Interview with LTG JOHNNIE H. CORNS,
Commanding General, United States Army, Pacific

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MAJ HIGA: Today is 12 January 1993. This is Major Lincoln Higa, Commander, 30th Military History Detachment, and Dr. Donald Laird, USARPAC Command Historian. We are interviewing Lieutenant General Johnnie Corns, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Pacific, concerning his thoughts on the Hurricane Iniki relief effort.

A. Timeliness of Our Response

LTG CORNS: Operation Iniki Response was a timely event in the history of Headquarters United States Army, Pacific, and in the history of the United States Army overall with regard to the total force - active, guard, and reserve - participating in efforts to come to the aid of American people in times of natural disaster. The timeliness has to do first with the role of a joint task force in the operations of United States Commander in Chief Pacific, or USCINCPAC, and his concepts for organizing and dealing with conflict or natural disasters. Operation Iniki Response was also timely for this Headquarters because it got us involved in the joint task force role for the Army and the other services to meet natural disasters right on the heels of similar involvement by joint task forces in Florida in response to the hurricane there and to the typhoon that had occurred in Guam. This timeliness enabled us to enter into the operation of the joint task force with some fairly recent experience among members of the USARPAC staff who had been part of augmentations for other
joint task forces. Particularly for me it was timely in that I had, within 10 days prior to being designated the Joint Task Force Commander, sat in a one-on-one meeting with the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Gordon Sullivan, in which he shared with me some insights into the ongoing, at that time, activities of the United States Army in a joint task force role which was responding to the hurricane in Florida. Rather ironic to me is the fact that, just 60 days prior to that, USARPAC had co-hosted, along with the Defense Forces of Tonga, a Pacific Armies Management Seminar (PAMS), in Honolulu. The theme of that seminar was the employment of armies in response to disasters. Papers were presented by representatives of the United States Army Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Army, who serve as executive agents for the Department of Defense in case of natural disasters. One key speaker was MG John Heldstab, the Director of Military Support within DA DCSOPS. Further, we had people with expertise in responding to the earthquake in the Oakland/San Francisco area; people with knowledge of the operations in Bangladesh to include representatives of the Army of Bangladesh, people who responded to Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines; and certainly people with knowledge of what we had done and were in fact still doing in response to the hurricane in Florida and to the typhoon in Guam. So it was a timely undertaking for Headquarters, U.S. Army, Pacific to lead Task Force Hawaii.
B. Lack of Warning and Preparation for the Mission

By the same token, it was not a mission for which the Headquarters was forewarned, and it was not a mission that we had anticipated. In the Commander in Chief Pacific's guidance for Joint Task Force Headquarters, we had generally anticipated that involvement in a joint task force would require a brigade of the 25th or the 6th Division, or the entire division command and control headquarters of either of those divisions, or the First Corps' Headquarters out of Fort Lewis. Generally, I had envisioned that I would meet my responsibilities by designating a joint task force commander and forming a joint task force. Consequently, we had never done an analysis which identified that Headquarters, USARPAC, could serve as a joint task force nucleus, nor that I, as the Commander of USARPAC, might serve as a joint task force commander. That meant when we undertook the mission we were operating heavily dependent upon the knowledge and skills of individual officers within the command who had experience with joint task forces or similar activities. During the exercise I was very pleased with the performance of scores of officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians. But, I think it's important to highlight that the staff which served as the nucleus of the joint task force consisted almost totally of new staff principals who had come together in about a 60-day period prior
to the advent of Hurricane Iniki. As a matter of fact, the Chief of Staff had been on board for duty less than two weeks. Nevertheless, the task force staff functioned well, and I think that is a tribute and testimonial to the Army training program for officers: both the myriad of courses through which officers go in the course of their careers; and the emphasis we place upon command and staff actions within those training programs. I look back at a similar kind of requirement 20 years ago in the Army: I don't believe that any commander or staff, having been together for such a short period of time, should have expected to function as well as we did because we would have not had the common base of doctrine, standard operating procedures, and training to perform as a staff.
C. Initial Organization of the Joint Task Force

On the performance of the joint task force staff, there are two key points. Despite my pride in the performance of the staff, the fact that we had not identified a requirement to serve as a nucleus of a joint task force meant that we had never practiced doing it, and that lack of practice showed. Our learning curve initially was quite high. We did have some difficulties, and it's a tribute to each staff principal, and in particular to COL Joe Windle, who was the new Chief of Staff here at USARPAC when this operation began, that we were able to overcome these deficiencies and settle down as a staff. Secondly, we did not receive in Headquarters, USARPAC, the complement from the other components of officers who were experienced in joint headquarters matters. Normally, when CINCPAC creates a joint task force, he will call together, and then provide to the designated joint task force commander, an augmentation for his core staff. That wasn't done in the case of the initiation of Joint Task Force Hawaii, which is the name that was given to our task force, because at that time there was an ongoing exercise that was very important to CINCPAC. In addition, the capability to augment joint task forces had been somewhat strapped already by the creation of the joint task force under the Navy that had operated in Guam in response to Typhoon Omar.
D. Augmentation of the Staff

About 72 hours into the operation, I was approached by the J3 of the PACOM staff with an offer to designate a deputy joint task force commander from another service, which at that time I did not find necessary, but I did accept later on. And while I was not offered the standard augmentation to the Joint Task Force, I was offered a small cell of joint-trained officers to assist us in our formatting and reporting, which I did accept, and they proved valuable to us. As a footnote, I think our experience showed that the practice that was normally followed -- augmenting the headquarters that served as the core for the joint task force with a group of officers -- should have been followed in this case as well. I believe I and my staff, though I am very proud of what they have accomplished, would have performed even more admirably had we had the normal augmentation that Pacific Command provides. That is not in the form of a complaint: at no time during the exercise did I go forward and request such an augmentation. I accepted the circumstances which caused the augmentation not to occur initially and I never brought that up as an issue. The addition of the small group of officers to assist us in reporting was, however, valuable, and I think that was attested to by the J3 of PACOM. In the course of the operation, one of the major factors that surfaced early was the assessment that I, the Commander, had to make with regard to
how to organize the joint task force itself. The PACOM charter designated me as the joint task force commander, and stated that available to me would be such other forces within Pacific Command as I might need. It did not identify and shape the task force from the beginning. It was, therefore, my requirement to identify initially and subsequently whatever capabilities that we needed, and then go to PACOM to obtain from other component commands the specific kind of unit or nature of skills among people that would be needed to meet requirements. Incidentally, I am very pleased with the enthusiasm with which all of the components responded, both to my initial assessment and the subsequent assessments and requests for capabilities, troops, or units.
E. Outguessing the Changing Winds of Iniki

One of the difficulties in organizing the task force internally rested in the unpredictability of the approaching storm. The best forecast that we could get from weather experts saw the storm vacillating, dancing around in the ocean as some of them referred to it, in such a manner that it was hard for us to tell whether the storm would hit both the western coast of Oahu and Kauai, or, in the early stages neither, or hit just one of the two islands. As the time clock got within about 40 hours of the touch down of the hurricane, it became more evident that the island of Kauai would be hit. Whether it would be hit on the west, in the center, or on the east, and, if on the east, whether that would include significant damage on the western coast of Oahu, was not clear to us.
F. Two Task Forces for Two Islands in Danger

With that situation, we chose to organize two task forces and two deputy defense coordinating officers below my level. One of the task forces was intended to respond to the needs of Kauai, but not to preposition itself in Kauai, and I will speak more about prepositioning later. The other task force was to be oriented upon the western coast of Oahu, on the Waianae Coast. I chose to have the nucleus of each of those task forces built around the 25th Division, and then augment that as needed by other services' capabilities. At the time those task forces were formed, we did not formally establish joint task forces, and I think that's a subject worthy of further examination. I tend to favor the view that we would have been better off if the task force which was referred to as Garden Isle, that went to Kauai, would have in fact been a true joint task force. It was perceived by many to be so, and it was called a joint task force, but it really was not. While I must compliment particularly the Marine Corps contingent that operated on Kauai as part of that effort, as well as Coast Guard, Navy, and United States Air Force personnel, I believe everything would have been smoother in the first 48 to 72 hours on Kauai itself, if it had been clearly established that they were a joint task force, and all elements there were under joint operational control and directive authority. In reality,
Joint Task Force Garden Isle was merely an Army Task Force Garden Isle, under command of Brigadier General Frank Akers, and the relationship with the elements of the other services was in fact largely cooperation and coordination with General Akers. A side light of the task organization requirement of special interest occurred several days into our operation when weather threatened to hit the large island of Hawai'i, the Big Island, with yet another storm. In that case, on a contingency basis, I directed the creation of a subordinate joint task force. The nucleus of this task force, however, was to be from the Marine brigade at Kaneohe. They actually did their analysis and assessment, went through briefings, and only when nearly midnight on the day before the storm hit the Big Island and Maui, were we able to stand them down in their level of alert because the storm had lost intensity and did not hit the Island of Hawai'i with great force. My emphasis in referring to the subordinate task forces is to point out that task organizing early, and making the right calls in the nature of the task organization, are very important, and we could have done that better than we did if we truly had designated joint task forces subordinate to Joint Task Force Hawai'i. Also, there must be flexibility in the assessment process when you're dealing with something so unpredictable as weather patterns. Finally, the capability to form those subordinate task forces reflects the good fortune that we all experienced in that, when Iniki struck and when the second storm
loomed as a possible threat, we had such a robust capacity here in the State of Hawaii, in the form of the United States active duty military, the Hawaii Air and Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve, with which to respond.
G. The Question of Prepositioning Supplies

That brings me to the subject I referred to earlier, of prepositioning. In my visit to Washington, some ten days before Iniki struck, I picked up, in the media as well as in some discussions with personnel on the Army Staff, a minor debate. It was associated with the response to the hurricane in Florida, about the degree to which there had or had not been adequate prepositioning of materials in the vicinity of the area where the storm was to impact, so that those materials would have been readily available as the storm moved through and subsided. I wasn't surprised, when I was alerted that I might form a joint task force in Hawaii in the hours before the actual decision was made to form the joint task force, to also hear discussion about prepositioning materials on Kauai. The concept of preposition, I think, is a good one. In the case of Operation Iniki, I think some of the people who early on were promoting prepositioning of supplies were not aware of the true nature of the situation. First, we already had tremendous amounts of military capability and supplies on the Island of Oahu, by virtue of the need just to run day-to-day military operations in Air and Army National Guard and active military training events. Therefore, being some 40 miles away from Kauai, the concept of prepositioning was already in place to a large extent. Secondly, to preposition more of those supplies further became not only questionable, but on the
day before the storm hit, it became largely undoable. The reason
was, first, you have to think twice about taking supplies and
putting them on a target island like Kauai. When your weather
prediction didn't tell you what part of the island would be hit,
you'd have no safe haven in which to put your supplies. You'd
run a chance of not being able to get to them. Secondly, during
the period that we might have dispatched equipment by air and by
sea, we were actually putting most of the boats in Pearl Harbor
and ships out to sea, so that they could weather the storm that
was anticipated to hit here. And, it did in fact hit here. We
were also putting our aircraft, fixed-wing and rotary-wing, in
hangers, or we were tying them down, or in some cases we were
flying them to the Big Island where we thought they would be
safer. As a practical matter, prepositioning of supplies on
Kauai for Iniki was not a feasible option open to CINCPAC, or to
me, or to the representatives of the Federal Emergency Management
Agency who happened to be in Hawaii at that time.
H. Interagency Relations: The Initial Assessment of Hurricane Damage

I've mentioned the importance of being able to make an early assessment of the situation, but I did that in the context of how to organize. Equally important is the early assessment of the nature of cooperation that's going to occur between the military, other Federal agencies, and the State in response to appeals from local (in the case of Iniki, Kauai County) officials. On the day that the storm winds initially hit Oahu, I visited the State Civil Defense Office and Operations Center inside Diamond Head Crater, and did some coordination there with respect to what we understood to be the current weather projection, and some of the possible impacts of the weather as it was being described on Kauai and on the western coast. Despite the fact that I visited there and did some coordination, one of the areas that I did not do as well as I should have and intended was in causing a more detailed coordination of the concepts of the Task Force Hawaii with the State Civil Defense Office, which of course incorporated what might be expected of the Army and Air National Guard in response to the storm. That was a very important short-fall on my part because it resulted in both some misunderstandings and dysfunction the following morning as we began doing the damage assessment on Kauai itself. There needs to be further clarity established in how the assessment process is accomplished
involving Federal agencies that are in support of the State and local agency. By that I mean, is it intended that the local and State agencies do an assessment entirely on their own without benefit of Federal agencies? And I'm pretty confident that the answer to that question is no. As a matter of fact, planning that had been done by the State Civil Defense Office, under the leadership of Mr. Roy Price, had contemplated using the expertise of Federal agencies within the assessment process. I think the key for me is the fact that my staff and I, not anticipating that we would form a joint task force headquarters to deal with a natural disaster, had never gone through that planning and exercising process with the State Civil Defense Office. Ironically, one of my subordinate headquarters, U.S. Army Support Command, Hawaii, had in fact done that on multiple occasions. While I had visited the Civil Defense Office and been briefed and had discussions before, the nature of those visits and discussions did not surface the kinds of things that should have been surfaced, so that my staff, working with the State Civil Defense Office, could identify the things that should be laid down and agreed upon at least 24 hours before the storm actually hit. I think that's an important point, and its an area that I'm most desirous of improving upon in the near term, in the event we might have some similar event occur. That is the role of the active duty military in the assessment. Clearly, we
could expect requests for transportation support, which we actually received before midnight on the evening of the day that the storm initially hit Kauai. We could also expect requests for communications support, which we got in roughly the same time frame. The role of the Corps of Engineers is well acknowledged in State planning here, and a role by the Corps of Engineers in the assessment process would be anticipated by the State. The assessment process requires agreement and clear understanding between the State, local, and Federal agencies, to include a leadership element of active component military forces who might subsequently be called forward depending upon the degree of the emergency on the site. The assessment team in Kauai for Iniki was shaped by me with the assumption that the damage done by the storm would include people killed, people injured, people in need of help and evacuation. Therefore, the assessment team arrived visibly capable of very quickly rolling in a lot of resources to deal with saving lives. However, the County and State officials quickly determined that the damage was not of that nature, that the damage volume was extensive and major in the form of property, but that very few lives had been lost and few appeared to be in imminent danger. The immediate reading of the size of the active Army assessment team was that it was too much too soon.
I. Adjustments in State and Federal Roles After the Damage Assessment

I think that the concern with the size of the Active Army assessment team, and the established and known capability of the leadership of that assessment team to call forward troops and material immediately if needed, was the result of the lack of thorough exchange of ideas and planning on the day before the response began. In addition, the assessment on the ground quickly showed that the nature of what needed to be coming in there was not so much a lot of soldiers with communications capabilities, helicopters, and first aid and life-saving means, but in fact people with generators and road clearing and engineer kinds of equipment. In the planning that had been done, we had pre-loaded some capacity to enhance the life saving capability by introducing ground vehicles by water movement and more soldiers by air movement. Within just a few hours of the arrival of the head of the Army assessment team at Kauai, it was determined that the package that had been pre-loaded should be reconfigured. As a result, some barges were unloaded early in the day that the assessment team arrived on Kauai, and, subsequently, the equipment and capability for a life-saving role began to be adjusted. Our personnel on Kauai removed their weapons and their load-bearing kinds of equipment to be more in step with an effort
to clean up situations that might create health hazards for people. During the first day of the assessment process, having overcome the impression that active U.S. military were set to do far more than was warranted by the situation, relationships were established between the overall assessment team and the county officials that allowed problems to be solved and others to be avoided.

In summary, with respect to assessment, it must be emphasized that the nature of the assessment team should be worked out by those local, State, and Federal agencies who might be involved in advance of a natural disaster. The content of the teams needs to be laid out and the contingencies which might modify the content need to be established and agreed upon. That having been done, I think, as long as the concept that was applied during the response to Hurricane Iniki is in turn followed, that the assessment process will work well. Then, as the State is trying to assess how it can respond to a local or county situation, it can request further assistance from Federal agencies after that analysis. The State identifies its requirements through the local representative of FEMA, who then makes the determination if it's valid and should be provided. After about 36 hours or so of an intensive assessment process, that mechanism began to work and became a highly refined process before we were finished.
J. Moving Materiel and People to Kauai

With respect to the functioning of the Task Force itself, an area of immediate concern was establishing priorities for and coordinating operations of the transportation system. In a joint task force, doctrinally you normally put together a joint movements control center, and then questions of priorities, best use of resources, as well as tracking the flow of supplies and equipment through the transportation system, are accomplished by that center. We had some difficulties during the operation in response to Iniki in that initially the entire operation was being run by the State responding to the County government. The State looked to the Air Guard, and the Air Guard managed the flow of the aircraft, the loading of the aircraft, and the movement of supplies and equipment to Kauai. As we established the Joint Movements Control Center, we did not have a smooth means to ensure that the desires of the County, the State, and the Air Guard would be properly reflected in the Joint Movements Management Center (JMMC), and that proved to be difficult throughout the entire operation. I believe that what we put on the ground was never a fully satisfactory solution to all parties. Therefore, we need to work harder on the question of air priorities, movement control, and visibility of supplies in any future operation such as Iniki response.
K. Comparing Operation Iniki Response to Other Hurricanes and Typhoons.

There are great differences in the performance of joint task forces and the nature of their coordination: in the Philippines and Bangladesh which are sovereign countries; in Guam which is a U.S. territory; and in the State of Hawaii which has a fairly robust Civil Defense apparatus in place. One of the key differences in the operations of the Joint Task Forces in Guam and in Hawaii is that in Guam there was a great deal of latitude provided by the Governor to the Joint Task Force Commander, because of the relatively limited capabilities that the Governor had in place in Guam to handle the problem himself.

On the other hand, in Hawaii, because there was a more robust structure to execute their plan, every capability that the Joint Task Force brought to the operation had to be fully coordinated with the State and, in some cases, with the local people, before it could be used. The Joint Task Force Commander was very much in a position of coordinating with State and local (but primarily with State) officials, and then, of course, making sure that actions were approved by FEMA before movements were made by the military or the Joint Task Force elements.
L. Is there a Need for a Federal Agency to be in Overall Charge?

I believe that Operation Iniki response represented a validation that the current American approach toward governmental response to local natural disasters is very close to the right answer. By that I mean the agency that should be overall in charge of the Federal response should be an agency that is civilian in nature. It should be an agency whose head enjoys a position in the hierarchy close to the White House, in the Executive Branch of Government. It's an agency that in my view should not be buried in any other single department, such as the Department of Defense, because a variety of governmental agencies such as Agriculture, Interior, and Transportation, have great contributions that they can make. I do believe that the military demonstrated its great capacity to help, and I believe that the military is more and more appropriate to the task in the response phase as the amount of human suffering and/or death has increased or is imminent. In other words, the military brings a total package capacity to an area such that, if a lot of people have been hurt or if others are in danger of dying, under proper civilian control, and, in response to FEMA, which is in turn responding to the request of the State, the military can play a superb role there. As you get into recovery and
reconstruction, it is the Corps of Engineers among the Federal military forces which has unique capabilities to bring to that particular task, and your operational units and even some of your logistical units can begin to be phased out. But the Corps of Engineers has great expertise in contracting and emergency management, and therefore you can expect them, once involved in such an operation, to be there for the long term, and then finally turn it over to civil agencies.
M. Deciding When to Leave

Very early in Operation Iniki Response, in discussions both with the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Commander in Chief, Pacific, it was agreed that we needed to identify an end-state for the involvement of the active military. This is done for two reasons. The first is, at some time the nature of the emergency will reduce to the point where considering the overall mission of the U.S. military --- the mission for being prepared to fight wars, to deter, to provide for national security --- will outweigh the emergency, and, therefore, those forces should be moved back to their primary role. Secondly, there are things that need to be done in an area that has been impacted by a natural disaster by the State, civilian government, and private organizations. While the military should not depart too soon, and should remain while its help is critical, there should be no delay in the process by which the local and State governments begin to help themselves and meet the needs of the people. That is why an end-state is very important. It was difficult to verbalize early on the actual date for the end-state. What was not difficult was to get a lot of people to accept the concept that there needed to be an end-state, that we shouldn't go on for months and months with some small elements or large elements of the military on Kauai. The coordination between the U.S.
military and the Air and Army Guard, with the State, and with the local government, was carefully done in such a manner that it would not be perceived that the military was running out on the local people or the local government. We conducted continuing dialogue with the State Adjutant General, and his representative located at the County Administrative Offices. Only through that mechanism, by which the local government and the people knew in advance and anticipated moves by the active military, were we able to avoid a perception that we were leaving anyone holding the bag. As a matter of fact, I continue to receive letters and Christmas cards not only from the Mayor, but from private citizens in Kauai, all of which are designed for me to share with soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen the appreciation of Kauai Government officials and the Kauai people for what the Joint Task Force Hawaii, was able to do to help people. And, it's an endeavor in which everyone involved, whether in the Joint Task Force, or in a supporting role associated with the military in Hawaii, is very proud.
N. Should the National Guard have been Federalized?

MAJ HIGA: Were the National Guard, Army or Air, ever federalized, and do you have any thoughts on that?

LTG CORNS: No, there was no federalization of forces, and early on I was told by a representative of the Governor that it was not desired. I believe that was a good move because it permitted the Guard, in its role as a State militia for the Governor, to assist in the areas of command and control, movement control, and protection of property, such that there were practically no cases or reports of vandalism of property. And, the Guard was highly accepted by the people of Kauai in their role of augmenting the local police for security of property. Had they been federalized, because of "posse comitatus," I think there would have been problems there. I was very happy that no one expected the Task Force, the active military, to provide anything in a military police role. As a matter of fact, we did not deploy any of our Army Military Police over to Kauai for those kinds of purposes.
MAJ HIGA: Sir, the last major hurricane to hit Hawaii was Hurricane Iwa ten years ago. Did we carry over lessons learned from that relief effort to this relief effort?

LTG CORNS: It's my impression that the active military that formed Joint Task Force Hawaii carried very limited lessons learned from Hurricane Iwa. Exceptions to that, I believe, were some of the personnel at the Navy installation of Barking Sands on Kauai who had some recollections of the earlier hurricane. I believe that experience helped them to make some local adjustments that, while important to Barking Sands, were not of the major nature that we're trying to address in this assessment.

I got the impression that the plan that the State Civil Defense Office was prepared to execute, and largely executed in response to Iniki, had benefited from the Hurricane Iwa experience. The most pronounced lesson learned from Hurricane Iwa that I saw evidence of was one that the county officials on Kauai emphasized most. Their experience had been that, in Iwa, there was some assistance provided to the County for which they were later billed. I gather that caused Kauai officials in the first two or three days after Hurricane Iniki to tell every representative of the Federal Government, and some State officials who arrived on Kauai, that they were not sure what they wanted to ask for, and
they were not sure what they were prepared to let Federal people do, because they were concerned they'd be left with the bill. The notion on the part of the County Government that they would be left with expenses that they couldn't pay if they blindly accepted every offer for help, or if they blindly asked for help to do everything they saw needed to be done, weighed heavily upon the local government. This causes me to feel compelled to comment on an area about which I have very little expertise and its not part of the responsibility of the Joint Task Force. But, while I understand the motivation that caused the Federal legislation that says that the local officials must be prepared to bear some percentage of the cost of whatever Federal aid is provided, I think that is an error in policy. Under circumstances wherein there is great physical damage, and particularly where there is loss of life and threat of more loss of life, I think there are too many local governments whose small annual budgets simply do not put them in the position where they should be having to deal with whether they're going to pay 25 percent or 10 percent of a particular cost of Federal support. I think that for a period of time, and I'll leave it to people more expert to say how long that period of time should be, the local government should be able to ask for and accept support with an assurance that 100 percent funding is going to be provided by agencies external to the local government.
P. Value of a Memorandum of Understanding for Future Interagency Operations

DR. LAIRD: General Corns, to be a little more specific on lessons learned for the future of inter-agency cooperation, we have a unique situation here in Hawaii. When disaster hits a place like Kauai it's insular, it's isolated, and there are no communications whatsoever. On Oahu, trying to respond to the Kauai disaster, there are a lot of agencies involved, State and County, National Guard. Is it desirable to have something on paper: a memorandum of agreement that says "next time this thing happens, agency A will do this, agency B that"? Is there any utility in having a piece of paper which spells out what FEMA will do, the JTF Commander would do, what the Guard would do, a paper based on lessons learned?

LTG CORNS: Well, to a large extent such documentation already exists, and existed before Iniki. It's in the form of the regulations that prescribe FEMA's role and the role of other Federal agencies. They impact on how the State emergency organization will operate. Within the State Civil Defense plan there is a memorandum between the State and USARPAC, and one between USARPAC and CINCPAC, which specify that, among CINCPAC's components, it is in fact the Army or USARPAC that has the lead
role in working with the State agencies in response to natural disasters. I do believe, however, that those documents need to be revisited and updated, and I have been in after-action reviews since Iniki occurred in which the intent has been to update those documents. Further, there's now going to be established, for the first time, a FEMA office here in Honolulu. That will facilitate coordination between State and Federal agencies. So, the answer is yes, we need such documentation. I'm not sure that I would promote a single document, but there should be a combination of documents which are coordinated, synchronized, not in conflict, which lay the basic understanding of how all that will work. In the end, I feel that we will get to a point where we need to stop trying to anticipate in great specificity the course of events in the future, but lay the ground work whereby we can flexibly respond in a manner that's generally agreed to by everyone.
Q. Benefits from Practicing for Future Emergency Operations

DR. LAIRD: In the beginning of the interview, General, you mentioned the importance of the initial assessment, to know what the situation is early on, on the ground, so you can form an organization and get the right skills to operate it. The flip side of the question then would be, is there merit in practicing something like a command post exercise, but involving the key State players, Civil and military, perhaps FEMA, actually running through disaster procedures so that officials could practice early problem assessment, and design a responsive organization?

LTG CORNS: Those types of exercises have in fact taken place here in Hawaii. They're run under the leadership of either the Adjutant General, as the Civil Defense Director, or his Deputy, whom I referred to earlier as Mr. Roy Price. We in USARPAC had participated in one of those just a few months before Iniki occurred, and it was conducted on yet another of the islands. I refer again to an earlier comment I made, however. The memorandum of agreement that we have, and the exercises that we had run, in no way anticipated that the level of interface between the Civil Defense and the other Federal agencies was going to be at the level of the CG, USARPAC, and his primary staff. The people who had that experience were in the U.S. Army
Support Command, Hawaii, which is largely the garrison staff for all Hawaii, and is commanded very capably by a colonel. The lessons learned through those experiences had not been transferred to the staff at USARPAC. As a matter of fact, at the risk of some immodesty, I think that, by virtue of my visits to the Civil Defense Office and discussions on these matters, I probably knew more about that than my staff did, because my staff was so new, and, as they read through their material as a new staff principal, there was nothing to suggest to them that they were going to be responsible to play a role in response to a large natural disaster, other than just a normal staff role.
R. The Role of Non-Governmental Agencies

DR. LAIRD: General Corns, in front of us is the formal organization chart of the Iniki response, and it has the State Emergency Office on top and then essentially two parallel chains of responsibility, one through you and the Joint Task Force, the other one through the Adjutant General. I do recall considerable press coverage, though, of a third element, a lot of voluntary organizations, non-profits with local agencies here. Their home offices back in the mainland said "me too, I wanna help." And, it looked like there was just a gaggle of people who wanted to come in to this Iniki response early in the game. How did you and the State officials deal with the large number of non-governmental agencies that wanted to be helpful, but maybe had been kind of stepping on each other in the process of beating on the door. How did the voluntaries eventually fit into the relief operation?

LTG CORNS: Well, from the viewpoint of the Joint Task Force Commander, the relationship that I, my staff, and the subordinate elements had with all of these volunteer agencies was one of coordination and support. Generally speaking, at the location where help and care are delivered to the people in need, that went smoothly. There was just a tremendous desire on the part of
members of the Hawaii Air and Army National Guard, U.S. active military, and these various charitable agencies to do what was right for the people there. Overall, any lack of coordination, or limited coordination, was quickly corrected. The larger aspect of that group of charitable organizations that interested me was the manner in which they interfaced with and were coordinated by the various Federal agencies and the State. It was principally FEMA's role to interface with many of those voluntary organizations, with other Federal agencies, the military and the State agencies. In my view, that emphasized the correctness of the concept that you need a civilian agency as the overall coordinator of all these activities. The Deputy Director of FEMA, who at one point was coordinating the Federal response here in the State of Hawaii, had occasion to meet with a couple of those charitable agencies and work out, at least for the current circumstance, an adjustment such that they felt that they were freely able to do what they were prepared to do and what they were in fact capable of doing. I think that FEMA's role was really validated in that particular interface activity. A point I would add is that it's very American to have individuals donate and contribute to other Americans in need. You need capacities to do that. There are many, many emergencies that occur in communities where there is no military, there is no Federal agency involvement. In those circumstances, representatives from
many of the long-standing charitable organizations are in fact the people who carry the weight of the response, getting what they have to give to the people who are in need. Any emergency operation has to fully accommodate and be able to capitalize upon their potential contributions. I think the structure we have now with FEMA in the lead is sound. I'm much more comfortable seeing the FEMA representatives coordinating all that than I am a uniformed military person.
S. The Biggest Fix Needed

DR. LAIRD: Finally, General, a two-part question, strictly a personal one. Is there one disappointment in retrospect as you recall managing the Joint Task Force? What would be the biggest single fix you would make for future USARPAC Commanders to learn from?

LTG CORNS: It would be, as a Joint Task Force Commander, making sure that when I went to sit and coordinate with the State Civil Defense and State Army and Air National Guard people before the emergency impact, that I took my key people with me, like my Chief of Staff, my Operations Officer, and Logistics Officer. If so, we could have begun the detailed coordination and sharing of concepts right at that point in time. That would have saved us some misunderstandings that occurred in the first 24 hours or so of the operation.
T. Joint Task Force Hawaii's Greatest Achievement

DR. LAIRD: A final question General: Iniki lasted about a month and had several thousand people involved, lots of materiel, many fine people working for you. What was your greatest moment, in responding to Iniki?

LTG CORNS: I think the greatest moment came when I visited the island of Kauai. I knew that there had been some real concerns on the part of the local leadership on whether or not to accept some of the capabilities that had been made available because of the question of who would pay the bill. While we were on Kauai, there were numerous people who came up to me individually with statements that reminded me that, while each of us in positions of military or political responsibility has to work out the right way to do things, and do things in a responsible manner, the overall nature of what was happening to help the people who had been victimized by the storm was very sincerely appreciated by the people of Kauai. As I then moved around the island, I was even more impressed by the number of Kauai citizens that I saw out, beside members of the Task Force and the Hawaii Army and Air Guard, working together to clean up and reverse conditions that they thought might cause disease to occur. The high point for me was the clear feedback from the people of Kauai, that they so much appreciated what was being done.
U. Thanks to Key Members of the Rescue Operation

MAJ HIGA: Sir, unless you have any final thoughts or anything to add...

LTG CORNS: I mentioned earlier that there were scores of people who had made very, very outstanding contributions. I mentioned a couple of names but I'm hesitant to mention many more. But for the people on Kauai, the figure who they have seen most frequently from the active military over time is Brigadier General Frank Akers, whom I did cite earlier as the Commander of Task Force Garden Isle. His dimensions as a leader in the military, because of his competency and his confidence, are very, very great. I was equally impressed with the genuineness of his relationship with the people on Kauai, from the Mayor down to the young child that he might see in the street or on the road. I think he was representative of the members of the Task Force who were on Kauai, and it was very important that he was so quickly perceived by the Mayor and others as sincere, cooperative, and effective. But, there were other great contributions: by Navy support ships and aircraft, and by the Marine Corps which had a large contingent on the island of Kauai, particularly in the engineering arena. There was great work to reestablish power, and provide water, feeding, and general health
clean up by the Army, and the Air and Army National Guard. The Coast Guard was on the scene very early. Everyone pictures them doing things in boats and ships, which they primarily did, but they also helped quite a bit with medical evacuations by air, in the first day or two; and of course the Air Force was just superb. The operation they ran here at Hickam, and then the arrival airfield operations they ran at the Lihue Airport, as well as the airfield over at Barking Sands were exceptional. I've had many opportunities to provide feedback to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific, Admiral Chuck Larson, and I've taken advantage of those to tell him how proud and thankful I was that all of the components of PACOM not only responded to what I asked for, but came and told me about capabilities that I maybe didn't know about, so that we could ensure that the very best that they had was involved in the operation to help the victims of Hurricane Iniki. So my hat is really off to all of the military people and their families on Oahu, which the Joint Task Force was very happy to represent.

MAJ HIGA: Thank you very much sir. That concludes the interview.