

Inter-Organizational Training for the Emergency Management System

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The development and deployment of the Iron Dome system during Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012 and Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, demonstrated impressive technological capabilities. In addition, it indicated the need for an increased professionalization among the personnel engaged in emergency management, and the creation of a structured professional identity transcending organizational affiliation. Government Decision 1661 transferred the powers previously held by Israel's Ministry of Home Front Defense to the Defense Ministry. In so doing, it charged the Defense Ministry with responsibility for leading a process of strategic change in the area of inter-organizational training in an attempt to facilitate a more effective and integrative approach to addressing the major challenges currently facing Israel's emergency management system.

Keywords: emergency management system, inter-organizational training, regulation, emergency management as a professional field, strategy formulation.

Introduction

The strategic importance of the emergency management system within the national security fabric of the state of Israel is undisputed. Substantial evidence of the critical nature of this area includes the fundamental

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discussions conducted in 2013 and 2014 by the government ministries claiming responsibility for, and proprietorship over preparations in this realm.¹ This extended dispute, waged primarily by the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Home Front Defense, concluded with Government Decision 1661 of June 1, 2014, which closed the Ministry of Home Front Defense and transferred all its powers, resources, and responsibilities to the Ministry of Defense.² Since the Second Lebanon War of 2006, which revealed significant failings in the functioning of the different authorities responsible for management of Israel's civilian front, Israel has witnessed numerous changes in this critical realm. Many of these changes are indicative of the current trend of improvement underway in the country's overall readiness for emergency situations.

One significant area in which progress is likely to make a substantial contribution to the formulation of an effective strategic response to the challenges facing Israel's civilian front is the training of the professional personnel affiliated with the different agencies responsible for this area: the public sector, the private sector, and the "third sector" (or the "volunteer" sector, consisting of non-government and other non-profit organizations).

Currently, most professional training conducted by the different organizations is intra-organizational and takes place within the confines of the Home Front Command, the Israeli Police Force, the Fire and Rescue Commission, The Israeli Red Cross – Magen David Adom, and other bodies. Courses and continuing education programs for officials within these organizations were also developed and conducted by the Ministry of Home Front Defense and organizations from the third sector (such as the Israel Trauma Coalition and the Cohen-Harris Center for Children at Risk). In order to effectively fulfill their purpose in this realm, the organizations that are part of the civilian front must operate in an integrative manner. The Israeli military, including the Home Front Command, conducts regular multi-organizational training programs for all the services and branches of the IDF, including specially designated training in the required areas of cooperation. However, non-military organizations do not take part in these courses. A significant development in this direction took place in February 2014 with the opening of the National Emergency Management School under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Front Defense, and following the closing of the ministry, it was incorporated into Israel's Defense Ministry. The school's purpose is to provide effective training

for relevant officials within local authorities, government ministries, and other emergency bodies.³

The structured integration, synergy, and common language necessary for effective development on the civilian front require a systemic cooperative design. Therefore, this article offers a description and analysis of the current state of inter-organizational training on the civilian front, and offers policy recommendations for the strategic changes necessary to bring about progress.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness requires the structured ongoing participation of a large number of organizations and groups and therefore necessitates a high degree of coordination.⁴ Indeed, inter-organizational coordination and cooperation is regarded as one of the most influential factors related to preparation for states of emergency.⁵ A recent study conducted in Israel indicated that inter-organizational cooperation in emergency management has played a significant and distinctive role in increasing the level of preparedness.⁶ Preparation for emergency situations is inherently interdisciplinary, and therefore incorporates individuals of various backgrounds and disciplines. In order to facilitate an integrative platform, it is important to create a shared foundation.

Whereas the joint work of local authority officials and national government agencies is addressed by legislation,⁷ there is no such regulation or legislation regarding non-government organizations and their integration into emergency management schemes. The current trends of expanded involvement of the third sector,⁸ privatization, and outsourcing⁹ also appear to be heightening the importance of the joint effort of local authority officials and a variety of non-government civil bodies to achieve optimal preparedness for emergency situations. This, however, has been accompanied by the formidable challenge of creating a common language between the diverse and complex mosaic of the parties involved, with an eye toward achieving effective integration of government and non-government forces. During the Second Lebanon War, non-government agencies were intensively involved in a diverse range of activities aimed at providing assistance to the affected communities and their varied and multi-dimensional needs.¹⁰ Nonetheless, no mechanism for coordination between government and non-government agencies was established with regard to this wartime work

on the national and the local level, and this had a detrimental impact on the ultimate effectiveness of the response in the civilian realm. The effort to meet the changing needs of the civilian population during the war was more comprehensive and effective in local authorities, in which more meaningful collaborative work had been conducted and in which there was greater coordination between all the involved parties.¹¹ Indeed, as a result of the process of formulating the lessons from the Second Lebanon War, during Operation Cast Lead the “third sector” organizations and relevant stakeholders from the private sector played a role in providing assistance to the civilian population and state officials led daily “roundtable” discussions aimed at formulating effective integrated working methods for all the parties involved.

It is important to emphasize that cooperation in such contexts must not be limited to ongoing emergency situations. Indeed, the need for local inter-organizational and inter-sectorial cooperation in preparation for emergencies was one of the major lessons learned from Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Katrina in the United States.¹² That being the case, the achievement of inter-organizational synthesis, which requires ongoing theoretical and applied joint-training for relevant officials within all the organizations involved, must be regarded as an essential element of preparing for and contending with states of emergency.

Inter-Organizational Training on the Israeli Civilian Front: Current State of Affairs, Trends, and Processes

The two major agencies with relevance to inter-organizational training on the civilian front in Israel are the IDF’s Home Front Command and the Ministry of Home Front Defense. The following assessment of the developments currently underway in inter-organizational training in Israel is based on the analysis of professional materials, political trends, and meetings of the authors with relevant officials during the years 2012-2014.

- a. There is currently no integrative national conception accepted by all relevant parties and no one agreed-upon professional authority for training the civilian front, possessing the power to determine required and comprehensive content and training frameworks and to supervise the implementation of training programs conducted by different organizations. There is, however, an understanding of the importance of inter-organizational training, as reflected in the establishment of the

National Emergency Management School and the implementation of interdisciplinary training programs by the Home Front Command. The need for integrative inter-organizational training was classified by the Ministry of Home Front Defense in its summary for 2013 as one of the main lessons learned during the year and as a major issue to be dealt with in 2014. However, without a solid legislative foundation and without cooperation between the major stakeholders involved, a sustainable “quantum leap” in this area will remain unattainable.

- b. In the course of 2012-2013, the Ministry of Home Front Defense considered the establishment and operation of inter-organizational training courses. Another option discussed was the possibility of granting civilian training bodies (universities and colleges), and their programs of study, official recognition by the Ministry of Home Front Defense. In this context, officials discussed the possibility of authorizing the content of both academic programs (programs of study for the purpose of earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in the field of emergency management, which have existed in institutions of higher education in Israel for a number of years) and non-academic continuing education programs. Nonetheless, in 2014, the Ministry of Home Front Defense decided to run the National Emergency Management School on its own and abandon efforts toward “certifying” external training bodies, at least for the time being.
- c. In addition to inter-organizational training programs which focus primarily on promoting professional cooperation, another important matter is the provision of required professional training for relevant officials within the different systems involved in emergency management. For example, within the local authorities, there is still no obligatory training program for emergency managers pertaining to the specific issues involved with emergency management during different types of situations. This training is extremely important given the fact that many local emergency managers do not have academic background in that field. The same is true of many relevant officials within government ministries and other bodies. The Ministry of Home Front Defense had begun to bridge this gap within government ministries and other emergency organizations. The first inter-organizational continuing education program for senior level personnel began in February 2014 and concluded the following month in the framework of the National

Emergency Management School. However, The IDF's Home Front Command refused to take part in this training program.

- d. The IDF Home Front Command intends to expand training and information dissemination within different sectors. The differentiated work characterized by cultural sensitivity. In this context, initial efforts have been conducted in training civilian volunteers for emergency activity in the Arab communities and the Jewish ultraorthodox sector. In the Arab sector, the Home Front Command, in cooperation with the Israel Trauma Coalition, conducted training for social workers (including a course specially designed for the Bedouin community) that has generated interest in further collaboration. Attention to people with special needs has been manifested in an additional training course organized by the Home front Command – for superintendents of “supportive communities” for the elderly and special needs populations run by JDC Israel and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services.
- e. The Home Front Command has recently begun to reach out to citizens to elicit their assistance during states of emergency, based on recognition of the essential role of civilians in initial search and rescue efforts in the wake of disasters. In this context, the Home Front Command, Magen David Adom, and the National Fire and Rescue Commission have developed an integrated training program known as “First Self-Aid” in local authorities throughout the country. This course is aimed primarily at providing participants with the capability to independently begin rescue operations in the wake of an earthquake.
- f. There is a growing recognition that emergency management is a distinct professional field and discipline requiring specialized training and specially designed academic education. One of the long-term challenges with which it will be necessary to contend in order to provide a complete solution for such training programs is the absence of legislation and regulation of the field of emergency management within the framework of the “Home Front Law” (different versions of which have been discussed by Knesset committees since 2008). Among other things, this law should define the mandatory terms for licensing individuals working in the field of emergency management and institutionalize procedures for licensing the institutions engaged in education and training in this field.

- g. In the current situation, most emergency management organizations provide independent training, and the National Emergency Management School was established in an effort to improve this state of affairs. In addition, the Home Front Command integrates representatives of other bodies into its training courses (such as its district commanders' course and its course for commanders of liaison units to local authorities). Still, it is important to remember that, first and foremost, these courses were planned and structured to meet the needs of the Home Front Command itself. The district commanders' course includes representatives from the Israeli Police Force, Magen David Adom, Fire and Rescue, security officers and emergency supervisors, and senior local authorities officials. The Home Front Command's courses for its company and battalion commanders are also attended by representatives of the Israeli Police Force, Magen David Adom, and chief emergency managers of the local authorities. The Home Front Command developed training programs specially designed for specific stakeholders on the civilian front, such as civil defense coordinators. This course—which is attended by representatives of the local authorities, government ministries, and business enterprises—has been offered on a regular basis since 2007.
- h. In spite of the absence of an institutionalized system of basic inter-organizational training programs, a comprehensive system of drills, exercises, and management simulations—in which representatives of the different organizations operating on the civilian front take part—has existed for a number of years. Most of these exercises are inter-organizational by nature, as defined by Procedure No. 15 of the Emergency Economy System (MELACH), which relates to the issue. This system of inter-organizational exercises includes annual drills for most of the local authorities in Israel, exercises within government ministries, integrated national exercises, and an annual national emergency week revolving around the national home front exercise that has been conducted since 2007 with a focus on specific types of emergency (earthquakes, non-conventional weapons' attacks, etc.).

Policy Recommendations

In general, awareness of the issues related to emergency management appears to have increased significantly in government ministries and among relevant officials within local authorities. On this basis, a path is paved for

the promotion and development of inter-organizational training. Beyond the realm of any specific training, there appears to be consensus among senior elements on the civilian front regarding the need for the establishment and development of a system of inter-organizational training programs for the different bodies operating in the field of emergency management. This agreement stems from the recognition that no single agency or body is capable of contending with the ever growing challenges, as well as an understanding that the constant strengthening of inter-organizational operational cooperation is a key to success. However, the organizational culture of the civilian front today is tainted by a high degree of unnecessary competition over credit and prestige, contributing to a bitter and ever intensifying dispute over seniority among the different bodies operating in the field of emergency management. This, of course, has had a detrimental impact on the promotion of integrative training programs.

The system of inter-organizational training in Israel is still in its infancy, but the establishment of the National Emergency Management School in 2014 has been an important development. In addition, an emerging fundamental conceptual difficulty lies in the fact that even if representatives of these bodies are aware of the fact that they are required to work in close cooperation with one another and that this necessitates joint training and exercises within a framework of integrative activity, each, in practice, relies on different bodies of knowledge and their own experience and tradition. For this reason, this work cannot be based on a common professional "melting pot," as is the case, for example, in the IDF'S inter-branch collaboration. The civilian front also undoubtedly requires a wise and dynamic combination of intra-organizational and inter-organizational training.

On this basis, the subject of inter-organizational training is closely linked to three strategic efforts that must be pursued on the civilian front: legal and organizational regulation in the field of emergency management on both the national and local level; formulation of an integrated operational conception with authority over all the relevant parties; and recognition of emergency management as a unique professional field.

Although the need for legal order is accepted in principle by all, obstacles stemming from organizational factors and narrow interests have been hindering its implementation since 2008. The absence of an integrated operational conception is rooted in inter-organizational competition, as the essential documents of each body, drawn up in accordance with its

particular point of view, are often unacceptable to or at odds with the views of other bodies. No solution to this problem can be expected until normalization of the relationship between the relevant bodies is achieved. As for recognition of emergency management as a professional field – this requires further investigation and clarification.

Though the issue has been the focus of deliberations and evaluations, more substantial work-based momentum is still necessary on all levels, as the issue stands to have far-reaching impact on the effectiveness of work on the civilian front.

It is important to remember that in addition to the officials whose professional field is emergency operations, there are many other officials who are usually not connected to the field of emergency management, but are “activated” in case of emergency. In order to facilitate their effectiveness, it is necessary to map them into three sectors (public, private, and the third sector) and to build appropriate frameworks for their training. It is also necessary to recognize the unique professionalism of the field of emergency management, as well as to establish a comprehensive system of fundamental academic study and ongoing integrative training and instruction based on an agreed upon operative conception, joint multi-year working plans, and calibrated inclusive mechanisms of implementation. Israel’s defense establishment, which was imbued with the primary powers pertaining to the civilian front by Government decision 1661 of June 1, 2014, now faces a number of questions of major significance in the realm of training:

1. In addition to the public sector, how can all the other relevant parties—on the municipal level, in the private sector, and in the third sector—be incorporated into the joint effort?
2. Which professional areas shall be incorporated into the professional identity of the field of emergency management and which shall remain within related fields and be worked with in close cooperation? What expertise will be defined as integral to the new field?
3. What are the minimum requirements of those seeking certification to work in this field?
4. What academic, inter-organizational, and intra-organizational levels will make up the ladder of professional development for those engaged in the field of emergency management?

In order to provide thoughtful and in-depth answers to these questions, it will undoubtedly be necessary to carry out a process of change aimed at

the creation of an integrative whole that is not a product of organizational patchwork, that possesses its own internal consistency, and that facilitates the necessary “strategic quantum leap.”

In conclusion, in addition to the cultivation of technological-operational capabilities so impressively demonstrated in the development and deployment of the Iron Dome system during Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012 and Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, from which the civilian front clearly benefited, it is necessary to increase professionalization among the personnel engaged in the field of emergency management, and create a structured professional identity in this field that transcends association with any one specific organization.

In 1952, Major General (Res.) Aharon Yariv was appointed to head the team that established the IDF Command and Staff School. Today, there is an urgent need to establish a comparable body on the civilian front – one that is accepted by all the parties involved and that is capable of playing a key role in a broad new training system. This task is as challenging as it is necessary and should be pursued without delay.

Notes

- 1 For example, see the discussions of the Subcommittee of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Home Front Preparedness from February 27, 2014 and March 13, 2014 http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/committees/ForeignAffairs/News/Pages/pr_270214.aspx.
- 2 Government Decision No. 1661, Transfer of the Home Front Defense Ministry's Field of Operation to the Ministry of Defense, June 1, 2014, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2014/Pages/dec1661.aspx>.
- 3 See the Israel Defense website, “School for Emergencies,” February 5, 2014 <http://www.israeldefense.co.il/?CategoryID=483&ArticleID=5810>.
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- 7 See, for example, The Civil Defense Law, 1951; The Municipalities Ordinance, 1973; and The Local Councils Order, 1972.
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 - 12 Gloria Simo, and Angela L. Bies, "The Role of Nonprofits in Disaster Response: An Expanded Model of Cross-Sector Collaboration," *Public Administration Review* 67, no. s1 (2007): 125-42.