

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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USNS Comfort Begins Treating Haiti Earthquake Patients

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Navy's 1,000-bed hospital ship Comfort arrived off the Haitian shore and began receiving patients from the January 12 earthquake even before it dropped anchor in Port-au-Prince harbor.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the arrival of the Comfort is "a big help," as international medical personnel on the ground continue to cope with casualties despite ongoing challenges resulting from the natural disaster.

Speaking to reporters at the State Department January 20, Clinton said the Comfort has brought with it more than 600 American medical personnel and "adds important capacity to our relief efforts."

"Already patients are being taken onboard via helicopter and treated," she said.

According to a January 20 article by Jim Garamone of the Defense Department's American Forces Press Service, doctors, nurses and military personnel on the Comfort immediately began assessing their first patients through tests and X-rays, and then moved them to operating rooms, intensive care units or more testing.

Creole speakers have joined the ship to facilitate communication between the medical personnel and their patients. Garamone reported that the crew of the Comfort is continuing to make more space available aboard the vessel not only to accommodate a larger number of patients, but also to make room for an additional 350 medical specialists who will be joining the crew.

The Comfort has a total capacity of 1,000 beds, including wards designated for limited, light, intermediate and intensive care, as well as recovery wards. It also has 12 operating rooms.

Clinton underscored that U.S. military and civilian personnel are closely consulting with Haitian President René Prével and his government on "every facet" of the ongoing relief effort, which she said is one of the largest in history.

"They are setting the priorities for relief and recovery, despite operating under the most difficult circumstances," she said.

Before the earthquake, Haiti and the United States had been working closely on plans for Haiti's sustainable

growth and new opportunities. "These plans, which are a very solid foundation, will of course be revised and rethought, but they will not be abandoned," Clinton said. "Haiti will need not only the talent and grit of her people, including the Haitian diaspora, but it will need all of us, partners and friends who are committed not just in the immediate aftermath of this terrible earthquake but for the duration."

Haiti was "on the cusp of progress," but was "dealt another cruel and unimaginable blow," Clinton said. Yet, "I'm confident that, even in this darkest of hours, they will once again persevere," she said. She reaffirmed President Obama's commitment that the United States "will stand with Haiti every step of the way," not only for disaster relief, but also for its long-term recovery.

The secretary expressed pride in all of the relief workers in Haiti and said that, given the many challenges they have had to cope with, "it's really remarkable how much we've gotten done."

However, as many still need relief supplies and medical attention, Clinton said, "We are not satisfied."

"We are working every day to get better. We have more assets on the ground today than we did yesterday. So we're just going to continue to do more and more," she said.

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Sir John Holmes told the *Wall Street Journal* January 20 that there normally are challenges, even "in the best of circumstances," that cause delays in getting relief aid to those who need it.

"If you look at any major disaster, there's this awkward phase when the immediate dust has settled and the aid is being mobilized and stuff is arriving and people are arriving before you actually see it in the street. I don't think it's been particularly bad in this case, though it's been frustrating for everybody," Holmes said.

"It always takes a bit of time to get the pipelines moving — not only the planes, but you have to have trucks and fuel and distribution centers, which don't just happen in an hour or two. You have to actually set them up," he said.

In Haiti's case, the earthquake had also knocked out the country's domestic fire and police forces, complicating the response time.

Holmes said the first priority is usually to get immediate life-saving relief and personnel into the country to perform search-and-rescue operations and address

medical needs. Following that are food and water concerns, he said.

“People don’t often starve to death in these circumstances because it takes a lot longer for anything like that to happen. Water can be a problem, but luckily a water plant has been working [in Haiti], so we’ve been able to get a certain amount of water in there. Not as much as people would like, but there is no one dying of thirst either,” he said.

Holmes also said any aid distribution must be both orderly and fair. “What you don’t want is the strongest with the weapons getting the stuff, and not the weakest and most vulnerable, who are not the strongest and the fastest, who get left behind,” he said. For that reason, aid distribution must be organized.

Port Repairs Begin to Expand Haitian Relief Operations

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. Military Sealift Command salvage-and-rescue ship USNS Grasp with heavy-lift cranes and an Army engineer diving team is in Haiti to remove debris and rubble that has jammed the small Port-au-Prince harbor and the Cap-Haitien port since an earthquake struck the country eight days ago.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates, currently on a mission to India, told reporters January 20 in New Delhi that the ship should have the port open for cargo and container ships within a week or two. An initial assessment of the port facilities indicated that it could be 60 to 90 days before they could be fully operational. The U.S. Coast Guard found that the ports are jammed with submerged cranes and shipping containers along with collapsed piers, which effectively prevent cargo ships from docking and offloading supplies and equipment.

In addition to clearing the ports, the roads leading into the ports are also being cleared so trucks can quickly arrive and load cargo.

Gates said ferrying relief supplies throughout the country by helicopter is critical to get initial supplies where they are most needed, but over the long term they will not be adequate to meet the needs of 2 million people. Cargo ships, which can carry more relief supplies than can aircraft, need a working port with cranes to bring in the supplies for the recovery and reconstruction of Port-au-Prince and the rest of Haiti, he said.

Haiti’s only airport, the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, is now receiving more than 200 flights a day and is being overwhelmed with relief

supplies.

“As long as more than 2 million people in Haiti are still struggling to get food and water, fuel and medical care, it would probably be a mistake for anyone to say they are satisfied with the level of effort,” Gates told reporters. “You cannot meet the needs of 2 million people just using helicopters.”

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Oak used a small pier in the Port-au-Prince harbor to deliver 62,880 bottles of water and medical supplies, said Commander Mike Glander, the commanding officer of the cutter, according to news reports. The Oak helped a Catholic Relief Services barge unload supplies at the same pier January 19, he said. The supplies have to be unloaded one container at a time, he added.

Other Coast Guard cutters are surveying the port and harbor and sounding the sea bottom to prepare for repairs.

The Grasp has an Army engineer diving team with it to help assess the damage to the port facilities and in cleaning up debris and rubble in the two ports.

Army Captain Scott Sann, who leads the 544th Engineer Dive Team, said his team will conduct an underwater survey to identify obstacles that are blocking the channels in Haiti as well as confirm possible areas for unloading cargo.

“This would be followed by salvage operations to clear debris from the identified pathways,” Sann said.

The U.S. Maritime Administration said it is sending five auxiliary ships to assemble a floating port. Two more crane ships, a special causeway-and-barge-handling ship, an oil-delivery ship and a high-speed ferry will also be sent to join the Navy and Coast Guard ships now there, the Maritime Administration said in an announcement.

The Crimson Clover, which is a commercial roll-on/roll-off barge with two 46-foot (14-meter) extendable ramps and a top-loader for lifting out cargo, is in Port-au-Prince and has begun unloading operations, according to the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). The barge does not require a working pier to unload its cargo.

The USNS 1st LT Jack Lummus is loading cargo destined for Haiti at Blount Island Command in Jacksonville, Florida. The cargo comes from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Marine Corps and other U.S. government agencies.

Secretary Gates Emphasizes U.S.-India Opportunities During Visit

India showed "statesmanlike" response to Mumbai crisis, he says

The following article originally appeared January 19 on the Department of Defense Web site.

Gates Presses for U.S.-Indian Cooperation

By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service

NEW DELHI, January 19, 2010 – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates today [Jan. 19] emphasized the opportunity and the need for closer defense cooperation between the United States and India in a broad range of areas, including the maritime, cyberspace and space domains.

Gates kicked off his two-day visit to India today [Jan. 19] by meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna, discussing the two nations' shared values, interests and challenges, senior defense officials told reporters following the sessions.

The secretary is expected to reinforce that message – and the U.S. wish to broaden its strategic partnership with India – when he meets tomorrow [Jan. 20] with Defense Minister A.K. Antony.

Today's [Jan. 19] sessions covered a broad range of issues, but focused heavily on the violent extremism that threatens both countries and their need to continue collaborative efforts to confront it.

A senior official who attended today's [Jan. 19] talks said Gates also addressed the need to overcome roadblocks that stand in the way of two critical tools supporting counter-extremism efforts: more technology sharing and an increased flow of information and expertise.

"We want to enhance and strengthen our sharing of technology with India," the official said. "We want to be able to share more information with India ... and develop cooperative programs, particularly in the maritime, cyberspace and space area."

The need to secure these realms, the so-called "global commons," is among the 21st-century challenges that "can only be solved by many nations working together in concert," Gates wrote in an article published in today's [Jan. 19] Times of India.

Yet the secretary has long been frustrated that U.S. law limits just how much technology and information the United States can share with trusted partners such as India to support these efforts.

During today's [Jan. 19] sessions, Gates also pressed for

continued discussion on yet-to-be-finalized agreements between the two countries that will promote geospatial data-sharing, communications interoperability and security and logistical support.

"Not getting these agreements signed is an obstacle to Indian access to the very highest level of technology," he told reporters during the flight here.

Gates lauded in his article the way India has stepped up in the maritime domain, where it is working alongside the multinational naval task force, conducting counter-piracy missions.

In addition to counter-piracy, today's talks also focused on increasing "maritime domain awareness," which the defense official described as "knowing what is moving around out there."

The terror attacks that rocked Mumbai in November 2008 and left 173 people dead drove home the tragic consequences of gaps within this capability. Investigations revealed that the attackers entered Mumbai by hijacking a fishing trawler, killing its crew, then going ashore in a rubber dinghy.

"The attack on Mumbai came from the sea, so there is a definite need to track the movement of people who want to do harm to us out there," a senior defense official told reporters.

During the flight here, Gates praised India's restraint toward Pakistan following the attacks.

"The bombing in Mumbai was a really terrible event, and frankly, I believe that the Indians responded subsequently with a great deal of restraint and have conducted themselves in a very statesmanlike manner since that attack," he told reporters flying with him.

"Obviously, we would hope that there wouldn't be any more attacks," he said. "But I think that even within the framework of that attack and the suspicions that it created, the two sides have managed to keep the tensions between them at a manageable level."

Gates summed up today's [Jan. 19] sessions as "very productive" and said he looks forward to another round of positive meetings tomorrow at the defense ministry, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell reported.

"Thus far, the visit is off to a very strong start," he said.

Ambassador Rice on Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula Sanctions

United Nations announces three new al-Qaeda designations linked to Yemen

USUN PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on today's Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Sanctions Designations, January 19, 2010

Today, the United Nations Security Council al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee (1267 Committee) announced three new al-Qaeda designations linked to Yemen, which include the group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and two of its leaders, Nasir al-Wahishi and Said al-Shihri. AQAP and these two leaders will be subject to an internationally-binding freeze of their assets and a ban on transfers of arms; al-Wahishi and al-Shihri will also be subject to a global travel ban. The U.S. Department of Treasury has also announced domestic U.S. designation of AQAP, al-Wahishi and al-Shihri.

Today's actions strengthen international efforts to degrade the capabilities of AQAP.

AQAP is a Yemen-based terrorist organization that has claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts targeting Saudi Arabia, Korea, Yemen, and the United States since its inception in January 2009. Two weeks ago, President Obama confirmed that the individual responsible for the attempted attack on December 25, 2009 on Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan had ties to AQAP.

Last month the Security Council reaffirmed the global consensus against al-Qaeda through its adoption of resolution 1904, which strengthened and improved the 1267 sanctions regime. In line with this new resolution, the United States supports the Council's ongoing work to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda's networks and eliminate its ability to carry out violent attacks.

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