

Peruvian Air Force

The tragedy may be enormous, but our will is stronger

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Over the last few years, we have had some unfortunate events on our continent that left dozens of people dead and wounded, which produced large property losses; this as a consequence of natural and manmade disasters such as the floods in northern Peru, forest fires in central and southern Chile, the floods and landslides that took place in Mocoa, Colombia, the impact of hurricanes Irma and María throughout Central and North America, and recently the earthquakes in Chiapas and Puebla in Mexico.

We are aware that the threats and risks that the countries currently face are not unique to a single country; because they are inherently transnational, natural or manmade disasters are not unusual in our countries; and since most countries of the region and of the world lack their own response to confront big events like earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and fires, among others, the coordinated action of friendly air forces becomes indispensable; in that sense, the System for Cooperation Among the American Air Forces (SICOFAA) constitutes an important mechanism to assemble operational resources in emergency situations, offering humanitarian aid in case of a natural disaster that surpasses the capabilities of the affected country. The supportive and cooperative actions of the System for Cooperation, when facing a call from a country affected by natural disasters, reflects the importance of its creation.

The System for Cooperation Among the American Air Forces is ruled by the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and cooperation, allowing it to act in a rapid and timely way in response to the needs of a country affected by a natural disaster; for that reason, it is necessary to be duly prepared and trained in Combined Air Operations for Humanitarian Aid, a preparation level obtained by the System for Cooperation's member countries thanks to their participation in the

various events that took place and to the execution of the real and virtual Cooperation Exercises that were conducted during the last few years, which has allowed them to improve the processes of planning, executing and conducting Combined Air Operations for Humanitarian Aid, as well as to define lessons learned that in the end permitted the generation of the operational doctrine. It is important to know that in aviation it is not sufficient to achieve maximum efficiency, rather we are obliged to seek perfection; it is an activity in which there is no room for improvisation, since resorting to that can cause a fatal error and as a consequence a negative impact on society.

The essence of this System for Cooperation consists of mutual help among its members, which forces them to permanently drive the development of combined air operations, the education, training, scientific and technological development, as well as telecommunications, logistics and use of human resources, in order to achieve a level of preparation and response capacity to confront the battering of nature.



The Peruvian Air Force, since 1961 when SICOFAA was created, has been actively participating in various Work Committees and Cooperation Exercises planned by the Permanent Office of the Secretary of SICOFAA and approved in the meetings of COJEFAMER; such was the case that during 2017 it was host and responsible for organizing two (02) Work Committees programmed during the SICOFAA cycle, which were carried out in the city of Lima. The 25th Committee, “Standardization Seminar of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC),” took place on April 3-7, 2017, which had the main objective of reviewing the procedures for planning, directing and executing Air Operations in the case of a natural disaster; as well as, for the Current and Virtual Cooperation Exercises programmed, the aim of training in the execution of Combined Air Operations for Humanitarian Aid. The seminar was organized by the Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA). Likewise, at said event the Strategic Plan of the SICOFAA (PLANESTRA) was reviewed, with the objective of redefining its strategic vision, clearly establishing the objectives, policies and activities, with the purpose of making the System for Cooperation more efficient when the time comes for humanitarian aid in response to possible natural disasters in the region. Similarly, from November 13-17, 2017 the 27th Committee “Learned Lessons and their Impact on the SICOFAA Doctrine” took place, which, based on certain experiences and lessons learned as a result of the execution of air operations carried out in affected countries in the face of natural disasters, allowed for the improvement of the Combined Air Operations Ma-

nual for Humanitarian Aid. The development of the 31st Committee-MPC of Virtual Cooperation Exercise VI is planned for the month of November of this year.



Earthquake in Ecuador

On April 16, 2016, Ecuador experienced a magnitude 7.8 earthquake. In this situation Peru responded in an efficient and timely manner to the call of the country, within hours after the telluric movement happened, that killed more than 600 and left more than 16,000 wounded and thousands who suffered property damage.

The Peruvian Air Force participated from the early hours of April 17 to May 4 with two aircraft, a Hercules L-100-20 and a C-27J Spartan, transporting 138,871 kg of humanitarian aid consisting of food, coats, potable water, mattresses, blankets, hydraulic jacks, cutters, drills, a pick-up truck and other items to lift collapsed structures.

The aircraft operated for 17 consecutive days, organizing airlifts among the provinces of Guayaquil, Quito, Manta, Esmeraldas, Tachima y Latacunga, transporting 1,162 passengers, totaling 84.7 flight hours.

Additionally, the Peruvian Air Force transported from Peru to Ecuador a group of brigade members with their corresponding work equipment, as well as search and rescue units, that removed rubble, saving human lives in the city of Manabí, one of the most affected by the seismic movement.

Once the air operations were concluded in Ecuador, on May 5 the Peruvian Air Force returned to the country, transporting a group of Peruvian citizens who lost all their possessions because of the earthquake, so they could reunite with their loved ones and begin a new life in their home country.

Forest fires in Chile

During the months of January and February 2017, Chile experienced a series of forest fires between the regions of Coquimbo and Los Lagos, which were of a higher intensity in the regions of O'Higgins, Maule and Bío Bío, in addition to the distant focal points in the southern region of Magallanes.

In the face of this unfortunate event, Peru made itself present by means of its Air Force, participating with three aircraft to help those affected by the forest fires which left 11 dead (two fire fighters, three brigade members, two law enforcement members and four civilians), thousands who suffered property damage and the devastation of 360,000 hectares of forest, as well as the destruction of 1,200 houses.

The aircraft C-27J and Hercules L-100-20 operated over the course of 15 days, transporting 13,450 kg of cargo, totaling 42.7 flight hours. The aircraft C-27J Spartan transported one group of 150 brigade members, leaders in combating forest fires, coming from the historical sanctuary of Machu Picchu, the Manu National Park and the Huascarán National Park. They traveled to Chile with their corresponding equipment to confront the emergency.

Likewise, the aircraft Hercules L-100-20 transported a Bell-212 helicopter to Aerial Group 3, ready to carry out search and rescue operations. This aircraft operated in the Talca region of Péncahue, flying more than 8 hours, and transporting approximately 500 kg of cargo.

The Bell-212 helicopter, in addition to the search and rescue operations, worked to assist with the population, aeromedical evacuations and reconnaissance flights coordinated with the Chilean Air Force, with the objective to assess the losses caused by the fires, whose flames destroyed thousands of acres. We should mention that in February 2010, the Peruvian Air Force participated in the Chile earthquake operation, with a Boeing 737-200 airplane, transporting a field hospital and 15 tons of humanitarian aid for the victims of the magnitude 8.8 earthquake that shook various regions of the country. Upon returning, the airplanes transported a group of nationals to Peru.

Floods in Peru

Peru, at the beginning of 2017, experienced one of the worst natural disasters in its history, due to the presence of the phenomenon "El Niño Costero." This climatic phenomenon caused copious rains, landslides and floods that devastated cities and populated areas of the country, especially in northern cities such as Piura, Trujillo, Chiclayo, Chimbote, Huarmey and some districts of the capital, leaving behind a large number of victims and people affected by property loss, blocked roads, fallen bridges, isolated houses and villages, thousands of flooded homes, collapsed sewer systems and lack of potable water.

Facing this situation, with the available means of its Armed Forces and National Police, Peru confronted the natural disaster; however, given the magnitude of the events and taking into account the need to offer rapid and timely assistance, Peru received the help of several countries, the majority of which are members of the System for Cooperation Among the American Air Forces (SICOFAA) like Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, United States, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, which were present with humanitarian aid and aerial support. In such difficult moments is when the System for Cooperation, under the principle of solidarity and cooperation, highlighted the importance of its existence and missions. The aid received from the member countries of the System for Cooperation was channeled through the corresponding ministries and made visible by means of their Air Forces, who immediately after the unfortunate events, made their air support available, bringing humanitarian aid, transporting the victims from one place to another, and participating in airlifts.

It is worth mentioning that Peru has always shown its solidarity with countries that have suffered some catastrophe, through its Air Force bringing humanitarian aid and air support to the affected countries, especially those that are members of SICOFAA; likewise, it has received immediate help when it fell victim to a natural disaster. History shows us that the SICOFAA is an efficient mechanism of cooperation and solidarity, and the experience acquired in the various events that took place, has shown that air power on many occasions is the most effective and fastest for providing humanitarian aid. In some cases, it is the first medium, in others the only one, above all when it is a question of providing help in remote, isolated communities where ground and maritime communications are inhospitable or do not exist.



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