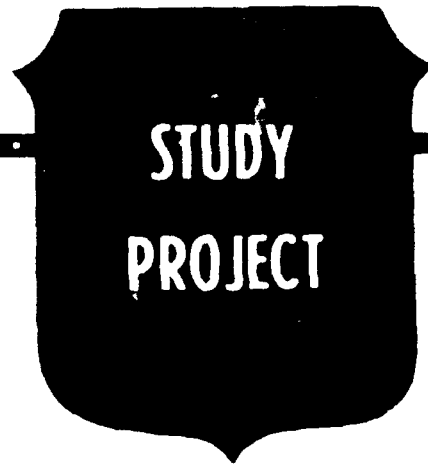


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THE CHAPLAIN MISSION IN A DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

BY

CHAPLAIN (LIEUTENANT COLONEL) JOHN A. FLASKA, JR.
United States Army

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THE CHAPLAIN MISSION IN A DEPARTMENT
OF THE ARMY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Abstract

AUTHOR: Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) John A. Flaska, Jr.
TITLE: The Chaplain Mission in a Department of the Army
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This paper examines the responsibilities of a chaplain participating in a Crisis Response Team, focusing on the chaplain's roles as staff officer and pastoral care provider. It describes the scenario, team mission, and team composition in response to the Gander Air Tragedy. The paper includes perceptions of Canadian officials, clergy, and citizens about the chaplain's mission. It provides conclusions and recommendations potentially valuable to the Army in defining the chaplain mission in support of future responses.

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the mission of a chaplain staff officer participating in a crisis response team at Headquarters, Department of Army level, such as that dispatched to Gander, Newfoundland, December 1985, when an aircraft disaster took the lives of soldiers and civilian aircraft crew members. It represents the experiences and learning of its author who was the chaplain team member dispatched to Gander. Because practically no literature treats the chaplain's role either at Gander or with such a response team, the author hopes that this description will provide the Chaplaincy and the Army some foundation for doctrine and training to assist a chaplain assigned this responsibility.

The paper presents the Gander response scenario and discusses the Crisis Response Team mission and personnel structure. It treats the chaplain's responsibilities as staff officer and pastoral care provider during the mission. It provides Canadian citizens' perceptions about the chaplain's activities. Finally, it will provide conclusions related to the type of chaplain best suited to serve on a Crisis Response Team and recommendations valuable to selecting and equipping a chaplain for this critically important duty.

CHAPTER 1

SCENARIO

When least expected, tragedy strikes.

In the early morning hours of 12 December, a jetliner laden with Screaming Eagle soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) began its takeoff roll from Gander International Airport, Newfoundland, Canada. The flight originated in Cairo, Egypt; its destination Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Spirits were high. The soldiers' hearts were filled with pride, with anticipation and with joy. Pride in knowing that they had accomplished a very, very tough mission and very important mission in the very finest tradition. Anticipation in knowing that within a few hours they would be reunited with families and friends in this "Sweet Land of Liberty." Joy at being healthy, alive and able to celebrate the specialness of the Christmas season at home and with loved ones.

Approximately two minutes into the flight, suddenly, inexplicably, and cruelly, the aircraft crashed, and all personnel on board, 248 soldiers from Task Force 3rd of the 502d and a flight crew of 10, perished. The enormity of this tragedy is without precedent in the annals of military history....The disbelief, the shocks, the anger and the grief associated with this tragic loss of life have been felt and shared throughout this post, our surrounding communities, throughout the entire nation and the world.¹

That same disbelief, shock, and grief marred the strikingly handsome, always jovial face of then Chief of Chaplains, Major General Patrick J. Hessian, as very early that duty day he entered the chaplain and civilian personnel pool work area. He confidentially mentioned an unconfirmed report of disaster and instructed the chaplains to prepare to take required action on confirmation.

Within one-half hour that confirmation was made and the Army was forming a Crisis Response Team for rapid departure to

Gander under the direction of the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. The Chief of Chaplains would assign a chaplain team member. Due to an off-site Chaplain Council of Colonels Conference, only two chaplains were on duty at the Pentagon. Christmas being so imminent, the unmarried chaplain would serve as team member. Two hours were allotted team members to don the battle dress uniform, prepare for an undetermined period of absence, and report to Andrews Air Force Base Operations where the team would assemble for immediate departure.

As are all short-fuzed missions, this was a "come-as-you-are" operation. Therefore, the chaplain had to determine very quickly military, religious, and civilian items he would require during an indeterminate period of time at a remote location. Specific instructions indicated that the Battle Dress would be the uniform for the operation. However, as will be described later in this paper, various activities the chaplain performed called more appropriately for the Class A Green Uniform. At times, civilian informal and casual dress would have been appropriate. Chaplains whose assignments include the possibility of being alerted for this type mission should be prepared to include this clothing variety in their baggage. The temperature and climate during December in Newfoundland indicated the need for cold weather gear. The instructions indicated that such gear would be provided. Indeed, such equipment was aboard the aircraft. Still, a team member would be wise to bring personal protective clothing. It is imperative that the chaplain bring

his Field Kit, small Bibles or New Testaments, a book of appropriate spiritual prayers for the deceased, and selected resource materials for sermons or memorial services.

ENDNOTE

1. Barry J. Sottak, "Introduction," in The Gander Air Crash: Unit Ministry Team Responses During a Crisis, ed. by Larry D. Call and Douglas L. Carver, p. iii.

CHAPTER 2

MISSION AND PERSONNEL

Mission

When all Crisis Response Team members assembled at Andrews Air Force Base Operations, the Team Director and senior American military officer, the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Major General John S. Crosby, immediately provided them his mission guidance. Critical elements of diplomacy and international, Canadian-United States, relations dictated that each team member thoroughly understand the mission, communicate it clearly, and conduct all activities in consonance with the mission guidance.

General Crosby recognized the imperative to ensure that all team members project a correct perception of our mission. He realized that people judge a society and its intentions on the basis of that segment of the society which they observe. The Canadian authorities were clearly in charge of recovering and identifying the remains of all crash victims. Americans were definitely not attempting to assume that responsibility, and must be acutely diligent not to communicate any perception of intent to do so. It must be clear that our mission would nurture trust and confidence that team members were present to assist and provide any required support to the Canadians.¹

General Crosby, reflecting on his comments that fateful morning, said,

I wanted the team members to focus constantly on our mission. I wanted everyone to understand that our mission was to offer our assistance. We were to help and support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Government of Canada in the recovery operation. Because the accident occurred in a foreign country, I wanted the victims remains to be returned to the United States as soon as possible. I wanted the remains returned to United States soil before Christmas.²

A team member remembers particular elements of the General's guidance and mission statement.

General Crosby emphasized that we must refer to our presence exclusively as a "Crisis Response Team." No team member should ever associate our mission with the term investigation. Our purpose in going to Gander was to assist the Canadian Government in any manner deemed appropriate, the extent of that assistance to be determined when we arrive. To preclude the possibility of team members making conflicting or inopportune statements, only the team's Public Affairs Officer would provide information or media news releases.³

Initially, then, the overwhelming responsibility of the team was to establish relationships enhancing a cooperative atmosphere between Canadian and United States authorities conducive to formulation of agreements expediting return of the remains to the United States. According to International and Canadian Law, the Canadian Government could exercise exclusive control over recovery, identification, and release of the remains. Each team member must be prepared to render assistance within the member's area of expertise and competency as requested by the Canadian authorities. During the flight to Gander, General Crosby spoke individually with each team member regarding the member's potential contribution to mission accomplishment, opening channels of communication and reinforcing his intent.

Crisis Response Team Composition

The Crisis Response Team was specifically tailored to accomplish the mission while involving the absolute minimum number of personnel to avert any Canadian perception that United States authorities intended to assume control of operations.

MG John Crosby, ADCSPER, is the senior US Military Officer at Gander. He arrived there at 1500 EST 12 Dec 85 with an eleven man team including: 4 pathologists, 3 morticians, ID experts, a chaplain, and representatives from Office of Legislative Liaison, Army Public Affairs, and ODCSPER. MG Crosby also has at his disposal 45 US Navy personnel from the United States Naval Station at Argentia which is about 200 miles from Gander.⁴

The United States Navy support team had arrived at Gander prior to the Crisis Response Team. General Crosby released the Navy personnel that same evening so that a minimal United States presence would reinforce the United States intent of only assisting the Canadian authorities.

Shortly after midnight, five senior Noncommissioned Officer technical experts chosen "by name" from the United States Army Recovery Team, Fort Lee, Virginia, augmented by a detachment from the 16th Field Service Company, Fort Lee, Virginia, and two officers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, arrived to form the nucleus of a team ready to assist the Canadian authorities on their request.

...arrived in Gander, Newfoundland at 0100. We were briefed at 0130, 13 December 1985....It was learned at this time, that due to the international scope of the operation U.S. Forces did not immediately participate in the recovery. The Canadian Forces were recovering the remains from the crash-site. Due to the political climate, we were instructed to stand fast until further information became available.⁵

The Recovery Team and detachment personnel maintained a low profile, remaining within a Canadian Defense Forces Barracks at Gander.

The soldiers remained in the Canadian Defense Forces Barracks to avoid any appearance of an overwhelming United States Military presence. This action prevented the soldiers being seen in local places of entertainment. It, furthermore, supported the United States Military determination to maintain proper military bearing and courtesy in conjunction with this very sensitive and potentially traumatic mission.⁶

Conclusion

This initial concept of Crisis Response Team operations at Gander emphasized concerted diplomatic, political activities of all team members to build an international relationship between Canadian and United States authorities, a relationship marked by United States assistance and eventual return of the remains to their homeland. "The chaplain's interaction on all levels of the mission increased that nurturing of relationships."⁷

This chapter gives deliberately detailed attention to the mission, personnel, and their disposition because these factors have a profound effect on the team chaplain's function as staff officer and his intentionality in a very unique ministry. The following two chapters will describe the chaplain's activities in support of these major responsibilities.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with Christopher T. Klein, LTC (Ret), formerly with U.S. Army Office of Chief of Legislative Liaison, at time of the Gander Tragedy, Silver Spring (MD), 13 December 1990.

2. Interview with John S. Crosby, LTG (Ret), formerly Army Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at time of the Gander Tragedy, Alexandria (VA), 13 December 1990.

3. Interview with Klein.

4. Chief of Staff, Army, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, subject: MFO Air Crash--Information Memorandum 1, 13 December 1985.

5. Charles W. Gerlach, After Action Report, Air Crash - DC-8, Arrow-Air, p. 3.

6. Interview with Klein.

7. Interview with Klein.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPLAIN STAFF OFFICER ACTIVITIES

Army Regulation 165-1 affirms, "Chaplains are special staff officers and serve on both the personal and special staff of the commander. They will have direct access to the commander."¹

Advisory Role

General Crosby exercised command leadership by placing high premium on the advice and observations of his staff officers and directing the staff members to acquit responsibilities on his behalf at the lowest possible levels of interface. This leadership style was absolutely most appropriate in this situation where any perception of United States authorities trying to wrestle away Canadian authority must be avoided.

General Crosby never portrays a bravado personality. He directed that his people establish liaisons with their Canadian counterparts and never gave the impression that he was controlling.²

There was never a need for the chaplain to request access to General Crosby. Constant, personal interaction with General Crosby marked the chaplain's and all staff members' functioning on his behalf.

It was imperative that I regularly send the facts back to Washington. I used everyone to provide their views about the operation. I considered the doctor, operations officer, legislative expert, Master Sergeant Howard, the entire team as a sounding board keeping me informed. Most have keen feelings, are able to analyze what they've heard. I considered all team members key players and used to being involved with sensitive issues. I absolutely relied on the chaplain's and doctor's advice, and that provided by Major General Moore at Headquarters, Department of the Army, and by

the State Department. I assembled the staff each day prior to my daily telephonic report to the Army Operations Center. I had to be certain that I was sending the facts back.³

While still aboard the aircraft enroute to Gander, the chaplain explained to General Crosby that particular religious groups have unique requirements associated with the treatment of decedants' remains. The regulation tasks the chaplain with advising "the commander and staff" about "information on emerging or unfamiliar religious groups within the command."⁴ In fact, Jewish civilian personnel were aboard the destroyed airliner. Because events transpired allowing expeditious transfer of remains to Dover Air Force Base Morgue, the question of Jewish prohibition of autopsy did not become an issue at Gander. However, this issue had to be addressed later by the chaplain at the Dover Morgue. Had the Canadian Government reserved the right to complete definitive identification and processing of remains prior to transfer to the Dover Morgue, General Crosby may have required the chaplain's support as a religious spokesman, or in conjunction with local religious ministers, to emphasize the importance of observing Jewish religious prohibition against conducting autopsy.

Interaction With Local Civilian Community

On arrival at Gander every member of the Crisis Response Team, identified by the United States military uniform, was besieged by an overwhelming expression of sympathy from members of the local community. The chaplain, accustomed to expressions of deep, personal feelings and to making appropriate, discrete

responses, became the focal point for dealing with such situations. The sympathy expressed and empathy for relatives and friends of the deceased formed a bonding of spirits between the citizens of Gander and the United States Military, especially families at Fort Campbell, which will endure. These relationships which the chaplain formed enabled him to become a valuable source of information to General Crosby regarding Canadian civilian attitudes and positions relative to the United States intent to expeditiously transfer the remains to their native land, a valuable instrument in accomplishing this task. This relationship with local civilians soon translated the chaplain mission into an ideal posture for relationships with the Gander Community leadership.

The chaplain became increasingly a formal conduit to the Community of Gander. His presence opened the possibility of gaining the support of Gander Citizens for a Canadian-United States network of goodwill and cooperation to get the remains back on United States soil before Christmas.⁵

This role of the chaplain impressed one team member who commented,

The presence of a chaplain showed the citizens of Gander how much we cared. It showed our degree of caring. It communicated a real message to the people of Gander. The chaplain could approach the City Fathers of Gander more easily because the General's position might have been considered intimidating.⁶

This evolving relationship with the populace and community officials developed into more formal social and religious interaction between the Gander Community and the United States representatives present at Gander which will be treated in the following section.

Community Memorial Service at Gander

Army Regulation 165-1 tasks the chaplain to "coordinate, integrate, and supervise all chaplain activities, religious services, ministries, or observance..." and to

Establish and maintain liaison with staff chaplains of higher, equal, and subordinate headquarters, the other military services, Government agencies, the armed forces of allied nations, and officials of civilian churches and other religious organizations.⁷

The Mayor of Gander in coordination with the Gander Ministerial Association organized a Memorial Service for Victims of Air Tragedy, Thursday, December 12, 1985, Gander, Newfoundland, at St. Martin's Pro-Cathedral, Gander, Newfoundland, Sunday, December 15, 1985, 1400. Far beyond being merely an expression of the Gander Community's desire to express its wishes and sympathy to the victims' families and loved ones, the memorial service developed into an international expression of common mourning over the loss of American soldiers.

As would be expected, the ministers of Gander (Anglican, Pentecostal, Baptist, Salvation Army, United Church, and Roman Catholic) had prominent parts in the service. However, in attendance was Lieutenant Governor Anthony B. Paddon, representing Her Majesty the Queen of England. Providing messages during the service were: His Worship, D.B. Sheppard, Mayor of Gander; the Honorable John Butt, representing the Newfoundland Government; the Honorable John C. Crosbie, representing the Canadian Government; Ambassador Thomas Niles and Major General Crosby, representing the United States Government.⁸

As proscribed by regulation, General Crosby tasked the team chaplain with coordinating with the Mayor and Ministerial Association of Gander United States Military participation in the service. The United States Ambassador to Canada's participation was probably arranged by the officer from the Office of the Chief of Legislative Liaison or at Department of State level. The chaplain, however, was responsible to plan and coordinate General Crosby's participation and the service of a United States Army soldier as color bearer for the American flag, and himself provide a closing prayer.

General Crosby commented,

The chaplain's role with the Gander Ministerial Alliance was very proper and important in obtaining community influencers and garnering their support. I considered my participation in the memorial service of paramount importance. The situation paralleled that of General Maxwell Thurman when he assumed command of the United States Southern Command. A devout Roman Catholic, General Thurman attended Mass, his first Sunday in Panama, in a civilian Panamanian parish. In doing so, he energized the local community. He demonstrated "what you're there for," supporting the community. We were in Gander to support. We weren't there in charge. All of us had to create that impression and all of us needed to participate. We needed to use all our resources to make that clear.⁹

The chaplain met with the entire Ministerial Association to determine their expectations of United States involvement in the memorial service. The soldier requested to serve as American Color Bearer was chosen from the detachment from Fort Lee, Virginia. A United States Navy liaison seaman at Gander instructed the soldier in Canadian customs during religious services to ensure proper protocol.

General Crosby instructed the chaplain to meet with the Mayor of Gander to ascertain the names and positions of Canadian dignitaries participating. The chaplain would also negotiate with the Mayor for transportation to and from the memorial service and formal reception immediately following, and for a RCMP escort and security party. The Mayor committed himself to these requests. However, the transportation was provided by prominent Gander citizens without the requested escort or security. General Crosby directed, "Do what the Canadians want done."¹⁰

Team members recognized that the chaplain was building a relationship with the Gander civilian community and "advised that the chaplain had the required sensitivity to prepare statements in harmony with the spirit of the Gander population."¹¹

General Crosby wanted the chaplain to prepare his message for the memorial service. The chaplain had been assimilated into the community, (and) was more sensitive. He was already aware of what the community perceptions were. General Crosby's position was, by its very nature, very formal. The General's comments would be perceived as official comments of the United States.¹²

The memorial service was conducted in the largest church in Gander, filled to capacity. A closed-circuit, televised program of the service was simultaneously broadcast to another church, also filled to capacity. The Gander Community was unanimous in its desire to share with the Fort Campbell Community in mourning this tragic loss. The Mayor of Gander sent Fort Campbell a videotape of the memorial service to demonstrate Gander's

empathy and personally visited Fort Campbell to express Gander's sympathy. National and international coverage of the memorial service was restricted to the church's exterior. The Crisis Response Team's media relations will be treated in the following section.

I followed the chaplain's advice in handling the church ceremony. It represented the United States and demanded proper protocol. It was important that it be done right; and we did.¹³

Contact With News Media

Initial and subsequent contacts with media personnel verified the critical need for exercising extreme caution in such contacts. The team commander emphasized that the delicate nature of our mission required that only an official spokesman, providing totally accurate information, discreetly and sensitively expressed, should provide news releases. Team members were to refer all news media requests to the Team Public Affairs Officer. The wisdom of this guidance became immediately apparent in relation to the inappropriate conduct and total insensitivity of media personnel in their news-gathering methodology.

As the team departed Andrews Air Force Base Operations building to board the aircraft to Gander, representatives of the media were confined behind barriers on the aircraft parking ramp to photograph the departure. Upon the approach of team members, the media persons unleashed a barrage of shouted questions. When no answers appeared forthcoming, one shouted, "Smile for the camera."

On arrival in Gander, media representatives were not permitted in the reception area at the airport. One female reporter was apparently able to avoid these restrictions and casually attempted to make contact with team members without identifying herself as a reporter. The chaplain used a pay telephone to contact his officer for specific information related to religious requirements pertaining to processing the remains. He suddenly realized that a boom-microphone was being extended over the telephone booth to capture his conversation.

The media representatives were not permitted access to the aircraft crash site or to the morgue located in an aircraft hanger at the airport. RCMP detected media personnel attempting to infiltrate the restricted area around the crash site and escorted them away. Under cover of darkness, they discovered another media team, which had gained access to the airfield area, attempting to photograph the remains and processing operations through a skylight in the hanger roof.

Media members made various requests for an interview with the chaplain. Later in the operation, the Public Affairs Officer arranged the availability of the chaplain for interview. The media representatives were no longer interested in conducting the interview at that point. They had already photographed various activities of the chaplain, however, providing their own editorialized description of his activity. Although their

assumptions described were inaccurate, the statements were positive in nature.

A chaplain serving on a Crisis Response Team must be well prepared to conduct his activities in an appropriate manner in the actual situation and to provide articulate, measured responses in an arranged interview. The Gander operation occurred in an environment politically, religiously, and socially like the United States. Even in such a friendly environment, there arose various opportunities for embarrassing media pitfalls. It is conceivable that future operations could be required in less friendly circumstances, lands with totally different political, religious, and social customs. A chaplain must be familiar with these factors, conduct any interviews taking them into account, and ensure that his activities provide no cause for offense worldwide. The media may be observing and recording his actions without the chaplain being aware.

Internal Chaplain Coordination

The chaplain made contact with the chaplain member of the Headquarters, Department of the Army, response team at Dover awaiting the arrival of remains. Initially, there was no agreement between the Canadian and United States Governments for releasing the remains. However, when that agreement enabled the transfer of remains, the chaplain coordinated each departure with the chaplain at Dover to ensure chaplain readiness for ceremonies or religious services to be conducted on their arrival.

Conclusions

The team chaplain exercised critical staff responsibilities with grave international, diplomatic, and political, as well as military, implications. He did so, simultaneously providing pastoral care.

As the following chapter will illustrate his roles of staff officer and pastoral care provider became intertwined and very effectively complemented each other.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, Army Regulation 165-1, p. 8 (hereafter referred to as "AR 165-1").
2. Interview with Christopher T. Klein, LTC (Ret), formerly with U.S. Army Office of Chief of Legislative Liaison at time of the Gander Tragedy, Silver Spring (MD), 13 December 1990.
3. Interview with John S. Crosby, LTG (Ret), formerly Army Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at time of the Gander Tragedy, Alexandria (VA), 13 December 1990.
4. AR 165-1, p. 8.
5. Interview with Klein.
6. Interview with Douglas L. Howard, MSG (Ret), Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center, Alexandria (VA), 12 December 1990.
7. AR 165-1, pp. 8-9.
8. Memorial Service For Victims of Air Tragedy. Service Brochure. Gander: Gander Ministerial Association, 12 December 1985.
9. Interview with Klein.
10. Interview with Klein.

11. Interview with Klein.
12. Interview with Klein.
13. Interview with Klein.
14. Interview with Klein.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPLAIN PASTORAL CARE ACTIVITIES

Shortly after the team's arrival at Gander, the chaplain met with the United States Navy chaplain accompanying the Navy personnel from Argentina. He advised the team chaplain that the party from Argentina would be returning to their base in a few moments. He stated that no United States military personnel were permitted to enter the crash site or the provisional morgue at the airport.

At approximately the same time, Canadian authorities escorted General Crosby to the crash site for his observation. There was no provision for any other team members to enter the site.

The Canadian Government was in charge, responsible for the entire operation. At the outset we had no idea of the problems we might encounter, all sorts of suspicions. Various politicians seemed to be protecting their legitimate interests: transportation aspects, police, fire, rescue. Not everyone can be in charge. The Canadians assiduously protected the integrity of the crash site. The RCMP began the initial rescue procedure. The Canadian Aviation Safety Board investigator took charge. RCMP, assisted by members of the Canadian Defense Force began the recovery of remains.¹

The chaplain believed that it would be appropriate to provide religious rites over the remains both at the crash-site and at the provisional morgue. He made this known.

It is important to note uncertainty among team members regarding the function of a chaplain in this operation. Pathologists, not permitted to enter the crash-site or morgue, were meeting at the hotel, expressing their frustrations and planning courses of action for beginning their operations. One asked the chaplain, "Why are you along on this operation? Do they think we're going to crack?"² The pathologists had conducted similar previous mass-casualty tragedies, some at Jonestown and Tenerife, without chaplain support to the initial crisis response.

A team member learned that a Canadian Defense Force chaplain stationed on a ship berthed at St. Johns, Newfoundland, had requested and secured his commander's authorization to travel to Gander and assist with the recovery operation. He was spending the night actually working side-by-side with members of the Canadian recovery team.

The following morning, the chaplain arranged a meeting with the Canadian chaplain who secured authorization for a United States chaplain to enter the crash site to provide rites to the deceased. The Canadian chaplain escorted the United States chaplain throughout the site.

In support of religious pluralism, the chaplain provided different prayers over the remains appropriate to the three major

faith groups: Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic. Later, he likewise did so over the remains at the morgue.

Ministry of Presence

United States Army chaplains are accustomed to being vitally involved with soldiers during operations. In fact, Army Regulation 165-1 provides that:

Chaplains will contribute to the spiritual well-being of soldiers and families of the command by developing a pastoral relationship with members of the command by taking part in command activities, ...visiting soldiers during duty and off-duty hours...being available to all individuals, families, and the command for pastoral activities and spiritual assistance.³

Consistent with the normal relationship a chaplain shares with his soldiers, the chaplain extended himself to the RCMP and Canadian Defense Force personnel involved in the recovery and identification process. These personnel were near exhaustion after more than twenty-four hours involvement in the stressful, tedious, potentially traumatizing recovery duty. They responded to the chaplain precisely as a soldier would with his own unit chaplain. A definite bonding in the immensity of this tragedy occurred.

Unlike the opportunity to physically assist our soldiers in their work, the chaplain could only serve these individuals in a spiritually supporting mode. The chaplain had to exercise extreme caution in not being involved in the actual handling of

remains, as yet a Canadian prerogative, or disturbing the integrity of the crash-site.

The chaplain's role was not limited to United States Forces, but involved outreach to RCMP, Canadian soldiers at the morgue and at the crash-site, and with the civilian community.⁴

Subsequent to this initial visit to the morgue and the crash-site, the chaplain no longer required access permission. In fact, the Canadians seemed to sincerely appreciate and value his presence. It felt as though he really belonged to their team.

Chaplain linkage provided a gradual reinforcement of the notion that Americans were there to assist, not take charge. General Crosby gained the confidence of the RCMP. Each day we became gradually more involved with the RCMP in providing professional courtesies.⁵

The value of the chaplain's interaction with the Canadian authorities not only provided a ministry of presence to those acquitting a very gruesome task, but also built Canadian trust in United States' intentions. It furnished the foundation for a cooperative spirit between the Canadians and United States Military personnel who would soon be working together in the identification effort.

The RCMP personnel seemed to display feelings of mistrust toward the intentions of United States personnel. The Canadians felt their professionalism was being questioned. The chaplain provided a communication link between the RCMP and the American Military. We were there to do the best and not awaken any mistrust or animosity. The chaplain's interaction with the Canadians helped in transitioning our people into the identification effort and helped mutual professionalism grow.⁶

During this same period the chaplain periodically visited United States soldiers quartered at the Canadian Defense Force Base, who were as yet not engaged in the recovery and identification of remains.

The chaplain visited the soldiers at the Canadian Defense Force Barracks and kept them informed about the situation: why they were waiting, why they were not involved. He kept their spirits up. Everyone was betraying a sensitivity that the Americans were in an aggressive role. The RCMP were proud of their professionalism. The Canadian Defense Force Commander felt it best that our soldiers remain on his installation and avoid the perception of a tremendous influx of United States personnel. Our patience paid off. We developed a close personal and professional relationship with Mr. Pittman, the Gander Airport Manager, and with Lieutenant Colonel McClain.⁷

Major General Crosby had requested, December 13, that the Canadian authorities release the remains to United States custody. December 15, the Canadian Government granted Doctor McMeekin, a United States Army Pathologist, a Canadian Medical License empowering him to sign death certificates. A Canadian Pathologist, Doctor Elcombe, arrived at Dover to observe the identification/autopsy of remains. These agreements enabled United States Military personnel to join the RCMP in the identification procedures at Gander. The first flight bearing remains departed Gander at 1317 hours, December 16.⁸

Canadian authorities were willing to accept our resources because of our experience. They realized that it had become an international media event. Considering the number of remains, the length of time to process, the destroyed medical records, and probably the impossibility of identifying some remains, it might be embarrassing to the government.⁹

Civic Memorial Services having been completed, the chaplain was free to devote undivided attention to pastoral care for United States soldiers and RCMP at the morgue.

The chaplain's accessibility to soldiers was very important. Soldiers talk to a chaplain. The chaplain makes a valued contribution to a commander. Information relayed through a chaplain is taken as gospel. He provides an accurate assessment of command climate on a mission. I was especially concerned about female soldiers. It was depressing. I saw grim sights in Viet Nam. This was as bad as anything I saw in Nam. It was bound to have influence on the soldiers.¹⁰

During the long hours spent with the RCMP and soldiers, the chaplain dealt with many questions pertaining to death, this tragedy, its impact on families, and religious matters born of the individuals' personal faith commitments.

The soldiers approached the chaplain not only to satisfy their religious needs. They also wanted a friend, a sounding board. They will always talk to a chaplain, if to no one else. It enhances our operation when the chaplain answers questions. He puts the soldiers at ease.¹¹

In fact, one very significant question pertained to a tragic mistake severely hampering their identification efforts:

One of the many frustrations we faced in processing identification of remains was the destruction of the victims' medical and dental records which were aboard the same flight. A very forceful message must be sent that soldiers and their records never be transported on the same plane.¹²

Dr. McMeekin, basing his comments on numerous experiences recovering remains at aircraft crash-sites and conducting autopsies, affirms the value of chaplain support to such

operations, while reflecting on chaplain activities both at Gander and Dover.

The chaplains did a tremendous job. It clarified in my own mind the difference between the psychological and chaplain approach. I would seek out Chaplain Corps support. The role of religious and medical figures depends on the person's personality. Technical competence helps not at all, if the support person cannot relate.

In the past, I have observed individuals in our work who have required intervention; macho figures eventually acting-out; a mature, physically active male buying a motorcycle and operating it in a risky fashion; scrapes with the law; driving under the influence of alcohol; snuggling a teddy-bear on airplane flights, making jokes about it, but this is clearly not normal behavior. If we do things right, however, our people won't need interventions.

Psychiatrists suggest that recovery and identification of remains may have long-term effects on behavior. One psychiatrist came in our morgue during operations, declaring "We're here to help you." He, then, threw up.

The chaplains at Dover were involved and related well with the troops. The chaplain would notice a kid standing off by himself, with a glassy-eyed, shell-shocked stare, and talk with him. Everyone experienced this sort of feeling after three or so days. Some experience nightmares or bed-wetting. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of letting the troops talk about it. The chaplain has an easier entree; the chaplain is less threatening. Without the opportunity to talk with a chaplain, we just keep the troops in formation and march on.

At previous crash-sites it was not readily apparent whether civilian clergy supported our operation. On one occasion a civilian rabbi, at Tenerife, provided guidance pertaining to Jewish religious prohibitions against autopsy of remains. Last rites may have been provided by civilian clergy.¹³

These comments prompt a comparison of the initial response to the tragedy which had a chaplain team member, with a

subsequent recovery mission to Gander, January 6, 1986,¹⁴ which did not have a chaplain team member.

It was a mistake not to include a chaplain in the return to Gander; it would have been important that the chaplain who ministered to the soldiers in the initial search and recovery operation would have ministered again. It is good to have present someone not living and breathing continually the responsibility of dealing with death and dying.

We sent one soldier home on the second operation. I don't know whether he was homesick or his presence was needed. Nevertheless, a casualty of the operation, he returned on the next plane. He was in promotable status. I discovered that he was not later promoted. Possibly, his commander had him removed from the promotion list. I don't know if a chaplain's presence would have made a difference. But there was no chaplain present to assist him.

The soldiers know that you're (the chaplain) there for the troops. That's why there was a let-down in January.¹⁵

Another opportunity for chaplain support on the initial crisis response mission occurred when soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) arrived at Gander to return transfer cases bearing the remains to Dover. These somber soldiers were on the ground at Gander only a short time while their aircraft was being prepared to return to the United States. The chaplain spent time with them in the hanger snack bar at Gander Airport and, then, stood by as they placed the transfer cases aboard the aircraft.

The Chaplain's presence while the soldiers placed the transfer cases aboard the aircraft provided reassurance and support to these pall-bearers. These soldiers believed that's where you (the chaplain) belong. It confirmed their expectations of a chaplain's presence.¹⁶

Although these soldiers were not involved in a potentially traumatizing operation, the mass of casualties from their division and their acquaintance with some of the deceased soldiers made this an important moment for chaplain ministry.

Religious Services

Sunday, December 15, the chaplain provided three religious services for personnel related to the recovery and identification of remains.

Chaplains are required by law to provide religious services for members of the command to which they are assigned (10 USC 3547)....Chaplains are authorized to conduct denominational services as required by their respective faith groups.¹⁷

Because there were no chaplains of other denominations present, the chaplain, a Catholic, provided for religious pluralism.

Many, who would otherwise hesitate to attend religious services in a foreign country, found those services available.¹⁸

The chaplain scheduled Catholic Mass at the Barracks where soldiers awaited permission to assume their duties. He invited non-Catholic personnel to that portion of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, which would satisfy the need for General Protestant ministry. They would be free to leave the Mass prior to the particular Catholic Liturgy of the Eucharist.

At the provisional morgue in an airport hanger, the chaplain also provided religious services. On offering a Catholic Mass as provided at the barracks, the RCMP requested a non-denominational Christian service. The chaplain provided Mass and, then, conducted the non-denominational service which non-Catholic United States personnel also attended. The chaplain encouraged active lay participation as lectors by Canadian and United States personnel.

The Mass and religious service were important because of the stress. The soldiers had never seen something, a crisis, like this. They turned to the services because of their belief foundation. They felt great reassurance, and were collectively brought to support one another.¹⁹

The chaplain sensed that the religious services brought that same, deep spiritual bonding between the Canadian and United States personnel who participated.

Conclusion

The chaplain's program of intentional pastoral care and religious services provided to Canadian and United States personnel involved in potentially traumatizing operations seemed essential to satisfying personal human needs in such circumstances. Collaterally, it seemed to lay a foundation for closer cooperation between RCMP officials and soldiers now interacting on a deeper level of human relations.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with Robert R. McMeekin, M.D., COL, formerly Director, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, at time of the Gander Tragedy, Washington, DC, 12 December 1990.

2. Interview with Cherri Gaffney, M.D., at time of the Gander Tragedy MAJ, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Gander, 12 December 1985.

3. U.S. Department of the Army, Army Regulation 165-1, p. 7 (hereafter referred to as "AR 165-1").

4. Interview with Christopher T. Klein, LTC (Ret), formerly with U.S. Army Office of Chief of Legislative Liaison at time of the Gander Tragedy, Silver Spring (MD), 13 December 1990.

5. Interview with Klein.

6. Interview with Douglas L. Howard, MSG (Ret), Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center, Alexandria (VA), 12 December 1990.

7. Interview with John S. Crosby, LTG (Ret), formerly Army Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at time of the Gander Tragedy, Alexandria (VA), 13 December 1990.

8. U.S. Department of Defense, "Chronology of Key Events," Working Paper, Undated, located at Personnel Contingency Cell, Army Operations Center, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

9. Interview with McMeekin.

10. Interview with Crosby.

11. Interview with Howard.

12. Interview with Howard.

13. Interview with McMeekin.

14. U.S. Department of Defense, "Chronology of Key Events," Working Paper, Undated, Personnel Contingency Cell, Army Operations Center, located at Washington, D.C., p. 2.

15. Interview with Howard.

16. Interview with Klein.

17. AR 165-1, p. 7.

18. Interview with Howard.

19. Interview with Klein.

CHAPTER 5

CANADIAN PERCEPTIONS

In assessing the chaplain's value as a member of a Crisis Response Team, it is very important to consider the perceptions of the local authorities and citizens in the community where the Team operated. Gander civilian government officials, clergy, and RCMP members were quite candid in addressing this issue. Their input has special value because the chaplain's staff officer and pastoral care activities involved intense interaction with them, as described in the previous two chapters.

Speaking for other members of the Gander Ministerial Association, the church Rector where the Memorial Service was conducted described his feelings:

I think it essential that a chaplain was involved in the American military response to the tragedy. On the Canadian Base here, we have no chaplain. I come to provide chaplain ministry and Father Bromley cares for the Catholics.

After the crash, the Airport Manager alerted me. The Canadian Base commander asked that I stand-by in the event the crash victims' family members might come to Gander. I had no desire to go to the crash site. I don't feel disappointed that I was not asked to go to the site. I considered myself primarily a support person dealing with the anger, the feelings; being with people, those the victims left behind, the recovery workers.

When I heard that an American padre was there, I felt a sense of relief. The responsibility and pastoral care was there for their own personnel. If family members would come in the future, we would care for them.

Our community needed a focus. The Airport is something very personal to people. They experienced a personal hurt and pain even though they didn't know the victims. Seeing the soldiers in the Airport calling home, making purchases in the gift shop made it all so personal to Gander people. It becomes very personal. People could see the possibility of those soldiers being our own sons and daughters.1

The growing sentiment for Americans lost in the tragedy and their family members gave rise to the community-wide need to express their feelings resulting in a Memorial Service.

The Gander Ministerial Association very early-on sensed a need to give expression to the community feeling and to reach out to the victims' families. Christopher Wren, Ottawa representative of the New York Times, asked after the Sunday Morning Communion Service, "Why are the people of Gander so taken up?" Our hearts went out to the families; we got concerned. The clergy had already gathered. We wanted to let the families know that, although separated by time and space, we were together with them. I decided to provide the opportunity in our church, Gander's largest. The Town Council reproduced the Service brochure. Telephone calls came regarding dignitaries, politicians coming. We were afraid. I was responsible, I had to be faithful, responsible to myself. I was conscious of not allowing the Service to become a spectacle. I agreed with the Mayor on the proper decorum, the space available, and a limit to the number of news media people who could be there.

We felt that, when American officials came with their padre, he would be a part of the team.

The way it developed, I was delighted by people in the hierarchy of the American Military and the Ambassador. It was non-political; it was supportive, not a we-they, but a people in pain sharing their loss. We wanted the message to reach the people concerned. We were glad to share with anyone who would want to take part.

After we shared that expression, we had done all we could. If in the future families would come here, we would care for those who might come.2

The Pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church, Gander, and Vicar General of the Grand Falls Diocese, commented,

Had no American chaplain come to Gander, it would have been noticeable. I'm not going to say that he should have been Catholic or Protestant. It would simply have been noticed, if no chaplain came. It is a source of reassurance to some and it would have been strange without the chaplain's presence. In those tragic conditions, and given that the ambassador and generals participated in the Memorial Service. That Service went reasonably well. It united the Gander people in empathy with the Fort Campbell people.³

This interview resulted in one very important critical comment.

The only "fly-in-the-ointment," when the crash occurred, was that no one requested that Catholic last rites be given the crash victims. The airport telephoned my secretary asking that a priest be ready to care for family members who might come to Gander. I was unavailable, but a priest taking duty during my absence could have administered rites. I don't know whether a priest would be permitted into the crash site. But a family member, who later visited Gander, asked whether Catholic last rites had been administered, and I had to answer, "No." The airport should have requested that the priest come. The American chaplaincy could have notified us immediately on their hearing about the crash. When we were called, we didn't know whether too much time had elapsed to administer the sacraments.⁴

This issue constitutes a very important Chaplaincy responsibility to provide for the religious requirements for Catholic personnel.

The Mayor of Gander reinforced the perceptions of the local clergy in his appraisal of the chaplain's presence from the civilian community point of view.

I think that, during the first few days, the people were in a state of shock as the magnitude of the disaster impacted upon them. With the closeness of Christmas nobody was in a mood to celebrate. They were in a daze, particularly because the young soldiers did Christmas shopping at the Duty Free Shop.

That a military chaplain could be available showed that these young individuals killed were not treated as so many bodies in body-bags. It means a lot to relatives. It helped some relatives see that their deceased were being treated in a religious fashion. It means a lot to families and military people to know they have a chaplain serving soldiers.

The American chaplain had to deal with the community because the community had the problem, too. Tragedy brought out the best in people. They had to deal with the inevitability of death, the fact that it happened so quickly, the fact that the victims were so young. The disaster workers had trouble the first two or three nights, then seemed to come together with it. They seemed to gather strength from the chaplain's presence.

Two days after the crash, Friday night, the Ministerial Association contacted me regarding a Joint Memorial Service. The clergy were feeling helpless: what can we do, how? The American chaplain became involved with our clergy. Working with them, he showed that he had more than a vested interest, a PR interest. Everyone was feeling helpless. The Ministerial Association worked closely with the chaplain. As Mayor, I headed the protocol committee.

The Memorial Service deeply impressed our people and achieved a number of results. It helped the people deal with the reality of the disaster. The fact that an American Military chaplain could share in the service, coming together with various other denominations, served to emphasize the extended family from a Christian perspective. The chaplain's participation served to remind our citizens that these young soldiers were somebody's sons, daughters, husbands, brothers. The fact that they were Americans instead of Canadians made very little difference. After the Memorial Service, a part of the Christian culture and tradition, the people were more at ease with themselves. It enabled them to deal better with the disaster.

If a major tragedy, disaster were to occur in a civilian area, or under civilian control, I recommend that a chaplain should be present working closely with the civilian religious community. The chaplain filled a very important slot which could not be filled by local clergy. He had to be the linkage between the American Community and the local civilian community. In a coming together of the military and the civilian side, the chaplain is the person to provide that linkage and ecclesiastical connection.

The chaplain was involved on two tracks: the rescue workers were one track; the community needs were the other track. He was there all the time giving critical support, but reaching the community, too.

I think it an omission that no chaplain came on the American return to Gander. There should have been one visiting the soldiers on the site.⁵

A new media representative stated,

It impresses me that I remembered the American chaplain's presence. I consider it a worthwhile thing that a chaplain was part of the mission.

The tragedy had a certain family aspect. The chaplain's involvement had a place in it. The military seems like a family. The religious aspect of any family is important.⁶

The RCMP commanding officer of the recovery and identification operation placed high value on the chaplain's ministry of presence, support, and religious services provided RCMP personnel, saying,

The chaplain's presence at the crash site brought serenity to the overall picture. His being down there with them, our people knew the chaplain's presence. That presence gave our people support and it must have to other crash site personnel who were aware of the chaplain's posture.

At the morgue, all of our people working there said the chaplain's presence was something they really appreciated. What happened at the morgue was something they remember more than the operation. The religious service brought the situation into proper perspective. They were people dealing with a tragic situation; it really didn't hit home until the service. It brought a good feeling to those dealing with death, a great support.

A chaplain is really needed at a disaster scene. A psychiatrist or psychologist may be needed later, but immediate support was needed at the time. Some of our people still have an eerie, overwhelming feeling five years later on visiting the crash site.

Our people said they would feel totally free to talk with the American chaplain. They seem to attribute that in great measure to the personality of the chaplain. We never felt in any way that our professionalism was being questioned. The chaplain's being there had a calming effect, especially for many for whom this was the first time at such a disaster.⁷

The RCMP supervisor directing identification of remains in the morgue remarked,

I think it does not matter that an American chaplain was there, at least that a chaplain was there.

The fact of a religious service Sunday morning meant a lot. It didn't matter to me that the chaplain was RC or another denomination, merely the fact that the chaplain was there. It was a chance to reflect, to get your mind straight. Almost everyone came together for the religious service. It provided a break. It was important for us to get out to lunch, too, to get away from it for awhile.

It appears to me people are more inclined to turn to a priest rather than a psychologist or a psychiatrist. The chaplain was side-by-side with us. He saw what we saw, what we were doing. In a situation like that, everyone becomes united.

At the beginning we may have felt that the Americans thought we didn't know what we were doing. But, after some discussion, we formed teams and worked hand-in-hand and really discovered the benefits of working together. We formed a mutual understanding and

recognized one another's talents and had something to contribute to a mutual cause.⁸

Another RCMP member described the situation as,

Something that will always stay in your mind. It was marked by group pressure, over a considerable length of time. I found no differentiation between the American military and the Canadians.

The religious service got both together; it created a common bond. You were part of a team, not alone. Some have strong religious beliefs. Maybe, religious belief doesn't ordinarily come to the forefront. The service brought a tone to it. We were tired and cold. It gave us a break and time to wind down.

There should be more emphasis on a place set aside to talk with someone. One of our members had nightmares for about six months afterward.

In a major disaster, the chaplain is a minor player. He provides a secondary service. The chaplain should make sure people know where to reach him. He must be there when someone needs him.⁹

Although this respondent considered the chaplain a "minor player," a "secondary service," I understood this to mean a person in a supporting role, rather than a worker directly involved in the recovery and identification operation. His emphasis that there should be an office or "place set aside" indicates the value he places on having the opportunity to discuss his feelings, presumably with a chaplain, in a confidential setting designated for and advertised to workers needing counseling.

Another RCMP member focused his comments on the chaplain's value to victims' families and loved ones.

I thought it a nice gesture that an American chaplain was present. You've got 256 Americans there; it must have been comforting to their families. You don't usually think about things like that, but in crisis they tend to reflect more on it. They were all young men. I'm sure that it was comforting.10

Likewise, another RCMP member stated:

Personally, I thought it great to have the American chaplain there. The service went a long way to helping; it was very beneficial. Personally, I considered the chaplain an asset, a friend to everybody. Everyone enjoyed having the chaplain there. Anyone having another operation would want a chaplain there. He was needed and welcome.11

Perhaps more conclusive in describing the deep bonding of Canadians and Crisis Response Team members than these interviews are events and evidence transpiring over the last 5 years. The Mayor of Gander has himself visited Fort Campbell expressing his community's solidarity with the bereaved. He has graciously hosted family members and American military officials visiting Gander. The town has erected a memorial to the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air-Assault), the "Silent Witnesses," at the crash site. Officers of the Division participated in the dedication ceremony. Letters from American congressmen, governors, and family members adorn the walls of the Town Hall. The Gander Masonic Lodge is raising funds to build a senior citizen residence dedicated to the "Fallen Eagles." RCMP members have maintained frequent correspondence with Crisis Response Team members. These facts, as well as the interview responses, verify General Crosby's comment, "The United States Army did a

magnificent job."12 All evidence indicates the chaplain played an important role.

Conclusions

Every interview of American and Canadian respondents requested comments pertaining to what the chaplain did well, what mistakes the respondent considered he made, and what he might have done better. All responses reflected very positively on the chaplain's duty performance.

Two responses are important for the future: the Catholic Pastor's advice that the staff chaplain at the Headquarters assigned the crisis response notify the Catholic priest, military or civilian, closest to the disaster to provide Catholic sacramental ministry, and that a secure, publicized location or room be established for counselling disaster workers.

ENDNOTES

1. Interview with James Reid, Reverend Rector, St. Martin's Pro-Cathedral, Gander: 16 January 1991.
2. Interview with Reid.
3. Interview with Edward T. Bromley, Reverend Monsignor, Pastor, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Gander, and Vicar General, Grand Falls Diocese, St. John's: 17 January 1991.
4. Interview with Bromley.
5. Interview with Douglas B. Sheppard, His Worship, Mayor, Gander: 15 January 1991.

6. Interview with Edward Pike, Host Producer of the Morning Show, Canadian Broadcasting Company, Gander: 16 January 1991.
7. Interview with Joseph E. McGuire, Superintendent, Officer Commanding Gander Sub-division, RCMP, Gander: 16 January 1991.
8. Interview with J.L. (John) Ryan, S/Sgt, B Division, RCMP, Forensic Identification Coordinator/Identification Specialist, St. John's: 17 January 1991.
9. Interview with Calvin W. Smith, Corporal, NCOIC, Gander Identification Section, RCMP, Gander: 16 January 1991.
10. Interview with J.R. (Dick) Corcoran, Constable, St. John's S/D Drug Section, RCMP, St. John's: 18 January 1991.
11. Interview with Robert E. Vokey, Sergeant, Detachment Commander, Ferryland, RCMP, St. John's: 18 January 1991.
12. Interview with John S. Crosby, LTG, USA (Ret), formerly Army Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at time of the Gander Tragedy, Alexandria (VA): 13 December 1990.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as the United States Army War College motto indicates the need during peacetime to plan for war to protect that peace, so must the Military Services, while making every effort to ensure the safe transportation of service members, be prepared to respond to crises involving mass casualties. As the forces are down-sized and forward deployment of forces becomes more limited, the requirement for rapid, mass movement of forces becomes more critical. The current deployment of forces to the Persian Gulf could prove to be a mere foreshadowing of future deployments in response to worldwide contingency operations. Such deployments and combat operations escalate the risk of mass casualty and the need for preparedness to respond.

This paper describes a response made to a United States tragedy in a nation marked by a democratic form of government, a common language, similar religious values, similar social customs, and by alliances with the United States. In essence, should a tragedy occur, it could not have happened under circumstances more favorable to international cooperation in the identification and recovery of remains. Nevertheless, as described, United States authorities had to exercise delicate, judicious sensitivity in all diplomatic operations with the Canadian authorities and people.

Conceivably, such a tragedy could occur in a nation with a far different form of government, with radically different religious and social customs, and a very tenuous relationship with the United States. The need for special preparedness becomes, then, compounded.

Should a mass casualty tragedy involving United States Army soldiers occur in the United States or its territories, the senior Army commander of the nearest installation, activity, or of the Continental United States Army within which the tragedy took place, would be the appropriate official to respond. Likewise, in nations with high concentrations of United States Army personnel, such as Germany, the senior United States Army commander would be the appropriate official. These senior Army commanders would already have a working relationship with military and civilian officials of the indigenous governments and be in the position most favorable to achieving United States aims in relation to the crisis. In response to tragedies involving Army personnel in other nations, a United States Army general officer representing Headquarters, Department of the Army, would be best apt to achieve United States goals in conjunction with the mass casualty. In any case, the responsible officer would dispatch a Crisis Response Team to the scene. The description of the Gander incident clarifies the need for a team chaplain.

Qualities Required of a Team Chaplain

The team chaplain must be sufficiently mature in the Chaplaincy to understand his roles as chaplain staff officer and chaplain for soldiers experiencing potentially trauma-inducing duties. The chaplain must possess the prerequisite common sense to understand the mission and be alert to its diplomatic, religious, social, political, and media aspects. The chaplain must know how to function as a staff officer while simultaneously conducting a program of pastoral care tailored toward soldiers active in a potentially traumatizing operation.

The decision to select a chaplain most appropriate for rendering pastoral care to soldiers involved in recovery and identification of remains found at the crash-site is not an easy one.

I would wrestle within myself about how to select the right kind of chaplain. Different chaplains may see their role in life as different. Would the spiffy and shiny chaplain be best qualified, or the one in the trenches with the troops? I don't know. Probably either one. I doubt that the troops will come out seeking the chaplain. The chaplain must extend himself/herself without being too assertive. Some are great at doing that. Usually, the psychiatrists and psychologists, as a group, appeared to be too assertive. An exception would be Doctor Trainor at Fort Rucker. The troops can really relate to him.¹

Because this paper is meant to provide guidance in preparing doctrine and training for chaplains as members of a Crisis Response Teams, it is important to note:

You really can't prepare for this situation. Let them know the types of situations they might encounter. I don't see any gain in showing them the gory slides.2

Perhaps, the ideally suited chaplain is the one who has a genuine concern for soldiers whatever may be their circumstances. Perhaps, too, a narrative such as this may provide insights valuable to a chaplain who is assigned to a Crisis Response Team.

Staff chaplains of Installations, Corps, and Major Army Commands should examine the personal qualities of their subordinate chaplains identifying individual chaplains who possess the maturity, system-sense, staff officer abilities, interpersonal relational skills, and concern for soldiers in critical situations to serve on a Crisis Response Team. The Chief of Chaplains would do so at Department of Army level.

Recommendations

Supervising staff chaplains at division level through Headquarters, Department of Army, the Chief of Chaplains, should:

a. Identify chaplains under their supervision having the required staff officer ability, pastoral care provider expertise, and personality qualifying them to serve as a crisis response team member, and designate that chaplain for this duty.

b. During and subsequent to a crisis response, maintain close liaison with the designated chaplain to provide chaplain

pastoral support and determine the chaplain's potential need for intervention after the operation.

The designated chaplain should:

a. Immediately become acquainted with those who would logically serve as team members and coordinate with them the potential chaplain functions in the team context.

b. Understand and be prepared to observe potential ground-rules of international and civil relations throughout the operation.

c. Understand and observe Department of the Army and the team commander's guidance relative to news media relations, and maintain close coordination with the supporting Public Affairs Officer for valuable guidance in staff officer-media relations.

d. Be familiar with and have in personal possession Department of the Army Pamphlet 165-13, Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups, A Handbook for Chaplains, and Department of the Army Pamphlet 165-13-1, Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups, A Handbook Supplement for Chaplains.

e. Have ready for immediate deployment required uniforms and appropriate civilian clothing, seasonal modifications

included; Chaplain's Field Kit; required liturgical implements; spiritual reading materials for hand-out; and resources for sermons and memorial services.

f. Understand and be prepared to provide for the religious requirements of accompanying soldiers and victims in support of the Chaplaincy's commitment to religious pluralism.

g. Upon notification of tragedy, ensure contact with the nearest Catholic priest, military chaplain or civilian, to immediately provide appropriate Catholic sacramental ministry.

h. At the crash-site environment establish a room or location for counselling, ensure the security required for confidentiality, and inform personnel involved in the operation of this counselling location.

i. Be prepared to support the team commander in relations with the local governmental, ecclesiastical, and emergency services leadership and the local community.

Headquarters, Department of the Army, should:

a. Provide subordinate commands policy and guidance for responding to mass-casualty situations and formation of Crisis Response Teams, ensuring chaplain participation.

b. Proscribe chaplain responsibilities.

c. And, ensure that no command transport soldiers and their medical and dental records aboard the same conveyance.

Commanders and chaplains must be prepared to respond to crisis situations as that which occurred at Gander, December 12, 1985. When least expected, tragedy strikes.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert R. McMeekin, M.D., COL, USA, formerly Director, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, D.C., at time of the Gander Tragedy, in interview conducted December 12, 1990, at Washington, D.C.

2. Interview with McMeekin.

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