

## **Interoperability of 505th Search and Rescue Group and the 205th Tactical Helicopter Wing of the Philippine Air Force in Search and Rescue Operations: An Assessment**

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**Abstract :** The complexity of disaster risk reduction management paved the way for various innovations and approaches to mitigate the loss of lives and casualties during disaster-related situations. The efficiency of doing response operations during disasters relies on the timely and organized deployment of search, rescue and retrieval teams. Indeed, the assistance provided by the search, rescue, and retrieval teams during disaster operations is a critical service needed to further minimize the loss of lives and casualties. The Armed Forces of the Philippines was mandated to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations during calamities and disasters. Thus, this study "Interoperability of 505TH Search and Rescue Group and the 205TH Tactical Helicopter Wing of the Philippine Air Force in Search and Rescue Operations: An Assessment" was intended to provide substantial information to further strengthen and promote the capabilities of search and rescue operations in the Philippines. Further, this study also aims to assess the interoperability of the 505th Search and Rescue Group of the Philippine Air Force and the 205th Tactical Helicopter Wing Philippine Air Force. This study was undertaken covering the component units in the Philippine Air Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines - specifically the 505th SRG and the 205th THW as the involved units who also acted as the respondents of the study. The qualitative approach was the mechanism utilized in the form of focused group discussions, key informant interviews, and documentary analysis as primary means to obtain the needed data for the study. Essentially, this study was geared towards the evaluation of the effectiveness of the interoperability of the two (2) involved PAF units during search and rescue operations. Further, it also delved into the identification of the impacts, gaps, and challenges confronted regarding interoperability as to training, equipment, and coordination mechanism vis-à-vis the needed measures for improvement, respectively. The result of the study regarding the interoperability of the two (2) PAF units during search and rescue operations showed that there was a duplication in terms of functions or tasks in HADR activities, specifically during the conduct of air rescue operations in situations like calamities. In addition, it was revealed that there was a lack of equipment and training for the personnel involved in search and rescue operations which is a vital element during calamity response activities. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that a strategic planning workshop/activity must be conducted regarding the duties and responsibilities of the personnel involved in the search and rescue operations to address the command and control and interoperability issues of these units. Additionally, the conduct of intensive HADR-related training for the personnel involved in search and rescue operations of the two (2) PAF Units must also be conducted so they can be more proficient in their skills and sustainably increase their knowledge of search and rescue scenarios, including the capabilities of the respective units. Lastly, the updating of existing doctrines or policies must be undertaken to adapt advancement to the evolving situations in search and rescue operations.

**Keywords :** interoperability, search and rescue capability, humanitarian assistance, disaster response

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