



Special Briefing  
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## U.S. Response to the South Asia Earthquake

(12:00 p.m. EST)

**MR. ERELI:** We are very pleased to welcome four senior Administration officials to brief you -- to give you an update on Pakistan earthquake assistance, a top priority of the U.S. Government, something we have been hard at work on from day one.

Tony Wayne, our Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, will give you an overview of the inter-government -- of the inter-agency approach to this crisis; and then we will have Michael Hess, who is the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID, give you a relief and assistance update; and then Brigadier General Carter Ham, Deputy Director of Regional Operations in the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will give you an update on the military component or military aspect of this relief effort; and after that we will open it up to questions.

We also have with us John Gastright, who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the South Asia Bureau, who has been to the region as well and is here to answer questions related specifically to Pakistan or other areas of -- his other areas of expertise.

So, Tony, over to you.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** Thanks very much. Thanks, Adam. Sorry for keeping you all waiting for a little while.

What we wanted to do is give you both a snapshot of where we are today in our efforts to assist Pakistan and see how this is really part of a continuum, and we are thinking through the medium- and long-term needs here, that we are committed not only to stand beside Pakistan at this time of tragedy but we are committed to working with and standing with Pakistan in the long run as they are both rebuilding but also as they continue their very important efforts to build their economy up and create prosperity and stability over the longer term.

As a number of you remember, Secretary Rice quickly traveled to Pakistan -- she was there on October 12 -- to offer our support and to discuss how we could be of support for Pakistan at this time of terrible tragedy. Of course, we are all reminded since we recently had experienced a natural disaster ourselves in the United States that this could be a tremendously trying experience for local authorities as well as for the civilians. So we worked very hard to bring our really unparalleled ability to have global airlift and maritime support to bear in support of the immediate humanitarian needs in Pakistan. We have been working very closely in this with the United Nations, with NGOs, with other donors on the ground and internationally.

We have worked hard to get humanitarian aid distributed, not only brought to the country but distributed to remote areas. And as you will hear in more details, U.S. aircraft, our all-terrain vehicles and our personnel have been intimately involved from very early on in making this possible and our plan is for that to continue as the emergency situation is being dealt with.

We also joined other donors in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 26th for the first international conference, which was aimed at helping meet the UN appeals for short-term assistance, near-term assistance and relief. And we're involved with Pakistan, with other international organizations and other donors as there's planning is going on for a second relief and reconstruction conference which will take place in mid-November which will look at relief and reconstruction also with some more detail.

That conference will be informed by a needs assessment that is now being prepared, led by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, on the sort of medium- and longer-term needs; and the UNDP is doing an assessment, a more thorough look at the short term, short- to medium-term then medium- to long-term. And that's very important for donors around the world because they can then think through what kind of support Pakistan is going to need in the long run. The Pakistani Government can think about what they need to do with their own resources and how they can structure their own planning.

As some of you already know, we have committed \$156 million to date for relief and reconstruction and airlift and other logistical support. That is comprised of an initial \$50 million, which we announced, a second \$50 million which we announced in Geneva, and then about \$56 million worth of expenditure from our military colleagues already in the support that they have been providing. This includes, of course, medical supplies, winterized tents, foods, blankets, all the personnel on the ground.

We are also providing heavy road-building and other reconstruction equipment and you'll have the opportunity to get more details about a lot of this as we go forward. We have provided \$41 million so far out of that monies to support agencies providing relief on the ground and for humanitarian commodities. We are also particularly focused, along with the international community, on the urgent need for shelters of all types.

We have contributed 14.2 million to the UN flash appeal. We are also working very closely with the multilateral development banks as they start looking out into the future. And we have reached out to other key donors to communicate well with them about their thinking to share our information and trying to find ways to best support the Government of Pakistan as this goes forward.

I should say we are having -- we get together every day and talk through where we are with our Embassy in Islamabad on the phone, with all the agencies represented, just to make sure that we are keeping careful watch on the situation and thinking through what else we can do to be supportive.

Now, in addition to our diplomatic and our relief and humanitarian assistance and all the great assets our military can bring to bear, we are also quite aware that the private sector plays a very important role in the United States through personal giving, through charities, through corporate giving.

And so on the 27th of October -- and I think you may have seen the announcement -- President Bush announced a private sector initiative to raise private funds to help in the earthquake relief and reconstruction. And that effort is going to be led by five American CEOs, business leaders: Sandy Weill, the Chairman of Citigroup; Anne Mulcahy, the CEO of Xerox; Hank McKinnell, the CEO of Pfizer; Jeff Immelt the CEO of General Electric; and Jim Kelly, who is the former Chairman and CEO of UPS.

They will be working very hard with colleagues to set up a relief fund and a website and that should be coming out soon to mobilize the private sector to work closely with nongovernmental organizations, I am sure both here and in Pakistan, and we look forward to working closely with them as this goes forward.

There are already -- over \$40 million has been donated by American citizens, by others, to relief and reconstruction, and we know this can be a very powerful force for rebuilding and we think there is probably a role where they can connect with private sector in Pakistan also because we know as people looking to recover from disaster, creating jobs, creating opportunities is a very important part of that picture.

**QUESTION:** Excuse me, is this --

**MR. ERELI:** Let's let him finish and then we will open to questions.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** Just to clarify, there is a website by the University of Indiana which keeps track of private sector donations in general for around the world, and they track this and as of last Friday, they were recording some \$43 million that had already been given to a wide variety of charities in the United States for relief and reconstruction.

So maybe I could turn this over to Mike now and he can give you an update on relief efforts from USAID.

**MR. HESS:** Thank you, Tony. As of today, we have 20 members of our Disaster Assistance Response Team out of Guam not only in Islamabad but in Mansehra and Muzaffarabad, so we have the teams spreading out around the country.

The first members of that team arrived on the 10th of October, so the day after the earthquakes. The team deployed to the field fairly quickly. That team has a number of responsibilities in terms of coordinating and assessing the damage on the ground and working with our partners, specifically with the Pakistani Government, to coordinate with them, with the UN agencies.

As you all know, the agents -- the UN works through a cluster system where various parts of the UN organization have responsibility for water sanitation or shelter or logistics coordination. And the Disaster Assistance Response Team -- that team leader works very closely with the UN and the cluster heads, with the Pakistani Government and with the U.S. military to make sure that we have a coordinated effort. Our team leader, Bill Berger, works very closely with Admiral LeFever and with the Ambassador Ryan Crocker to make sure that we have a coordinated effort on the ground and make sure that we have the latest information and the clearest picture of what's happening on the ground.

To date, USAID has over nine airlifts that have gone in to the region, carrying things like tents, water sanitation kits, water purification systems. We've also brought in ten WHO emergency health kits. Those health kits, each one, can provide 10,000 people with medical supplies for three months. We knew very early on that a lot of the infrastructure, the medical infrastructure, the health care infrastructure had been destroyed and so we deployed those health kits immediately to try and alleviate some of those problems.

We have been working very closely with the Pakistani Government in terms of distribution of tents. As you all know, winter is approaching very rapidly and the temperatures in the higher elevations are already reaching 20 degrees in the night so it's a very untenable situation up there.

So we've been working with the Pakistani Government on alternative forms of shelter. We estimate that the number of tents needed is somewhere north of 400,000. It would be a long time before all those tents could even physically get to Pakistan, let alone to find enough producers. And we're not talking about ordinary tents. For this part of the world, we need heavy winterized tents. Ironically, the largest producer of those tents is in Pakistan so that makes it even more complicated. Tent makers around the world are working around the clock to produce as many tents as they can, but we estimate it's going to take at least two months to get tents there.

So we are looking at alternative programs. We have used the "one warm, dry room" concept. It's a concept we used in Kosovo in that crisis as the winter approached, where you have structures that are maybe partially destroyed, and so what you want to do is make sure that you have one warm, dry room in that structure where the family can survive and live because they don't have a tent.

The other programs we're looking at, working with our implementing partners, are voucher programs and host family programs, where we can bring families out of the mountains, give them vouchers so they can go to the market, get goods and services to help shelter other families.

We are working through, as Tony mentioned, ten implementing partners. These are partners with whom we have been working, the mission there, and have been working with them over a number of years so we have a good working relationship with them. These partners know the country very well. They know this region very well and increases our capacity and our throughput fairly quickly.

So we've got our implementing partners. The military is helping to get the distribution and supplies out there, all in coordination with the UN and the military to get as much as we can on the ground as quickly as we can.

We are also doing some work on schools. A lot of the schools were destroyed. We get GP medium tents from the military and we bring in books and help the teachers to get the schools reestablished, because it's important for the children right now that we can do some things along those lines.

We recognize that this is going to be a long process. Usually earthquakes, the relief effort is short and it has to be because the damage is devastating and there's not much that can happen in terms of the injuries. They're either catastrophic or they're fairly minor.

In this case, we've got a larger problem, however, because of the onset of winter. We think this relief operation will continue probably until March or April. At the same time, we have teams deploying this weekend that will begin a recovery process. We have the assessment teams that Tony mentioned on the ground for the reconstruction. So what you're going to see, this is going to be a continuum of relief, recovery and reconstruction happening simultaneously in the region. It's going to be a tricky operation, but we need to do that throughout the winter to make sure the people have a great chance of survival.

I'll be followed by General Ham.

**BGEN HAM:** Thanks, Mr. Hess. Good day. I have to tell you, I'm glad to be here as part of this team that has the Department of State, the Department of Defense and so many other -- U.S. and other agencies involved in this important effort. It is important for us to participate in this relief effort of our friends in Pakistan and those who have been devastated by this.

Just a couple of snippets of information. As of today, there are about 890 U.S. military personnel and 24 helicopters that are in Pakistan supporting relief operations. There are nine additional helicopters that are presently in Afghanistan that we expect to be able to move into Pakistan within the next coming days.

Our approach to the many logistical challenges associated with this operation has been multi-pronged: We employ a strategic lift from Europe, from the continental United States, from the Gulf region, airlift; we provide maritime lift, and increasingly that has become the conveyance to get -- the means to get large quantities of equipment and material from other parts of the world into Pakistan; we use rotary wing assets for, if you will, retail distribution inside country, and also our -- have done a number of airdrop missions to get to some of the more remote areas which are outside the range of the helicopters, all in an effort to get needed supplies and equipment to the places where they are most needed.

U.S. helicopters today have completed more than 750 individual missions, delivering more than 1,700 tons of humanitarian relief supplies. And they've also transported about 7,500 people. Some of those are injured. Some of those are people who just needed to be displaced for -- to sites where there was additional shelter and comfort. U.S. strategic airlift missions have delivered more than 3,700 tons of humanitarian supplies. And I mentioned the airdrops are being used to supply the more remote areas.

We have some ground support in Pakistan as well, ranging from a military hospital, which is now up and operational and receiving its first -- and treating its first patients.

We also have a naval construction battalion which has been deployed from Okinawa which is linked up with equipment from other places in the world and they're conducting a variety of engineering operations: construction, road clearance to open up again more routes for ground delivery of supplies. And we have also delivered and are operating a water purification unit.

U.S. military support in Pakistan is very effectively coordinated with USAID, other U.S. agencies, but mostly importantly with the Government of Pakistan. And we look forward to our continued efforts in support of the Government of Pakistan in this important humanitarian assistance operation.

Thank you.

**MR. ERELI:** If I could welcome our other guests. If you want to come up for the questions. If you could, just identify yourself and your news organizations.

Barry.

**QUESTION:** I'm Barry Schweid. I wonder if we could have some elaboration on the reconstruction period -- not the instant relief. Tony, you began by referring the U.S. being into this for the long haul. Whatever you can say, what you think the price tag might be, how much of an effort -- and to be totally candid with you, I'm also wondering if there are opportunities for corporations because I've never known a situation like this where American corporations couldn't find a way to get involved.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** Well, we'll have a much better sense in a couple of weeks when we have the needs assessments done. The numbers that -- initially the Government of Pakistan was talking about five -- an initial estimate of \$5 billion for relief and that was sort of the near-term helping of people. And that's why they quickly got the World Bank and Asian Development Bank to come in and start work on a more detailed needs assessment, as many of you remember we've done in other crises around the world on a regular basis, because that gives everybody a respected international estimate of what the needs are going to be.

So I would say -- and they're just starting that right now. So in about two weeks or so we'll have -- I'll be able to give you a much better answer on that. But since we and others have, of course, experienced these situations before, we are thinking ahead. We have -- one of our colleagues from USAID has gone out to do our own bilateral assessment of where AID might be able to add benefit to this process. He'll be coming back with his comments to share with the rest of us. Other donors are doing the same thing. The World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank are also -- while the assessment's going on, they're thinking through how they can use their long programs creatively and maybe re-target some of that.

So while our focus is on keeping people warm and healthy and getting them shelter again, we're at the same time preparing for after the winter when we can really start rebuilding. And we realize that it will be a multi-year process. And of course, working with the Government of Pakistan is going to be essential in that. They have their own long-term vision and plans where we were already working. We already, I think, as you know, provide a substantial amount of ESF support for the Government of Pakistan and we're already committed to doing that.

And I think it's important to remember that it comes in the context of the Government of Pakistan turning in very, very good macroeconomic results for this decade, consistently having good growth results and really in many macroeconomic figures just doing a superb job. So we think we'll have a very good partner.

**QUESTION:** Which companies are we talking? Do you know which -- the nationalities or the countries that would get these contracts?

**MR. WAYNE:** I don't, sorry.

**QUESTION:** It's kind of early.

**MR. WAYNE:** It's a little early.

**MR. ERELI:** Let's go to Sue.

**QUESTION:** Sue Fleming from Reuters. This is for Brigadier General. Is it? Do you have any details on the attack on the U.S. military helicopter? Was it caused by a rocket-propelled grenade and has this had an impact on the flow of aid to people who are stranded?

And then a final question that I had is what are your ground rules for operating there? Do you go in armed, as the military, when you're helping or how does it work because it can be a bit of a hostile environment?

**BGEN HAM:** First, there is a report -- yesterday -- that a U.S. helicopter conducting a humanitarian mission was fired upon. There is presently a collaborative investigation that's ongoing between U.S. officials and the Government of Pakistan. We don't -- it is ongoing, so we don't know the results of that. But necessarily, we're very concerned and treat that very, very seriously as a matter of force protection.

It is important to note, however, that operations for that particular flight returned to its base, based on the threat that they perceive. Other airlift operations have continued and will continue. There is an ongoing -- we call it "risk assessment" -- that the commander, Rear Admiral LeFever and his team render and, in conjunction with the military officials and the Government of Pakistan, decide what missions they can do within acceptable risks. So this particular instance, while serious, has not had a significant effect on ongoing operations.

To your second question, we don't talk specifically about the force protection measures that we apply when we are conducting operations, but it is important to note that the operations that we do conduct are done with the -- in close coordination with the Pakistan military. It's their country and we recognize that. So, for example, on a U.S. flight -- helicopter flight that will occur -- there'll be a Pakistan military official with that flight. It helps us because there's someone who's familiar with the routes, with the area, those kinds of things, and it's very helpful on the ground to the people to whom the materials are being delivered to have a representative of their government on the ground with him.

**QUESTION:** Was anyone hurt in the attack?

**BGEN HAM:** No. The aircraft was not at all -- it was not damaged. It's important to emphasize there is a report of the aircraft being fired upon. So no injuries and no damage.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow up. For example, during tsunami relief when U.S. troops went from aircraft -- from carriers on land, they were not armed and it was a request from the Indonesian authorities. So when your guys are going out, are they fully armed and fully loaded, so to speak?

**BGEN HAM:** I would again, we don't -- for matters of security, we don't talk about the specific measures, but everything that we do is done in close coordination with the Pakistan military.

**MR. GASTRIGHT:** If I could just clarify briefly. The Government of Pakistan has approached us and provided an alternative theory on the attack. Again, as the General mentioned, there is a collaborative Government of Pakistan-United States military investigation ongoing. What they say and what they have taken our people to is a road-clearing exercise that was ongoing that involved explosives. Not to say that's right or wrong, but it is an ongoing investigation. The two sides are working collaboratively.

We appreciate that the Government of Pakistan has reached out in this manner and provided us the opportunity to work with them, hand in glove, in this instance as well.

**QUESTION:** How would you describe the outcome of the pledging conference in Geneva, which has been described as gravely disappointing? I'm sure you have seen the Oxfam statement, which is one of those rare things. They don't generally make statements of that kind.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** I would say that we have gone out to our embassies around the world again and asked people to go in to their host governments and tell them to seriously consider the needs in Pakistan and to come forward to meet those needs. I think we will have even a better sense when both the long-term needs assessment and the UNDP needs assessments are done and governments will have time to absorb that. So we very much look forward to the continuing generosity of the international community to help Pakistan address the tragedy that it now faces.

**QUESTION:** As a follow-up, can you address the general question that's a corollary to that, which is donor fatigue and whether you're running into it or you think that's -- there's validity there?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** I think that there are a lot of serious needs out there in the world and that as we have been -- as we have responded, I think that our partners in the international community can respond. And we know that they have the generosity and the foresight to do that and so we're going to work very closely with them and to encourage everybody to come together to really address what are the outstanding needs in Pakistan.

**QUESTION:** Raghubir Goyal from India Globe and Asia Today. A number of question -- and one question actually, one is that how do you compare this with tsunami? And two, when you said that Americans gave \$41 or \$43 million, is that part of \$156 million or is it --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** No, no --

**QUESTION:** And another one is --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** No, that's -- the \$46 million is what's recorded so far of private donations. And this is recorded by a nongovernmental organization and I believe it's the University of Indiana that has a special institute that tracks this all around the world -- or not around the world, that tracks American donor --

**QUESTION:** The question for you was that how do you compare this with tsunami. And also there are some reports that the help is going there but it's not reaching to the needy and poor people.

**MR. HESS:** It's hard to compare natural disasters. I mean, all of them are devastating and this one was certainly getting up there in terms of the numbers of dead. As you know, the Pakistani Government announced that it's over 73,000 people who have died. That number has just jumped up from 58,000 a couple of days ago.

The number of dead in the tsunami still can't be calculated. It's devastating in its terms of its reach and its breadth, much more devastating in terms of the larger area of impact. So it's harder in that regard. But we view this as a very, very severe humanitarian complex emergency, as probably one of the most devastating earthquakes that we have seen in recent history. It's more so than the Bam one, which is the most recent one, or even the Turkey one, which were fairly recently.

But it's very high on our list. And in terms of getting out there and reaching it, this is complicated, as General Ham mentioned, by the fact that these are very, very remote and isolated areas. In some cases, you can't even get helicopters into some of these valleys and that's why they're doing the airdrops. It's hard to get assessment teams on the ground. But, again, we're working with the Pakistani Government, the Pakistani military who had units on the ground, so they are feeding us information in terms of the assessment needs of those areas and those most affected populations. But it's a very, very remote and isolated area. That's why the helicopters come in handy. We have funded -- in addition to U.S. military helicopters -- USAID has funded the International Committee of the Red Cross for five additional heavy lift helicopters. So we recognize that this has got to happen very fast, very quick and get as many areas as we can.

**QUESTION:** But there were allegations of misdoing that the aid was not being passed along? Is that what you were talking about, Goyal? There were allegations in the last days that actually there was stockpiled aid that was not being passed along as it should be. You haven't heard any of those allegations?

**QUESTION:** This comes from the Kashmiris themselves.

**MR. GASTRIGHT:** I have seen reports to that effect and I also note that the Government of Pakistan said they were investigating it, obviously. But I think to say that aid is not getting out is patently false, as Mike just mentioned. I mean it is getting out there. Our implementing partners are certainly putting out there and the Government of Pakistan -- our assessment of the Government of Pakistan's efforts is that it has been remarkably good. They've done a great job. And to say that it's not because of an isolated incident where some, I think it was some local government officials were hoarding. Some officials -- I think the Government of Pakistan, central government said, we're going to look at that, we're going to look at it immediately. So to say that that epitomizes what's happening on the ground in Pakistan is not correct. It's patently false.

**QUESTION:** Yes, I just would like to go back to the figures. You said that 156 million were committed to date and then 41 million provided its --

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** They're different figures.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Yes, can you explain the figures?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** Just at Geneva, what we announced was that the total U.S. monies committed to date were the initial \$50 million we proposed, an additional \$50 million, and then \$56 million had already been expended by our colleagues at the Department of Defense. So all of that \$100 million has not yet been disbursed. What the monies that I cited is how much has actually been disbursed to date to relief organizations.

**QUESTION:** Out of 100?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** Out of 100.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Has it been obligated?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAYNE:** And maybe --

**QUESTION:** It's obligated, right?

**MR. HESS:** It's obligated.

**QUESTION:** Oh, okay.

**MR. HESS:** What we do is we look at the proposals that come in from our implementing partners and we evaluate those proposals. And as Tony mentioned, 41.2 -- that number will go up, even today.

**MR. ERELI:** We have time for one more. Teri.

**QUESTION:** Teri Schultz with FOX News. When aid organizations are warning that if the donations don't go up, if the level -- the donor levels don't go up, they may have to ground some of these flights for cost reasons, does that affect the U.S. bilateral flights and are you seeing -- or our flights are funded and we take care of all of that, so that the bigger picture of -- you're nodding. I'm answering the question for you -- sorry. But I was just curious.

**MR. HESS:** You're doing a great job. Keep it up. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** The U.S. aid flights go on regardless of these concerns?

**MR. HESS:** To officially answer your question on camera, yes. I'll keep nodding, yes. Yes, all flights are funded by us and it comes out of our funding. So our flights are funded. They'll continue to go and we'll continue to provide those supplies regardless of what the international community does in terms of their donations. So our commodities and DOD's commodities will still keep flowing and as we see the needs.

**QUESTION:** But is that big a picture of a concern for you, that there may be flights -- the international flights may be grounded?

**MR. HESS:** There were reports of that. But again, you know, we're still not seeing -- we're seeing some slowdown and that happens. I think as -- I think it was Tony indicated, we're starting to see a shift now from air flights to maritime. You know, aircraft aren't the most efficient way to get things in there, especially if you're talking about bulk items. So you're starting to see supplies come in by ships and then it can be trucked up to the affected region a lot more effectively than flying an airplane in there. So we're starting to see that shift. And that happens in these operations all the time.

**QUESTION:** Will that be affected by winter? No.

**MR. ERELI:** We've got an event coming. Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

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