



# *IPhson*

AT THE 45TH  
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
FOR MILITARY MEDICINE  
WORLD CONGRESS

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## **SESSION READOUT**



AUSTRALIAN  
DEFENCE FORCE



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USINDOPACOM SURGEON'S OFFICE AND THE ADF



# SESSION READOUT

During the the International Committee for Military Medicine (ICMM) 45th World Congress themed “Military Medicine Shaping Global Health”, held in Brisbane, Australia from 22-27 September 2024, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) co-hosted an Indo Pacific Health Security Alliance (IPhsa) session that brought together a diverse array of regional and international stakeholders on 26 September. The session focused on sharing insights into IPhsa’s strategic plans and fostering collaboration across the Indo-Pacific region. Highlights included the announcement of the next IPhsa event in Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 2025, as well as keynotes from the president of the African Partnership Outbreak Response Alliance (APORA) and the PNG Defence Force Surgeon General, both outlining their vision for future collaborations and reflecting on valuable lessons learned. Session participants also heard from the World Health Organization (WHO) on their National Civil-Military Health Collaboration Framework.

Facilitators Lt Col Alyson Auliff, ADF, and Elizabeth Garza, USINDOPACOM, introduced IPhsa, a joint effort between the ADF and USINDOPACOM to enhance health security in the Indo-Pacific region. The Military-Civilian Health Security Summit (MCHSS), established in 2018 by USINDOPACOM and the ADF, symbolizes a unified commitment to addressing global health security challenges. Through initiatives like MCHSS and, going forward, IPhsa, aims to strengthen regional resilience and response



capabilities by integrating military and civilian sectors and aligning with global health frameworks like the WHO. The alliance also recently launched a [new website](#) to share information and resources, including news articles, reports and agreements, resources as well as upcoming events. IPhsa will hold their next event in Port Moresby, PNG, in May 2025. IPhsa will also be holding a session at the Indo-Pacific Military Health Exchange (IPMHE) in Japan in December 2025. Key goals of IPhsa include building regional capacity through training, technical assistance, and fostering partnerships. The IPhsa session at ICMM highlighted the importance of collaboration to tackle health security threats and the integration of both the military and civilian sectors into global health security initiatives. Presentations from key speakers and upcoming regional activities were also outlined, underscoring the alliance's ongoing commitment to regional health security.

CAPT Jeffrey Bitterman, in his opening remarks at the ICMM IPhsa session, emphasized the significance of collaboration to advance global health security, adding that this alliance brings together professionals from the military, government, international organizations like the WHO, and academia. CAPT Bitterman highlighted the progress since 2018, including key milestones like the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation in 2022 and the Terms of Reference in 2024. These actions formalized the commitment to strengthen health security through partnerships. He underscored the importance of regional preparedness to counter evolving health threats, which range from infectious diseases to natural disasters. He added that IPhsa aims to foster collaboration between military and civilian sectors, improve response capabilities, and promote shared information and interoperability. CAPT Bitterman stressed that health threats know no borders, and regional and global cooperation is essential for safeguarding public health, economic stability, and security. He also emphasized the defense sector's role in health security

*“By building health security capacity, together, we foster global stability, will cultivate key partnerships and mitigate harmful influences and enhance readiness in our collective interoperability. Collaboration with public health authorities, media organizations and other stakeholders is also crucial for building public trust and health security efforts.”*

**CAPT BITTERMAN, U.S. INDOPACOM  
COMMAND SURGEON**



and the necessity of building trust with public health authorities and stakeholders. Concluding his remarks, he called for stronger partnerships and innovative solutions, reiterating that joint efforts in health security are vital for global stability and readiness. He expressed

gratitude for the participation and looked forward to productive discussions and continued cooperation.

Head of health preparedness unit at WHO, Mr. Ludy Prapancha Suryantoro, shared in a pre-recorded message that his team has been actively promoting strategic collaboration between civilian and military sectors to enhance health emergency preparedness. This WHO initiative was launched in 2017, leading to the development of a National Civil-Military Health Collaboration Framework and a Civil-Military Health Security Mapping (CMAP) tool. The CMAP tool serves as a key mechanism to map out the capacities and capabilities of civilian and military organizations in relation to the core capacities outlined in the International Health Regulations (IHR). This mapping exercise aims to identify areas of synergy, as well as gaps and needs, that can be addressed through enhanced civil-military cooperation. Mr Suryantoro said the WHO has leveraged the CMAP tool in several countries, revealing important insights. For instance, the findings highlight the need for improved cross-sectoral coordination, particularly in the areas of biosecurity, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear preparedness, and the human-animal-environment interface. The findings from the CMAP tool underscore the importance of information-sharing, joint training, and harmonized policies and legal frameworks to facilitate effective collaboration between civilian and military stakeholders. Moving forward, the WHO is calling on various stakeholders to join forces and leverage the growing momentum for civil-military collaboration in strengthening public health emergency preparedness. By fostering a cross-sectoral approach and leveraging the complementary strengths of

civilian and military sectors, significant progress can be made in enhancing global health security.

COL Julius Nwobegahay, APORA President, shared the organization's efforts to combat emerging infectious diseases in Africa. Established in 2014 with 12 member countries, COL Nwobegahay said APORA has since grown to 38 members. Its mission is to enhance the role of military support in disease outbreak responses through military-civilian partnerships. Over the past decade, APORA has conducted 11 events, including workshops and simulations, with notable achievements such as a comprehensive "glide path" with 20 workshops aimed at training and capacity-building. Despite these successes, APORA faces challenges in expanding its reach, having created task forces in only 19 out of 54 African nations. Funding constraints have also hindered progress, particularly for in-person events. Future goals include establishing task forces in all member countries, enhancing financial contributions from member nations, and developing mechanisms for rapid activation during outbreaks. APORA is also planning an impact evaluation of its activities over the past decade and will hold its next event in Benin, focusing on disaster response simulations. COL Nwobegahay concluded by highlighting the challenges and opportunities in building a continental military response alliance, emphasizing that collaboration and sustained funding are key to APORA's continued success.

PNG Defence Force Surgeon General, Lt-Col Peter Kaminiel discussed PNG's health security priorities, including TB, HIV, malaria, and antimicrobial resistance. PNG, with a population of 10 million, faces significant health threats, including a TB incidence of 424 per 100,000 and an HIV prevalence rate of over 1% for



the first time in 10 years. The country has also experienced various outbreaks, such as cholera, chikungunya, measles, polio, SARS, influenza, and zika. Lt-Col Kaminiel



highlighted the military's role in health security, including collaboration with international organizations and the implementation of the 95-95-95 HIV strategy. He also addressed challenges in malaria control and antimicrobial resistance, and emphasized the need for improved disaster response and pandemic preparedness. Lt-Col Kaminieel said PNG's location in the Pacific Ring of Fire makes it vulnerable to natural disasters, adding that the military has played a crucial role in disaster response, including providing medical supplies and services during emergencies. Recent disasters include a whooping cough outbreak in Oro Province and a massive landslide in Angoram, he added. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in PNG's pandemic preparedness and response, with the government having to update its pandemic act and involve the military in the national control center. PNG faces challenges in emergency manpower, funding, and comprehensive disaster response management. He invited participants to attend IPhsa in PNG next year and acknowledged bilateral military partners and civilian stakeholders for their support.



To conclude, ADF AIRCDRE dos Santos acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land and highlighted the importance of global health security, emphasizing its role in national, regional, and international security. She referenced the UN Commissioner for Human Rights' observation on

insecurity and the need for stable points of reference and underscored the convergence of geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic factors leading to various global challenges. She also referenced U.S. President Obama's speech commemorating Nelson Mandela, highlighting the word "Ubuntu," which describes the interconnectedness and humanity shared among people. AIRCDRE dos Santos also celebrated strong relationships and government focus on providing quality health care to serving personnel and the broader region. She said military medicine

*“Leading to improved global health security, we are very privileged to be a founding member of the alliance, and we look forward to contributing to the development of the Indo Pacific health security alliance over the coming years. As we progress and mature, we would like to welcome more of you to join the alliance and work with us to improve the health security of our region and our world for those who follow.”*

**AIRCDRE DOS SANTOS, DIRECTOR  
GENERAL OPERATIONAL HEALTH -  
JOINT HEALTH COMMAND**

has been instrumental in improving global health security, with examples ranging from blood transfusions to public health surveillance. She framed the IPhsa as advocating for a multilateral, whole-of-government approach to bolster health security capabilities and concluded with an invitation to future forums and increased multilateral participation to improve global health security, adding that Australia is a founding member of the alliance and looks forward to contributing to its development. She also welcomed more participants to join and contribute and encouraged reaching out to any of the organizing teams for further

information and involvement in this important forum.

The presentations were followed by a session dedicated to questions, which focused on the integration of defense expertise into global health security efforts and civil-military collaboration. Participants inquired about the defense sector’s involvement in IPhsa and how its lessons have been applied. In response, IPhsa organizers explained that over the past few years, there has been significant cooperation between the ADF, the U.S., and regional stakeholders, leading to the normalization of civilian sector involvement in military health security engagement. They highlighted the inclusion of health officials in official delegations and the launch of the One Health concept, which emphasizes collaboration between military and civilian sectors. They also highlighted advocating for civil-military collaboration during a recent medical symposium in PNG, which led to the theme of global health security for next year's symposium. The session ended expressing hope to see attendees in PNG next year.