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U.S. and Indonesia Complete Field Training Exercise for Earthquake & Tsunami Preparedness

SENTUL, INDONESIA. *The wailing of sirens pierce the humid silence of a waxing morning. An ambulance is racing to a scene of yet unknown catastrophe as the driver grips the wheels with white knuckles and gritted teeth. Emergency rescue workers arrive to the epicenter of pandemonium. As they spill out of the ambulance in a frantic pace, they find victims of the emergency crying for help, while others lie without emotion on the muddy ground. In the distance, more vehicles ascend the horizon. All of this reaction has been sparked by an earthquake that has struck without notice.*

To ensure governments are prepared to support its citizens in scenes like the one just described, it is paramount to practice response and recovery procedures. Furthermore, it becomes even more necessary to stand ready when the threat of the disaster is large-scale and could overwhelm local capacity. As a result, the governments of Indonesia and the United States conduct a regular Disaster Response Exercise & Exchange (DREE) entitled Pacific Resilience. This year's event, which was held 3-6 June 2013 at the Indonesia Peace & Security Center (IPSC) in Sentul, was the seventh annual event between the two parties. The event was led, planned and executed by the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), SRC-PB (Satuan Reaksi Cepat Penanggulangan Bencana), and Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB). Agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Programme (WFP) also provided subject matter expertise.

During the course of the exercise, over 150 participants gathered to focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The exercise was designed for response to an earthquake and tsunami impacting the area of Padang in western Sumatra. The event commenced with capability presentations by various organizations participating in the event. This included the SRC-PB and USARPAC's Contingency Command Post (CCP). From there, a short Table-Top Exercise was conducted to introduce participants to the four themes of the exercise. The themes were quick reaction and communication, integration of foreign humanitarian assistance, urban search & rescue, and medical triage and stabilization. Upon conclusion of the Table-Top Exercise, two days of field training were conducted. In each of the four phases, USARPAC, SRC-PB, TNI, USACE and others were able to work side-by-side using disaster response equipment and standard operating procedures. Medical personnel from USARPAC's 18th Medical Command performed moulage on volunteers so first responders could practice procedures. U.S. and Indonesian teams conducted joint assessments on critical infrastructure, practiced water and ground search and rescue techniques, and evaluated processes for foreign assistance to supplement Indonesia first-responders.

"It's just a matter of time before the next disaster hits. Pacific Resilience provides an opportunity for two similar military organizations from two different countries to come together and share best practices and lessons learned in order to prepare," stated LTC Thomas Brown, Chief, Civil-Military Operations, USARPAC. In this year's DREE,

USARPAC's Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team (HAST), SRC-PB and other various civilian disaster relief organizations worked side by side in the first ever joint HA/DR Field Training Exercise in Indonesia. Both civilian and military disaster responders learned how to respond to a number of issues and problems in an efficient and responsible manner. "The most important aspect of this training was that everyone unselfishly worked together to improve their methods and procedures with the common goal to save lives," stated LTC Brown.

USARPAC and the Government of Indonesia will continue with its annual disaster preparedness initiatives by conducting Pacific Resilience field training activities again next year. The event will continue to focus on operational and tactical response and processes to natural disaster situations. Through these engagements, USARPAC, TNI, SRC-PB and others will enhance communication, interoperability and standardization. Pacific Resilience strengthens an unwavering partnership between the U.S. and Indonesia, and will continue to ensure both parties stand ready to respond to disasters in benefit of the civilian populace.

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