

Combating Pandemic: The Effort by Malaysian Armed Forces in Assisting the Government

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Abstract

COVID-19 disease is a fatal infectious disease caused by the coronavirus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). The virus has spread worldwide causing thousands of deaths and massive impact health systems, the economy and even security. As one of the virtual machines of government, the military must always ready and alert to be deployed and assisting the present government. In order to be deployed, the military must have clear guidance in performing their roles and duties. This study is to identify and explain the effort by Malaysian Armed Forces in assisting the government to curb the pandemic from further spreading to the whole country. This study will use qualitative approach relying on secondary data and material such as book, journals, articles and reports from various reliable sources including the data from military Hospital in Malaysia that was involved in helping community during pandemic COVID 19. This study also will analyses based on the roles and duties as well as initiative of Malaysia Armed Forces in order to disconnect the COVID 19 network from continuing to spread in the country. It's also part and parcel of military activities in implementing Military Operations Other than War (MOOTW). This study will also suggest few steps and actions which can be used to improve the armed forces involvement in carrying out their task in helping government specially to stop the COVID 19 problem.

Keywords: COVID-19, Malaysian Armed Forces, Military operations, Malaysian defence and security.

1. Introduction

COVID-19 illness is a lethal viral disease caused by the corona virus two that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). On December 31, 2019, the Chinese government alerted the WHO about the virus (Secon et al., 2020, WHO, 2020c). As the number of instances increased each day, in-depth investigations were immediately begun. On January 1, 2020, WHO created a Management Incident Support Team (MIST) at each of its three levels to cope with the epidemic, placing it on an emergency footing. (Gralinski and Menachery, 2020). The Chinese authorities revealed the discovery of a new Covid 19 as the cause of this severe pneumonia sickness on January 7, 2020, and the WHO agreed on January 12, 2020. (Secon et al., 2020, Abdullah, 2020a). The Covid 19 genome-wide nucleotide sequences are most likely 96 percent identical to bat DNA. (Li et al., 2020). SARS-CoV-2, a virus that originated in Wuhan have been added to the list of viruses that threaten humans. COVID-19, a pneumonia disease caused by this virus, has caused large-scale epidemics all over the world (WHO, 2020d). The later cases of COVID-19 had no comparable background to the earlier recorded cases of COVID-19, which occurred in patients who visited the Huanan market. This was a troubling situation because

the number of instances in the second group had risen dramatically. As fresh instances were identified in people who had never been to Wuhan before, the issue got even more difficult. (Chan et al., 2020).

SARS-CoV-2 has a 14-day incubation period, according to the WHO, during which time it can spread and infect others. (Rothe et al., 2020, Quilty et al., 2020). SARS-CoV-2 is widely spread by droplets in the air and direct or indirect contact with the eyes, mouth, and nasal mucous membranes. People with a compromised immune system, such as the elderly and children, as well as those with a history of other diseases, are more prone to experience significant repercussions after being diagnosed with COVID-19. (Lu et al., 2020, Carlos et al., 2020, Xia et al., 2020). Thailand reported the first COVID-19 case outside of China on January 13, 2020, just two days after China announced the first fatality on January 11, 2020. (WHO, 2020c). Airports in Thailand, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore have established more strict screening processes for travelers with fever as a result of this outbreak. (Secon et al., 2020). The first case was identified in the United States on January 20, 2020, in an individual who had previously returned from Wuhan (Secon et al., 2020). The US declared the Covid 19 outbreak on January 31, 2020, one day after the WHO announced the attack as a Global Public Health Emergency (Secon et al., 2020, WHO, 2020c, Worldometer, 2020).

COVID-19 began to appear more eminent in Malaysia after Singapore announced the country's first imported case of COVID-19 from Wuhan, China, as well as the republic's first recorded case of COVID-19. Following the first incident, the Malaysian government discovered eight people in a similar situation in Johor, Malaysia (Abdullah, 2020b). A total of eight positive cases were registered over six days, starting with the first case. Every one of these cases had originated in China (Abdullah, 2020d). In addition, this was the first case of a Malaysian individual who tested positive for COVID-19 and had previously travelled to a neighbouring country for a business meeting (Ahmad, 2020).

2. Pandemic

Infections are often defined using words like endemic, outbreak, epidemic, and pandemic. Still, conditions like hypertension, cancer, aggression, and even good, beneficial habits may also be described differently. These categories are mostly based on the number of illness cases vs the expected number of cases for a specific time period, as well as the geographic dispersion of the points. A pandemic is an illness that spreads throughout the globe. The 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic, which afflicted more than a third of the world's population and killed approximately 50 million people, is the most famous example. Since 1918, there have been other influenza pandemics, including H1N1 in 2009 and 1957 and 1968.

The transmission of illness is influenced by a variety of circumstances. The ease with which the disease spreads from person to person, as well as people's movement, particularly through flight, since diseases may be moved to other regions of the world in hours, are two of the most crucial. While these ideas may appear straightforward, putting them into practise in dynamic, real-world situations is more difficult. HIV, for example, started in West Africa, spread throughout the continent for decades, and finally became pandemic in the late twentieth century. However, it is safe to say that HIV has grown common in various parts of the world two decades into the twenty-first century. COVID 19 has spread over the world and is now a pandemic. No country is immune to the disease's spread.

3. Military Operation Other Than War (Mootw)

Following the end of the Cold War, the military began to change its focus from combat to non-combatant roles, such as preserving stability, resolving disputes, aiding civil authorities in dealing with domestic crises, and so forth (Segal, 2005). MOOTW is a designation that prioritises humanitarian help and disaster relief over the use or threat of violence. Organizations such as diplomacy, business, government, politics, and religion collaborate in military attempts to engage in MOOTW (Darwanto, 2015). Prior to conducting operations, functional units usually present situations and settings to determine strengths and skills, design plans, conduct training, and provide preconditions for accomplishing operational goals. Special terrain recognition teams may be developed and deployed quickly to do field assessments, identify characteristics and dangers, and engage with various parties, among other things. For this specific group of ancestors, mastery of the local language and culture is essential (Darwanto, 2015).

4. Military Crisis Responses to Covid 19

In reaction to COVID-19, military assets and capabilities were quickly dispatched. Several military assets, including military physicians and nurses, have been employed to relieve overloaded hospitals and civilian medical staff, as well as to build new hospitals (Megerian & Cloud, 2020). According to reports, China has sent 10,000 military soldiers to assist in this operation. While France has initiated Operation Resilience to combat the emergence or potential spread of the disease (Macron launches army Operation, 2020). Medical supplies and patients were transported, army medical logistics planners were sent, healthcare workers were transported, and hospitals and other public places were disinfected as part of the military support. The military has also created and tested possible vaccinations, as well as medical supplies like face masks and disinfection wipes. Troops have been dispatched to control traffic and impose forced lockdown, even though this is a considerably more contentious issue. The military has also been deployed overseas to help with other nations' health emergencies. The Chinese military's use of medics and supplies, as well as Russia's employment of physicians, computers, and personal protective equipment to Italy, are important mentions for deployment reasons. However, almost two-thirds of all military aid was provided within the receiving country's boundaries, implying that the recipients deployed within their own country. However, in recent years, the extent and size of military assets deployed within countries has been unparalleled. The purpose of this article is to establish the military's primary involvement in suppressing the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as the consequences of this military influence.

5. Malaysian Government Action Against Covid 19

Malaysian authorities assessed the forced interventions, especially the Movement Control Order, in response to the 2009 COVID-19 outbreak (MCO). Conditional Movement Control Orders (CMCO) have been enforced in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Penang, and Kelantan, while Recovery Movement Control Orders (RMCO) have been imposed in the remaining eight states until April 14, 2021. All major economic sectors have reopened, subject to rigorous compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), however interstate travel is still forbidden. The country's border is still blocked, and only those with authorization from the right authorities are allowed to enter. To stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia's King Yang di-Pertuan Agong issued a State of Emergency from January 12 to August 1, 2021. Despite the imposition of a State of Emergency, Malaysia's Prime Minister stated that the government will continue to function. The economy would continue to function normally, although with the deployment of SOP. Malaysia's Prime Minister has made a strong statement about the country's openness to commerce and welcoming of business tourists. As stated, the government would carry out the Malaysian government's 6-Phase Economic Recovery Plan (6Rs), which was implemented at the beginning of the year and aims to rebuild the economy. The government developed the One Stop Centre to aid Malaysia's economic recovery and growth while balancing public health and livelihoods and enhancing Malaysia's reputation as a preferred investment destination in Asia (OSC).

6. Measures And Action Taken by MAF

The government and its ministries may have found it difficult to address and resolve all concerns due to the obstacles, but all agencies are working hard to overcome them. The MAF has reinforced security on land, sea, and air by bolstering security on land, sea, and air and collaborating with other security and law enforcement organisations, according to General Affendi Buang, Chief of Defence Force (Afiq, 2020). A new long-term plan is being implemented to assist improve the country's general security, particularly in areas where "Lorong Tikus" is an issue (illegal routes). The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and the navy will coordinate patrols of the country's seas to deter illegal immigration. Aside from that, MAF and RMP have deployed smaller and micro-class Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) for duties that support their mandatory MCO activities. This mission has been completed using a variety of UAS types, including VTOL systems of various models.

MCO has led to the stationing of drug-trafficking officers across the country in over 800 roadblocks of police officers from the Narcotics Investigation Criminal Department (NCID). The MAF personnel who are stationed at various border locations have also been doubled, resulting in a total of 2,197 military personnel. The separate operations completed from April 10 to 13 in 2020 impeded the detection of several primary drug trafficking operations, such as those in Penang, Perak, and Kuala Lumpur and two others in Selangor and Penang. In four days, 15 people were detained, and 165kg of various drugs, which has a street value of RM5.7 million, were seized (Bernama, 2020). One step that will continue to be adopted in the military is the reduction

of large-scale exercises and training. Furthermore, military drills have been cancelled or scaled back throughout the world until recently. In addition, to restrict the virus's transmission, numerous measures have been adopted at home, such as reducing training and deferring a few drills. Additional events, such as the National University of Defence Malaysia's graduation and recruitment exercises, have been postponed till further notice. Most

students in the training line have continued to accomplish all of the essential activities via online and video conferencing. In the MAF, command structures were built, duty travel was decreased, and telework was implemented. A work attendance rotation is also organised for individuals who served at headquarters. It is feasible to exercise while adhering to the one-meter rule.

It's too soon to determine if the global epidemic will cause slight fall in the sector, or whether it will continue to expand. Defence firms must identify the most significant locations in the supply chain and analyse their capacity to alter business growth plans and company supply chains to avoid a business development disaster. While bigger defence industries may have contingency plans in place to deal with the worst-case situation, local small and medium-sized enterprises are vulnerable to liquidity issues and are heavily in debt.

These firms will require financial support in order to succeed. As a result, they must re-evaluate the implementation of their business strategy. Regardless of whether the Covid-19 scenario occurs or not, the conclusion has implications for the defence sector. In today's environment, it's hard to survive without embracing unpredictability, and the defence sector must spend time and resources to risk management. Those in the defence business should look at other options and come up with better solutions, such as obtaining other funding or changing the contract's terms and circumstances. Furthermore, the defence industry is separate from many other businesses. Negotiations, for example, can take months; accords, years; the stakes are enormous; and government-to-government (G2G) relationships are long. The future growth prospects of this industry do not appear to be promising currently. Citizens who live, learn, or work from home are today more vulnerable to cyber-attacks than ever before.

7. Operation PENAWAR

The MAF has been enlisted to assist the police in Operation Penawar, which entails the deployment of roadblocks (SJR), static posts, and Mobile Patrol Vehicle (MPV) patrols around the country. Op Penawar is a joint operation involving the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Control and security patrols in high-risk areas designated as Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO), the location of the Covid-19 Quarantine and Low-Risk Treatment Centre (PKRC), and the formation of the Compliance Operations Task Force to monitor and enforce compliance with SOP throughout the MCO are all part of this manoeuvre and readiness.

8. Operation BENTENG

Even though it is still in its development, its achievements and success are rather astounding. National security threats have been successfully fought by road or through national seas. It is the outcome of the National Task Force's coordination, integration, and precise preparation of all law enforcement authorities (NTF). On May 6, 2020, the National Task Force (NTF) was founded to enhance the country's border controls against illegal immigration in order to combat Covid-19. The 6D approach, which stands for Deter, Detect, Deny, Detour, Detain, and Deportation, is used to mobilise integrated troops to exert control over land, sea, and air. The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) was named as the NTF's principal agency, with police, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), and 18 other law enforcement agencies, including the Ministry of Health (MOH).

The NTF created national history when it executed Operation Benteng, involving the Security Forces, 19 law enforcement agencies, and the Ministry of Health in an unprecedented task entrusted by the country's leadership. These 19 agencies and departments include both uniformed and non-uniformed agencies and departments, which is noteworthy. The NTF accomplishes this goal by cooperating in this operation, strengthening land and sea border controls and simplifying each agency's work procedure. Because most kinds of violence are related to other types of international crime, this is the case.

The NTF's integration of land, sea, and air components has also improved information exchange through the tracking system and reinforced the communication system network. By developing a robust communication network, it was possible to strengthen the interaction between all agencies. Surprisingly, this agency's task

integration does not interfere with the departments' and agencies' primary activities. Task coordination will be prioritised to ensure that this coordinated operation maximises the use of current capabilities across all agencies. Total human resource mobilisation to meet the goals, with a focus on intelligence capabilities and information exchange between agencies. While the NTF's creation looks to be comparable to those of other organisations, the NTF's existence directly supports the DWP from a strategic national defence standpoint. It uses the HANRUH Concept, often known as the Total Defence Document. NTF is also assisting the Malaysian Immigration Department in coordinating the repatriation of illegal immigrants from several neighbouring countries. This successful enforcement is a testament to the close cooperation between all agencies. The issue of Rohingya migrants currently attempting to enter the country is also a primary focus of NTF radar now.

9. Conclusion

Armed forces are a military tactic aimed at resolving a conflict in the state's favour. Military operations oversee the development of military policies as well as the capabilities to achieve strategic, operational, and tactical military goals and plans. Military activities can be combat or non-combat in nature. MOOTW stands for non-war-related activities that do not come within the definition of war. The humanitarian intervention tries to help individuals who are in need while also protecting human rights.

According to new data, military engagement in disaster aid has expanded. In the aftermath of such calamities, the military's involvement has grown in importance. The research, however, does not link the increased frequency of disasters to climate change. Military forces will initially deal with internal issues, employing a variety of measures ranging from tiger poaching prevention to airport surveillance. Due to the epidemic, maintaining military preparedness has been difficult. Military training and drills necessitate a great deal of intimate interaction between troops. The government and relevant ministries, on the other hand, have done all possible to control and address the problem. MAF has struggled to be prepared during the outbreak. Furthermore, military training and exercises are well-known for requiring precise coordination of operations. Despite these obstacles, Malaysia's government and associated ministries have moved quickly to address and resolve these problems.

The most difficult element for Malaysia during this Covid 19 will be border control and migration of foreigners from neighbouring nations. During this period, terrorists, pirates, smugglers, drug traffickers, human traffickers, and illegal immigrants all pose a serious threat. To counteract Covid-19, the NTF was formed to tighten border controls against illegal immigration. The operation is carried out using the 6D approach, which involves mobilising integrated soldiers to control land, sea, and air. The National Task Force's mission is to make it more difficult for illegal immigrants to enter and exit the country. It also assists Malaysia's Immigration Department in coordinating the return of illegal immigrants from neighbouring nations. This achievement is the consequence of tight collaboration across all agencies.

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