

**After Action Review (AAR):  
Expanded Joint Operations Centre**

**Hurricane Sandy Lessons Learned Debriefing (EJOC Activation)**

**Date of After Action Review (AAR):** The After Action Review was conducted from October 26, 2012.

**Date or duration of the event:** The AAR covers the recent hurricane Sandy which passed through Haiti from 24-31 October, 2012.

**Location:** EJOC room, Delta Camp, Building 28

**Participants:**

Chief of JOC: Ernesto Jacomelli  
Robert Campbell JOC Plans and Coordination Officer  
Todd Balsimo JOC Plans and Coordination  
MINUSTAH Military U5- Kevin Klien  
Civil Affairs Liaison: Alberich d'Aiglepierre  
WFP/Logistics Cluster Liaison: Alphonse  
West Region RJOC CRO OIC : Yao Bouaka  
West Region RJOC: Sonia LUQUE  
West Region RJOC Juliana Cassini  
Chief of West Region UNPOL: Phirma Ebanda  
JLOC: Eddy Van Laethem  
Aviation: Sergio Castillo  
UN Security: Raul Rodolfo  
JMAC: Ayman Sabarih and  
U8: Maj Tanso and Maj Turnip  
OCHA: Jean H Beouport

**Introduction**

Tropical Storm Sandy hit Haiti on 23 October. Three consecutive days of intense winds and heavy rain caused severe flooding, damaging and destroying homes, farms and public infrastructure, mainly in the Southern part of the country and West Department. It was the third disaster to hit the country in the space of a few months. Between May and June a severe drought struck at the beginning of the critical spring cropping season. In August Haiti was battered by Tropical Storm Isaac followed two months later by Sandy.

The combined impact of these three disasters on the agricultural sector, has been estimated by the Government of Haiti at \$254 million, affecting the livelihood of 1.5 million people. FAO, WFP and other partners are supporting the Government of Haiti in conducting a post-disaster assessment in order to present a full picture of the damage and needs for agriculture and food security and allow appropriate and significant response to recover from the crisis.

In response of Tropical Storm Sandy, E-JOC was activated on 15:00 hrs on 24 October and stood down a week after. During this time, MINUSTAH implemented 30 requests for support during the crisis for security, aviation, and logistics. There have been no reports of UN assets or personnel affected by the storm, however several UN personnel were stranded in the Malpasse area (West Department) but were airlifted to Port-au-Prince (West Department) on 27 October.

In early November, some places in the South, South East and Grand' Anse zone are still largely isolated due to the massive destruction of road and other infrastructures. FAO, WFP, OCHA and partners are conducting helicopter surveys of those areas with MINUSTAH support. The Humanitarian Country Team in Haiti, the Donors' Group Supporting Haiti and the Government are currently discussing the next steps in responding to the crisis in the immediate, medium and long term, also addressing root causes of the country's vulnerability to recurrent natural disasters.

### **Alert & Activation; deactivation**

The issue of Alerting US SOUTHCOM and the US embassy was discussed. Participants wondered who notifies SOUTHCOM, who is to liaise with them? And what the relationship/contact with the US and other embassies during such a crisis such as Tropical Storm Sandy be like?

Pre-Alert meetings with EJOC members are to be held in order to identify key players, roles and responsibilities while JOC is to make sure that RJOC contact list are updated upon receipt from the regions. Contacts with regions prior to activation to identify CRO/OIC must be done on a daily basis. All this will result in better situational awareness and even response.

Participants agreed that earlier EJOC activation has several benefits:

- EJOC cannot rely on activation of COUN, EJOINT, etc...
- The time could be used to train inexperienced EJOC members – small exercises, etc...It will also allow RJOCs to get used to develop battle rhythm for reporting, etc...and be better prepared to assume their part in the implementation of mandate in time of emergency.

One of the EJOC lessons learned from Tropical Storm ISAAC was that the pre-activation meeting is supposed to be as informative as possible with all actors exchanging information on respective roles and responsibilities. This is important due to the rotation of EJOC members and the need to inform them in advance of the activation on operational mollities of each actors. This is why OCHA produced the Civil Military Coordination Quick Guide to be illustrated during the pre-activation meeting. It is important that we always take into consideration this point of the TS ISAAC lessons learned.

On this occasion the EJOINT was not activated since the Government of Haiti requested OCHA staff to be seconded to the COUN. This is in fact also in line with the ongoing transition process and the decision recently endorsed by the Humanitarian Coordinator to co-locate the EJOINT with the COUN. However, as per EJOC SOPs the activation of the EJOC is not linked to the EJOINT activation as "*the decision to activate the EJOINT is subject to several factors including consultations between the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Government*".

Regarding the deactivation, OCHA noted that as of Friday 26 November, EJOC support started to be coordinated through email and phone communication without members meeting regularly in Camp Delta. As a lessons learned, it was remarked that it would be better to keep the EJOC in session for longer after the passage of the adverse event, since this is the time when coordination for the submission of requests is mostly needed. Daily meetings (once or twice a day) could also be an option instead of having a permanent activation.

### **Communication**

EJOC should process/ treat unconfirmed information and reach out to confirm it in order to provide a reliable common operations picture (this will normally exclude reports from reliable sources (i.e. CROs, RSOs, O/ SRSG)).

#### **Internal communications:**

Participants agreed that electronic/non-electronic dashboards/monitors with real-time information are helpful in the EJOC room as visual tool to have clarity and a global understanding of the situation(s). They also recommended improving the integrity and reliability of distribution lists for emailing.

#### **External communications:**

All reports should be complete (5Ws). Incomplete information degrades situational awareness and response capacity. The Plan for RJOCs reporting can be hindered by the crisis itself and related operational factors.

OCHA has reminded Humanitarian Partners that it is important that when flight are requested to MINUSTAH, the JOC form is filled in. This is essential since MINUSTAH needs the exact locality (with GPS) as well as all the details of the passengers to process the MOPs. However, what was noticed is that as of late it is becoming increasingly difficult to have the approval for SFRs. Often, it is necessary to ask for the official endorsement of the Humanitarian Coordinator or the DSRSG to have the SFR approved. Since this higher authority endorsement is not part of the standard SOPs for the submission of requests, it is important that we find a better way to coordinate the approval of the SFRs requested by the GoH/Humanitarian Community.

In relation to the flight request to the island of a Illette a Bouet, a part from the confusion in relation to the coordinates of the island that appeared to be wrong, OCHA's understanding is that the pilot informed all passengers that he would not be landing but then did otherwise and this created some confusion in the distribution of the cargo. In addition, the FPU on board were reported to point guns to the approaching population, and this also represents a serious concern in relation to the humanitarian assistance being provided by OCHA staff on board. The lesson learned in this case is that the flight mission, including details relating to landing modality/area and humanitarian distributions to be conducted, need to be discussed and agreed by all parties in advance of flight departure.

### **Roles & Responsibilities**

JOC training of RJOCs: JOC is to strive to fill the training gap, taking into account that the RJOC staffing is dynamic.

EJOC Duty Officer better trained to ensure information sharing with both internal and external partners. JOC is to make sure that the EJOC duty officers are aware of the SOPs.

Regarding the reporting it was noted that multiple individuals were involved in the process and that it was required to develop reporting template/format/tool designed for senior management that will regularly include;

- Key events/incidents checked and verified for accuracy
- What is MINUSTAH response?
- Quick weather update. Current and projected cyclonic path
- Satellite pics.

Participants agreed that it would be important to identify mission individuals with skill sets that will benefit the EJOC and mission during a crisis and to be called upon when needed. It was regrettable that EJOINT was not activated, that EJOC was under staff and that original trained members were not present in mission. Alternate members must be identified and trained. EJOC members in the field benefited information flow

An Aviation (MAOC) position should be created in the EJOC.

Accelerate absorption of EJOC into JOC for next season

### **Issues to be addressed; recommendations**

- EJOC ideally should be located within the close proximity of senior management. The EJOC could be situated in any of the town hall conference rooms during its activation.
- Senior management should be briefed on the EJOC mechanism and its primary function.
- Senior management should advise who notifies SOUTHCOM, who Liaises with them and what the relationships with the US and other embassies during such a crisis such as Tropical Storm Sandy should be like.
- EJOC member section chiefs must support the EJOC by making available competent section representatives possessing decision making authority, and are familiar with the EJOC mechanism as well as their own section operation. The section chief should also provide for an alternate. Sections across the mission are to be aware that the responsibility to respond in case of an emergency or a big operation such a hurricane or the elections implies all the mission assets and staff. It is a shared joint effort to be led by JOC. CoS may wish to remind all chiefs of sections about this.
- The pre-activation EJOC meeting is supposed to be as informative as possible with all actors exchanging information on respective roles and responsibilities. This is important due to the rotation of EJOC members and the need to inform them in advance of the activation on operational modalities of each actors
- EJOC members and their alternates must not be authorized to take leave together; one member must remain in mission. Both members should be considered critical staff.
- Tools vital to EJOC operations must be in place when it is activated, particularly the activation of the EJOINT.
- MAOC/ Air Operations is to appoint a representative before the EJOC

- All MINUSTAH operations in support of response to the crisis at hand should be coordinated through the EJOC, or at the bare minimal, EJOC coordinator and/or JOC Chief should be kept abreast on operations devised outside of the EJOC.
- Senior management should advise on the frequency of reporting, as denoted in the EJOC operations SoP.
- RJOC West Laptops should be permanently assigned and CITS should provide support to RJOC West.
- JOC will carry out/organise regular EJOC training exercises and develop reporting template and reporting timelines to set the battle rhythm. JOC is to strive to fill the training gap of the RJOCs, taking into account that the RJOC staffing is dynamic.
- JOC will check mailing distribution lists.
- JOC required to develop reporting template/format/tool designed for senior management that will regularly include: Key events/incidents checked and verified for accuracy; what is MINUSTAH response; quick weather update with current and projected cyclonic path. Satellite pics.
- JOC is to identify mission individuals with skill sets that will benefit the EJOC and mission during a crisis and to be called upon when needed. Alternate members must be identified and trained.
- It is important that we find a better way to coordinate the approval of the SFRs requested by the GoH/Humanitarian Community.