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Cebrowski Lecture Discusses Disaster and Humanitarian Response

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Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

Cebrowski Lecture Discusses Disaster and Humanitarian Response - Today at NPS
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U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Michael Ehrlich

Cebrowski Lecture Discusses Disaster and Humanitarian Response

By MC2 Michael Ehrlich

Guest lecturer Willow Brugh speaks to NPS students, faculty and staff on the benefits of combining centralized and distributed systems in disaster and humanitarian response efforts during a Cebrowski Institute Brown Bag in Glasgow Hall, May 25. Brugh, a Research Affiliate with MIT's Center for Civic Media, discussed how varying types of distributed and digital disaster response efforts can support the overall relief effort in ways traditional institutions cannot.

"Formal institutions and grass roots initiatives both have their own strengths, and I think that finding ways to have them interoperate can yield benefits for everyone," said Brugh.

During the Hurricane Sandy response, Brugh was able to take support from various government entities, and coordinate the efforts of small local groups to create the most efficient and effective use of manpower and resources.

"From where I come from, I often see the formal sector thinking that the grass roots are an extension of themselves," said Brugh. "If [informal groups] gather the information, [formal groups] will act on it, which is not how it should end up. Disaster relief works better as part of a more reciprocal relationship."

NPS Department of Information Sciences Research Associate Gerry Scott has written several publications on humanitarian technologies, and agrees with Brugh on the mutual benefits between formal and informal institutions.

"I think, from the military and government perspective, there is a lot we can gain by looking at how informal structures operate in these environments," said Scott.

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