

Pathfinders Task Force: A Replicable Resource that Combines Civil/Military into a Cohesive, Logical, Response Unit

Scott Lewis, CEM, FPPEM, MEd

The Eagles Wings Foundation, Inc., West Palm Beach, Florida USA

In just 14 days, Pathfinders Task Force (PTF) Katrina combined 1,500 military and civilian responders into a Unified Command that delivered relief supplies to 126,000 homebound survivors, while searching for and working to resolve the unmet special needs identified as a result of that rapid grid search. This replicable resource is sponsored by the State of Florida for the US Department of Homeland Security to accelerate approval for a three-day "Train-the-Trainer" (TTT) course, followed by a basic, volunteer course where the TTT graduates lead a Pathfinders Task Force for one-day mission. National Guard operations in the US also are scheduling trainings as this force multiplier concept relies upon local survivor volunteers who are recruited, rapidly trained, background checked, and then merged with military forces to conduct mass-care operations. This model has been used repeatedly in major disasters with increasing effectiveness.

The Workshop session will have 100 military specialists, GPS cellular telephones for hands-on learning (technology designed to work with no cellular towers), internet infrastructure, etc. The simple, flip cellular telephones performed seamlessly in Hurricane Ike where no normal infrastructure remained.

Keywords: civilian; cooperation; incident command; military; training

Prehosp Disaster Med

Volunteers—An Effective Force Multiplier for Mass-Care Operations

Scott P. Lewis, CEM, FPPEM, MEd

The Eagles Wings Foundation, Inc., West Palm Beach, Florida USA

Unaffiliated, local volunteers can be assimilated into disaster operations as an effective force multiplier. Using modern technology, Pathfinders requires training, strives to be National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant, relies upon a Volunteer Receiving Area, and maps and tracks volunteer hours. The Workshop session will have 100 military-specific, global positioning system (GPS) cellular telephones for hands-on learning of technology designed to work with no cellular towers, Internet infrastructure, etc. The focus of this mission is to deliver relief supplies to the homebound survivors while seeking and working to resolve the unmet needs of the vulnerable populations during a disaster. This model has been tested in major disasters in the United States and Caribbean for 10 years and repeatedly has improved its methodology with an unprecedented capacity for emergency relief operations.

Keywords: civilian; mass-casualty incident; volunteer

Prehosp Disaster Med

Israeli Medical Corps Intervention

Mrs. Gila Margalit, RN, MHA

Israel

Events such as floods, earthquakes, wildfires, chemical disasters, and disasters resulting from regional strife, cause serious damage to medical services. Casualties in these and similar situations often are deprived of even the most basic services.

There are a number of organizations that provide assistance in such cases, but the initiative usually is taken by individuals for whom this is not their main field of activity.

In times of war and during disasters caused by natural hazards, international assistance may be required. Organizations trained in providing emergency medical treatment, such as armies and medical corps, play a major role in establishing mobile and temporary facilities.

These facilities usually are not equipped to treat civilian populations in developing countries. Without appropriate preparation, the medical staff and administration of the field hospital are likely to face unfamiliar problems that they are not qualified to solve.

In cases of disasters caused by natural hazards, damage to the infrastructure often includes the collapse of communication systems. This creates difficulties in the transmission of vital information required to prepare field hospital staff and equipment.

Israel has a great deal of experience in providing humanitarian assistance based on the medical corps and field hospitals staffed by professionals in the regular army and reserves. The lessons learned by the various delegations have resulted in improved operational efficiency. In addition, these lessons have been consolidated into written procedures proven to be invaluable in the preparation and functioning of the hospital and immediate recruitment of various experts sent on such humanitarian missions, and operate under extremely difficult conditions.

Keywords: disaster; field hospital; international assistance; Israel Medical Corps

Prehosp Disaster Med

Preparing a Hospital for an Unconventional Mass-Casualty Event

Gila Margalit, RN, MHA

Israel

Introduction: Preparing a hospital for an unconventional mass-casualty event (MCE) in times of war is a complex task that requires full collaboration between various hospital departments. The main challenge is that the nature of each event requires a different operational approach. Drills and simulations are expensive and require thorough planning.

Objective: The objective is to prepare a hospital for an unconventional MCE.

Methods: Preparing a hospital for an unconventional MCE requires:

1. Providing the best treatment to the casualties while ensuring the safety of personnel;
2. Maximizing the readiness of personnel and the equipment;
3. Familiarity with the treatments required when presented with injuries caused by chemical weapons;

4. Building a detailed operation plan and ensure that all personnel are familiar with the plan;
5. Performing structured drills and simulations; and
6. Performing professional lessons-learned sessions to allow for the ongoing improvement of preparedness for an unconventional MCE.

Results: Drills testing the readiness of the hospital for an unconventional MCE should improve patient treatment during an actual event.

Keywords: drill; mass-casualty incident; plan; preparedness; unconventional mass-casualty incident

Prehosp Disaster Med

The Israel Defense Forces Secondary Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Program for Casualty Notification Officers

Ofer Margalit; Uri Segal

Israel

The Personnel Wing of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) developed two unique officers' roles for the management of grieving families of soldiers who die during their military service. One is the "Casualties Officer", officers who are in charge of the permanent treatment of these families by the IDF. The other is the "Casualty Notification Officer", volunteer reserve officers whose task is to bear the bad news to the family and treat the family during the military funeral and until the end of the first week of mourning. The psychological burden on these officers necessitated the formation of a special prevention program, in order to avoid the development of secondary post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

The Casualty Notification Officers secondary PTSD prevention includes several components: (1) a professional preparatory course, in which the appropriate methods of bearing the grave news and the immediate treatment of the grieving family are taught; (2) every notification is handled by a team, consisting of two officers and a physician—inexperienced officers accompany such teams first, then become the "second officer", until they feel experienced enough to become the Casualty Notification Officer; (3) the load of the notifications is divided between many reserve officers; and (4) there is a debriefing session with a psychologist following each event experienced in this field.

Even though most officers report being stressed each time they break the sad news of death of a soldier to his or her family, none had to receive psychological or psychiatric treatment. All the Casualty Notification Officers volunteers are pre-screened, gradually prepared for this delicate mission, and whose mental state is monitored following each notification, which adds to the success of the secondary PTSD prevention program.

Keywords: Casualty Notification Officer; grieving; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); prevention; volunteer

Prehosp Disaster Med

The Military Role in a, Influenza Pandemic

V. Molina Hazan;¹ R.D. Balicer;^{1,2} I. Grotto;^{1,3} S. Zarka;^{4,5} O.E. Ankol;^{1,6} Y. Bar-Zeev;¹ H. Levine;^{1,3,7} N. Ash⁸

1. Army Health Branch, Medical Corps Headquarters, Israeli Defence Forces, Israel
2. Division of Public Health Sciences, The Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel
3. National Public Health Services, Ministry of Health, Jerusalem, Israel
4. Chief Surgeon, Medical Corps, Northern Command, Israeli Defence Forces, Israel
5. School of Public Health, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel
6. Department of Health Management, School of Health Science, Ariel University, Center of Samaria, Israel
7. Department of Health Systems Management, Division of Public Health Sciences, The Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel
8. Chief Surgeon, Medical Corps, Headquarters, Israeli Defence Forces, Israel

Background: Pandemic influenza is a major challenge to emergency preparedness agencies and health systems around the world. It requires preparation for widespread morbidity due to influenza and its complications, which will lead to huge burden on the health system in the community and in hospitals, as well as work absenteeism among healthcare personnel. The army may have a major involvement in preparedness for and tackling of such an event. The different roles armies could take in such a crisis will be reviewed, and the Israeli test case will be presented.

Results: Defense systems are characterized by a few attributes that may provide major advantages during pandemic influenza: crisis management capacities, ability to cope with varied tasks in suboptimal conditions, logistical resources, widespread deployment, and ability to activate people, even against their will, in risky situations. The army's roles during a pandemic could include: (1) national and regional command of the event; (2) workforce for essential civilian missions; (3) use of logistic and military resources; (4) keeping public order; and (5) implementing public health measures such as isolation and quarantine. The army must continue its primary role of guarding the security of the state.

Discussion: Since the March 2009, the influenza virus A/2009 H1N1 spread around the world, leading the World Health Organization to declare it a pandemic influenza. According to the Israeli preparedness plan, the management of the event was supposed to be by the defense system. Due to the moderate severity of the illness, it was decided to leave the management to the health system. In view of the necessity of maintaining military combat capabilities, and the possibility of outbreaks in combat units, the Israeli Defense Forces policy for the pandemic was stricter than the Ministry of Health policy.

Conclusions: Defense systems should prepare for the possibility of a more severe pandemic, in which the army may take a major role, especially if regular life is disturbed.

Keywords: influenza; military; pandemic

Prehosp Disaster Med