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More Military Funds Committed for Pakistan Quake Relief

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21, 2005 – The Defense Department is nearly doubling its funding for earthquake relief operations in Pakistan - to \$110 million - following the country's devastating Oct. 8 earthquake that left an estimated 73,000 people dead, State Department officials announced Nov. 19.

U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios announced the increased support while leading the U.S. delegation to the Pakistani government's reconstruction conference in Islamabad.

The added military commitment is part of a larger overall U.S. aid package for Pakistan's relief and reconstruction, now \$510 million. This includes \$300 million in assistance from USAID and at least \$100 million in private contributions, Natsios said.

DoD had previously obligated \$80 million to cover operating costs for earthquake relief efforts.

This additional aid is particularly important now as winter sets in, officials noted.

Navy Rear Adm. Mike LeFever, commander of the Disaster Assistance Center in Pakistan, told Pentagon reporters Nov. 10 that snow is beginning to fall in the region and temperatures are plummeting. This, LeFever said, makes it crucial that the people affected receive shelter and supplies quickly.

An estimated 1,200 U.S. military personnel and 23 helicopters are currently supporting relief operations in Pakistan, officials said.

So far, U.S. helicopters have flown more than 2,500 sorties, delivered almost 4,300 tons of relief supplies and transported almost 17,000 people, including more than 4,300 who needed medical attention, officials reported.

In addition, more than 178 military and civilian cargo airlift flights have delivered almost 1,900 tons of humanitarian aid, medical supplies and equipment, officials said. U.S. troops have offloaded almost 6,000 tons of relief supplies from U.S. and other aircraft for distribution to affected Pakistani citizens.

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Article

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About N

News A

News by

Other N

Sources

U.S. humanitarian aid supplies delivered so far include more than 360,000 blankets, almost 13,000 sleeping bags, more than 3,500 tents, 5,000 water containers, almost 121,000 halal meals, 600 heaters and 18 pallets of medicine, officials reported.

In addition, nine U.S. military and commercial ships have delivered 115 pieces of equipment, 34 containers of supplies and 176 tons of humanitarian assistance through the port of Karachi, officials said.


Members of the 212th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital began operating in Muzaffarabad Oct. 29, and have treated more than 2,400 patients, officials said. In addition, the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force Medical Team arrived in Shinkiara and began treating patients Nov. 15.

DoD engineering teams arrived in Pakistan Oct. 24 and have cleared school and university sites, constructed three airport berms and finished preparations for a United Nations World Food Program tent site in Muzaffarabad, officials said.

A forward area refueling point and water purification unit are operating in Muzaffarabad to support these operations, officials said. Another water purification unit is en route to Pakistan.

Speaking from the White House Nov. 9, President Bush praised servicemembers supporting earthquake-relief efforts in South Asia. They "represent the best of America (and) the generous spirit of our country," he said.

"Our government's response to this tragedy ... should say to the people of the world, 'We care when somebody else suffers,'" Bush said.

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