



## GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC) DISASTER RESPONSE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM) MEETING

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U.S. Central Command and the Qatar Armed Forces held the *Executive Committee (EXCOM) for Disaster Response and Environmental Security* from 12-14 October 2003 in Mesaieed, Qatar. Participants included approximately 40 delegates from the Gulf Cooperation Channel (GCC) Secretariat General, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. This was the first meeting of the EXCOM, which derived its creation from the September 2002 Environmental Security Conference held in Doha, Qatar. It is a U.S. Central Command theater security cooperation activity and is supported through the coordinated efforts of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, U.S. Central Command, and the Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership.

### 12 OCTOBER 2003 SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The morning began with the opening ceremony. In addition to the delegates, the Qatari Chief of Staff, Major General Al-Attiyah, and the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. McGahee, attended the opening. Brigadier General (BGen) Trautman, Deputy Director of Plans and Policy (DJ5), and Mr. Curtis Bowling, Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, made opening remarks for the U.S. delegation.

In his remarks, BGen Trautman spoke of three events that exemplified the need for disaster response and environmental security planning. The first was an earthquake in southern California, which demonstrated that a small natural event can have paralyzing results. The next was a typhoon striking Bangladesh, which demonstrated the importance of regional cooperation. The last was the Kuwaiti oil fires of 1991, which made clear that natural disasters do not respect national boundaries.

Mr. Bowling reviewed recommendations from the Executive Committee session from the Doha conference of 2002. These were: to activate the EXCOM; include the GCC Secretariat General; increase civil-military cooperation; and schedule follow-on activities to give tangible results. Due to the substantial turnover of personnel involved in this arena, the previous environmental security conferences (Oman, April 2000; Doha, September 2002) were summarized to help provide a common knowledge base for all participants. Dr. Kent Butts, U.S. Army War College and Mr. Michael Shaw, Chief of the Counterproliferation Division, USCENTCOM/CCJ5, completed the U.S. delegation.



The goals of the U.S. delegation were: 1) regain the momentum of the September 2002 conference; 2) select a host country and meeting site for the 2004 conference, with an EXCOM to prepare for the full conference; 3) determine the potential role of the GCC in planning for regional disaster response; 4) broaden the focus of the next conference from strictly “environmental security” to include consequence management and disaster response subsequent to a man-made (i.e., terrorist) attack.

### **Session 1: Regional Capabilities Briefings**

Colonel Al-Jaber, Qatar Armed Forces, guided this discussion. Each delegation provided an overview of disaster response and environmental security capabilities. The goals of this session were: to identify the environmental security institutions, capabilities, and programs of each nation; determine the civil authorities involved, and how they interact during disaster response; to create awareness of regional resources with which the defense community may cooperate when addressing the region’s environmental issues.

The briefings were informative and highlighted the establishment of disaster response mechanisms within the GCC nations. Many countries have created a national operations center to coordinate the assets involved in disaster response. They also categorize the events as minor, medium, or major, and make response decisions based on the severity of the disaster.

### **Session 2: Leveraging Existing Training Opportunities**

Dr. Kent Butts, U.S. Army War College, facilitated this discussion. This session started with a review of the training subjects discussed at the September 2002 conference. Priorities at that time focused on oil production and transportation accidents, toxic waste and hazardous materials, petrochemical accidents, some Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and natural disasters. The goals of this session were to identify training opportunities that support multilateral environmental security cooperation and to discuss ways to leverage those training opportunities across the region.



Although agreeing with the training issues and focus of the September 2002 conference, the delegates asked that the focus of training should be broadened to recognize recent developments. The delegates suggested new training topics such as emphasis on terrorist attacks on infrastructure, better warning capabilities and training, and preventing and responding to WMD events. There is a desire for regional exercises to discover and fix disaster response vulnerabilities, and centralized or standardized training for disaster response. Countries with response centers currently have more robust training programs than those neighboring countries without centers. Common suggestions for improvement included more multi-lateral/regional training and the involvement of other ministries within the government during exercises and discussions.

### **Recommendations:**

- o Train against the known threats consistent with regional priorities.
- o Conduct training that addresses detection, prevention, and mitigation of natural and man-made disasters.
- o Provide multi-faceted training to GCC first responders.
- o Identify the regional centers of expertise and include those centers in GCC regional training.

### Session 3: Regional Coordination Center (RCC)



Col Al-Meraikhi, Qatar Armed Forces, led this session. It began with a review of the September 2002 discussions concerning the proposed RCC. The goals of the session were to: develop an action plan to leverage existing regional capabilities; define the center's charter and develop terms of reference; obtain national and regional approval; determine roles and missions of the center for disaster response and training; determine its organization and capabilities.

This session went quickly with few differences of opinion. Brigadier Nasser, Qatar Armed Forces, stated the group could not define terms such as the charter, or organization, until the GCC approves the creation of the RCC. As in previous meetings in 2000 and 2002, there was unanimous agreement that an RCC is needed, but the decision to support its creation lies at higher levels within the various ministries. The group decided to make a supporting recommendation to the GCC that would be part of a document from the Qatari Chief of Staff to the Chiefs of Staff of the GCC countries.

#### Recommendations:

- o Create a regional response center for environmental security and disaster prevention and response.
- o The center should have a permanent site with backup capabilities in an alternate location.
- o Base the RCC on the best practices of national prevention and response operations centers.
- o The RCC should have a common, integrated, redundant warning and response system.

## 13 OCTOBER 2003 SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

### Session 4: Discussion of Environmental Security and Disaster Response

Lieutenant Colonel Sanad from Bahrain facilitated this session. The goals were to: understand the regional distinction between environmental security and disaster response; discuss how these activities differ from, but complement, other disaster response activities in the region. The group revisited the definition of environmental security and tested it against current events in the region, to include the ongoing threat of WMD, missile attacks, and the renewed terrorist threat. Environmental security deals with environmental issues which affect national security. After fruitful discussion, the delegates decided that they should use the definition of environmental security from the September 2002 Doha conference, which is:

*“an integrated proactive approach that ensures the protection, preservation, and restoration of the environment, including air, land, water, biodiversity, natural resources, and people, from natural and man-made disasters that might contribute to instability and conflict.”*

Mr. Bowling pointed out that disasters, including those caused by a WMD terrorist attack, have an environmental dimension that may easily exceed the capabilities of civil authority, lead agencies and must be addressed by military disaster response planners. Mr. Shaw added that although the military is not the lead federal agency, it may be the resource of choice in catastrophic emergencies because the military provides the necessary command and control, discipline, equipment, and have emergency response training. Focusing on

disaster management allows the military to fine tune its capabilities to support civil authorities and their response mechanisms. As expressed by BGen Trautman, “disaster response is not a new concept, especially for the military; the military responds to the nation’s needs.”

### Session 5: Future Actions/Way Ahead

Colonel Al-Essa from Kuwait was the chairman for this session. Its goals were to determine: the time, location, and participation for the next Gulf region, environmental security conference and the next EXCOM; a strategy for accomplishing the EXCOM recommendations; and a strategy for obtaining national approval for the regional center. The discussions resulted in a decision to conduct the next EXCOM meeting in the March-April 2004 timeframe, and the full conference at a later date. The location for these events was not decided, but it was agreed that one country should host both events to encourage continuity of planning.

#### Recommendation:

- o USCENTCOM will compose the necessary correspondence asking for a country to host the two events.

### SUMMARY SESSION



Colonel Al-Tamtami from Oman presided over the conclusion of the conference proceedings. During the three-day conference, the attending delegations reviewed the previous recommendations, discussed the current situation, and unanimously recommended that: a regional disaster response coordination center be established to manage disaster prevention and response in the Gulf, the details for which will be determined later; there should be an integrated regional system of training; the Qatari Chief of Staff will send a letter to Chief of Staff of the GCC summarizing the conference recommendations; and CENTCOM will request a host for the next EXCOM and full conference.

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