EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 15: COMMUNICATION
SYNCHRONIZATION DURING DEFENSE SUPPORT
OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 15: COMMUNICATION
SYNCHRONIZATION DURING DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES
OPERATIONS, by MAJ Anthony M. Clas, 97 pages.

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during Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
DSC	Dual Status Commander
DSCA	Defense Support of Civil Authorities
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FCO	Federal Coordinating Officer
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ICA	Inter-organizational Collaboration Approach
ICS	Incident Command Structure
JIC	Joint Information Center
NEMA	Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRF	National Response Framework
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
RC	Rational Choice
USARNORTH	U.S. Army North
USNORTHCOM	U.S. Northern Command
WGA	Whole-of-Government Approach

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Our shared commitment, as the Federal external affairs team, is to execute the requirements and plans developed by the FCO [Federal Coordinating Officer] and the Unified Coordination staff. Our supporting external communications strategy, based upon the concept of unity of effort, must be rapidly developed, with forces deployed in advance of an incident wherever and whenever possible, and fully integrated and synchronized within the incident command system to our state, tribal, territorial, local, and private sector partners. The FCO and ESF #15 leadership cadre are empowered to develop and disseminate external affairs plans and information. We are guided by the operating principle of maximum disclosure, with minimum delay.
>
> — Jeff Karonis,
> *Emergency Support Function 15 Standard Operating Procedures*

The Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) concept provides U.S. military and other federal assets to civilian authorities in emergency response situations that may otherwise overwhelm or deplete state and local resources.[1] An example of this interagency effort occurred during the Hurricane Sandy relief effort. On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall on the U.S. East Coast affecting 24 states resulting in 162 fatalities, 8,500,000 to be without power, and 23,000 losing their homes and needing temporary shelter.[2] U.S. military and other federal agencies were deployed to the affected area to assist state and local authorities with emergency relief efforts. However, in the Hurricane Sandy After-Action Report the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) showed the community relations mission faced many challenges because of inexperienced staff, poor management, and too many deployed personnel.[3] The composition of community relation specialists are public affairs and public information officers from federal (to include military), state, local, and tribal partners.[4]

Problem Background

After the horrific events which occurred on September 11, 2001, the 9/11 Commission determined there was a significant shortfall in interagency coordination.[5] Testimony at the 9/11 Commission did not to show that each agency was not independently capable of meeting their individual organization's objectives, but instead identified unity of effort to be a real challenge. Desai posits that interagency coordination struggles because there is more focus on individual agency culture as opposed to interagency culture.[6] In response to this shortfall, the President of the United States (POTUS) and members of Congress developed national policies and directives post-9/11 to improve interagency culture, but there may still be challenges that hinder the unity of effort in the interagency community.

The aforementioned problem has a negative impact on the federal government's ability to augment state and local authorities with community relations operations in emergency response incidents. The National Response Framework (NRF) was revised in 2013 to outline the Whole-of-Government Approach (WGA) for the National Incident Command System (NIMS).[7] This revision may be due to lack of understanding of NIMS and the NRF across the agencies. Senior leaders at FEMA posit 55 percent of community relations staff understood their roles and events in the field in comparison to the rest of the staff which had a 75 percent understanding rate during Hurricane Sandy.[8] This lack of understanding will impact the effectiveness in meeting the needs of the impacted population during DSCA operations.

Support requirements to civil authorities are grouped into differe Emergency Support Functions. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is initially responsible

for providing the required support to civil authorties during emergency relief operations.[9] Once civil authorites are capable of resuming responsibility for the recovery operations the federal assets will be recalled from the impacted area.

<center>Problem Statement</center>

To date, there is limited literature regarding interagency communication synchronization in response to emergency relief efforts within the Continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States. The Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) was revised in 2013, restructuring Community-Relations–Assess, Inform, Report (CR-AIR) to FEMA's internal Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams (DSAT) removing it from ESF 15.[10] The leadership at FEMA restructured the military, interagency, and local authority public affairs personnel under the Joint Information Center. The FEMA ESF 15 SOP is designed to provide timely and accurate information to the public during emergency incidents.[11] However, the revised ESF 15 SOP has not yet been rigorously evaluated to determine if public affairs interagency stakeholders understand the affect of interagency coordination and communication synchronization during emergency response operations within the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR).

A cross-sectional phenomenological study appears to be a logical first step in seeking to understand the process of communications synchronization during emergency relief efforts and integrating interagency public affairs operations from interagency stakeholder views. The emergent themes from this study may offer insights about ESF 15 JIC communication synchronization with federal, state, and local agency stakeholders, as

well as across setting with non-governmental organizations. Public Affairs stakeholders will be defined as federal (to include military), state, and local agency public affairs professionals. For the purpose of this study, it is the assumption of the researcher that the duties and responsibilities are the same between both Public Informaiton Officers and Public Affairs Officers in federal and civil authorities organizations.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Study</div>

The value of this study is for federal and civil authorities public affairs professionals to increase understanding of the assessed ESF 15 during DSCA external affairs operations. FEMA responds to emergency situations within the Continental United States (CONUS), Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States. FEMA's ESF 15 SOP is comprised of communications assets to inform and educate the populace of the affected area on resources and assistance available to them; however, the revised ESF 15 SOP removed the community relations function and created Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams (DSATs).[12] Therefore, the intent of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of selected ESF 15 SOP stakeholders and how they see the process of interagency coordination in emergency response efforts.

The purpose of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program evaluation phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of federal (to include military), state, and local interagency public affairs officers in the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern Region AOR and to explore the affect of the ESF 15 SOP synchronizing communication during DSCA operations. Simon and Goes posit researchers using the phenomenological method to focus on individual lived experiences in regards to a

phenomenon and how they interpret the phenomenon.[13] Phenomenological research is a way to systematically study and learn a phenomenon typically difficult to measure or observe.[14] A phenomenological study design appears appropriate for examining shared experiences and supports analyzing and exploring the social phenomena surrounding the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study to understand ESF 15 JIC participant experiences in the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern AOR. There appears to be limited literature regarding interagency communication synchronization in response to emergency relief efforts within the CONUS, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Program evaluation is done in three steps: engage stakeholders (Interagency PAOs), describe the program, and focus the evaluation plan.[15] Through conducting a program evaluation of ESF 15 Communication Synchronization in the JIC, an understanding can be made as to the affect of interagency communication synchronization in the FEMA Region VII AOR. Holden and Zimmerman posit stakeholders are essential to program evaluation because of participation in the program. Therefore, inclusion of interagency PAOs in the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization research study will likely contribute to understanding the affects of the ESF 15 JIC during DSCA operations within the FEMA Region VII AOR and help answer the following research questions.

<u>Research Questions</u>

The following questions will guide this proposed program evaluation phenomenological study:

Overarching Research Question 1: What are intergovernmental agency public affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations?

Sub-Question 1: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers define the ESF 15 JIC purpose and outcomes?

Overarching Research Question 2: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations?

Sub-Question 2: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental agencies during DSCA operations?

<u>Significance of the Research</u>

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program evaluation: phenomenological study may contribute to the limited body of research on the concept of communication synchronization between federal, state, local and tribal partner interagency organizations operating within a JIC during DSCA operations. The results of this study may also contribute to research on the WGA when implementing the ESF 15 SOP during emergency relief efforts.[16] This study may also extend toincreased user understanding of how interagency public affairs professionals make sense of experiences with communication synchronization and the ESF 15 SOP's affect on DSCA operations.

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Significance to Leadership

Jeff Karonis, director of Incident Communications for U.S. Department of Homeland Security states "Providing the public timely information during major incidents remains our [DHS'] highest priority."[17] In response to 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, there were a number of shortfalls that surfaced in interagency coordination and jurisdictional boundaries such as poor information sharing, confused relationships, unclear understanding of roles and responsibilities and leadership challenges.[18] By understanding the experiences of federal, state, and local intergovernmental public affairs professionals who have participated in the interagency public affairs stakeholders can potentially streamline communication efforts and enhance communication synchronization during DSCA operations.

Limitations

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program evaluation: phenomenological study contains limitations with sample size, generalizability, and researcher reliability.[19] The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study will focus on lived experiences of interagency public affairs professionals within the FEMA Region VII AOR which will significantly reduce the sample size of the study. Moustakas posits that experience and behavior is an inseparable relationship of a person experiencing the phenomenon.[20] Groenwald suggests with a small sample size experiencing the phenomenon and through conducting non-probability, purposive sampling inferences cannot be generalized to the larger population, but can only be transferable to a quantitative study for increased validity.[21] Additionally, the researcher will rely on study

participants to be retrospective and insightful on lived experiences as opposed to introspective, which is a another limitation found in program evaluations.

Holden and Zimmerman postulate program evaluations need reliable and authentic assessments of project activities to understand how programs work and how to improve capacity and reach.[22] The results of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization inquiry will rely on the researcher to correctly compile and analyze data. Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman suggest validity of the analysis can be difficult to measure because the evaluation instrument may only be valid if the participants accept the instrument as valid.[23] Furthermore, sensitivity is a potential limitation of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study if an improper instrument is implemented to collect data.[24]

Delimitations

To understand human behavior in a phenomenological study, participants interpret the experience for the researcher and the researcher interprets the experiences for each person.[25] First, in this ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study, the researcher will attempt to understand federal, state, local interagency public affairs professionals' lived experiences around the ESF 15 SOP application to DSCA operations phenomenon. And secondly, this study is for only those that operate within FEMA Region VII's AOR, the 48 CONUS, Alaska, and the U.S. possessions in the Caribbean.[26]

In terms of program evaluation, the sample consists of federal, state, and local interagency public affairs officers that have experience with the ESF 15 SOP to build a shared understanding of the program.[27] Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman posit the researcher has an understanding of the cognitive styles of the program stakeholders which will increase access and comprehension of the resulting data.[28] And lastly, through

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conducting a phenomenological study program evaluation of ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization during DSCA operations, one may conclude from the research which

social dynamic theory surrounds this phenomenon.

<u>Theoretical Framework</u>

The Rational Choice (RC) and Institutional theories (IT) perspectives are two

principles that influence the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization strategy. Both RC

and IT perspectives can hinder or enhance the WGA and Inter-Organizational

Collaboration (ICA) approaches to interagency coordination. During humanitarian

assistance and disaster relief operations, as seen in Hurricane Sandy in 2012, unity of

effort across the whole community is a challenge.[29]

Williams and Fredowicz define RC theory as the way in which organizational

leadership chooses courses of action based on the means available to operate effectively

in an environment with minimal external influence.[30] The RC perspective is seen in an

organization's willingness to collaborate with other organizations to achieve shared

objectives. Orlikowski posits organizations are influenced by constructs of the social

beliefs within the operating environments and may challenge rationality per the

organization's perspective.[31] The RC and IT are philosophical underpinnings that are

used for organizations to accept the social constructs of WGA and ICA.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the

WGA is a consolidated effort of security, political, economic, and humanitarian

assistance agencies.[32] The WGA was adopted by the U.S. in the 2010 National Security

Strategy to integrate government security agency participation for increased national

security.[33] Morris, Morris, and Jones posit ICA occurs when multiple organizations work

together to focus on a shared objective.[34] The WGA and ICA are processes that are designed to build a unity of effort to situations that call for multi-agency resources.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study, the following key words apply:

Communication Synchronization**:** the process for coordinating and synchronizing themes, messages, images, operations, and actions to support strategic communication-related objectives and ensure the integrity and consistency of themes and messages to the lowest tactical level through the integration and synchronization of all relevant communication activities.[35]

Community Relations Staff: personnel that are trained to provide survivors with an overview of available assistance programs and explanations of how to register.[36]

Interagency Coordination: Interagency meetings, such as the Incident Communications Public Affairs Coordination Committee (ICPACC) meeting, FEMA Region VII ESF 15 Workshop, and related events, will be used to discuss ESF 15 processes, teamwork and training needs.[37]

Public Affairs Officers: this term applies to both public affairs and public information officers serving in federal or civil authorities public affairs/information officer positions. For the purpose of this study, it is the assumption of the researcher that the duties and responsibilities are the same between both Public Informaiton Officers and Public Affairs Officers in federal and civil authorities organizations.

Whole-of-Government: A concept which focuses efforts and enables a full range of stakeholders—individuals, families, communities, the private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal governments—to participate in national preparedness activities and to be full partners in incident response.[38]

Summary

This chapter included an overview of the systemic issues of communication synchronization between federal, state, and local interagency public affairs officer when operating within an ESF 15 JIC during DSCA operations.[39] This chapter also contained an overview of the ESF 15 JIC communication synchronization concept, which is designed to provide timely and accurate information to the public during emergency incidents.[40] The next chapter includes a review of literature relating to federal, state, and local interagency coordination and ESF 15 Communication Synchronization during DSCA operations.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intent of the review of the literature is to narrow the scope to a specific area of investigation.[1] The framework of chapter 2 will include content extracted from peer-reviewed and seminal sources to support the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study. The sections will include: crisis-communication strategy; communication synchronization with a comprehensive content overview of the National Response Framework (NRF), National Incident Management System (NIMS), and Public Information; and the theoretical framework (Rational Choice and Institutional theories and Whole-of-Government and Inter-Organizational approaches). Furthermore, this chapter will offer an evaluation of Hurricane Sandy relief efforts.

Communication Synchronization

Communication Synchronization is designed to focus efforts to set conditions for national interests through engaging key audiences with informative means collectively using all instruments of national power.[2] During DSCA operations the instruments of national power are military, federal, state, and local interagency partners. DSCA operations are conducted in five phases:

1. Phase 0 (Shape). Phase 0 is continuous situational awareness and preparedness. Actions in this phase include interagency coordination, planning, identification of gaps, exercises, and public affairs (PA) outreach.

2. Phase I (Anticipate). Phase I begins with the identification of a potential DSCA

mission, a no-notice event, or when directed by the President or Secretary of

Defense.

3. Phase II (Respond). Phase II begins with the deployment of initial response

capabilities.

4. Phase III (Operate). Phase III begins when DSCA response operations

commence.

5. Phase IV (Stabilize). Phase IV begins when military and civil authorities decide

that DOD support will scale down.

6. Phase V (Transition). Phase V begins with the redeployment of remaining

DOD forces.[3]

To synchronize interagency communication efforts and create a shared understanding

during DSCA operations, the POTUS uses the NRF, NIMS, ICS, and the ESF 15 SOP.

Creating shared understanding is the process of managing information, sharing

knowledge between stakeholders, and then making sound decisions.[4]

National Response Framework

The NRF, Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8: National Preparedness is a WGA

to respond to risks that threaten the security of the nation through five mission areas:

Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.[5] The NRF evolved from the

National Response Plan (NRP) created in 1992 to generate common incident

management and response principles.[6] In 2008, the NRP was superseded by the NRF to

incorporate guidance and lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and past incidents to

better orchestrate efforts from federal, non-governmental, and private sector efforts towards emergency response in the homeland.

An effective response, according to the NRF concept, to an emergency relief effort depends on the integration of the whole community performing their roles and responsibilities.[7] According to the NRF, the scope focuses on the structures of national response to support civil authorities. The guiding principles are designed to protect property and the environment, stabilize the incident, and provide basic human needs.[8] The NRF manages the five mission areas and guidance to the whole community through NIMS.

<center>National Incident Management System</center>

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a systematic approach to focus on risk mitigation and increased collaborative response effort effectiveness toward emergency response incidents.[9] The POTUS and the Departments of DHS implemented NIMS in 2003 due to the complexity and challenges of incident response during 9/11 response efforts. The POTUS issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5): Management of Domestic Incidents resulting in the development of NIMS through a collaborative partnership incorporating input from intergovernmental, non-governmental, and private sector agencies.[10] To further clarify what NIMS is and what NIMS is not see figure 1.

What NIMS Is:	What NIMS Is NOT:
• A comprehensive, nationwide, systematic approach to incident management, including the Incident Command System, Multiagency Coordination Systems, and Public Information • A set of preparedness concepts and principles for all hazards • Essential principles for a common operating picture and interoperability of communications and information management • Standardized resource management procedures that enable coordination among different jurisdictions or organizations • Scalable, so it may be used for all incidents (from day-to-day to large-scale) • A dynamic system that promotes ongoing management and maintenance	• A response plan • Only used during large-scale incidents • A communications plan • Only applicable to certain emergency management/incident response personnel • Only the Incident Command System or an organization chart • A static system

Figure 1.   Overview of NIMS

Source: Department of Homeland Security, *National Incident Management System* (Washington, DC: FEMA, 2008), 1.

The NIMS components: Preparedness, Communications and Information Management, Resource Management, Command and Management, and Ongoing Management and Maintenance are designed to complement the NRF and provide flexibility to incident response.[11] In terms of communication synchronization, NIMS standardizes communication types to streamline information dissemination to key audiences and eliminate redundancies. The standardized communication types are: strategic communications, tactical communications, support communications, and public addresses.[12] Incident management is further enhanced by the Incident Command System (ICS), Multiagency Coordination System (MACS), and Public Information.[13] As an

incident grows beyond local and state control to a multiagency requirement, a JIC will be established to manage communication synchronization.

Public Information

The Public Information (PI) process consists of three components: the Public Information Officer (PIO), Joint Information Systems (JIS), and the Joint Information Center (JIC). Public Information is nested within NIMS to communicate timely and factual information to directly and indirectly affected stakeholders during emergency relief efforts.[14] The PIO advises the command, manages media personnel and inquiries, and informs the public and elected officials about emergency public information and warnings.[15] The JIS and JIC are the means in which the PIO collects, coordinates, and disseminates information to stakeholders.

The JIS is the mechanism for interagency, non-governmental, and private sector communication synchronization. The JIS includes the products and structures to disseminate public information.[16] The JIC is the location of the facility that hosts JIS operations. A single location for the JIC is preferable and is designed to centralize personnel with public information responsibilities to perform critical information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions in a synchronized manner.[17] During DSCA operations the instrument used to synchronize communication efforts is the ESF 15: External Affairs SOP.

Emergency Support Function 15: External Affairs

The ESF 15 SOP incorporates the following five components: public affairs, JIC, congressional affairs, public information plans and products, intergovernmental affairs,

and the private sector aspects of external affairs.[18] ESF 15 provides guidelines and

procedures for public information communication stakeholders to implement in response

to emergency relief efforts within the Continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto

Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

> Our shared commitment, as the Federal external affairs team, is to execute the
> requirements and plans developed by the FCO [Federal Coordinating Officer] and
> the Unified Coordination staff. Our supporting external communications strategy,
> based upon the concept of unity of effort, must be rapidly developed, with forces
> deployed in advance of an incident wherever and whenever possible, and fully
> integrated and synchronized within the incident command system to our state,
> tribal, territorial, local, and private sector partners. The FCO and ESF #15
> leadership cadre are empowered to develop and disseminate external affairs plans
> and information. We are guided by the operating principle of maximum
> disclosure, with minimum delay.[19]

Of the five components that makeup the ESF-15 composition, the two that contribute the

most to the communication synchronization aspect of incident response management are

public affairs and JIC.

During incidents that require a coordinated federal response collocation with

state, local, and tribal partners is of the highest-priority and the key element is unified

effort.[20] FEMA leadership will work closely with the FCO during initial coordination

meetings to ensure JIC resources are provided and the JIC is operational. The Midwest

Floods of the 2008 Stafford Act Case Study is an example of an Incident JIC which

coordinated and orchestrated efforts of six ESF 15 organizations and 400 personnel in

Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Nebraska.[21] The ESF 15 concept

follows a WGA and ICA to communication synchronization, which is relative to the RC

and IT perspectives. The following section will provide examples relative to crisis-

communication strategy which employs the concepts of NRF, NIMS, and PI during

DSCA operations. An example of the ESF 15 JIC Organization Chart is as follows:
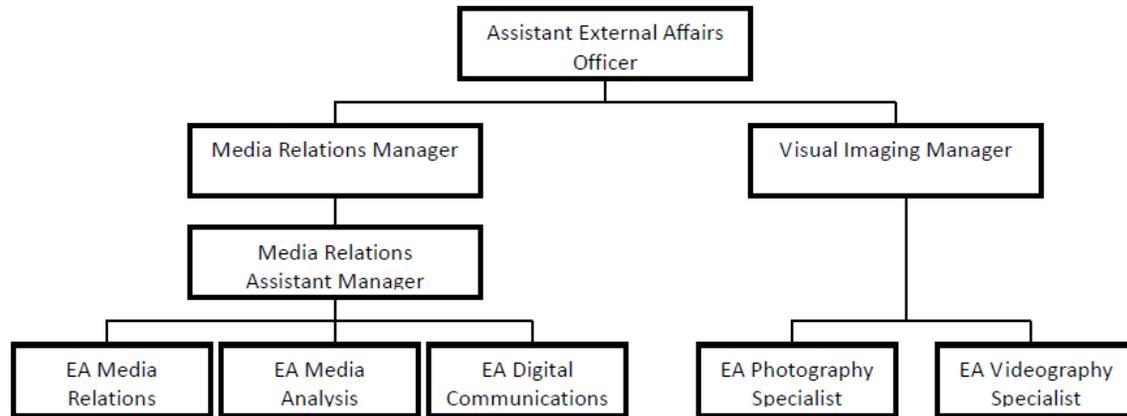
Figure 2.   ESF #15 External Affairs–JIC Organization Chart

Source: Department of Homeland Security, *Emergency Support Function 15 Standard Operating Procedures* (Washington, DC: FEMA, 2013), C-4.

U.S. Army National Guard Dual Status Commander

A dual status commander (DSC) is a commissioned officer of the Regular Army, Air Force, or a federally recognized Army or Air National Guard officer authorized, pursuant to Title 32, USC, Section 315 or 325, by SecDef, with the consent of the applicable governor of a state, to exercise command on behalf of, and receive separate orders from, a federal chain of command and exercise command on behalf of, and receive separate orders from, a state chain of command.[22] The DSC serves as the intermediate link between the different chains of command from the federal, state, and territorial governments. However, the DSC does have limitations as well.

The DSC, although he has the power to relay orders to federal and state military forces, he cannot relay federal orders to state forces and vice versa. The consternation that exists with orchestrating efforts between state and federal forces exists due to funding and the Posse Comitatus Act, which inhibits federal military forces from

conducing law enforcement activities in the U.S. Additionally, the appointed DSC

position does not exist during civil disturbance and homeland defense operations when

federal military commanders are provided under DSCA "immediate response

authority."[23]

<div align="center">

DOD Critical Planning Factors to Support
Domestic Law Enforcement Agencies

</div>

The WGA is often used during counter-drug operations. DOD support to domestic

law enforcement agencies will essentially fall into two broad categories: direct and

indirect. Direct support occurs when DOD assets are enforcing the law and engaging in

physical contact with offenders; and indirect support consists of aid to civilian law

enforcement agencies but not enforcement of the law or direct contact with offenders.[24]

An easier way to differentiate between the two DOD support categories is "hands-on" for

direct and "hands off" for indirect. However, DOD assets are still required to adhere to

the Posse Comitatus Act which does not allow federal military, or Title 10, assets to

perform law enforcement activities within the U.S. This means that those DOD support

assets will be other than federal military when conducting direct support.

During the planning and preparation phase of supporting domestic agencies for

counterdrug operations, there are several critical planning factors that must be

considered. "When authorized by the Secretary of Defense, federal military forces may

provide indirect support to civilian law enforcement agencies, but support is limited to

logistic, transportation, and training assistance except in life-threatening emergencies."[25]

Within the U.S., federal military assets are limited to conducting security and enforcing

laws on military installations only unless authorized by the Secretary of Defense to support domestic law enforcement agencies.

The DoD provides support to domestic law enforcement agencies to achieve the strategic goals outlined in the National Drug Control Strategy. "Army forces support law enforcement officials indirectly through loan of equipment (without operators), use of facilities (such as buildings, training areas, or ranges), transfer of excess equipment, and training conducted in military schools."[26] It is important for planners to know where to find the U.S. strategic objectives to effectively identify the types of support DoD can provide, or what types of requests of support cannot be provided based on the strategic guidance.

There are currently three standing task forces that are comprised of DoD agencies in support of domestic law enforcement for counterdrug operations. The three task forces are Joint Task Force-North (USNORTHCOM AOR), Joint Task Force –West (USPACOM AOR), and Joint Interagency Task Force South (USSOUTHCOM AOR). The activities conducted by DoD in support of domestic law enforcement agencies are indirect support missions which may include ground reconnaissance; detection and monitoring; communications support; aerial reconnaissance; marijuana eradication; linguist support; air and ground transportation; intelligence analysis; tunnel detection; engineering support; and maintenance support.[27]

<p style="text-align:center">Crisis-Communication Strategy</p>

Communication strategy is a way in which organizations can synchronize messaging to a desired audience. Raupp and Hoffjann suggest through combining decision making, conscious calculated choices, and interpretive paradigm, individual and

collective sense-making, communication strategy can use actions taken by the organization to become part of and shape an organization's identity.[28] During DSCA operations the communication strategy is governed by NIMS. The communication strategy encompasses input from federal, state, and local entities to inform and educate the U.S. public in the affected areas.[29] Active duty military forces will also be intertwined in the communication strategy during DSCA operations to ensure communication synchronization at all levels. However, to effectively synchronize messaging amongst each stakeholder cultural considerations of the military and civilian entities should be considered.

<div align="center">

Emergency Response and Business Continuity:
The Next Generation in Planning

</div>

Interagency coordination is an important aspect in emergency response due to the impact the incident will have on the affected populace. These efforts are not solely internal to federal, state, or local authorities, but also to civilian corporations as well. For crisis response purposes, the corporate sector has implemented Emergency Response and Business Continuity (E&BC) teams to ensure the companies make it through the crisis and can continue their operations post-incident.[30] This is important because when federal, state, and local authorities conduct emergency response operations there will be additional private sector resources that could be leveraged to improve community relations operations. Nicoll and Owens state that during an emergency response private sector corporations should have an evacuation plan, communications capabilities, and a plan for continued operations.[31]

With private sector companies focusing on emergency response, ESF 15 will have

additional factors to consider when conducting emergency response operations and will

rely heavily on the National Business Emergency Operations Center.[32] Nicoll and Owens

posit federal, state, and local governments are not solely responsible for emergency

response and private sector companies should nest their emergency action plans with the

NIMS and the NRF for interoperability between all agencies conducting emergency

response operations.[33] However, private sector corporations are not the only entity

becoming more invested in emergency response management; the public health sector is

working on emergency response management improvement as well.

Information Intermediaries for Emergency Preparedness and Response: A Case Study from Public Health

Ipe, Raghu, and Vinze conducted a study that measured the effectiveness of

information management in the public health sector. Their case study measures the

effectiveness of change made to the public health field's information management

systems post 9/11.[34] The public health information management structure, Medical

Electronic Disease Surveillance and Intelligence System (MEDSIS), divides information

flow into three tiers which in turn provide necessary information to emergency response

stakeholders: local public health organizations (tier 1), federal health organizations (tier

2), and other federal and state emergency response agencies (tier 3).[35] Additionally, this

information management system places the state public health agency in the role as

intermediary for all other emergency response agencies.

The significance of the public health information management system will impact

external affairs operations during emergency response efforts. Understanding MEDSIS

may improve the whole community approach and enable public affairs and the JIC to increase the survivor awareness for life-saving and sustaining resources and services.[36] With the increase of information management systems across federal, state, and local agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, having a clear understanding of the ICS and key players will result in effective emergency response.[37]

<div align="center">

Effective Emergency Management: A Closer Look
at the Incident Command System

</div>

Bennett posits the objective of ICS is to assist the Incident Commander (IC) in deploying resources and mitigating safety risks through collaborative planning between interagency stakeholders for an emergency response effort.[38] The ICS feeds into NIMS and is then nested in the NRF. Bennett further explains that key principles of ICS are the size of the emergency response incident, specifics to the affected environment, and clearly defining planning processes and objectives.[39] Due to the complexity of the aforementioned frameworks it is likely to see shortfalls in response efforts due to a lack of understanding, especially in time constraint emergency situations.

The significance of Bennett's work in relation to the ESF-15 is the nature in which he identifies the keys to successful incident management. Bennett posits to increase a shared understanding of incident management their needs to be the pre-incident coordination between interagency stakeholders which may take months to achieve, but may result in a more clear delineation of effort during crises.[40] This recommendation coincides with the WGA outlined in the NRF. Understanding this phenomenon may assist interagency stakeholders in planning for incidents in a more

collaborative effort towards communication synchronization. The following section will focus on an analysis of communicaton synchronization during Hurricane Sandy.

<u>Hurricane Sandy Communication Synchronization Analysis</u>

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall on the U.S. East Coast affecting 24 states resulting in 162 fatalities, 8,500,000 to be without power, and 23,000 losing their homes and needing temporary shelter.[41] U.S. military and other federal agencies were deployed to the affected area to assist state and local authorities with emergency relief efforts. However, in the Hurricane Sandy After-Action Report FEMA showed the community relations mission faced many challenges because of inexperienced staff, poor management, and too many deployed personnel.[42] The composition of community relation specialists are public affairs and public information officers from federal (to include military), state, local, and tribal partners.[43]
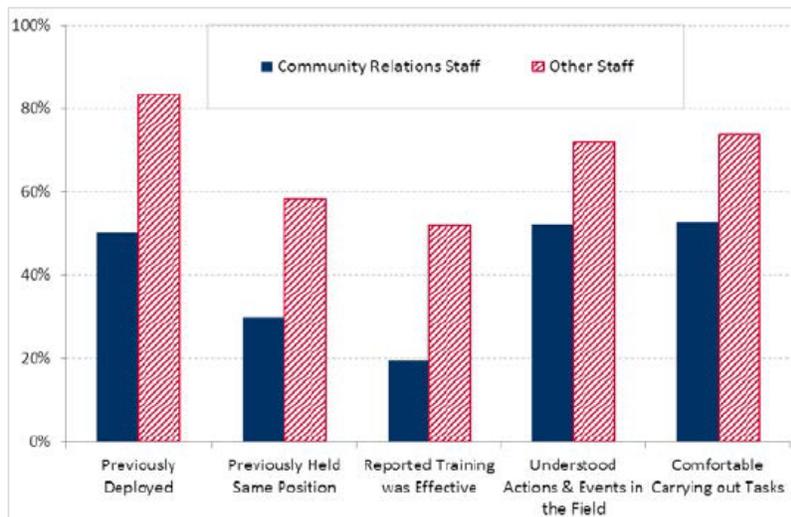
Figure 3.   Community Relations–Assess, Inform, Report (CR-AIR) Assessment

Source: Department of Homeland Security, *Hurricane Sandy FEMA After-Action Report* (Washington, DC: FEMA, 2013), 20.

The findings of the Hurricane Sandy After-Actions Report show a significant disparity of preparation and overall understanding of the community relations staff in comparison to other ESF staff functions.[44] In 2011 the homeland security and DSCA doctrine was published and available to all members of the intergovernmental agency community. By 2012, the RT and IT theories and WGA and ICA were found as contributing factors to effective whole community response across intergovernmental agency stakeholders. So what factors hindered the community relations staff in comparison to the other inter-agency staff? That is the phenomenon that will be addressed throughout the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study.

To address the community relations shortfalls in emergency response during Hurricane Sandy, the ESF 15 SOP was revised in 2013, restructuring Community-Relations–Assess, Inform, Report (CR-AIR) to FEMA's internal Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams (DSAT) removing it from ESF-15.[45] FEMA restructured the military, interagency, and local authority public affairs personnel under the Joint Information Center. The FEMA ESF 15 SOP is designed to provide timely and accurate information to the public during emergency incidents.[46]

<u>Theoretical Framework</u>

The RC and IT perspectives are two principles that influence the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization strategy. During humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, as seen in Hurricane Sandy in 2012, unity of effort across the whole community is a challenge.[47] Both RC and IT perspectives can hinder or enhance the WGA and ICA to interagency coordination.

Rational Choice Theory

Williams and Fedorowicz suggest RC theory is the way in which organizational leadership choose courses of action based on the means available to operate effectively in an environment with minimal external influence.[48] The RC perspective is seen in an organization's willingness to collaborate with other organizations to achieve shared objectives. Orlikowski posits organizations are influenced by constructs of the social beliefs within the operating environments and may challenge rationality per the organization's perspective.[49]

Institutional Theory

Scott and Hjort-Madsen suggest IT adds the social beliefs, norms, and rules that are inherent to the organization's environment.[50] The IT moves beyond the idea of rationality and efficiency, but establishes a community based system of ideals that is recognized by the members of the organization. The RC and IT perspectives are inter-related to the one another due to their similar objectives.

The IT is comprised of three types of isomorphism. Dimaggio and Powell posit that IT is comprised of coercive, mimetic, normative institutional isomorphism.[51] Coercive isomorphism occurs when a lesser organization's ideals are influenced by a larger organization. An example of coercive isomorphism can be seen in public safety networks adopting HIPPA regulations on information sharing like other health professional organizations.[52] Mimetic isomorphism occurs when one organization identifies organization, such as police departments that adopt similar processes and command structures of nearby police departments. Normative isomorphism is defined by the concept of professionalism that is attached to an organization, such as the shared

belief system amongst service members in the U.S. military. The RC and IT are theoretical underpinnings that are used for the organizations to accept the social constructs of WGA and the ICA.

Interagency Coordination Concepts

The RC and IT perspectives are the philosophical underpinnings that frame interagency coordination concepts. The WGA and ICA are the two holistic approaches nested in homeland security and DSCA doctrine. The theory of applying RC and IT to the WGA and ICA may positively influence shared understanding and unified action amongst intergovernmental agency stakeholders during DSCA operations.

Whole-of-Government Approach

The WGA concept was adopted by the U.S. in the 2010 National Security Strategy to integrate government security agency participation for increased national security.[53] The WGA concept is defined in the NRF as an approach that focuses efforts and enables a full range of stakeholders—individuals, families, communities, the private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal governments—to participate in national preparedness activities and to be full partners in incident response.[54] According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the WGA is a consolidated effort of security, political, economic, and humanitarian assistance agencies.[55] The WGA to communication synchronization affords all intergovernmental and private sector stakeholders involved in the emergency relief effort to speak with one voice. The framework used to maximize the WGA is ICA.

Inter-Organizational Collaboration Approach

Morris, Morris, and Jones posit ICA occurs when multiple organizations work together to focus on a shared objective.[56] The framework of inter-organizational collaboration is the Inter-Organizational Collaborative Capacity Model (ICCM). The different elements of the ICCM are designed to layout the capabilities from each of the agencies involved in the collaborative or interagency effort.[57] An example of the ICCM is seen in the FEMA ESF SOPs. Purpose and Strategy is outlined in the NRF; lateral processes are found in NIMS; structure is determined by ICS; incentives and reward systems are the achievements made by the intergovernmental organizations responding to the emergency relief effort along with the people element of the ICCM.
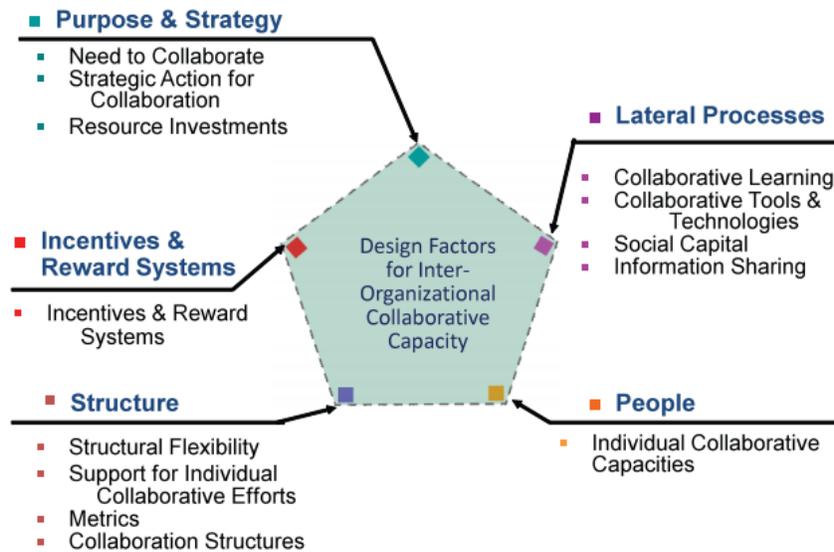
Figure 4.   Inter-Organizational Capacity Model–Organizational Domains and Factors

Source: Susan P. Hocevar, Erik Jansen, and Gail F. Thomas, "Inter-Organizational Collaboration: Addressing the Challenge," *Homeland Security Affairs* 7, no. 2 (2011): 2.

The WGA and ICA are processes that are designed to build a unity of effort to situations that call for multi-agency resources. Hocevar, Jansen, and Thomas recommend incorporating three practices to improve the ICCM (1) conduct training exercises that analyze failures instead of punishing team members; (2) construct nation-wide capability to share and disseminate information during incidents; and (3) incentivize institutional lesson-learning processes at every level of government.[58] The genesis of WGA and ICA derived from the complexity of response efforts seen during 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.[59] Both approaches have been applied to many different circumstances since there origin and an example of a large-scale DSCA operation where the aforementioned theories and approaches were applied to attain a unity of effort occurred during Hurricane Sandy relief efforts.

<u>Summary</u>

This chapter included a review of literature relating to communication synchronization between intergovernmental agency stakeholders in response to DSCA operations. The major findings of the review of the literature are relevant homeland security and DSCA doctrine and systems and procedures as means to respond holistically and create a shared understanding during emergency relief efforts in the homeland. The philosophical underpinnings found in effective emergency response efforts are RC and IT theories with a combination of WGA and ICA. Additionally, during the 2012 Hurricane Sandy relief effort their seemed to be a significant disparity between community relations staff understanding and preparedness and other emergency support functions staff members. The community relations staff members were neither as experienced nor as comfortable in their abilities to execute their duties during the response. The next chapter

includes an overview of the methodology recommended to analyze the affect of the ESF

15 Communication Synchronization study based on military, federal, state, and local

agency public affairs interagency stakeholders.

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[8] Ibid., 5.

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[13] Ibid., 45.

[14] Ibid., 70.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 71.

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[19] Ibid., 8.

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-28, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities*, C-1.

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[53] Garamone, 1.

[54] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, 4.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLGY

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study follows a

qualitative research design. A thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data

obtained through person-to-person interviews. The researcher conducted interviews with

military public affairs officers, federal agency public affairs officers, state public

information officers and city public affairs officers in the U.S. Midwestern region to gain

insight to lived experiences relative to ESF 15 communication synchronization during

DSCA operations. The population, sample, and sampling procedure will be discussed in

the following sections. In chapter 3, the researcher offers the research questions, research

design, instrumentation, and procedures and measures. Additionally, included in this

chapter are the proposed data analysis, methodological assumptions, limitations and

delimitations, and theoretical framework.

Research Questions

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study seeks to

understand military public affairs officers, federal agency public affairs officers, state

public affairs officers and city public affairs officers lived experiences during DSCA

operations. To gain insight to this phenomenon, the following research questions were

administered:

Overarching Research Question 1: What are intergovernmental agency public

affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization

during DSCA operations?

Sub-Question 1: How do intergovernmental agency stakeholders define the ESF 15 Joint Information Center purpose and outcomes?

Overarching Research Question 2: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations?

Sub-Question 2: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental agencies during DSCA operations?

Research Design

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study is a qualitative research design. A thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data obtained through one-on-one interviews. The researcher conducted interviews with military public affairs officers, federal agency public affairs officers, state public affairs officers and city public affairs officers in the U.S. Midwestern region to gain insight to lived experiences relative to DSCA operations. The population, sample, and sampling procedure will be discussed in the following section.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedure

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study followed a qualitative research design using the structured interview technique (See Appendix A). The structured interview technique was used to collect data, which means the researcher conducted interviews with the subjects one-on-one.[1] In this section the focus will be the

population, sample, and sampling procedure of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study.

Population

The population impacted by the ESF 15 phenomenological study will include approximately 180,393 people in the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern region AOR.[2] The population is spread across the states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. This population is broken down to approximately 180,000 military, 220 FEMA personnel, 173 State of Nebraska employees, and 66 Lawrence, KS employees.[3] Therefore, we may see use of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study in other FEMA regions in the U.S.

Sample

The sample included eight U.S. Midwestern region federal, state, and local public affairs officers to include: 2 PAOs from U.S. Army North (Fifth Army), 1 PAO from the FEMA Region VII Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment on a prepare to deploy order (PTDO), 1 PAO from the Missouri National Guard Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the State of Nebraska Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the Douglas County, KS Public Affairs Office, and 1 PAO from the City of Lawrence, KS Public Affairs Office with their voluntary consent. A phenomenological approach is based on the principles of bracketing and reduction to emphasize imagination, intuition, and universal structures in the analysis.[4] Therefore, to develop the inclusion criteria for the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study to conduct a universal structure analysis the participants included U.S. Army North PAOs with no less

than 1 year in position and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; Missouri

National Guard PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public

affairs experience; Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment PAOs with no less than 1 year

in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; FEMA Region VII PAO

with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; the

State of Nebraska PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years

public affairs experience. The Douglas County, KS PAO with no less than 1 year in

position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; and lastly, the City of

Lawrence, KS PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public

affairs experience.

Sampling Procedure

The purposive sampling strategy was used to extract the sample from the

population. Purposive sampling selects participants based on specific qualifications or

expertise in relation to phenomenon or program being evaluated.[5] Purposive sampling

was used due to the necessity of participant institutional knowledge and experience with

the ESF 15 SOP to conduct the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization

phenomenological study.[6] This was accomplished through personally contacting each

public affairs office and screening each participant based on the criteria developed to

filter out unqualified participants. Given the large pool of subjects, the probability for

participation was favorable.[7] The following procedures were taken to recruit the specific

samples.

USARNORTH PAO

The public affairs office was contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the installation website for the active duty command that is responsible for the U.S. Midwestern region during DSCA operations to gain permission to conduct the study. The PAOs were briefed the intent of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and the researcher inquired about their willingness to participate in a one-on-one interview, and schedule a meeting. Prior to the interview the researcher provided the participant a copy of the informed consent form and advise potential participants that participation was strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment

The public affairs detachment (PAD) was contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the installation website for the active duty PAD that is on PTDO to support DSCA operations within the U.S. to gain permission to conduct the study. The participant was briefed the intent of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and the researcher coordinated a one-on-one interview via phone. Prior to the interview the researcher provided the participant a copy of the informed consent form and advise potential participants that participation was strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

FEMA Region VII PAO

FEMA Region VII PAO was contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the FEMA Website for the FEMA Region VII Headquarters to gain permission to conduct the study. The participant from the PAO was then contacted to explain the intent of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and coordinate a one-

on-one interview via phone. Prior to the interview the researcher provided the participant

a copy of the informed consent form, participant information sheet, and advise potential

participants that participation is strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

Missouri National Guard PAO

The public affairs office was contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the

Missouri National Guard website to gain permission to conduct the study. Participants

from the PAO were contacted to explain the intent of the ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization phenomenological study and to coordinate a one-on-one interview via

phone. Prior to the interview the researcher was provided the participant a copy of the

informed consent form, participant information sheet, and advise potential participants

that participation is strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

State of Nebraska PAO

The State of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Office was

contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the NEMA official website to recruit

participants that met the screening criteria. The NEMA PAO was briefed the intent of the

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and the researcher

coordinated a one-on-one interview via phone. Prior to the interview the researcher

provided the participant a copy of the informed consent form and advised the participant

that participation is strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

Douglas County PAO

The Douglas County, KS PAO was contacted by the researcher via phone roster

on the Douglas County official website to gain permission to conduct the study. The

Douglas County Public Affairs Office PAO was briefed the intent of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and the researcher coordinated a one-on-one interview via phone with the participant. Prior to the interview the researcher provided the participant a copy of the informed consent form and advised the participant that participation is strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

City of Lawrence PAO

The City of Lawrence, Kansas PAO was contacted by the researcher via phone roster on the City of Lawrence official website to gain permission to conduct the study. The City of Lawrence PAO was briefed the intent of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and the researcher coordinated a one-on-one interview via phone with the participant. Prior to the interview the researcher provided the participant a copy of the informed consent form and advised the participant that participation is strictly voluntary (See Appendix B).

Location

The researcher coordinated with each potential participant to schedule a one-on-one interview via phone. For each phone interview the researcher was in a private interview room at the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The participant was in a location of their choosing that allowed participation in the interview without disruption and had telecommunication capabilities.

Consent

Prior to data collection, all participants were provided a consent form to sign and return to the researcher via email explaining the research, intent of the interview,

confidentiality, and procedures used to collect the data[8] (See Appendix B). The

participants signed the informed consent form and provided it to the researcher via email

prior to conducting the interview. At the time of the interview, each participant was

reminded participation in the study is strictly voluntary and that participants could cease

participation in the interview at any time. Furthermore, each participant was advised that

there is no compensation for their participation in the study.

<div align="center">Instrumentation</div>

A structured questionnaire, containing four open-ended questions, was

administered to the participants during each one-on-one interview. The structured

questionnaire will be administered to category Federal: USARNORTH Public Affairs

Officers, Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment PAOs, and FEMA Region VII Public

Affairs Officers; and category Civil Authorities: Missouri National Guard Public Affairs

Officers, State of Nebraska Public Affairs Officers, Douglas County Public Affairs

Officers, and the City of Lawrence Public Affairs Officers. After the data was collected

and then categorized, a thematic analysis was conducted to find emergent themes.[9]

<div align="center">Procedures and Measures</div>

After approval from the research committee was attained, participants were

recruited. Prior to participating in the interview, each participant reviewed, agreed with

the terms of the study, and signed the informed consent letter. Each participant was given

a participant code per their category. Category A (A001-004) is USARNORTH Public

Affairs Officers, Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment PAOs, and FEMA Region VII

Public Affairs Officers; and Category B (B001-004) is Missouri National Guard Public

Affairs Officers, State of Nebraska Public Affairs Officers, Douglas County Public Affairs Officers, and the City of Lawrence Public Affairs Officers for anonymity.[10] Each participant was advised the purpose of the study and assured no identifying information will be used or collected at any point during the data collection process, or when results are presented. The researcher approached ESF 15 interagency PAOs to ask if they would voluntarily agree to participate in the research study. If an individual be interested in participating, the consent form was presented to the participant.

During the interview process, the researcher was the sole interviewer throughout the proposed ESF 15 phenomenological study and interviewed each participant individually to enhance the understanding of the data collected.[11] The methods of recording the interview were be audio recording equipment, pending permission from each participant, and taking personal notes of the responses throughout each interview. The interviews for each category took place via one-on-one phone call to ensure privacy.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

After data was collected, open coding was used to "open up the data to all potentials and possibilities contained within them."[12] Raw data was reviewed thoroughly, and then succinct verbal descriptions were applied to specified groups of data for each intergovernmental agency public affairs officer.[13] Codes were then synthesized into themes, in terms of properties and dimensions. Qualitative data was collected by administering four open-ended interview questions which were measured through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to pinpoint emergent themes within the data collected and establish meaningful patterns.[14] The raw data was reviewed and categorized

by identifying concepts found within the data.[15] The next step was to synthesize codes into themes. These themes defined and transformed into a qualitative narrative.[16]

<u>Methodological Assumptions, Limitation, and Delimitations</u>

This section entails the assumptions of the researcher as they impacted the validity of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study during data collection. The researcher's philosophical approach has the potential to show bias towards the result during data analysis.[17] Furthermore, the limitations and delimitations of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study research procedures were identified to understand potential challenges and capabilities of that impact the research design.

Methodological Assumptions

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study uses Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach which is designed to uncover in-depth accounts of the phenomenon through understanding an individual's account of their lived experience.[18] In this capacity, the researcher does not apply any internal knowledge of the phenomena to better understand the data.[19] Van Manen also posits the challenge for the researcher conducting a phenomenological study is to interpret the individual's description of the phenomena without incorporating the researcher's perspective or personal theories to the topic.[20]

As a post-modern positivist constructivist, the researcher understands past personal experiences will help to understand the data and interpret themes collected from the individual's being researched in a positive manner.[21] Van Manen posits through

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conducting hermeneutic phenomenology a researcher can break through the subjectivity

of an experience and find true objectivity in the events experienced by the individual.[22]

Therefore, as a researcher based on post-modern positivist constructivism conducting a

hermeneutic phenomenological study through the proposed ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization phenomenological study, the intent is to find the objective truth from the

shared lived experiences of the intergovernmental agency public affairs stakeholders and

not inject researcher bias.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

There are several limitations that exist in the ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization phenomenological study which include sample size, generalizability and

researcher reliability.[23] In a phenomenological study, sample sizes are often small;

therefore, inferences cannot always be generalized to the larger population.[24] Additional

factors that may be seen as limitation in a phenomenological study include an absence of

literature relative to the study, relying on lived experience, and participant bias.[25]

<div align="center">Delimitations</div>

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study will unveil

how well the intergovernmental agency public affairs officers understand the ESF 15

SOP JIC purpose and outcomes, which is enlightening the silence of lived experience.[26]

This may encourage intergovernmental agency public affairs stakeholders within the U.S.

Midwestern region to participate in the phenomenological study. Additional advantages

to the proposed ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study are

flexibility in applying multiple theories from a variety of epistemologies, themes are

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supported by data, and categories are derived from the data collected.[27] Also, as a service member, the researcher will be able to gain access to the participants who will potentially be involved in the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study.

Summary

In chapter 3, an overview of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study methodology was provided. The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study attempts to understand the shared lived experiences of intergovernmental agency public affairs stakeholders using a qualitative research design. The purposive sampling technique will be used to collect data for the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study, and thematic analysis was used to categorize, code, and explain the findings of the study.[28] Chapter 4 wll display the results of the data analysis and will be discussed and expanded upon.

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[7] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 165.

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[9] John Creswell, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Lincoln: Sage Publications, 2007), 119.

[10] John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design,* 2nd ed. (Lincoln: Sage Publications, 2009), 119.

[11] Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* 2nd ed. (Ontario: The Althouse Press, 1997), 187.

[12] Corbin and Strauss, 160.

[13] Dennis Howitt and Duncan Cramer, *Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), 243.

[14] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 81, accessed November 11, 2014, ProQuest Database.

[15] Corbin and Strauss, 165.

[16] Ibid., 165-166.

[17] Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2002), 474.

[18] Max Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences* (Newcastle: Newcastle University, 1996), 42.

[19] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 63.

[20] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 45.

[21] Robson, 496.

[22] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 21.

[23] Corbin and Strauss, 187.

[24] Groenewald, 19.

[25] Moustakas, 132.

[26] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 11.

[27] Braun and Clark, 85.

[28] Ibid., 81.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter includes a description of the ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization phenomenological study results from a qualitative analysis of the data

collected. A thematic analysis was conducted using ATLAS qualitative research analysis

software to compare the responses to the interview questions, coding the data, and

identifying emergent themes and patterns. The results are presented in there relation to

the two overarching ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study research questions

derived from responses to the four questions in the structured questionnaire. The views

presented are those of the participants and researcher and do not necessarily represent the

views of DoD, FEMA, or civil authorities from Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri or its

components.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this proposed ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program

evaluation phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of federal (to

include military), state, and local interagency public affairs officers the FEMA VII U.S.

Midwestern Region AOR to explore the affect of the ESF 15 communication

synchronization during DSCA operations. Inclusion of interagency PAOs in the ESF 15

Communication Synchronization research study will likely contribute to understanding

the affects of the ESF 15 JIC in DSCA operations within the FEMA Region VII AOR

and help answer the following research questions. Two overarching research and two

subquestions questions were used to understand shared lived experiences about the ESF 15 SOP during DSCA operations within the FEMA VII Region AOR.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research process:

1. What are intergovernmental agency public affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations?

2. How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers define the ESF 15 JIC purpose and outcomes?

3. How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations?

4. How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental agencies during DSCA operations?

Review of the Data Collection Procedures

Each participant was given a participant code per their category. Group A (A001-A004) included federal authorities: USARNORTH Public Affairs Officers, Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment PAOs, and FEMA Region VII Public Affairs Officers; and Group B (B001-004) included Civil Authorities from Missouri National Guard Public Affairs Officers, State of Nebraska Public Affairs Officers, Douglas County Public Affairs Officers, and the City of Lawrence Public Affairs Officers and they were given fictitious names to discuss the findings for anonymity.[1] During the interview process, the

researcher was the sole interviewer throughout the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and interviewed each participant individually to enhance the understanding of the data collected.[2] Digital audio-recording equipment and field notes were the methods of recording each interview.

The sample includes eight U.S. Midwestern region federal, state, and local public affairs officers to include: 2 PAOs from U.S. Army North (Fifth Army), 1 PAO from the FEMA Region VII Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment on PTDO, 1 PAO from the Missouri National Guard Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the State of Nebraska Public Affairs Office, 1 PAO from the Douglas County, KS Public Affairs Office, and 1 PAO from the City of Lawrence, KS Public Affairs Office with their voluntary consent. A phenomenological approach is based on the principles of bracketing and reduction to emphasize imagination, intuition, and universal structures in the analysis.[3] Therefore, to develop the inclusion criteria for the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study to conduct a universal structure analysis the participants included U.S. Army North PAOs with no less than 1 year in position and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; Missouri National Guard PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachment PAOs with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; FEMA Region VII PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; the State of Nebraska PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience. The Douglas County, KS PAO with no less than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience; and lastly, the City of Lawrence, KS PAO with no less

than 1 year in position, and no less than 3 years public affairs experience. Table 1

displays general demographic data for all participants, and Table 2 displays number

assignments, with corresponding pseudo name.

Table 1.	General Demographic Data for All Participants	
Category	Response Option	Frequency
Group	A) Federal Authorities	4
	B) Civil Authorities	4

Source: Created by author.

Table 2.	Number Assignment and corresponding Name
Assignment	Name
A001	Arthur
A002	Amelia
A003	Aaron
A004	Abigail
B001	Bethany
B002	Brian
B003	Brianna
B004	Brad

Source: Created by author.

Program-Related Documents

Using ATLAS software, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the data

collected during the interviews with ESF 15 Communication Synchronization

stakeholders. Thematic analyses consisted of reviewing the responses from each group of

participants, open-coding and identifying the frequency of emergent themes.[4] Appendix A is the document used to guide the data collection during the open-ended interview process. Collected documents on file for the ESF 15 SOP include briefings, memorandums, and contact information for the FEMA ESF 15 Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JICG) during the formal research period February through April 2015.

<div align="center">Open-ended Interviews with ESF 15 Communication
Synchronization Stakeholders</div>

The one-on-one interviews with Federal and Civil authorities PAO stakeholders occurred from February 20 through April 23, 2015. Phone calls were made to Fort Sam Houston, Fort Hood, and FEMA Region VII Headquarters public affairs offices to coordinate with the PAO professionals to request participation in the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study. Emails and phone calls were made to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Missouri National Guard, Douglas County, and Lawrence, KS public affairs professionals to recruit participants for the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study. Interview times and locations were scheduled and conducted (table 3).

Table 3.	ESF 15 Communication Synchronization PAO Interview Schedule				
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A A001-A004		A003 Mar. 31	A002/004 Mar. 4/ Apr. 15		A001 Feb. 20
Group B B001-B004	B001 Mar. 16	B003 Apr. 21	B002 Mar. 25	B004 Apr. 23	

Source: Created by author.

ATLAS Software

The researcher used ATLAS software to organize and analyze the qualitative data collected from the open-ended interview questions. The integration of qualitative analysis software enhanced the researcher's ability to conduct thematic analysis from participants' responses.[5] The research analysis process consisted of coding data, and identifying emergent themes and patterns between participants within the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study sample.

Findings

Two overarching research questions were used to determine the shared understanding of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization PAO stakeholders. Findings for research questions one and two are represented by interview questions one and research question two is represented by interview question three. In addition to the two research questions, two additional interview questions were asked to support the results. The findings are depicted with frequency of themes found in participant responses, and exemplars that further expound on participants feedback (table 4).

Table 4.	ESF 15 Communication Synchronization PAO Lived Experience Summary of Findings			
Research Question 1	Themes	Federal	Civil	Frequency
What are intergovernmental agency public affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations?	Improves interagency coordination	1	3	4
	Synchronizes information between agencies	1	1	2
	Creates unified messages to the populace	1	1	2
	Does not improve interagency coordination	2		2
Research Question 2				
How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations?	A good system to deconflict information before communicating it to the populace	2	4	6

Source: Created by author.

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization
Stakeholder Impressions

Research question one asked: What are intergovernmental agency public affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Interview question one was constructed to answer research question one. Interview question one states: What are your impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed, four themes were

extracted. These themes were: (1) improves interagency communication, (2) synchronizes information between agencies, (3) creates unified messages to the populace, and (4) does not improve interagency coordination. Specifically, three civil authorities PAOs and one federal authority PAO law participants felt the ESF 15 SOP assisted the public affairs professionals in coordinating communications efforts to the populace during DSCA operations. Brianna stated "we'll coordinate to whatever extent they feel we need to, make sure that everybody was talking with one voice. Everybody has the same big priority of getting the mission done and supporting the community." Additionally, Bethany stated, "We've really built a lot of bridges between local agencies so that we all know each other and we all know who does what and who we can depend on for what."

The significance of the thmes discovered relate to the importance of relationship building to improve interagency communication synchronization prior to an emergency relief incident occurring. The Phase 0: Shape, which is the preparation phase of DSCA, will significantly impact the quality of response and duration of federal assets required during DSCA operations. Through improving interagency coordination during Phase 0 the federal authorities could better streamline support more efficiently to civil authorities during DSCA operations.

<center>ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Stakeholder
Personal Experiences</center>

Research question two asked: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Interview question three was constructed to answer research question two.

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Interview question four states: What are your experiences with communication synchronization during emergency response efforts? Of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed, one theme was extracted. Based on responses, the main theme extracted was it's a good system to deconflict information before communicating it to the populace. This theme was reported by six of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals. Specifically, Arthur stated, "During Hurricane Sandy, when I was out reporting I coordinated my product release. I would take photographs or write stories and we'd coordinate that with the joint information center. Additionally, Aaron said, "By using the speaker's bureau function in the ESF 15, which basically acts as a depository for incoming requests. Where our requests from local chambers of commerce, maybe local YMCA for someone to speak tomorrow night about what recovery programs are available. From an organization standpoint helps greatly where we can receive an incoming request through the speaker's bureau then reach out to our colleagues at FPA [Federal Protection Agency] or maybe Army Corps [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] to talk debris removal, whatever it is, and just stay coordinated."

As it is important to note that the only authorities bound by the ESF 15 SOP are federal authorities, the experiences of the participants and their feedback suggests there is shared buy-in from the civil authorities. The willingness for civil authorioties to cross-talk with federal authority public affairs professionals significantly decreases the chances of misinformation being communicated to the public. During DSCA operations it is imperative that messaging to the populace is accurate to save lives and mitigate suffering.

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Supporting Question Results

The remaining interview questions were questions developed to support the overarching research questions, interview question two directly supports research question one and interview question four directly supports research question two. Each group of participants, federal and civil authorities PAO stakeholders, were each asked the remaining two interview questions. The following sub-question results focus on shared understanding and personal experience with communication synchronization during DSCA operations.

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Understanding

Question two of the interview questions states: How would you define the ESF 15 Joint Information Center purpose and outcomes? The majority of the federal and civil authorities public affairs participants (4) described the JIC, the means to create shared understanding between interagency public affairs professionals, as a mechanism to speak with one voice and (4) believed the JIC as a way to synchronize efforts for unified action between the agencies. Table 5 displays the interview question, along with the frequency of responses by extracted themes.

Table 5.	ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Understanding			
Interview Question 2	Themes	Federal	Civil	Frequency
How would you define the ESF 15 Joint Information Center purpose and outcomes?	To make sure we speak with one voice	1	3	4
	Synchronize efforts for unified action between agencies	2	2	4
	Reduces communication of misinformation to the populace	1	2	3
	Increases interoperability between agency personnel and resources	1	1	2

Source: Created by author.

Four themes were extracted from the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed. These themes from highest frequency to lowest were: (1) to make sure we speak with one voice, (2) synchronize efforts for unified action between agencies, (3) reduces communication of misinformation to the populace, and (4) increases interoperability between agency personnel and resources. The top two themes were to make sure we speak with one voice, and to synchronize efforts for unified action between agencies. Specifically, Brianna stated, "The most important thing is just coordinating messaging and making sure that we all are operating off the same information, that we have that established common operating picture. Going back to Joplin, the important thing was that the government was talking with one voice making sure that all of those messages and all the best information is getting to them [the

populace]." Additionally, Amelia said, "What it does, it helps us synchronize. It shows

the total teamwork of the effort that's going on versus a bunch of individual work. That's

the main purpose of it, to ensure that we're showing that oneness of a team and we're

synchronizing all of our messaging, and everyone's getting it out at the same time through

the primary organization."

The significance of the themes speak with one voice and synchronize efforts for

unified action shows the leadership and the populace that the messages match the actions

taken during the emergency relief effort. In comparison to Hurricane Katrina and 9/11

civil support operations, the ESF 15 SOP provides alinkage between both federal and

civil authorities efforts and communication during DSCA operations. Furthermore, a

coordinated effort will result in more efficient response to emergency incidents such as

reduced response times and expenditure of federal funds.

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Experience

Question four of the interview questions states: How would you describe your

experience synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental

agencies during DSCA operations? The majority of the federal and civil authorities

public affairs participants (5) described a positive experience applying the ESF 15 SOP

during emergency response operations. Table 6 displays the interview question, along

with the frequency of responses by extracted themes.

Table 6.	ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Experience			
Interview Question 2	Themes	Federal	Civil	Frequency
How would you describe your experience synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental agencies during DSCA operations?	Positive	2	3	5
	Strengthens professional relationships prior to an incident	3	1	4
	Sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way	1	1	2

Source: Created by author.

Three themes were extracted from the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed. These themes from highest frequency to lowest were: (1) positive, (2) strengthens professional relationships prior to an incident, and (3) sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way. The top two themes were positive and strengthens relationships prior to an incident. Specifically, Abigail stated, "During the PTDO time frame, we had a satisfactory, superior level of communication with intergovernmental agencies talking with USARNORTH and FEMA on a regular basis and I think the list [of contacts] that we had at all times, really enhanced the readiness and so did the regular communication. An example, would be prior to participating in the Vibrant Response exercise we had regular teleconferences." Additionally, Aaron said, "We here at [FEMA] Region VII have a Region VII ESF 15 interagency working group, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska are a part of this group, and agencies like the Army Corps, USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture], FPA, HHS [Department of Health and Human Services], etc. are all part of this group. We usually try to get together for phone

calls and send out updates via emails. Just keeping up those relationships and having that group together, practicing for an actual incident, I think is really helpful."

The positive experiences with the ESF 15 SOP reinforce the SOPs value during DSCA operations. The strengthens relationships theme reinforces the need to focus on Phase 0 operations to ensure an orchestrated response to future emergency relief operations. However, the sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way theme suggests that therer is a lack of communication to ESF 15 leadership during DSCA operation or a lack of understanding from the leadership of the ESF 15 SOP's purpose in relation to communication synchronization.

Summary

In summary, the majority of federal and civil authorities PAOs felt the ESF 15 SOP has a positive impact on communication synchronization during DSCA operations. Group B, the civil authorities PAOs, reported more positive experiences when implementing the ESF 15 SOP for readiness and emergency response efforts. Group A, federal authorities PAOs, also reported positive experiences implementing the ESF 15 SOP. However, federal authorities PAOs also reported that the ESF 15 SOP does not promote collaboration across the agencies that well and bureaucracy sometimes slows the process of communicating to the public during DSCA operations. Both groups reported that the ESF 15 SOP strengthens professional relationships prior to and incident, it synchronizes efforts well, and enables federal and civil authorities to speak with one voice to the populace. Overall, all reported a mostly positive impact on the information environment and communication synchronization between PAO professionals. Chapter 5

will display the recommendations for the ESF 15 SOP way ahead and recommendations

for future research.

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[1] John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: Sage Publications, 2009), 75-76.

[2] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 52.

[3] Moustakas, 43.

[4] Ibid., 123.

[5] Braun and Clark, 94.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a discussion of the summary of findings and

recommendations for future study for the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization

phenomenological study. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to

uncover in-depth accounts of the ESF 15 SOP affect on communication synchronization

phenomenon through understanding stakeholder accounts of their lived experience.[1] This

chapter also contains recommendations for senior military leaders, federal, state and local

civil authority policy makers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program evaluation

phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of federal (to include

military), state, and local interagency public affairs officers the FEMA VII U.S.

Midwestern Region AOR and to explore the affect of the ESF 15 communication

synchronization in DSCA operations. A phenomenological study design was appropriate

for examining shared experiences and analyzing and exploring the social phenomena

surrounding the ESF 15 communication synchronization in DSCA operations and to

understand ESF 15 JIC participant experiences in the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern AOR.

To date, there is limited literature regarding interagency communication synchronization

in response to emergency relief efforts within CONUS, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico,

Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

The major findings of the review of the literature are relevant homeland security and DSCA doctrine and systems and procedures as means to respond holistically and create a shared understanding during emergency relief efforts in the homeland. The philosophical underpinnings found in effective emergency response efforts are RC and IT theories with a combination of WGA and ICA. Additionally, during the 2012 Hurricane Sandy relief effort their seemed to be a significant disparity between community relations staff understanding and preparedness and other emergency support functions staff members. The community relations staff members were neither as experienced nor as comfortable in their abilities to execute their duties during the response.

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

The following summary of findings were concluded by conducting a thematic analysis using ATLAS qualitative research analysis software to compare the responses to the interview questions, coding the data, and identifying emergent themes and patterns. The results are presented in there relation to the two overarching ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study research questions derived from responses to the four questions in the structured questionnaire. Appendix A is the document used to guide the data collection during the open-ended interview process.

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization
Stakeholder Impressions

Research question one asked: What are intergovernmental agency public affairs officer impressions of intergovernmental agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Interview question one was constructed to answer research question one. Interview question one states: What are your impressions of intergovernmental

agency communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed, four themes were extracted. These themes were: (1) improves interagency communication, (2) synchronizes information between agencies, (3) creates unified messages to the populace, and (4) does not improve interagency coordination.

The significance of the thmes discovered relate to the importance of relationship building to improve interagency communication synchronization prior to an emergency relief incident occurring. The Phase 0: Shape, which is the preparation phase of DSCA, will significantly impact the quality of response and duration of federal assets required during DSCA operations. Through improving interagency coordination during Phase 0 the federal authorities could better streamline support more efficiently to civil authorities during DSCA operations.

<div style="text-align:center">

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization
Stakeholder Personal Experiences

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Research question two asked: How do intergovernmental agency public affairs officers describe experiences with communication synchronization during DSCA operations? Interview question three was constructed to answer research question two. Interview question four states: What are your experiences with communication synchronization during emergency response efforts? Of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals who were interviewed, one theme was extracted. Based on responses, the main theme extracted was it's a good system to deconflict information before communicating it to the populace. This theme was reported by six of the eight federal and civil authority public affairs professionals.

The experiences of the participants and their feedback suggests there is shared

buy-in from the civil authorities. The willingness for civil authorioties to cross-talk with

federal authority public affairs professionals significantly decreases the chances of

misinformation being communicated to the public. During DSCA operations it is

imperative that messaging to the populace is accurate to save lives and mitigate suffering.

<center>Supporting Question Results</center>

The remaining interview questions were questions developed to support the

overarching research questions, interview question two directly supports research

question one and interview question four directly supports research question two. Each

group of participants, federal and civil authorities PAO stakeholders, were each asked the

remaining two interview questions. The following sub-question results focus on shared

understanding and personal experience with communication synchronization during

DSCA operations.

<u>ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Understanding</u>

Question two of the interview questions states: How would you define the ESF 15

JIC purpose and outcomes? The majority of the federal and civil authorities public affairs

participants (4) described the JIC, the means to create shared understanding between

interagency public affairs professionals, as a mechanism to speak with one voice and (4)

believed the JIC as a way to synchronize efforts for unified action between the agencies.

The significance of the themes speak with one voice and synchronize efforts for

unified action shows the leadership and the populace that the messages match the actions

taken during the emergency relief effort. In comparison to Hurricane Katrina and 9/11

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civil support operations, the ESF 15 SOP provides alinkage between both federal and

civil authorities efforts and communication during DSCA operations. Furthermore, a

coordinated effort will result in more efficient response to emergency incidents such as

reduced response times and expenditure of federal funds.

ESF 15 Communication Synchronization Experience

Question four of the interview questions states: How would you describe your

experience synchronizing communication efforts with partnering intergovernmental

agencies during DSCA operations? The majority of the federal and civil authorities

public affairs participants (5) described a positive experience applying the ESF 15 SOP

during emergency response operations.

The positive experiences with the ESF 15 SOP reinforce the SOPs value during

DSCA operations. The strengthens relationships theme reinforces the need to focus on

Phase 0 operations to ensure an orchestrated response to future emergency relief

operations. However, the sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way theme suggests that

therer is a lack of communication to ESF 15 leadership during DSCA operation or a lack

of understanding from the leadership of the ESF 15 SOP's purpose in relation to

communication synchronization.

Discussion

The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study attempts to

narrow the gaps in literature relative to communication synchronization during DSCA

operations; and contribute to the limited body of research on the concept of

communication synchronization between federal, state and local and tribal partner

interagency organizations operating within a JIC during DSCA operations. The results of this study may also contribute to research on whole-of-government approach and inter-organizational collaboration during DSCA operations.[2] This study may extend to user understanding of how intergovernmental agency public affairs professionals make sense of experiences with communication synchronization and the programs affects on DSCA operations. Furthermore, there is limited research focused on WGA and ICA during DSCA operations, which may reduce the transferability of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study due to the different social conditions that exist in communities outside the U.S.

The RC and IT perspectives are two principles that influence the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization strategy. During humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, as seen in Hurricane Sandy in 2012, unity of effort across the whole community is a challenge.[3] Both RC and IT perspectives can hinder or enhance the WGA and ICA to interagency coordination. The WGA during communication synchronization affords all intergovernmental and private sector stakeholders involved in the emergency relief effort to speak with one voice. The framework used to maximize the WGA is ICA. Morris, Morris, and Jones posit ICA occurs when multiple organizations work together to focus on a shared objective.[4] The WGA and ICA are processes that are designed to build a unity of effort to situations that call for multi-agency resources. Hocevar, Jansen, and Thomas recommend incorporating three practices to improve the ICCM (1) conduct training exercises that analyze failures instead of punishing team members; (2) construct nation-wide capability to share and disseminate information during incidents; and (3) incentivize institutional lesson-learning processes at every level of government.[5] The

genesis of ICA and WGA derived from the complexity of response efforts seen during

9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.[6]

<div align="center">Ethical Concerns</div>

As the researcher is an active duty service member and PAO who understands the

lived experience of the ESF 15 SOP, opportunities emerged during thematic analysis to

interpret the findings. The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological

study uses Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach which is designed to

uncover in-depth accounts of the phenomenon through understanding an individual's

account of their lived experience.[7] In this capacity, the researcher does not apply any

internal knowledge of the phenomena to better understand the data.[8] Van Manen also

posits the challenge for the researcher conducting a phenomenological study is to

interpret the individual's description of the phenomena without incorporating the

researcher's perspective or personal theories to the topic.[9]

As a post-modern positivist constructivist, the researcher understands past

personal experiences will help to comprehend the data and interpret themes collected

from the individual's being researched in a positive manner.[10] Van Manen posits through

conducting hermeneutic phenomenology a researcher can break through the subjectivity

of an experience and find true objectivity in the events experienced by the individual.[11]

Therefore, as a researcher based on post-modern positivist constructivism conducting a

hermeneutic phenomenological study through the proposed ESF 15 Communication

Synchronization phenomenological study, the intent is to find the objective truth from the

shared lived experiences of the intergovernmental agency public affairs stakeholders and

not inject researcher bias. The Hermeneutic Cycle was the method used to compile the

data before analysis. The Hermeneutic Cycle applies interpreting, reflective writing, and reading as a process to understand the lived experiences of the subjects.[12] If done correctly, the outcomes will have high standards in (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) conformability.[13] The intent of conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study throughout the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study was to find the objective truth from the shared lived experiences of the federal and civil authorities PAO stakeholders. Therefore, the researcher, as a post-modern positivist constructivist, influenced and modulated research findings as this theoretical framework was part of the analytical process.

<p align="center">Implications</p>

The majority of community members felt the ESF 15 SOP serves as a mechanism to enhance interagency coordination, unified action, and communicate with one voice across agencies to the populace. However, the federal authorities PAOs felt that the ESF 15 SOP can do a better job integrating interagency efforts. The civil authorities PAOs showed stronger support than federal authorities for the ESF 15 SOP which could be due to civil authorities working more frequently than federal authorities with one another on state and local level emergency situations and the supporting (federal) and supported (civil) relationship the occurs during DSCA operations. Another difference is that Federal authorities are the only agencies bound to the ESF 15 SOP as the proponent for the SOP is DHS.. Additionally, one member from both the federal and civil authorities PAO participants suggested that the ESF 15 SOP generates bureaucratic obstacles, centralizing information release authority at the senior leader level, which results in delayed communication to the populace.

Conclusions

Based on research, findings did support the ESF SOP having a positive affect on communication synchronization during DSCA operations. In summary, the majority of federal and civil authorities PAOs felt the ESF 15 SOP has a positive impact on communication synchronization during DSCA operations. Group B, the civil authorities PAOs, reported more positive experiences when implementing the ESF 15 SOP for readiness and emergency response efforts. Group A, federal authorities PAOs, also reported positive experiences implementing the ESF 15 SOP. However, federal authorities PAOs also reported that the ESF 15 SOP does not promote collaboration across the agencies that well and bureaucracy sometimes slows the process of communicating to the public during DSCA operations. Both groups reported that the ESF 15 SOP strengthens professional relationships prior to an incident, it synchronizes efforts well, and enables federal and civil authorities to speak with one voice to the populace. Overall, all reported a mostly positive impact on the information environment and communication synchronization between PAO professionals.

Recommendations for ESF 15 SOP Stakeholder
Leadership and Policy Makers

The overall recommendation to federal and civil authorities ESF 15 SOP stakeholders is to continue to create training opportunities that include members from each agency. For federak authorities, when a unit is assigned a PTDO tasking that unit will immediately coordinate with the Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) within their FEMA region to find Command Post Exercise opportunities to include in their training plan. FEMA Region VII External Affairs section hosts a monthly ESF 15 workshop that

invites civil and federal authorities on a monthly basis to collaborate and exercise DSCA operations scenarios. The aforementioned tactics afford public affairs professionals from each entity to strengthen professional relationships prior to an emergency situation requiring federal assistance. Furthermore, by conucting a review of policy to determine how to fund units to participate in training opportunities with different civil agencies To enhance readiness during Phase 0 prior to an emergency relief operation.

The WGA and the ICA are the two holistic approaches nested in DSCA doctrine. Elements of the rational choice theory and the institutional theory are the philosophical underpinnings, according to the literature review, which frame interagency coordination concepts. The theory of applying RC and IT to the WGA and ICA may positively influence shared understanding and unified action amongst intergovernmental agency stakeholders during DSCA operations. Senior DOD, state, and city officials should further exploit the ESF 15 SOP philosophical underpinnings to change cultural understanding of interagency coordination for communication synchronization during DSCA operations.

<u>Recommendation for Future Study</u>

Throughout the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study, several questions evolved that could be improved on in future research. How was communication synchronization between intergovernmental agency stakeholders prior to the ESF 15 SOP? What are the differences in communication synchronization between DSCA and Humanitarian Assistance (HA) operations? Lastly, how does the ESF 15 SOP affect communication synchronization during DSCA operations in another FEMA region compared to FEMA Region VII? Many of the ESF Communication Synchronization

phenomenological study participants referenced time frames prior to the existence of the ESF 15 SOP. It would seem logical to focus future research on public affairs professionals that have experience in both DSCA and HA operations, or to use a systems approach that incorporates a range of time prior to the existence of the ESF 15 SOP. Future studies could also include a quantitative analysis or mixed-methods approach to determine ESF 15 SOP effectiveness. The following questions were unanswered by the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study and should be considered in future research:

1. Is the doctrine correct or sufficient to support the ESF 15 SOP?

2. How does the ESF 15 SOP affect leaders decision making?

3. Have emergency response times improved?

4. What is the perspective of the civilian populace receiving federal assistance?

5. What does the general population feel about federal assistance during DSCA operations?

Limitations

There are several limitations that remain probable in the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization phenomenological study which include sample size, generalizability and researcher reliability.[14] In a phenomenological study, sample sizes are often small; therefore, inferences cannot always be generalized to the larger population.[15] Additional factors that may be seen as limitation in a phenomenological study include an absence of literature relative to the study, relying on lived experience, and participant bias.[16]

<u>Summary</u>

The purpose of the ESF 15 Communication Synchronization program evaluation phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of federal (to include military), state, and local interagency public affairs officers the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern Region area of responsibility to explore the affect of the ESF 15 communication synchronization in DSCA operations. A phenomenological study design was appropriate for examining shared experiences and analyzing and exploring the social phenomena surrounding the ESF 15 communication synchronization in DSCA operations and to understand ESF 15 JIC participant experiences in the FEMA VII U.S. Midwestern AOR.

Overall, all reported a mostly positive impact on the information environment and communication synchronization between PAO professionals. In summary, the majority of federal and civil authorities PAOs felt the ESF 15 SOP has a positive impact on communication synchronization during DSCA operations. Group A, federal authorities PAOs, reported positive experiences implementing the ESF 15 SOP. However, federal authorities PAOs also reported that the ESF 15 SOP does not promote collaboration across the agencies that well and bureaucracy sometimes slows the process of communicating to the public during DSCA operations. Group B, the civil authorities PAOs, reported more positive experiences when implementing the ESF 15 SOP for readiness and emergency response efforts. Both groups reported that the ESF 15 SOP strengthens professional relationships prior to an incident, it synchronizes efforts well, and enables federal and civil authorities to speak with one voice to the populace.

Future research should focus on public affairs professionals that have experience in both DSCA and HA operations, or to use a systems approach that incorporates a range of time prior to the existence of the ESF 15 SOP. Future studies could also include a quantitative analysis or mixed-methods approach to determine ESF 15 SOP effectiveness. By further expounding on research focused on increasing our understanding on how to holistically synchronize communication efforts across agencies during DSCA operations we could essentially save more lives and mitigate suffering at a much quicker rate.

[1] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 45.

[2] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, 1.

[3] Department of Homeland Security, *Emergency Support Function 15,* 2.

[4] Morris, Morris, and Jones, 95.

[5] Ibid., 4.

[6] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, 1.

[7] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 42.

[8] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 63

[9] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 45.

[10] Robson, 496.

[11] Van Manen, *Method and Meaning in the Human Sciences*, 21.

[12] Ibid., 33.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Corbin and Strauss, 187.

[15] Groenewald, 19.

[16] Moustakas, 132.

GLOSSARY

Communication Synchronization. A process for coordinating and synchronizing themes, messages, images, operations, and actions to support strategic communication-related objectives and ensure the integrity and consistency of themes and messages to the lowest tactical level through the integration and synchronization of all relevant communication activities.

Community Relations Staff. Personnel that are trained to provide survivors with an overview of available assistance programs and explanations of how to register.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA). This concept provides U.S. military and other federal assets to civilian authorities in emergency response situations that may otherwise overwhelm or deplete state and local resources.[1]

Dual Status Commander (DSC). A commissioned officer of the Regular Army or Air Force or a federally recognized ARNG or ANG officer authorized, pursuant to Title 32, USC, Section 315 or 325, by SecDef, with the consent of the applicable governor of a state, to exercise command on behalf of, and receive separate orders from, a federal chain of command and exercise command on behalf of, and receive separate orders from, a state chain of command.[2]

ESF 15 SOP. Incorporates the following five components: public affairs, JIC, congressional affairs, public information plans and products, intergovernmental affairs, and the private sector aspects of external affairs.[3]

Institutional Theory. Adds the social beliefs, norms, and rules that are inherent to the organization's environment.[4]

Interagency Coordination. Agency meetings, such as the Incident Communications Public Affairs Coordination Committee (ICPACC) meeting and related events, will be used to discuss ESF-15 processes, teamwork and training needs.

Inter-Organizational Collaboration Approach (ICA). This occurs when multiple organizations work together to focus on a shared objective.[5]

National Incident Management System (NIMS). A systematic approach to focus on risk mitigation and increased collaborative response effort effectiveness toward emergency response incidents.[6]

National Response Framework (NRF). Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8: National Preparedness is a whole-of-government approach to respond to risks that threaten the security of the nation in through five mission area: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.[7]

Phenomenological Research. A way to systematically study and learn a phenomenon typically difficult to measure or observe.[8]

Public Affairs Officers: this term applies to both public affairs and public information officers serving in federal or civil authorities public affairs/information officer positions. For the purpose of this study, it is the assumption of the researcher that the duties and responsibilities are the same between both Public Informaiton Officers and Public Affairs Officers in federal and civil authorities organizations.

Rational Choice Theory. A way in which organizational leadership choose courses of action based on the means available to operate effectively in an environment with minimal external influence.[9]

Whole-of-Government. A concept which focuses efforts and enables a full range of stakeholders—individuals, families, communities, the private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal governments—to participate in national preparedness activities and to be full partners in incident response.

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[1] Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-28, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities*, 2.

[2] Ibid., C-1.

[3] Department of Homeland Security, *Emergency Support Function 15,* 6.

[4] Scott, "Reflections on a Half-Century of Organizational Sociology," 13; Kristian Hjort-Madsen, "Institutional Patterns of Enterprise Architecture Adoption in Government," *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy* 1 no. 4 (2007): 338.

[5] Morris, Morris, and Jones, 95.

[6] Department of Homeland Security, *National Incident Management System,* 1.

[7] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Framework*, 1.

[8] Moustakas, 45.

[9] Williams and Fedorwicz, 15.

APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questions

Participant Qualification Requirements:

a) Public Affairs Professional

b) Minimum of three years public affairs experience

c) Minimum of one year experience in a federal or civil authority Public Affairs

Office.

Groups:

a) Federal Authorities: USARNORTH, Fort Hood Public Affairs Detachments, and

FEMA Region VII PAOs

b) Civil Authorities: Missouri National Guard Bureau, State of Nebraska Emergency

Management Agency, Douglas County, and City of Lawrence PAOs

1. What are your impressions of intergovernmental agency communication

synchronization during Defense Support of Civil Authorities operations?

2. How would you define the Emergency Support Function 15 Joint

Information Center purpose and outcomes?

3. What are your experiences with communication synchronization during

emergency response efforts?

4. How would you describe your experience synchronizing communication

efforts with partnering intergovernmental agencies during Defense

Support of Civil Authorities operations?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Command and General Staff College
U.S. Combined Arms Center
Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF THE STUDY: ESF 15 COMMUNICATION SYNCHRONIZATION
DURING DSCA OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION: My participation in this research study has been requested by **MAJ Anthony Clas**. The ESF 15 Communication Synchronization study is for partial fulfillment of requirements for a Masters of Military Arts and Science at the Command and General Staff College. The purpose of the ESF-15 Communication Synchronization study is to investigate the lived experience with the intergovernmental agency public affairs stakeholders during DSCA operations in the U.S. Midwestern region. I have been asked to participate because I am a military, federal, state, or local public affairs officer and I am 18 years of age or older.

I have the option of participating in an interview that will be audio recorded. If I confirm participation, I will be asked to take part in an interview approximately 30 minutes in length that will be audio recorded. I understand that I will have the option to stop at any time I choose. I also agree to have the interview audio recorded and understand that the answers given will be kept confidential. I will be able to obtain copies of the results by contacting the researcher at anthony.m.clas.mil@mail.mil. If I choose to participate in the study, I will not be exposed to any known harm. Additionally, there will not be any compensation or other forms of benefits provided to me for my participation. The only benefit for me by participating in this study is the satisfaction that my participation will help to study an important element in a critical study that investigates the lived experience of the ESF-15 Communication Synchronization during DSCA operations. I understand that I can stop participating at any time without my relations with the college, job, benefits, etc., being affected and all records pertaining to participation will be discarded.

I understand that all necessary procedures are taken to ensure my confidentiality. There will be no identifying data collected and the recorded conversation will be kept in a secure location to protect my identity and ensure my confidentiality. If I decide to participate, I am free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make me uncomfortable. I understand that if I have any questions about this study, I can contact the researcher, MAJ Anthony Clas, or the Research Committee Chairperson, MAJ Kenneth Rich via contact information listed below if I have any issues or research-related questions. I understand that this study has been reviewed and Certified by the Institutional Review Board, Command and General Staff College, U.S. Combined Arms Center. For problems or questions regarding participants' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board Chair, Dr. Maria L. Clark.

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Dissertation Committee Chairperson
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E-mail: anthony.m.clas.mil@mail.mil

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions about my participation in this research. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may obtain a copy of this consent form by contacting the above named Investigator. By signing this document, I give my consent to conditions of the study.
Name of participant (Print) _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

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