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SARAH BALDWIN: Earthquakes, tsunamis, pandemics, civil wars-- all around the world, at any given moment, millions of people are enduring disasters, both natural and man-made. Humanitarian assistance comes in all shapes and sizes-- from government agencies to NGOs, from foreign armies to the United Nations. But for it to be effective, humanitarian response must be coordinated. What can civilian and military responders learn from each other?

From Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, this is *Trending Globally*. I'm Sarah Baldwin. Today, we're joined by Adam Levine, an emergency medicine specialist and Founding Director of the Humanitarian Innovation Initiative here at the Watson Institute, Dave Polatty, Director of the Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Program at the Naval War College, and Michael Marx, Senior Civil-Military Coordination Advisor for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Welcome to the podcast, everyone. Thanks for being here today.

ADAM LEVINE: Thank you so much, Sarah.

DAVE POLATTY: Thanks.

SARAH BALDWIN: You're taking time out of the Civilian-Military Humanitarian Response Workshop, which is a two-day conference that is going on as we speak. This is the second such conference that the Humanitarian Innovation Initiative and the Naval War College have co-sponsored. So my first question is really basic. Can you describe how civilian and military approaches to disaster relief are different and why they need to be coordinated? Isn't it about sort of rushing in and saving as many lives as possible?

ADAM LEVINE: So in an uncoordinated response, what you have is a lot of actors rushing in, whether they be humanitarian groups, foreign militaries, local government. And they're all working towards the betterment of the individuals who've been infected. But they're not working together in that sense. And so what ends up happening is you have duplication of efforts. You have different groups doing the same thing in the same place. And then you have huge gaps-- places or types of needs that are not being addressed at all because nobody is there addressing them.

When you have a coordinated response, and you have all the actors sitting together at a table,

they can discuss. And one actor can say, I'm going to work in this sector. Another actor can say, I am going to work in this other sector. And that way, you have a response that allows for all of the needs of all of the people to be covered, or at least as much as possible to be covered, without duplicating or wasting resources.

MICHAEL MARX: And if you look at the Haiti earthquake in 2010, when there were literally thousands of nongovernmental organizations on the ground, some of which-- many of which-- were not NGOs the day before the earthquake, but there were people that wanted to go and do good things. They don't understand that there is a system in place-- that there is a way for the humanitarians, the military, the different entities to integrate into a coherent response.

SARAH BALDWIN: Well, in a response, in any given response, how do you know who's boss? Who decides who's boss? Who's running the show?

MICHAEL MARX: Well, the affected nation is always in charge. So wherever that disaster happened, it is up to the government. It's their responsibility to provide for the needs of their people. The humanitarian community nations who send military and civilian capabilities are there in support of the nation.

But each nation has different capability, different preparedness, in place to respond to a disaster. There are some nations that are very good at identifying what their needs are, what capabilities can support their efforts. There are others that are so overwhelmed by the scope and scale of the disaster that they really can't do that in the early days of a response.

SARAH BALDWIN: And I suppose it's different if we're thinking about natural disasters as opposed to man-made situations like armed conflict.

MICHAEL MARX: It's absolutely different. And just the thoughts that you have to go through, the sensitivities with respect to humanitarian principles, the proximity between humanitarian and military actors-- in a natural disaster, it's fairly easy to work together because you don't have a lot of those same political considerations. But in a protracted conflict, like Syria or Yemen, you very much have to worry about perceptions of relationships between humanitarian and military actors because that very much affects their ability to access the wider population. It affects their own safety and security of staff.

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SARAH BALDWIN: You all have so much experience in this kind of humanitarian response from Asia to Africa to the Middle East. So in your experience, what, concretely, does uncoordinated response look like? What's at stake? What are the consequences? And then, what does a coordinated response look like when it's successful?

MICHAEL MARX: Yeah, and that really gets to the heart of what we're trying to do in this workshop and in building all the relationships-- is to try to get a response as coordinated as possible. I don't think there's ever been a response that's been truly coordinated because there's so many variables. There's so many factors. And the big thing that we're trying to deal with is speed, because speed is paramount-- speed to try to get assistance to the affected population, to save lives, to reduce suffering. Having all of these different actors converge on the same place is incredibly difficult. So you have--

SARAH BALDWIN: It must be chaotic.

MICHAEL MARX: It is, and that's the whole thing. For the first five to seven days is almost complete chaos because there's not a sense of situational awareness that is shared amongst all the actors. So nobody is seeing the response in the same way-- and then trying to figure out what capabilities are there, and then trying to kind of piece together a response based on what shows up. And this is one of the big challenges with working with military actors, because you never know what military capabilities will arrive. Whether it's shipborne, or aircraft, or troops on the ground, we never know from one disaster to another.

DAVE POLATTY: And I would add to that, most people think of militaries as highly trained, and capable, and professional. But most militaries are trained to do security missions or potentially war fighting. So while all of them have some element and capability to do humanitarian assistance, oftentimes, they don't receive a lot of training and have a chance to do exercises or simulations to prepare, just to operate with one another-- say, the US military with the Pakistani military.

So then you add in the element of having to coordinate with civilian organizations who you are not used to dealing with. That can lead quickly to an uncoordinated response, which is another reason why we have the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs here-- is the lead agency for helping to coordinate when militaries respond. It's important to have these discussions in this neutral, academic environment prior to the disaster happening.

SARAH BALDWIN: So coordination, but not at the expense of letting too much time go by, but also-- it sounds

incredibly complex. I mean, just the array of civilian responders who have nothing to do with each other until they're on the ground is sort of daunting. And then you add in the military.

MICHAEL MARX: Correct. But there are structures that are already in place. The big challenge we have is that not everybody that shows up understands that the structures are there and how to link into them. So the humanitarian community has developed and kind of evolved this cluster system, which brings together the 11 sectors within a humanitarian response-- so everything from logistics to health, water sanitation, hygiene. And that allows humanitarian organizations to bring their capabilities to the table and share with other like organizations.

OCHA's responsibility within that system is to make sure that the different clusters are talking to each other. But the reality is that militaries don't understand that system because they don't do enough training prior to the disaster. They get orders, and they show up. And then they tried to figure out, OK, who is who? And how do I link into this? So the more that we do ahead of time, the better off that we are.

This workshop is particularly important because it brings in the academic community. And that's an area where we don't have a lot of evidence-based research that supports this. We have a lot of anecdotal kind of stories that we can tell about what happened-- what went right? What went wrong? But bringing the academic side into this gives us kind of that fact-based evidence.

SARAH BALDWIN: Yeah, that was going to be a question I had, too, for Adam, because one of the stated objectives of the conference is to develop a research agenda. So what are you guys looking at? And when will you have findings? And how can you share the findings?

ADAM LEVINE: So one of the most important parts, actually, of this workshop is about building the evidence base for coordination of humanitarian and military actors in humanitarian response. One of the things we've learned in general about humanitarian response is that we have very little evidence or very little research to guide the work that we do. And that is problematic.

Right now, most of humanitarian aid is sort of based on anecdote or based on experience, but not necessarily based on hard data about what works best in different types of environments-- whether it be after a disaster, or during a conflict, or during an epidemic. One of our stated goals here at the Humanitarian Innovation Initiative is really to work together with humanitarian actors in order to improve the evidence base-- to conduct research in humanitarian crises and figure out what works best. And that can be said as well regarding civil-military coordination

and humanitarian response.

The idea of civilian and military actors working together in humanitarian response is not new. But one of the things that is new here is this idea of working to build the evidence base for that-- figuring out what has been done before, looking at case studies of what has worked well and what has not worked well, and then also conducting research to figure out, what are the best ways and the best mechanisms that we can use to help these two different groups work together better for the betterment of individuals who are caught up in disasters and other types of emergencies?

One of the things we hope to come out of this workshop is a very comprehensive research strategy outlining all of the current gaps that we have right now in the research regarding civil-military coordination and humanitarian response and then hopefully to create a system for targeting specific research questions, for answering those in a systematic way, and making those answers and that information available to, firstly, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, and then also to the larger humanitarian and military communities around the world.

SARAH BALDWIN: Can you give some examples?

ADAM LEVINE: So one of the major after-action reviews that came out of the cholera epidemic in Goma, Zaire really pointed out the need for better coordination in humanitarian response as well as better evidence-base for the types of actions that humanitarians were taking. And so since then, it's been really one of the goals of the humanitarian community to really try and figure out how to conduct research into how to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid.

And that's a big part of our focus here at the Watson Institute Humanitarian Innovation Initiative and also a big part of our partnership with the Naval War College and with United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on this particular workshop. What we really want to do is figure out, what are the best ways for military and humanitarian actors to work together in the setting of a humanitarian emergency? Where are there gaps in research-- things that we don't know about? And how can we learn from each other in terms of how to improve those going forward?

SARAH BALDWIN: Dave?

DAVE POLATTY: I just would like to add I think this is probably one of the most exciting parts of getting together

for events like this. People hear research agendas and academics, and they kind of roll their eyes, and it's research for the sake of research. But this is truly taking evidence-based research, and then applying it to existing training and education programs, and developing new, innovative training and education programs, and doing simulations together, civilian and military-- which Adam's done up here at Brown, I've done down in Newport, Harvard routinely does up in Boston. And I think Adam and I are both very grateful for the chance to work with UN OCHA and the opportunity to really reach a much wider audience than we would if we were just working here in Rhode Island.

SARAH BALDWIN: I know we're almost out of time, but I've been thinking about this climate change workshop, which was added this year, I think. And I'm just wondering how our changing climate has altered what you're responding to and how you're responding to it.

DAVE POLATTY: We looked very briefly, in October of 2016, at climate change. But we had attached it to the urbanization working group, which is another significant problem. And it's such a pressing challenge for today and the future that we decided to break it out into two different groups. You could talk for hours about climate change, and sea-level rise, and the impact that that's going to have on vulnerable people around the world. Climate-induced migration is already a problem. We see it in Africa. We see it in the Asia-Pacific region.

We want to talk as well about some of the security concerns that are going to come out and really how you can get aid to those people. The Mediterranean migration problem right now, which is one of the most significant things we've seen in decades, is sadly probably a very small problem compared to what we could face in the future. So we're grappling here in the workshop, looking out 10, 20, 30 years at some of the projections that are out there, and trying to get out in front by coordinating now.

MICHAEL MARX: I just want to add to that because on the humanitarian side, we don't really know what we face with climate change. It's really critical that we have the academic community here that is starting to look at these issues that can help inform and help us better prepare for those requirements. But another great part about this workshop in particular is, because of the partnership with the Naval War College, we've got a lot more naval capabilities at the table to talk about these issues.

And probably more than any other natural disaster, climate change effects are going to affect naval capabilities-- because of their global presence, because of rising sea. But a lot of these

issues, I think, will cut directly into missions that navies across the world are going to have to deal with. So we're actually taking the time now to try to look at, how do we better prepare for that? What do we need to be thinking about in the coming decade?

SARAH BALDWIN: Yeah, great. That's so important. Well, speaking of the workshop, I need to let you guys go back and do your important work. But I really want to thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. Thank you very much for being here.

ADAM LEVINE: Thank you so much, Sarah.

DAVE POLATTY: Thank you.

MICHAEL MARX: Thanks.

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