations will have multiple agencies responding including military forces, emergency responders, United Nations agencies, None Government Organisations (NGOs) and Private Volunteer Organisations all of which specialising in the provision of the necessities of life to survive a disaster including food, shelter, water, sanitation, medical and logistics support. The coordination of the relief effort and ensuring resources are applied where they can achieve maximum impact is a significant challenge. Information and communications technology, and in particular the Internet, has matured to a level now where this technology can be used to aid with the coordination challenges facing the multiple responders in a HA/DR operation.

This paper examines the command and control arrangements that the New Zealand Defence Force has in place to support deployment on HA/DR operations and looks at modern commercial information technology trends, labelled broadly as Web 2.0, and proposes ways that these trends in information and communications technology might be utilised to increase the effectiveness of a New Zealand Defence Force Deployment. It examines the use of Web 2.0 type technology that was used by the United States Military during their deployment to Haiti and compares this with the use of information and communications technology by the New Zealand Defence Force during a response to a major earthquake in Christchurch and on an HA/DR exercise in the South Pacific. It seeks to highlight ways that the New Zealand Defence Force might use information and communications technology to enhance responses to HA/DR incidents in the future.

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